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for every child

Ensuring Lasting Impact

Sustainable Programming in
Eastern and Southern Africa

For every child
Whoever she is.
Wherever he lives.
Every child deserves a childhood.
A future.
A fair chance.
That's why UNICEF is there.
For each and every child.
Working day in and day out.
In more than 190 countries and territories.
Reaching the hardest to reach.
The furthest from help.
The most excluded.
It's why we stay to the end.
And never give up.



for every child

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Table of Contents

Acronyms	3
Introduction	4
Overview	
Our Approach, Types of Data	6
Three Study Questions, Five Goal Areas	7

Findings



Goal Area 1

Every child, including adolescents, survives and thrives, with access to nutritious diets, quality primary health care, nurturing practices and essential supplies

8



Goal Area 2

Every child, including adolescents, learns and acquires skills for the future

10



Goal Area 3

Every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices

12



Goal Area 4

Every child, including adolescents, has access to safe and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene services and lives in a safe and sustainable climate and environment

14




Goal Area 5

Every child, including adolescents, has access to inclusive social protection and lives free of poverty

16

Conclusion	18
Recommendations	20



“UNICEF is undertaking multiple shifts in its programming and operations to achieve sustainable, outcome-level change for children.”

- UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Acronyms

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CYCW	Child and Youth Care Worker
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of OECD)
ESAR	Eastern and Southern Africa Region
ESARO	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
GEROS	Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCO	Malawi Country Office
MIS	Management Information System
MOPAN	Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RAM	Results Assessment Module
SCT	Social Cash Transfer
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene

Introduction

Africa has a chance for greater prosperity, higher per capita growth and a reduction in poverty, if policies and investments are targeted, sustainable and tailored towards its fast-growing child population, particularly in health, education and protection systems.

UNICEF works with partners, communities and the private sector to ensure that children are at the heart of our actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We work to save children's lives, to defend their rights, and to help them fulfil their potential, from early childhood through to adolescence.

Sustainability, that is, the capacity to endure, to meet society's needs without compromising the needs of future societies, is an important dimension of our work. Sustainable development is vital but it is also complex, requiring a strategic approach and concerted stakeholder efforts.

In the face of global threats such as COVID-19 and climate change, UNICEF seeks to understand more fully issues related to the sustainability of results and to better design and deliver programmes that ensure lasting impact in children's lives in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR).

Between 2018 and 2021, the period covering UNICEF's previous Strategic Plan, UNICEF produced 82 reports of evaluations conducted in ESAR, including project, thematic, country programme and multi-country evaluations, as well as mid-term, formative, summative, end-of-programme, and impact evaluations in both development and humanitarian contexts that cover a wide range of sectors and topics.

This report synthesizes the learnings from these evaluations on the theme of sustainability, highlighting the contributions of UNICEF and its partners to improve children's lives and ensure lasting impact. It shares some promising practices of sustainability as well as recommendations for future, sustainable programming and policymaking in line with the SDGs and our pledge to leave no one behind.



Overview

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

– UN World Commission on Environment and Development

In order to better understand and strengthen the sustainability of its development programming in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA), UNICEF analyzed and summarized evidence centred of sustainability from all (82) reports of evaluations conducted in the ESA region between 2018 and 2021, a period covering UNICEF’s previous Strategic Plan.

These evaluations, which cover a wide array of issues including child poverty, gender equality, and quality education, were assessed through the lens of sustainability. The findings will help the ESA Regional Office (ESARO) identify ways to better address the region’s sustainability needs and will inform the design and implementation of future programming and policy-making to improve the lives of children in the ESA region.



82 evaluations conducted in ESAR

Sanitation & hygiene
Ending child poverty
Water & environment
GENDER EQUALITY
Quality education & learning
Social protection
Reduce stunting
Ebola preparedness
HIV & AIDS
Youth protection
Survive & thrive

Our Approach

Using an analytical framework, the evaluation team compared and organized the data to identify patterns and relevant findings on the multi-faceted theme of sustainability.

Types of Data

Descriptive data which focuses on: i) the type of evaluation (formative, summative, etc.); ii) the geographic scope (sub-national, country program, multi-country); iii) the time period of the intervention covered by the evaluation; and iv) the thematic/sectoral/Goal Area scope (education, health, nutrition, protection, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), etc.).

Content data focuses on the parameters identified, linked in particular to each of the three sustainability study questions, ensuring that enabling and limiting factors as well as best/good practices for sustainability were captured.

Interpretive data. After individual data was extracted from all reports, data was interpreted in view of synthesizing the findings overall and across three specific study questions.

Three Study Questions

The theme of sustainability was addressed through **three specific study questions (SQ)** identified during discussions with UNICEF ESARO for examination in each of the evaluation reports, as follows:

Coverage of Sustainability in Evaluations

SQ1: Systems Strengthening/Capacity Building

To what extent has the intervention strengthened systems and built capacity with the aim of sustaining net benefits over time?

Weak



Moderate



Full



SQ2: Shock Resilience

To what extent has the intervention addressed sustainability of the net benefits from the perspective of resilience to climate/environmental risk factors and major shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic?



SQ3: Equity Dimension/Leave no one behind

To what extent has the intervention addressed sustainability of the net benefits from an equity perspective, prioritizing the most disadvantaged rights holders (or prioritizing policies/strategies that would support/address the most disadvantaged) in accordance with the 'leave no one behind' principle?



By analyzing the key messaging related to sustainability, UNICEF was able to identify a number of promising practices from different countries in the region as well as potential reasons for low sustainability of results in different contexts.

These findings are grouped under the five goal areas identified in UNICEF's current Strategic Plan 2022-2025 to ensure relevance to UNICEF's ongoing work.

Overall, the 82 evaluation reports provided partial coverage of the three SQs. The average coverage of sustainability for SQ1 is moderate including ratings for Goal Area 1, 2, and 5, while the rating for Goal Area 3 and 4 was rated full. The average coverage of sustainability for SQ2 and SQ3 is weak and consistently rated weak across all five Goal Areas.

Five Goal Areas



Goal Area 1

Every child, including adolescents, survives and thrives, with access to nutritious diets, quality primary health care, nurturing practices and essential supplies



Goal Area 2

Learns and acquires skills for the future



Goal Area 3

Is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices



Goal Area 4

Has access to water, sanitation and hygiene and lives in a safe and sustainable climate and environment



Goal Area 5

Has access to inclusive social protection and lives free from poverty



Goal Area 1: Every child, including adolescents, survives and thrives, with access to nutritious diets, quality primary health care, nurturing practices and essential supplies

Photo: UNICEF South Sudan

Approximately half of the 82 evaluation reports addressed Goal Area 1 on health, nutrition, and HIV/AIDS. Most of the discussion on sustainability focuses on strengthening health systems and building the capacity of stakeholders at the community, sub-national, and national levels. Programming also aimed to ensure long-term health supplies, equipment, and personnel investments.

To a lesser extent, evaluation reports also addressed the resilience of populations in the context of COVID-19 and humanitarian emergencies, as well as the benefits of UNICEF-supported interventions from an equity perspective.

An integrated approach that uses existing government structures at different levels and involves community leaders and community members for rollout are reported as good practices for sustainability, such as in Ethiopia and South Sudan's **Multi-Country Evaluation for Birth Registration for Maternal, Newborn, Child Health (BR4MNCH) Project**. This approach encompasses not only effective service delivery but also institutional development, and empowers communities to take ownership of program benefits. Buttressed by an enabling legal and policy environment, the results of health and nutrition interventions may be even more sustainable in the longer term.

Key Message 1

An integrated approach to health and nutrition—one that leverages existing government structures and involves community leaders and members—engenders a high degree of buy-in and ownership. Training, medical supply provision to maintain demand, and an enabling legal and policy environment also improve the sustainability of health and nutrition interventions.

Coverage of Sustainability in Evaluations



SQ1
Moderate



SQ2
Weak



SQ3
Weak

Programming that involved human resources training and the provision of health and nutrition services (such as supplements, drug supplies, and equipment) contributed to the continued demand and use of services over time. Some interventions that sought to expand and maintain such demand addressed sustainability from an equity perspective by targeting females and children as the direct recipients of long-term benefits irrespective of the areas where they lived. This is reflected in the **Enhancing Skilled Delivery in Ethiopia Maternal Health Project** implemented between 2014 and 2018 and the **Saving Mothers' and Children's Lives through Innovative, Sustainable, and Comprehensive Reproductive, Mother, Child and Adolescent Health Services** intervention in Tanzania.

Key Message 2

Factors that hinder sustainability of programme results include: i) donor dependency; ii) medical equipment degradation; iii) lack of exit/handover plans and operational guidelines; iv) high turnover of trained human resources; v) lack of continuous training, mentoring, refresher courses, and incentives for trained resources.

However, the potential for sustainability in the health sector is tempered by challenges with ongoing maintenance and replacement of non-functional equipment post interventions as well as the lack of exit and handover plans and **UNICEF Enhancing Skilled Delivery in Ethiopia Project** identified the maintenance and functionality of health equipment as a major challenge stemming from the purchase of poor-quality equipment and the lack of training on how to use the equipment. This project evaluation also mentioned the high turnover of trained human resources and the need for continuous training, mentoring, refresher courses, and

incentives for those that remain in the communities.

Dependence on donor finances to maintain health systems was also noted as an impediment to community ownership and continuity of programme results. This is evidenced in the **Evaluation of UNICEF's contribution to strengthening the Rural Health Motivators Programme in Eswatini**. Furthermore, the **Real-Time Evaluation of UNICEF'S Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak Crisis in Malawi**, which addressed sustainability from the perspective of building resilience in the face of a major shock, also highlighted that health systems are weak due to: i) limited capacity to absorb external support, particularly at district level; ii) structural limitations, including shortage of staff, weak management, shortage of funding and lack of allowance; and iii) poor equipment and storage capacity. These issues negatively impacted the sustainable delivery of services and were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Promising Practice

In Ethiopia and South Sudan, the Birth Registration Project (BR4MNCH) ensured sustainability by using existing government structures and involving community leaders for rollout.



Photo: UNICEF Ethiopia Mulugeta Ayene



Goal Area 2:
Every child, including adolescents, learns and acquires skills for the future

Photo: UNICEF Ethiopia Mulugeta Ayene

Under Goal Area 2 covering education and humanitarian interventions, 29 evaluation reports were identified. Most of the discussion on sustainability in these evaluations focuses on systems strengthening, capacity building, buy-in and legal and policy reform at the national and local levels on learning and skills-building. Government funding and ownership of education systems as well as equity and gender dimensions of education interventions in terms of female student retention, people with disabilities and leaving no one behind were all addressed in the evaluation reports.

Key Message 1

Cross-sectoral partnerships, disaster preparedness programmes for children, government buy-in, capacity building to retain educational staff and pupils, and gender mainstreaming are important factors in ensuring lasting impact.

The need for cross-sectoral synergies between UNICEF and its partners, particularly in leveraging each partner's strengths in service delivery is an overarching theme in the sustainability of education-related outcomes in emergency and post-emergency periods. The cross-sectoral approach helps to address capacity gaps in emergency contexts and to develop agile response mechanisms in education-related interventions. Collaboration with local school partners for example was identified as a contributing factor to successful learning outcomes for adolescent and youth development programmes in the **Evaluation of UNICEF's Contribution Towards the Isibindi Programme in Eastern Cape, South Africa: 2014 – 2018**.

The **Learning-Focused Evaluation of the UNICEF Mozambique Response to the Level 2 Emergency in Cabo Delgado** indicated strong linkages with partners across various sectors and clusters to integrate disaster risk and resilience activities.

Ongoing emergencies in ESAR have highlighted the need to reorganize human resource strategies to support an agile and flexible disaster response. The **Ethiopia Country Programme Evaluation** identified the need for resilience strategies that

combine long-term risk reduction and short-term emergency response capacity development, including integrating conflict prevention and mitigation within the education system.

Coverage of Sustainability in Evaluations



SQ1
Moderate



SQ2
Weak



SQ3
Weak

A few evaluations under Goal Area 2 highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming and addressing multi-dimensional vulnerabilities for ensuring sustainability, particularly long-term gender equity-related outcomes. In particular, the **Eswatini Country Program Evaluation** identified gender mainstreaming strategies and gender equality policies as important enablers of adolescent girls' secondary school completion and of gender-responsive education programming.

The **Learning Focused Evaluation of the UNICEF Mozambique Response to the L2 Emergency in Cabo Delgado** identified adequate human resources, both government and UNICEF staff, including educational staff training and retention of staff and pupils, as a common enabling factor for supporting sustainability in the humanitarian-to-development transition. Similarly, several evaluation reports, including the **Endline Evaluation of Assessment for Learning Programme in Ethiopia**, identified stakeholder engagement, including government buy-in and training resources, as a best practice to support continued learning outcomes at schools for both boys and girls.

Despite UNICEF's efforts to contribute to sustainable development in ESAR through education, external factors beyond the organization's control may hamper such efforts.

Key Message 2

Factors that impact sustainability of results include the family, social, and economic environment; school infrastructure; and training of local officials, teachers, and community members to maintain innovative education initiatives.

For example, the **Summative Evaluation of UNICEF Education Programme in Angola** reported a change of Government and a drop in oil revenues, which were an important source of public resources, as factors that threatened the sustainability of the 2015-2019 programme. Child-friendly schools in Angola also faced challenges with the maintenance of school WASH facilities due in part to the country's overall mediocre state of sanitation.

Promising Practice

Case management and workshops organized during the cholera emergency response in Mozambique familiarized partners with international standards for risk communication and community engagement. These measures strengthened partner collaboration and supported the delivery of useful services over an extended period of time.



Photo: UNICEF Mozambique

The **Endline Evaluation of Assessment for Learning Programme in Ethiopia** indicates that teachers had difficulty implementing the programme in the classroom due to a combination of limited material resources such as copies of the lesson plan and their perceptions that it constituted an additional burden on their time.

The **Evaluation of the Mozambique Accelerated School Readiness Pilot Programme**, highlighted the difficulty of mobilizing volunteers with the basic skills to deliver the programme. **Similarly, the Formative Evaluation of the Sara Radio Programme in Tanzania**, an innovative radio drama series that aimed to share knowledge and change attitudes about issues such as reproductive health, early marriage, and early pregnancy, to empower girls in the long term did not sufficiently train teachers on facilitating radio listening with children. Moreover, it did not engage parents and communities in its design and implementation or create sufficient public awareness of the programme thus compromising its sustainability.



Goal Area 3:
Every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence,
exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices

Twenty-one evaluation reports were identified under Goal Area 3 mainly covering Child Protection (5 reports), multiple sectors (10 reports), and humanitarian assistance (3 reports). Sustainability discussions mainly addressed capacity building and systems strengthening, and to a lesser extent, equity and gender dimensions, including gender-based violence and gender mainstreaming.

Key Message 1

Child protection policies and social safety nets, strong legal frameworks, public financing of child protection systems, case management and training at child and youth protection centres all contribute to programme sustainability.

UNICEF has successfully supported the establishment of nationally owned social safety nets by co-developing child protection policies, strengthening existing laws and building permanent infrastructures from emergency safety nets. Child and youth protection centres have demonstrably contributed to the delivery of specialized services to communities through improvements in case management, better coordination between service providers, and improved linkages amongst stakeholders. Training local and national stakeholders at child and youth protection centres has developed the capacity of human resources at the national and sub-national levels to better disseminate knowledge and skills for sustainable planning and provision of child protection services.

Some of the evaluation reports related to child protection that address systems strengthening and capacity building are for example **The Evaluation of Malawi Child Protection Strategy 2012-2018 (CHP-Malawi-CPS)**, **The Formative Evaluation of Child Protection Centres to Prevent and Respond to Violence, Abuse, and Neglect in Kenya**,

Coverage of Sustainability in Evaluations



SQ1
Full



SQ2
Weak



SQ3
Weak

and the **Rapport d'Évaluation du Service d'Écoute et de Protection des Enfants et des Femmes Victimes de Violence de Ngazidja, Comores (Période de 2014-2018)** in Comoros. The interventions evaluated in these reports focused on developing and strengthening existing legal frameworks (as in the case of Malawi) so that child protection services can operate effectively, training local and national stakeholders at child protection centres, and sensitizing community members on the forms of violence against children and services related to Child Protection (as in the Kenya and Comoros interventions). In these contexts, the evaluation reports highlight some key enabling factors for sustainability such as the development of case management as well as capacity strengthening at district and community levels (Malawi).

Some evaluations demonstrate that increased government allocations for child protection systems have reduced donor dependency and contributed to the sustainability of net benefits but are insufficient and require comprehensive long-term strategies towards further fostering government ownership through public financing measures. Local ownership of child protection initiatives has been successful at pooling resources amongst community members and leaders, engendering a high degree of buy-in from rights-holders and helping to establish stronger linkages with national governments and local communities.

Some of the humanitarian assistance evaluation reports that address sustainability issues related to systems strengthening and capacity building are for example **Learning-Focused Evaluation of the UNICEF Mozambique Response to the Level 2 Emergency in Cabo Delgado**, **Evaluation of UNICEFs coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations: Somalia**, and **Evaluation of the UNICEF Response to the South Sudan Humanitarian Crisis (2016-2019)**. The programmes covered by these evaluations provided humanitarian responses to youth, including social protection, WASH and education. While support in developing a social protection policy and building capacity towards owning a nation-wide social

safety net (e.g., Somalia) may contribute to sustainability, the evaluation reports highlight concerns that the Government would not have sufficient financial resources to continue to run the services after the emergency response (e.g., Mozambique) and the difficulty to retain teachers given the absence of a salary scheme and public financing measures (South Sudan). Similarly, the **Formative Evaluation of Child Protection Centres to Prevent and Respond to Violence, Abuse, and Neglect** in Kenya reported concerns that child protection centres would become inoperable once external funding ceased.

Key Message 2

Insufficient government resources, staff turnover, and management challenges can limit the sustainability of programme results.

UNICEF's Contribution towards the Isibindi Adolescent and Youth Development Programme in South Africa provided social support to vulnerable and at-risk youth (who may often suffer from substance abuse problems) through Child and Youth Care Workers (CYCWs). In this context, notwithstanding some enabling factors for sustainability such as the improved capacity of the CYCW to identify vulnerable youth through Safe Parks and home visits, the evaluation highlighted high staff turnover and management issues such as the lack of a proper monitoring and evaluation system.

Promising Practice

In Comoros, sensitization campaigns that involve community and religious leaders have increased the tendency of the population to report cases of violence against children.



Photo: UNICEF Comoros



Goal Area 4: Every child, including adolescents, has access to safe and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene services and lives in a safe and sustainable climate and environment

Twenty-three evaluation reports were identified under Goal Area 4. While these evaluations largely concerned standalone water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and humanitarian initiatives (8 reports). Evaluation reports mainly focused on capacity building and systems strengthening of WASH facilities in terms of maintenance and equipment as well as buy-in from community leaders and challenges regarding financial sustainability. To a lesser extent, evaluation reports discussed the capacity of WASH infrastructure to withstand the effects of climate change, flooding and natural disasters.

Key Message 1

Solar-powered pumps to rehabilitate boreholes and lessen fuel dependency, local capacity building for maintaining boreholes and latrines; as well as multi-sector partnerships and community outreach contributed to programme sustainability.

The functionality of water sources needs to be at the forefront of sustainable WASH interventions. UNICEF programming suggests that this outcome can be achieved by training operators to ensure proper maintenance of boreholes and latrines, which engenders a high degree of buy-in from rights-holders and supports community-led development. While solar-powered pumps are a cost-effective modality, challenges related to obtaining spare parts can be resolved through pooling financial resources at the community level which can ensure timely maintenance and further engender buy-in as well as support community-led development.

Coverage of Sustainability in Evaluations



SQ1
Full



SQ2
Weak



SQ3
Weak

Evaluation reports that addressed systems strengthening and capacity building include the **Evaluation of the Community Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene Programme** in Malawi, **Évaluation Finale de la Mise en Oeuvre par l'UNICEF de l'Approche d'Assainissement Total Piloté par la Communauté (ATPC) au Burundi**, **Final Evaluation of the SIDA Funded Project on Improving Children's Access to Water and Sanitation in Somalia**, and **End of Project Evaluation for a WASH Project in Satellite Schools** in Zimbabwe. These interventions focused on providing and ensuring access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene solutions through community sensitization on maintaining water points and toilets clean as well as the construction of latrines (Burundi), boreholes drilling and rehabilitation (Somalia and Zimbabwe), as well as the capacity building of stakeholders (water committees, local institutions, district authorities, etc.) towards the maintenance and rehabilitation of boreholes and latrines (Malawi and Somalia). Key enabling factors include the use of solar-powered pumps to rehabilitate boreholes and circumvent fuel dependency (Somalia), the use of existing structures and legal frameworks in building local capacity and coordination mechanisms, facilitating knowledge sharing and transfer, and fostering ownership among key stakeholders of the WASH sectors (Malawi).

Integrating WASH interventions into multi-sector and multi-stakeholder partnerships and community outreach and awareness reduces silos in service delivery and contributes to positive externalities to other sectors and other WASH actors, particularly at the local level. The pooling of risk through partnership and coordination mechanisms contributes to accountability and engagement from stakeholders which improves the sustainability of WASH infrastructure over time. Moreover, multi-sector and multi-stakeholder partnerships and community outreach and awareness raising allow for the dissemination of lessons learned and best practices and for the establishment of monitoring systems to improve future service delivery with sustainability in mind.

Promising Practice

Multi-sector partnerships and community outreach reduce silos, contribute to accountability and engagement, which in turn improves sustainability, such as in Madagascar, where The One WASH strategy mobilized efforts of different ministries (including education, public health, WASH) and local CSOs to end open defecation.



Photo: UNICEF Madagascar

The **Learning-Focused Evaluation of the UNICEF Mozambique Response to the Level 2 Emergency in Cabo Delgado** and **Real Time Evaluation on Emergency Drought Situation Response in Kenya, 2017** revealed humanitarian responses across a wide array of sectors, such as social protection, WASH, and education. For the WASH-related interventions, community-level outreach in drought and non-drought periods was important in providing an opportunity to identify WASH issues in community catchment areas (Kenya).

Key Message 2

Limited financial and material resources to maintain WASH infrastructures is a principal factor impeding the sustainability of a programme results.

Limited financial and material resources, including the unavailability of spare parts and lack of means to repair collapsed latrines for example, resulting in partially functional or non-functional water sources are described as impediments to the sustainability of WASH infrastructures in several evaluations. These include the **End-of-Project Evaluation for a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project in Satellite Schools in Zimbabwe**, the **Evaluation of the Community Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene Programme in Malawi**, and the **Évaluation finale de la Mise en Oeuvre par l'UNICEF de l'Approche de l'Assainissement Total Piloté par la Communauté (ATPC) au Burundi**.



Goal Area 5:

Every child, including adolescents, has access to inclusive social protection and lives free of poverty

Photo: UNICEF Mozambique

Goal Area 5 yielded 22 evaluation reports, mainly focused on social inclusion and protection initiatives (8 report), interventions across multiple-sectors (9 reports), and humanitarian assistance initiatives (4 reports), with one report covering the youth and adolescent sector. Discussions on sustainability centred on systems strengthening through legal and policy reform to create an enabling environment for social protection interventions as well as engagement with community leaders to ensure buy-in and address equity and gender considerations of social protection interventions.

Key Message 1

Social protection mechanisms supplemented by cash transfers and the rapid recovery of essential services for children after a disaster contribute to the sustainability of programme results.

Evaluations suggest that social protection mechanisms require an enabling environment for the net benefits to be sustained over time. These conditions are best produced by guidelines and frameworks that adapt to existing government structures and harness best practices. Management information systems are also helpful in developing insights into potential rights-holders and contributing to institutional development. They can be leveraged to create effective monitoring systems for improved service delivery.

Coverage of Sustainability in Evaluations



SQ1
Moderate



SQ2
Weak



SQ3
Weak

The interventions assessed under Goal Area 5 addressed sustainability largely through a systems strengthening and capacity building lens. They include for example the **Impact Evaluation of Monetary Transfer for Human Development/Let Us Learn Conditional Cash Transfer Programme** in Madagascar and the **End of Programme Evaluation of the Government of the Republic of Zambia-UN Joint Programme on Social Protection, December 2015 - March 2019** which focused on promoting and delivering inclusive social protection services through capacity building, sensitization campaigns, support to reinforcing legal and policy frameworks, and cash transfer.

The **Multi-Sector Evaluation of UNICEF Zambia's Capacity Development Interventions 2016-2018** assessed interventions providing capacity development opportunities to institutional, community, and individual stakeholders in various sectors including social protection, education, and WASH. For the social protection related issues in these settings, the evaluation found that the increased capacity of Social Cash Transfer (SCT) enumerators to appropriately

Key Message 2

There is a lack of long-term, sustainable, and predictable financing mechanisms and sources for shock-responsive social protection and emergency cash transfer programmes.

screen rights-holders, particularly people with disabilities, and the improved communication skills of participants to address vulnerable individuals properly in their language to be positive factors for sustainability. However, this was limited by the lack of a concrete government plan to ensure continuous financing for capacity development .

Chronic lack of sufficient government funding for essential services in post-emergency periods is a major threat to the sustainability of the net benefits from social protection interventions supported by UNICEF. The lack of continuity in the responses to multiple crises undermines capacity-building efforts and persistently fosters siloed response approaches.

Moreover, the **Evaluation of UNICEF's Work on Cash Transfer Programming in Emergencies** in Malawi highlights the lack of long-term, sustainable, and predictable financing as one of the major factors inhibiting the financial sustainability of shock-responsive social protection and emergency cash transfer programmes. This shortcoming is also reflected in the **Evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies, Phase II** in Somalia which identifies a perception that UNICEF had made an insufficient investment in looking beyond its humanitarian mandate toward sustainable development programming to strengthen social protection. Similarly, the report of the **Real-Time Evaluation on the Emergency Drought Situation Response in Kenya, 2017** points out that successful initiatives to strengthen national structures set up to deal with emergencies are still too dependent on external funding and not fully integrated into government structures and processes.

Promising Practice

Management information systems, such as the Disability MIS and the Zambia Integrated Social Protection Information System, facilitate the process of collecting and storing data on social protection recipients for more sustainable programming.



Photo: UNICEF Zambia

Conclusions

Reflections on Objective 1:

Analyze assessments of the level of sustainability of UNICEF programming in ESAR, including through an equity lens.

SQ1

To what extent has the intervention strengthened systems and built capacity with the aim of sustaining net benefits over time?

The coverage of Sustainability in the reviewed evaluations vis-à-vis SQ1 is moderate to full. They also indicate that many of the evaluated interventions had a system-strengthening or capacity-building component/aspect. This implies that UNICEF (in ESAR) is committed to ensuring the sustainability of results by strengthening systems and building capacities.

However, despite considerable efforts by UNICEF and development partners to strengthen systems and build capacities, our analysis suggests that the long-term sustainability of these programmes and interventions is contingent on continued financial support by donors. In this regard, issues related to ownership and buy-in from the Government and local communities have been identified as a major impediment to long-term sustainability, with financial ownership being a key component.

Overall, the outlook on Sustainability vis-à-vis SQ1 in the evaluation reports is overwhelmingly positive and should be used by UNICEF as an effective example for bolstering outcomes related to SQ2 and SQ3.

SQ2

To what extent has the intervention addressed sustainability of net benefits from the perspective of resilience to climate/environmental risk factors and major shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

The coverage of Sustainability in the reviewed evaluations vis-à-vis SQ2 is weak. Of 82 evaluation reports assessed, 60 evaluation reports did not assess SQ2. As a result, we did not find sufficient evidence suggesting that addressing the sustainability of net benefits from the perspective of resilience to climate/environment risk factors and major shocks is a significant consideration or component in UNICEF's current programming in ESAR.

Of the 22 evaluation reports that assessed SQ2, UNICEF programmes and interventions primarily focused on emergency responses and humanitarian contexts with emphasis on resilience activities, preparedness initiatives, and disaster risk. These programmes and interventions identified support for the humanitarian-to-development transition as a key sustainability factor, including the need for human resource support from UNICEF and development partners as crucial to long-term sustainability. UNICEF programmes and interventions covered climate/environmental risks, adaptation, and the COVID-19 pandemic to a lesser extent. Moving forward, UNICEF should consider an integrated approach to addressing external shocks and risk factors by including climate/environmental risk factors in humanitarian/emergency responses.

Overall, whilst coverage of SQ2 has been weak, the outlook on Sustainability vis-à-vis SQ2 in the evaluation reports is neutral with an emerging set of programmes and interventions focused on the humanitarian-development transition, and opportunities remain to bolster coverage of other risk factors to support these transitions.

SQ3

To what extent has the intervention addressed sustainability of net benefits from an equity perspective, prioritizing the most disadvantaged rights holders (or prioritizing policies/strategies that would support/address the most disadvantaged) per the ‘leave no one behind’ principle?

The coverage of Sustainability in the reviewed evaluations vis-à-vis SQ3 is weak. Of the evaluation reports assessed, 31 evaluation reports did not assess SQ3. As a result, we did not find sufficient evidence that sustainability of net benefits from an equity perspective are considered holistically in UNICEF programmes.

Of the 51 evaluation reports that did assess equity dimensions, there was an overwhelming focus on gender considerations, namely addressing gender-based violence and gender mainstreaming in education, social protection, and health and nutrition sectors.

Overall, the outlook on Sustainability vis-à-vis SQ3 in the evaluation reports is neutral as there remains scope for UNICEF programmes and interventions to explicitly address the needs of the most disadvantaged groups and multi-dimensional vulnerabilities.

Reflections on Objective 2:

Identify potential reasons for low sustainability of results in different contexts.

UNICEF and its partners in ESA are committed to creating lasting change for children, despite the challenges faced in ensuring the sustainability of results. These challenges include factors such as donor dependency, equipment degradation, and a lack of exit/handover plans and operational guidelines. The high turnover of trained human resources, along with a lack of continuous training, mentoring, and incentives, also impacts the sustainability of results.

Recommendations

How to strengthen sustainability in future programming

- 1 Consistently and comprehensively integrate sustainability considerations in programmes and interventions, including establishing clear definitions and targets for measuring sustainability systematically incorporating aspects of resilience and equity into sustainability programming, monitoring and reporting.

UNICEF work programs should include specific strategies or activities, corresponding targets and indicators of results achieved, which can be reported on that demonstrate their contribution to aspects of resilience and equity in sustainability programming.

Potential action point: ESARO to review current systems and processes in place to ensure adequate integration of sustainability considerations into UNICEF's programming at the country levels in ESAR.

- 2 Ensure that the standard OECD-DAC criterion of sustainability is systematically identified as a criterion of assessment with corresponding evaluation questions of all UNICEF programming.

UNICEF should bring into alignment evaluation questions relating to the criterion which correspond to the focus current Strategic Plan, many of which aim to contribute to the sustainability of the results targets set in the plan:

- Reinvigorate partnerships and amplify resource mobilization
- Engage and partner with children and young people
- Integrate bold actions on climate action and mental health across all five Goal Areas, as well as UNICEF's internal operations.
- Ensuring that the recovery is inclusive, equitable, sustainable and targeted towards solutions that build resilience, drive economic recovery
- Focus on risk-informed humanitarian and development nexus programming across all contexts, contributing to crisis prevention and preparedness, building strong, resilient systems and strengthening social cohesion and accountability to affected population.
- Harness digital technologies
- Lead the momentum for achieving progress on the United Nations reform agenda and towards a cohesive United Nations system while leveraging the private sector and working with civil society and local actors.
- Focus on intersectional approach to inequality and discrimination, to address underlying drivers of discrimination and transform structures

Potential action point: UNICEF to establish proper guidance and frameworks on systematically integrating Sustainability considerations into its evaluations.

- 3 Systemically incorporate exit plans into sustainability programming, including consultations with governments and rights-holders to ensure ownership and buy-in, as demonstrated in "Final evaluation of Justice for Children/Birth Registration European Union project 2014 - 2019 (including Communication for Development component)".

Activities and initiatives are generally well planned, and risk factors assessed, with established targets, indicators and responsibilities detailed. Nevertheless, programs often stop when funding does. It would be prudent to expand the planning tool to include the "approach to sustainability" as a section with realistic plans for exit. This may mean a reduced approach or reliance on "piloting and scaling up" and giving more thought to gradually scaling up and transitioning out."

4

Ensure an appropriate mix of demand-side interventions, such as awareness-raising campaigns and supply-side interventions. involving institutional strengthening, capacity building of local community leaders and members, and infrastructure development.

Demand side efforts involving behavioural change should be explored for sustainability potential: targeting choices/ adoption of technology (such as online learning), consumption, lifestyles, improving government service provision and associated socio-technical transitions (policies and plans), as exemplified by options to enhance accessibility and living conditions and increase nutritional quality.

5

Test simple, low-cost, environmentally friendly innovations and, where relevant, promote and favour these over complex systems with sophisticated technological requirements if they are unlikely to be effectively maintained and operational over time.

Examples of this may include radios, small tablets to distribute information or educate populations, use of solar technology, using competency-based education approaches for learning where learners acquire skills that can be productive or is transferable to others in the community.

6

Build strong partnerships (inter-agency, government, civil society, etc.) at all levels to strengthen the sustainability of developmental results within and across sectors by pooling risks and capabilities to increase engagement and accountability.

In Malawi for example, partnerships at the district level has expanded with many local and international NGOs participating to upscale minimum package of activities. UNICEF has further strategically partnered with the World Bank and the European Investment Bank (EIB) and leveraged financing for urban sanitation, a traditionally underfunded sub-sector with high fiduciary risks. Based on modelled climate resilient approaches, the MCO collaborated with other development partners to support the development of a Climate Resilient WASH financing strategy.

Finally, in partnership with Airtel Africa and the Ministry of Education, the MCO finalized a 5-year continental project, which aims to make digital learning in across Malawi a reality. The key to actioning this is the development of partnerships strategies with action plans at the country and section level. In a number of instances, UNICEF has commissioned baseline studies and / or needs assessment which have produced the necessary information to mobilize partnerships by providing evidenced-based reports and studies that can underpin and kick start initiatives.

Other efforts which have supported sustainability include UNICEF Technical Assistance to support governments in preparation of proposals for global initiatives such as Global Partnership for Education.

UNICEF could explore opportunities for collaboration with other United Nations agencies or International Financial Institutions (such as the World Bank) where resources could be mobilized for these studies and assessments, which could be used by multiple actors and support mobilizing more significant investments. In addition to improved collaboration, this could increase efficiency and use of peoples' time and raise resources swifter. With suitable assessments and baselines set, it would also improve timelines for action, demonstrate knowledge and diversify potential contributors, reducing dependence in the long term on a few donors.

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