



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
12 April 2019

Original: English

**For decision**

---

### United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

**Annual session 2019**

11–13 June 2019

Item 8 of the provisional agenda\*

### **Annual report for 2018 on the evaluation function in UNICEF**

#### *Summary*

This report provides an overview of the UNICEF evaluation function in 2018. It provides an update on the implementation of the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2018/14](#)) and the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 ([E/ICEF/2018/3](#)).

In addition, the report presents a detailed analysis of the performance of the evaluation function at all levels of the organization, especially the regional and country levels, and contains a summary of the key findings of several corporate evaluations.

Elements of a decision for consideration by the Executive Board are provided in section VII.

---

\* [E/ICEF/2019/9](#).



## I. Introduction

1. The year 2018 was one of gathering momentum. The profound shifts required to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have begun to take shape; Governments and their partners are instituting new ways of working together in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the reform agenda of the Secretary-General has created immense opportunities for effective joint action by United Nations entities toward this end. At the same time, humanitarian crises continue to unfold, requiring ever more ambitious responses in complex environments. Within UNICEF, the organization's response to the 2030 Agenda, in the form of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, began its first year of implementation.

2. UNICEF and its partners are being called upon to do more than ever before, placing unprecedented demands on the organization's mechanisms for learning and accountability. In recognition of this, the UNICEF Executive Board endorsed a revised evaluation policy in 2018 (E/ICEF/2018/14) as well as a plan for global evaluations (E/ICEF/2018/3). The revised policy is aimed at ensuring that UNICEF and its partners use evaluation for learning, continuous improvement and strengthened accountability towards the timely achievement of Strategic Plan targets and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the fulfilment of the rights of children everywhere. The plan for global evaluations, meanwhile, outlines the specific evaluations that will be completed in any given year of the Strategic Plan. Thus, 2018 was critical for the UNICEF evaluation function as it began to strengthen its foundations in accordance with its theory of change (see annex) and as informed by the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

3. Already, these changes are beginning to bear fruit. There is growing demand throughout the organization for high-quality, timely evaluations. In 2018, UNICEF conducted the highest number of evaluations since 2012, with broader geographical coverage than in previous years. In part, this upsurge in demand is a result of the revised evaluation policy, including its new coverage benchmarks, as well as investments in other key drivers of evaluation performance, such as planning, guidance, tools, knowledge management and increased resources, including through the newly established pooled fund. Increased demand is also a result of growing recognition that evaluation is an essential element of accountability at all levels of the organization. Also, in line with the theory of change, UNICEF is embracing new partnerships for evaluation, sharing knowledge with and learning valuable lessons from United Nations agencies, Governments and bilateral and multilateral partners as well as the private sector and academia. Particular focus is being given to the use of evaluations in programming throughout the organization and by partners.

4. The present report outlines the ways in which the UNICEF evaluation function has progressed in the implementation of the revised policy and the plan for global evaluations.

5. In accordance with the theory of change, the next section of the report discusses progress on strengthening the key drivers of the evaluation function. Section III analyses progress in achieving outputs, including evaluation coverage and quality and knowledge management and contains an overview of UNICEF efforts to support national evaluation capacity development. Section IV looks at outcomes, including efforts to enhance evaluation use at the country, regional and global levels. Information on the expected impact is captured in other UNICEF and system-wide documents on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Finally, section V lays out the programme of work for the year ahead.

6. Elements of a decision for consideration by the Executive Board are provided in section VII.

## **II. Strengthening the drivers of the UNICEF evaluation function**

7. Building on the recommendations of the 2017 peer review, 2018 was a year for strengthening the foundations of the UNICEF evaluation function through: (a) a revision of the policy that directs the work of the function; (b) evaluation planning in response to the challenges of the era of the Sustainable Development Goals and the new Strategic Plan; (c) enhancing the governance of the function in order to uphold the norms and standards of UNEG; (d) systems development; and (e) deepening partnerships in accordance with the United Nations reform agenda.

### **A. Revised evaluation policy**

8. In June 2018, the UNICEF Executive Board endorsed a revised evaluation policy outlining the key evaluation principles, procedures and accountabilities for the function. Particular emphasis is placed on measures to safeguard the norms and standards of UNEG; new coverage benchmarks; actions to enhance the use of evaluation findings and recommendations; and attention to strengthening the evaluation capacity in UNICEF and among its partners. The policy also describes the ways in which UNICEF will contribute to system-wide evaluations and national evaluation capacity development.

9. The UNICEF Executive Director subsequently issued a procedure in October 2018 that outlined a coherent approach to implementing the evaluation policy throughout the organization, under the leadership of the Evaluation Office. This was followed by a corporate framework issued by the Office, further setting out how the policy would be executed by different actors within UNICEF.

### **B. Strengthening evaluation planning**

10. The Executive Board endorsed the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 at its first regular session in 2018. Progress made on the implementation of the plan and accompanying management response actions are presented in section IV.

11. At the regional level, offices are preparing road maps laying out key steps to implement the evaluation policy, including quality assurance measures for country office evaluations and the identification of opportunities for synergy within the United Nations system.

12. With regard to evaluation planning at the country level, new guidance has been issued on how to design, implement and monitor costed evaluation plans (CEPs). A total of 22 CEPs were attached to country programme documents (CPDs) presented to the Executive Board in 2018.

13. Work also began in 2018 to update the methodological approaches used in country programme evaluations. The Evaluation Office conducted a review of existing methodologies among United Nations entities. This review proved to be instrumental for better understanding links with the plans of other agencies as well as the importance of coordination, sequencing and linking to United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluations at the country level. The review informed the development of methodological guidance for accelerating country programme evaluations.

## C. Governance

14. In accordance with the revised evaluation policy, several actors assured the governance of the evaluation function in 2018. The Executive Board continued to oversee the organization's work, providing direction to the evaluation function, endorsing a revised policy and a plan for global evaluations and using evaluation findings to strengthen accountability. The Executive Director continued to promote a culture of accountability, learning and continuous improvement and to allocate human and financial resources to the function. The Evaluation Office continued to oversee the function, including drafting the revised policy, providing technical guidance and quality assurance to the organization, fostering partnerships, ensuring knowledge management and capacity development and commissioning and managing corporate evaluations in support of the Strategic Plan.

15. The addition of an evaluation expert to the Audit Advisory Committee further strengthened its independent oversight of the evaluation function, including guidance on the revision of the policy and the plan for global evaluations, and ensuring adherence to the norms and standards set out in the policy. Interactions with two regional offices helped with the review of requirements for evaluation oversight at that level.

16. The Evaluation Advisory Panel, made up of external experts who provide independent advice to the Director of Evaluation, continued to provide advice to the Director on policy matters, evaluation methodologies and procedures and improvements to processes that strengthen the use of evaluations.

17. The Global Evaluation Committee, an internal body that advises senior management on the relevance and use of evaluations, reviewed areas for improvement in the performance of the evaluation function at the regional and country levels, including reviewing progress on the implementation of management responses, ensuring the adequate resourcing of the function and promoting the use of evaluations.

18. Divisional and regional directors and regional evaluation advisers, together with country representatives and specialists, continued to generate vital evidence and facilitate its use, in line with the norms and standards of UNEG. Three new regional evaluation advisers were recruited, in accordance with the management response to the peer review report and provisions in the UNICEF integrated budget, 2018–2021.

19. The UNICEF global evaluation network convened evaluation staff and key partners, including UNEG, in late 2018 to discuss implementation plans for the revised evaluation policy and measures to strengthen collaboration across all levels of the organization.

## D. Systems, guidance and tools

20. In addition to guidance on country programme evaluations, a series of new guidance packages was developed in 2018.

21. UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action have become increasingly vital. In the past, however, results have often come too late to inform the response. Therefore, in 2018 the Evaluation Office developed a modified approach in the form of “real-time evaluation plus”, which endeavours to produce evidence that can inform a given humanitarian response as it unfolds. This approach was piloted in the evaluation of the UNICEF response to the cholera/acute watery diarrhoea outbreak in Yemen (published in the summer of 2018) and the evaluation of the UNICEF response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh (published in the autumn of 2018), as well as the evaluation of child survival programming in South Sudan and the evaluation of

the UNICEF humanitarian response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (both to be published in the first quarter of 2019). A guidance note has now been developed for use at the headquarters and regional- and country-office levels.

22. Evaluability — that is, the extent to which a programme or strategy can be evaluated against standard criteria — is critical to strengthening results-based management and demonstrating the contribution of UNICEF programmes to results for children. Evaluability assessments are designed to provide evidence on the extent to which results can be demonstrated, with the ultimate aim of achieving better results through better programme design. There has been increased demand within UNICEF for evaluability assessments and, accordingly, the Evaluation Office has developed guidance to promote a common understanding and provide a set of practical tools.

## **E. Systems for monitoring evaluation activities**

23. UNICEF continued to strengthen its internal systems for monitoring evaluation activities. A new evidence information systems integration platform was developed in 2018, merging three legacy systems that are separately used for planning evaluations and monitoring the implementation of management response actions. The new platform allows for the enhanced monitoring and reporting of key evaluation performance indicators. A series of training webinars will be conducted in advance of the launch of the system at the end of February 2019.

## **F. Resources**

### **Human resources**

24. UNICEF continues to strengthen its internal capacity for evaluation. As noted above, the Evaluation Office was provided resources to establish senior evaluation specialist positions in three regions in 2018, bringing the number of regions with dedicated senior evaluation positions to five. These positions are critical for upholding evaluation norms and standards at the regional and country levels. UNICEF has committed to establishing similar positions in the two remaining regions (Latin America and Caribbean (LACR) and Europe and Central Asia (ECAR)) through the midterm review of the integrated budget.

25. Building on the experiences of partners, UNICEF is collaborating with the United Nations System Staff College to develop an in-service skills development programme for all staff who play a role in managing evaluations, especially at the country level. Beginning in the second half of 2019, the skills programme will address gaps related to implementing UNEG norms and standards, the analysis of gender equality in evaluation, evaluations focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals and humanitarian evaluations, among others.

26. In parallel, the Division of Human Resources is working to ensure that the required professional standards are included in the competency profiles and job descriptions of staff involved in evaluation.

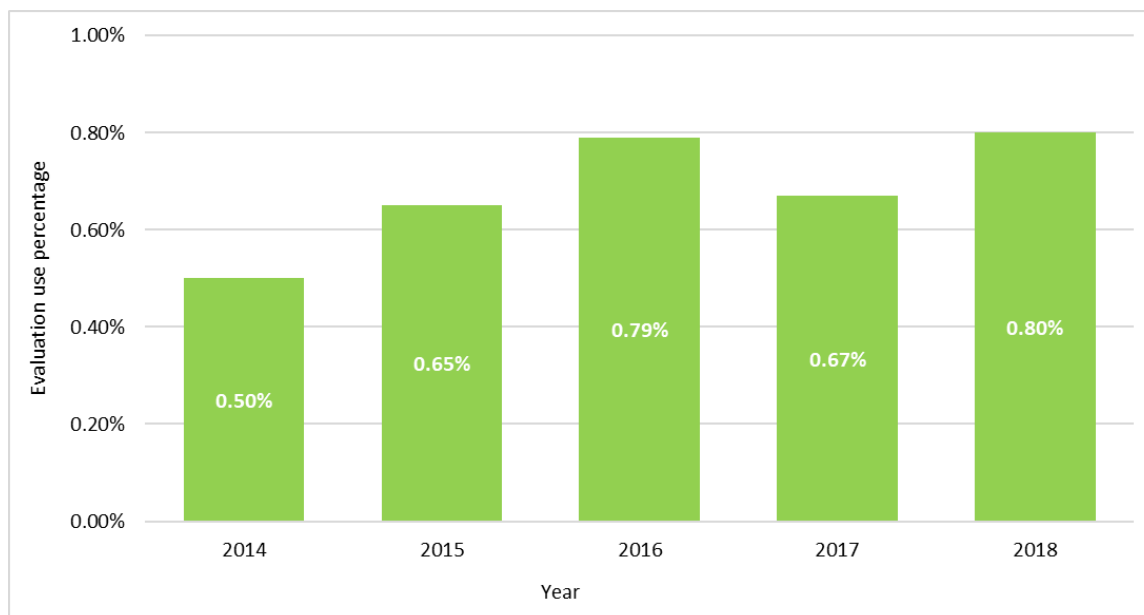
### **Financial resources**

27. In 2018, an estimated \$49,999,400 was spent on evaluation, accounting for approximately 0.8 per cent of global programme expenditure. This represents an increase in absolute terms as well as in proportion to the total programme budget. The evaluation pooled fund contributed \$8,535,000 of this amount. Established in 2018, the pooled fund is designed to supplement spending by offices at all levels of the organization, with the goal of meeting the target set by the Executive Board in its

decision 2018/10 that evaluation account for 1 per cent of programme expenditure by the end of 2019.

Figure I

**Evaluation expenditure out of total programme expenditure, 2014–2018**



Source: inSight (UNICEF performance management system).

## **G. Partnerships and the promotion of evaluation coherence within the United Nations**

28. In line with the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR; General Assembly resolution [71/243](#)), as well as the Secretary-General's reform agenda on the repositioning of the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, UNICEF is committed to working together with other United Nations entities to advance joint and system-wide evaluations and to uphold the norms and standards of UNEG.

29. In this context, UNICEF worked with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to commence an evaluation of the Joint Programme on the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation and of the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage. Early findings, conclusions and recommendations of the two joint evaluations are already shaping the future of the programmes. Both evaluations are expected to be published by mid-2019.

30. In addition, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) commenced preparations for the joint evaluation of the common chapter of their strategic plans, 2018–2021. An initial approach for the operationalization of the common chapter and its evaluation was informally discussed by the Executive Boards of the four agencies in 2018. The purpose of the joint evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of the implementation of the common chapter with a view to providing an impartial update on the progress and results achieved, and to inform the development of the next strategic plans of the four agencies involved. The evaluation will follow a phased approach, with three outputs: a baseline study on evaluating the common chapter in 2019; a report assessing the

implementation of accelerator initiatives in 2020; and a final report on the evaluation of the common chapter in 2021.

31. Furthermore, in support of the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development, UNICEF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, commenced a joint evaluation synthesis related to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4.

32. UNICEF provided substantive support to several UNEG initiatives, including the partnership strategy and the midterm review of the UNEG strategic plan and the organization of the Evaluation Practice Exchange and roundtable on professionalization at UNEG Evaluation Week held in Rome in May 2018. In addition, UNICEF organized a side event with UNEG and UNDP at the high-level political forum in July 2018. The event was aimed at promoting a dialogue to address the embedding of evaluation in voluntary national reviews, building upon lessons from evaluations on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). UNICEF evaluation staff continue to be active in various UNEG working groups. Currently, UNICEF is the co-convenor of the ethics and humanitarian working groups.

33. UNICEF also joined efforts by UNEG to provide substantive input on enhancing system-wide evaluation in the funding compact, the management and accountability framework of the United Nations development system and the resident coordinator system and the new UNDAF guidance.

34. In the humanitarian sphere, UNICEF continued to support the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), which is particularly valuable for its link to decision-makers and its state-of-the-art innovations in the humanitarian field. The Evaluation Office regularly shares the latest ALNAP developments throughout the organization to promote learning.

35. UNICEF is also a member of the Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) steering group, which is composed of Directors of Evaluation from members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. In 2018, the IAHE steering group launched two inter-agency humanitarian evaluations, to which UNICEF is providing technical and financial support. The first will focus on the collective humanitarian response of the humanitarian country team to the recurring droughts in Ethiopia, while the second will evaluate efforts to empower women and girls in humanitarian action.

36. At the regional level, UNICEF worked with the African Union, Ethiopia, and the Economic Commission for Africa to organize a three-day multi-stakeholder forum on national evaluation capacity development in Africa. The forum was held in Addis Ababa from 10 to 12 December 2018. Representatives from Governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) as well as parliamentarians and UNICEF staff members discussed strategies to strengthen national evaluation capacities for the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. Representatives of 23 countries worked on a road map towards evidence-based voluntary national reviews and country-led evaluations.

37. Another example highlighting joint action with other agencies is from Eritrea. The Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework, 2013–2016 was implemented by the Government of Eritrea and nine resident United Nations entities, including the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP, UNFPA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization, with technical support from a number of non-resident agencies. In 2018, under the leadership of the Government of Eritrea and UNICEF, a joint evaluation of the

Cooperation Framework was conducted to: (a) identify what had worked, what had not and why; (b) verify results achieved; (c) assess the effectiveness of the strategies and interventions used; and (d) generate lessons and provide recommendations for improvements in the implementation of the next cooperation framework. UNICEF provided the funding and quality assurance for the joint evaluation, which was the first-ever evaluation of an UNDAF in Eritrea.

38. In the East Asia and the Pacific region (EAPR), the UNICEF Regional Office collaborated with the United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific to provide quality assurance for the inception report of a joint evaluation of the UNDAF for Timor-Leste. The joint evaluation will be completed in 2019 and is being supported financially by the EAPR Regional Office. In addition, as part of the UNDP-UNICEF joint initiative to review national evaluation capacity for evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals, four country case studies (Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand) were completed. New country case studies were also initiated in Mongolia and the Philippines.

39. In LACR, the UNICEF Regional Office joined an evaluation platform, led by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), in a project entitled FOCELAC, which is aimed at strengthening national evaluation capacities in the region. UNICEF will join efforts with the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy of Costa Rica and DEval to increase capacity in the evaluation of child-related areas as well as in the use of ethical standards with regard to evaluations involving children. In addition, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN-Women and WFP initiated discussions to develop a national evaluation capacity index, which will take stock of national capacity in the region and strengthen collaboration with Governments, academia and think tanks.

40. In the West and Central Africa region (WCAR), UNICEF organized the first-ever Evaluation Week for Lusophone countries in the region. Held in Guinea-Bissau in October 2018, the event gathered government officials, development partners, CSOs, academia and professional evaluators. At the end of this well-attended event, participants signed a national declaration of intent on evaluation and committed to engaging further to enhance the quality of evaluations and evaluation capacity development programmes in the future. Building on the momentum of Agenda 2063 and the national evaluation capacity development forum in Addis Ababa, UNICEF collaborated with the Government of Nigeria to launch the first evaluation encompassing the Sustainable Development Goals in the global south (Nigeria).

### **III. Outputs from the UNICEF evaluation function in 2018**

41. This section analyses evaluation coverage, quality and knowledge management. It also contains an overview of UNICEF efforts to support national evaluation capacity development.

#### **A. Independent, credible and useful evaluations at the corporate, regional and country levels, delivered in line with coverage norms**

##### **Evaluation submission and coverage**

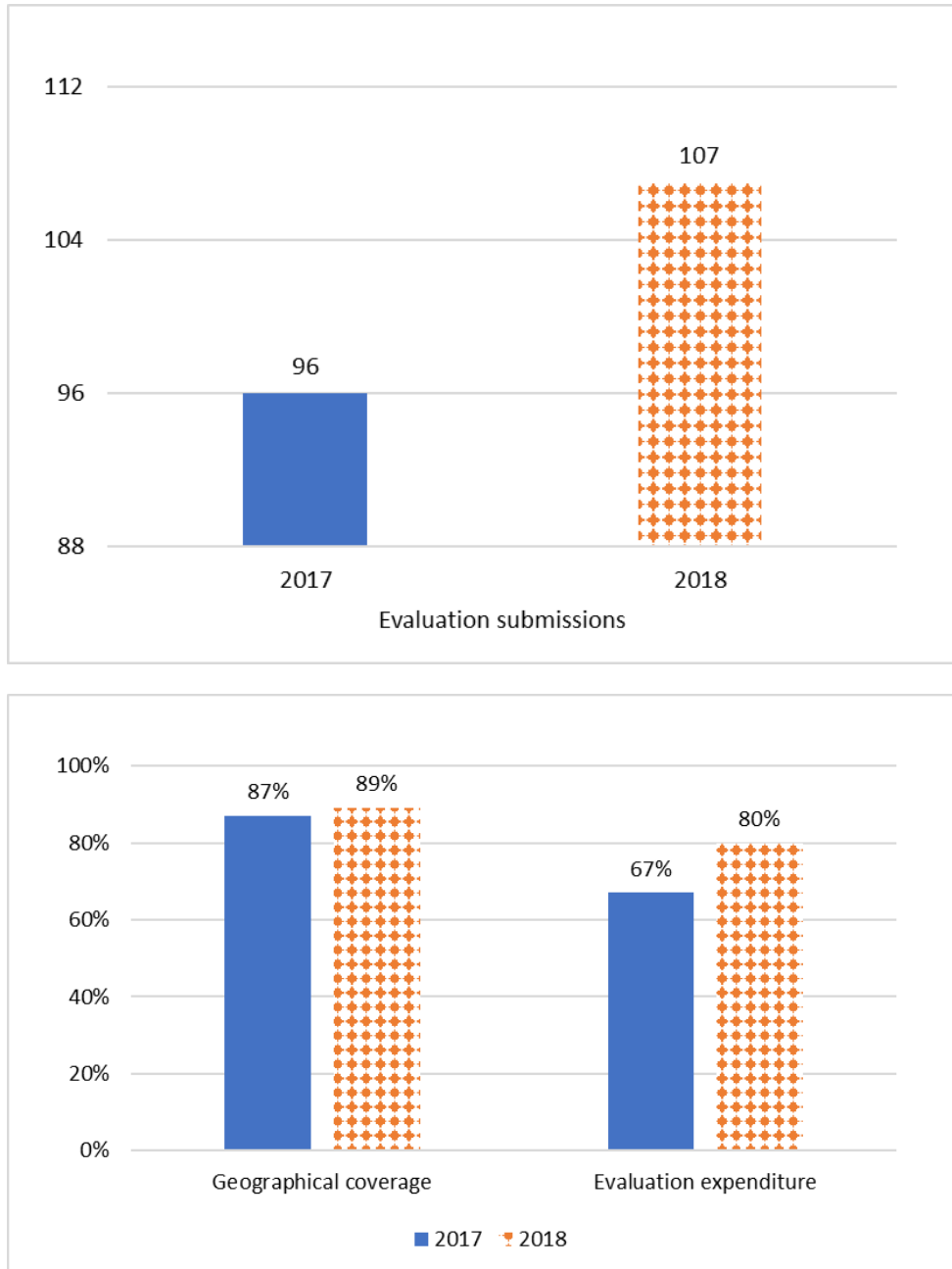
42. Adequate evaluation coverage is key to providing a representative, unbiased picture of UNICEF performance and ensuring that policies, strategies, programmes and advocacy are informed by relevant evidence. There was an overall increase in 2018 in both the number of evaluations submitted and the coverage of those evaluations, representing a positive trend. A total of 107 evaluation products,



including 104 evaluations and three reviews, was submitted to the evaluation and research database in 2018. This is the highest number since 2012 and represents a substantial increase from 88 evaluations and 8 reviews in 2017.

Figure II

**Evaluation submissions, geographical coverage and expenditure, 2017 and 2018**



Source: Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS).

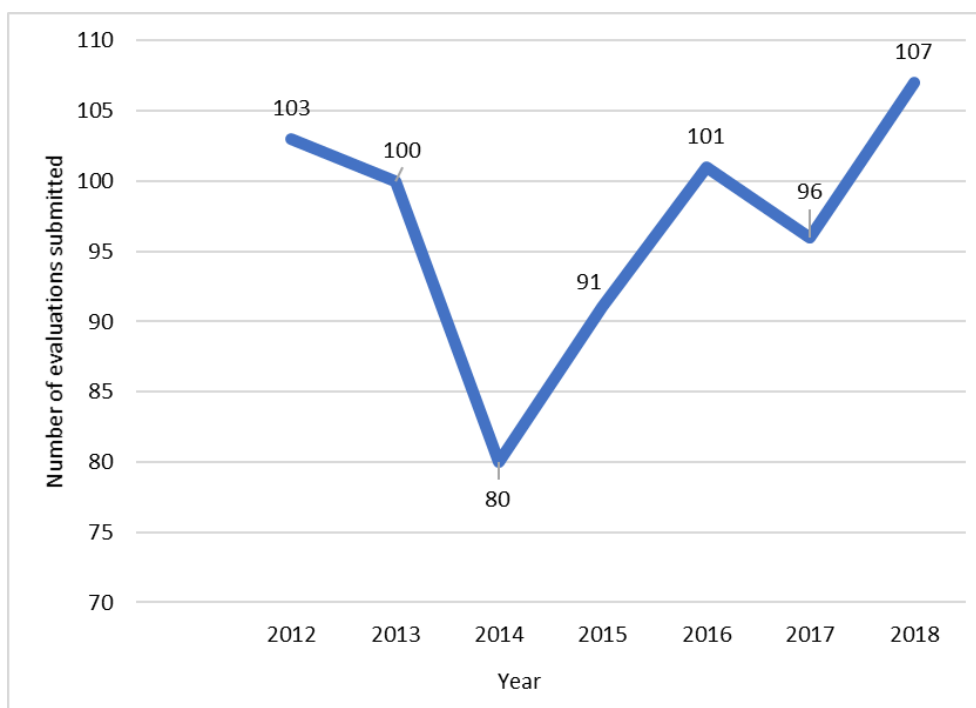
Table 1  
Regional evaluation submission rates, 2012–2018

Year	Region								Total
	EAPR	ECAR	ESAR	HQ	LACR	MENA	SA	WCAR	
2012	8	15	28	13	6	5	8	20	103
2013	8	13	19	6	15	8	4	27	100
2014	6	15	13	8	8	4	14	12	80
2015	14	14	17	4	7	8	12	15	91
2016	11	9	26	10	13	6	13	13	101
2017	8	16	15	13	13	7	7	17	96
2018	12	12	20	15	11	8	9	20	107

*Abbreviations:* East Asia and the Pacific (EAPR), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECAR), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAR), HQ (headquarters), Latin America and Caribbean (LACR), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), South Asia (ROSA) and West and Central Africa (WCAR).

*Source:* UNICEF Evaluation and Research Database.

Figure III  
Trends in evaluation submissions, 2012–2018



*Source:* UNICEF Evaluation and Research Database.

43. In terms of geographical coverage for the period 2016–2018, there was a slight increase in the number of offices that have conducted at least one evaluation in the past three years, with 120 offices (89 per cent) having done so. Fifteen offices (11 per cent) did not conduct an evaluation over that period (see figure IV). This represents a slight improvement over the 2015–2017 period, during which 118 offices (87 per cent) conducted at least one evaluation. Evaluation coverage has steadily improved since the period 2012–2014.

44. In addition to the evaluations at the country level noted above, three regional evaluations were conducted in ECAR, the Eastern and Southern Africa region (ESAR) and WCAR.

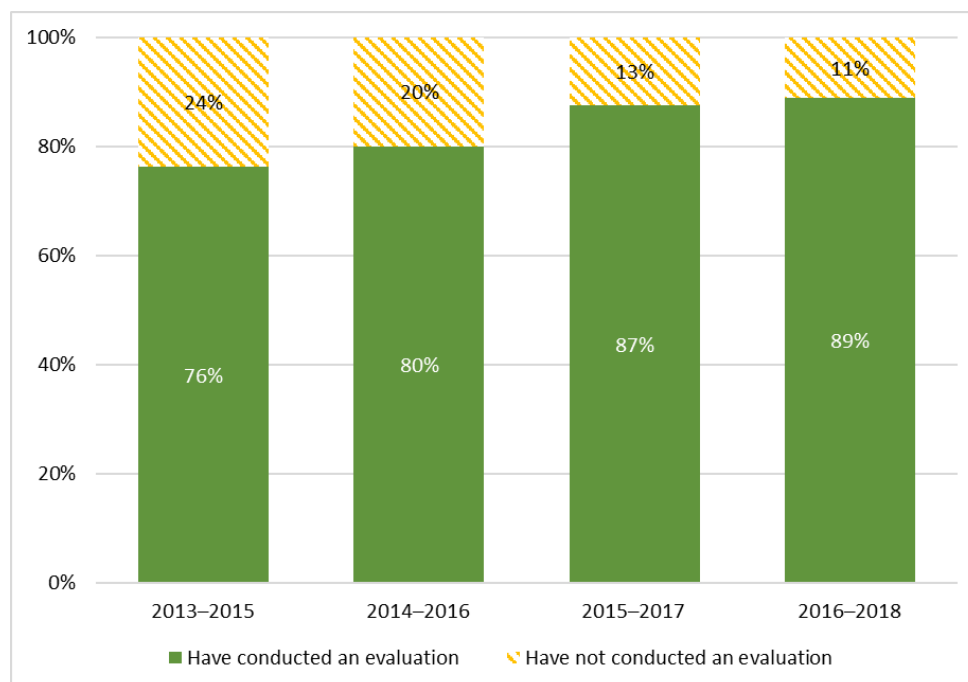
Table 2  
Geographical evaluation coverage rates, 2013–2018

Year	Evaluation coverage (percentage)							Total
	EAPR	ECAR	ESAR	LACR	MENA	ROSA	WCAR	
2013–2015	73	82	95	56	65	100	76	76
2014–2016	87	86	82	65	65	100	76	80
2015–2017	87	91	91	84	82	89	87	87
2016–2018	87	86	100	88	71	77	100	89

Abbreviations: East Asia and the Pacific (EAPR), Europe and Central Asia (ECAR), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAR), Latin America and Caribbean (LACR), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), South Asia (ROSA) and West and Central Africa (WCAR).

Source: UNICEF Evaluation and Research Database.

Figure IV  
Trends in geographical coverage of evaluations, 2013–2018, all regions

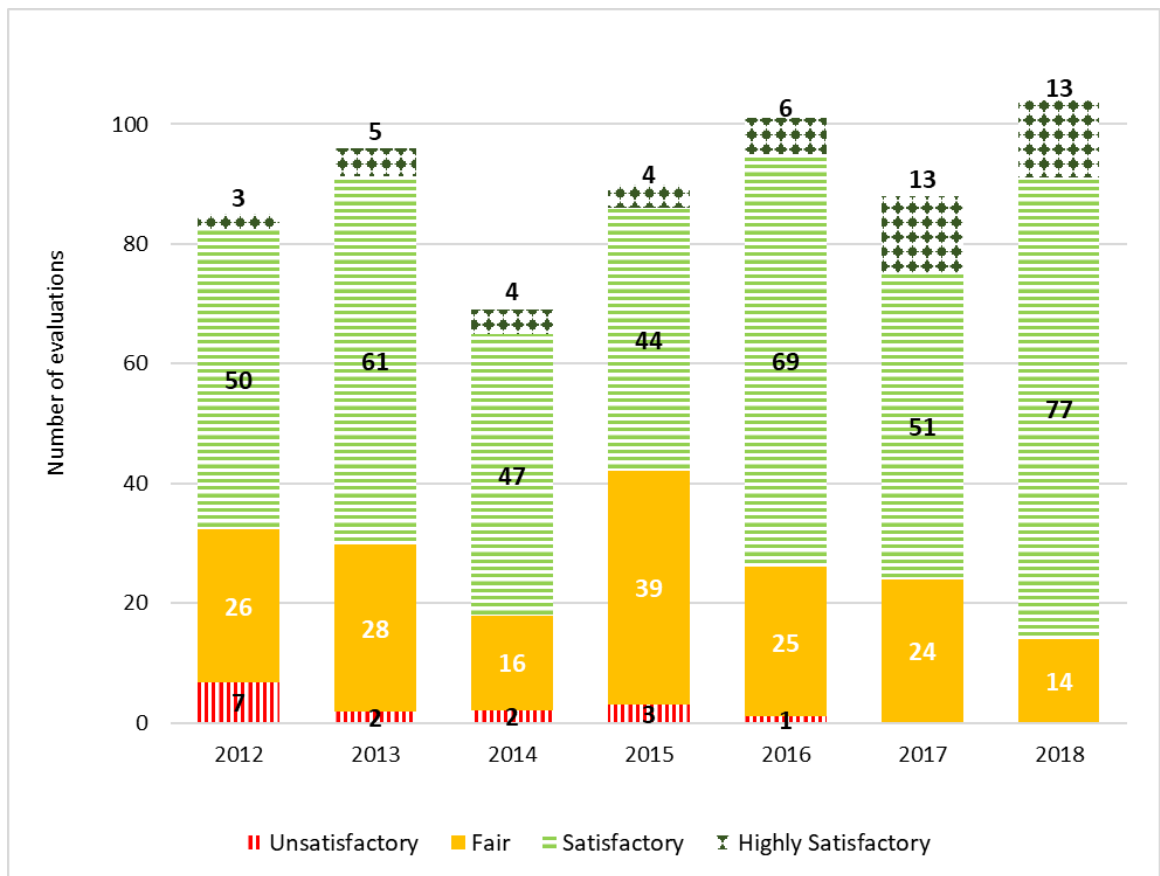


Source: UNICEF Evaluation and Research Database.

### Evaluation quality

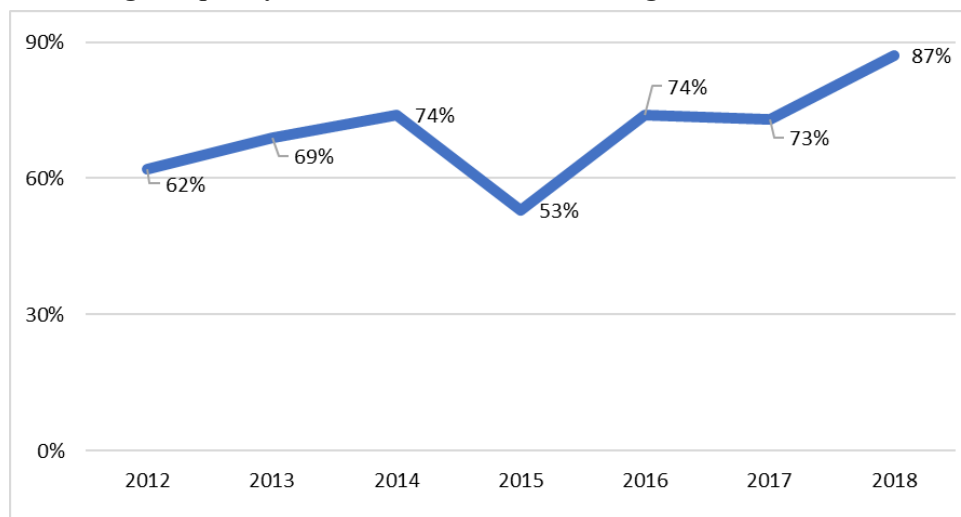
45. All 104 evaluations submitted in 2018 went through the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) quality assessment. Ninety evaluations (87 per cent) were rated as “good quality” i.e., rated “Satisfactory” or “Highly Satisfactory”. Compared with 2017, the percentage of good-quality evaluations increased from 72 per cent to 87 per cent. Fourteen evaluations (13 per cent) were rated “Fair”. No evaluations were rated “Unsatisfactory”.

Figure V  
**Evaluation quality by number of submissions, 2012–2018,<sup>1</sup> all regions**



Source: GEROS.

Figure VI  
**Trend in good-quality evaluations, 2012–2018, all regions**



Source: GEROS.

<sup>1</sup> Represents all evaluations that have been assessed by the UNICEF independent quality assurance system (Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System).

46. Evaluations were also assessed in terms of quality by type of evaluation. Forty-seven evaluations were at the impact level, 53 at the outcome level and 3 at the output level. One evaluation focused on a pilot programme.

Table 3  
**Evaluation focus and quality by type of evaluation, 2018 (number)**

	<i>Quality</i>			
	<i>Highly satisfactory</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
Impact	8	31	8	0
Outcome	5	43	5	0
Output	0	3	0	0
Pilot/innovation	0	0	1	0

Source: GEROS.

47. Evaluations covered all areas of the Strategic Plan. Most evaluations considered Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives, followed by Goal Areas 3, 2, 5 and 4. Significantly, 86 evaluations focused on cross-cutting themes, i.e., humanitarian (32) and gender equality (54). The complete sector breakdown is presented in table 4.

Table 4  
**2018 evaluation Goal Area distribution**

<i>Goal Area</i>	<i>Number of Evaluations</i>
<b>Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives</b>	
Health	64
HIV/AIDS	19
Nutrition	43
<b>Goal Area 2: Every child learns</b>	
Education	53
<b>Goal Area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation</b>	
Child protection	58
<b>Goal Area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment</b>	
Water, sanitation and hygiene	31
<b>Goal Area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life</b>	
Social inclusion	41
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	
Humanitarian	32
Gender equality	54

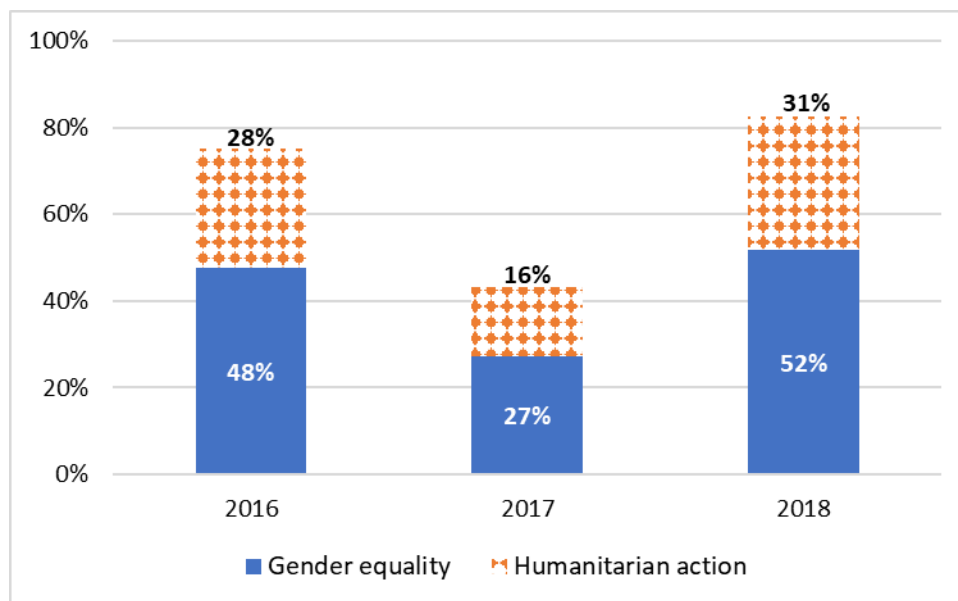
Source: GEROS.

### **United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**

48. With regard to performance under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the UNICEF aggregated

average score for 2017<sup>2</sup> was 6.15, which is classified as “approaching requirements”. This is the same score as for the 2015 and 2016 cycles. Evaluations in 2017 were slightly stronger than previously in integrating gender in evaluation questions and criteria as well as in gender analysis. Analysis on performance for 2018 under the Action Plan will be available in the second half of 2019. Nevertheless, GEROS data indicates an improvement in the number of evaluations that cover gender equality and humanitarian action.

Figure VII  
Evaluations covering cross-cutting priorities



Source: GEROS.

49. To further strengthen gender equality analysis in evaluations, the Evaluation Office is developing guidance on the subject and will follow up with training. In addition, UNICEF will also conduct an evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan.

## B. Knowledge management

50. Evaluations that are not used to inform programming represent a missed opportunity for learning and improving performance. Accordingly, UNICEF continues to invest in effective knowledge management.

51. To ensure that all UNICEF knowledge is available to all staff, anytime, an enterprise content management initiative is being implemented. This will centrally locate and curate evaluation knowledge for ease of access by the entire organization. The digital library will include evaluation content as well as tools, guidelines and other documents useful for UNICEF staff involved in planning and implementing evaluations at any level of the organization.

52. In 2018, six webinars were held in partnership with organizations such as Better Evaluation and EVALSDGs. A further 12 webinars were held on evaluation planning and management. Furthermore, the Evaluation Office organized a series of learning

<sup>2</sup> Due to different reporting cycles, UNICEF reported on performance under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the evaluation reports submitted in 2017.

events, with a view to sharing knowledge on some of the emerging approaches in evaluation.

53. Two issues of “Evaluation Insights”, a periodic paper summarizing the findings of UNICEF evaluations, were circulated to all staff in 2018. The themes covered were deepening cross-sectoral approaches to programming and unlocking opportunities for young people.

54. The Evaluation Office hosted its first Learning Day in 2018 to discuss emerging trends and knowledge on key evaluation topics and to share lessons learned and good practices among UNICEF and its partners. Speakers came from diverse backgrounds, including academia, multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, consulting firms and regional evaluation bodies. More than 120 participants attended, including representatives of Member States and sister agencies as well as UNICEF staff.

55. Finally, a global evaluation meeting was held from 14 to 16 November 2018, bringing together representatives of the evaluation function to develop an implementation plan for the evaluation policy and to deliberate on approaches to strengthen the capacity of the UNICEF evaluation function. Thematic sessions and clinics were also held to discuss strategies and shape guidance in the areas of CEPs, real-time evaluations, evaluability assessments and taxonomy.

56. In 2019, the Evaluation Office will intensify its approach to ensuring that evaluation evidence and knowledge are better absorbed by the organization.

### **C. National evaluation capacity development**

57. In line with the revised evaluation policy, the QCPR and General Assembly resolution [69/237](#) on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level, UNICEF continued to support national evaluation capacity development in 2018.

58. On the basis of a 2017 mapping exercise, the Evaluation Office embarked on multiple partnership initiatives to support countries to establish enabling environments for evaluation, and to enhance country capacity for evidence-based reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals. In Africa, in partnership with the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa, UNICEF organized training for all 19 countries slated to go through voluntary national reviews for reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals in 2019.

59. UNICEF continued to engage in various inter-agency and global partnerships on national evaluation capacity development. Since 2015, UNICEF has co-chaired the EVALSDGs global network, which aims to promote evaluation activities around the Sustainable Development Goals, including review and follow-up processes. UNICEF is also an active member of the EvalPartners management group and of the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation. In September 2018, UNICEF co-organized, together with the Forum, the first-ever global parliamentarians evaluation event, EvalColombo2018 – Responsible Parliaments: Embracing evaluation for the 2030 Agenda, hosted by the Parliament of Sri Lanka. The event successfully concluded with the endorsement of the Colombo Declaration, through which parliamentarians, CSOs, United Nations entities, bilateral partners, multilateral organizations and government representatives renewed their commitment to more-effective national evaluation capacity development for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## IV. Outcomes from the UNICEF evaluation function in 2018

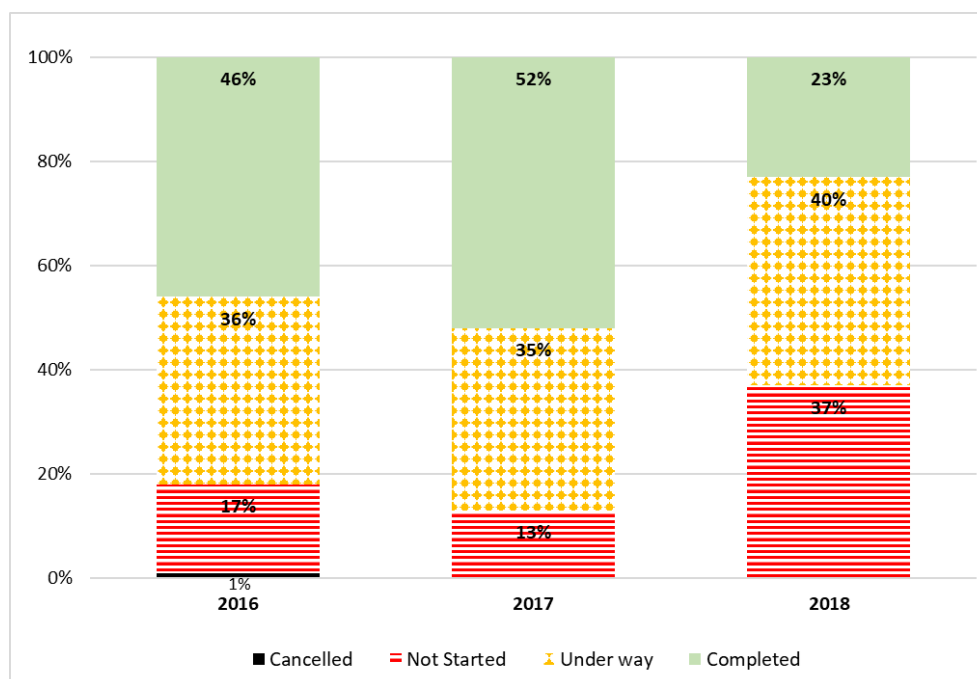
60. The outputs above support the delivery of the outcomes specified in the theory of change of the evaluation function, namely: the use of evaluation evidence for learning, decision-making and accountability; guiding the effective design and implementation of programmes in UNICEF; and supporting decision-making by partners for improved child well-being. This includes the preparation and implementation of management response actions emerging from evaluations; the public disclosure of evaluations; and deliberate strategies to promote the use of evaluations.

### A. Management responses

61. Each year, the Evaluation Office reports on management responses submitted in the previous year. Management responses have been submitted for 100 per cent of evaluations conducted in 2017. To date, 52 per cent of management response actions have been completed, 35 per cent are under way and 13 per cent have not yet been initiated after a 12-month period. Overall, there is a slight improvement in the implementation of management response actions compared with the previous year, in which 46 per cent of actions had been completed and 36 per cent were under way by the time of reporting. Complete data on the submission and implementation of management responses for all evaluations in 2018 will be available in the second half of 2019.

Figure VIII

#### Implementation of management response actions, 2016–2017



Source: Evaluation Management Response Tracking System.

62. As shown in table 5, over half of management responses have been completed in LACR, EAPR, ESAR, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and ECAR, while concerted effort is needed to improve their implementation in WCAR, the South Asia region (ROSA) and headquarters.



Table 5  
Implementation of 2017 management response actions

Region	2017			
	Management Actions Committed	Percentage		
		Completed	Under way	Not Started
EAPR	125	66	31	2
ECAR	152	55	32	14
ESAR	209	62	26	12
HQ	136	28	62	10
LACR	100	68	24	8
MENA	101	57	37	6
ROSA	69	29	41	30
WCAR	138	43	34	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>13</b>

*Abbreviations:* East Asia and the Pacific (EAPR), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECAR), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAR), HQ (headquarters), Latin America and Caribbean (LACR), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), South Asia (ROSA) and West and Central Africa (WCAR).

*Source:* Evaluation Management Response Tracking System.

## B. Use of evaluation evidence

63. For evaluations to be useful, they must inform change at some level. The Evaluation Office undertook a study on evaluation influence in the organization to better understand the extent to which UNICEF evaluations are informing change and identify the factors contributing to the use of evaluations. The findings showed that evaluations reviewed as part of the study are indeed contributing to change.

64. In some cases, evaluations provided independent confirmation of programme effectiveness. For example, in Nigeria and Togo, evaluations of UNICEF cash transfer programmes led to support to scale up the approach. Others contributed to conceptual shifts in how problems are understood and addressed, e.g., impact evaluations of school-based WASH programmes in Laos and Mali challenged the common wisdom that improving WASH in schools reduces absenteeism. Another type of learning identified was capacity-building for evaluation and results-based management.

65. Evaluations helped to shape national partnerships and agendas. In Guatemala, an evaluation of the national strategy on the protection of the human rights of girls led to expanded partnerships with non-governmental organizations. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the evaluation of the Justice for Every Child Project led to the scaling-up of legal reforms and services for children.

66. In many cases, influential evaluations focused on pilot projects. For example, in Argentina, a pilot evaluation demonstrated that information and communications technology could be used to improve access to education for adolescents in rural areas; this finding led to a shift in national education policy. Formative evaluations, meanwhile, have been instrumental in giving coherence to fragmented interventions. In Myanmar, an evaluation of child protection systems strengthening led to the development of a comprehensive policy framework, from national legislation through to guidelines for implementation.

67. Overall, evaluations that were strategic; designed for utilization; timely; and well-resourced; and had strong ownership by staff and partners, tended to be the most

influential. Underlying these factors was support from Government and senior management in UNICEF. The lessons learned from the study will shape future guidance on utilization-focused evaluation in UNICEF.

### **C. Public disclosure of evaluative products and management responses**

68. The Evaluation Office made all evaluations and management responses available to the Executive Board and the general public in 2018. Three evaluations/reviews, and accompanying management responses, were presented at informal consultations and sessions of the Executive Board. These included:

(a) Towards emergency responses: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016;

(b) Evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age;

(c) Evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 response to the cholera epidemic in Yemen: crisis within a crisis.

69. Progress information on the implementation of the management response actions accompanying these evaluations is available from [www.unicef.org/evaluation/index\\_103521.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/index_103521.html).

70. In addition, several corporate evaluative products were completed or initiated in 2018, in line with the plan for global evaluations. The full list appears in section V, and a summary of key corporate evaluations is presented immediately below.

### **D. Summary of corporate evaluations, evaluability assessments, syntheses and reviews completed in 2018**

71. The Evaluation Office undertook a corporate evaluation of innovation in UNICEF, examining the organization's ability to employ innovation as a key strategy and analysing the ways in which innovation contributes to UNICEF goals and objectives. Overall, the evaluation found that while UNICEF has clearly signalled its strategic intent with regard to innovation, implementation was falling short. A number of barriers to innovation were noted, among which risk aversion was particularly salient. The organization has also been unclear about the staffing model it is pursuing with regard to innovation capacity, and the evaluation noted contrasting opinions as to the optimal balance between focusing on tested technologies versus those at early stages. Recommendations were clustered in three main areas: (a) develop a shared strategic vision and approach; (b) enact necessary structural changes to advance innovation as a means of achieving results for children; and (c) utilize a portfolio management approach to ensure the alignment of resources with priorities and comparative advantages.

72. An evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 response to the cholera epidemic in Yemen was finalized, and its findings, conclusions and recommendations were used to strengthen the organization's efforts to prevent and respond to acute watery diarrhoea and cholera. For example, the evaluation recommended that an oral cholera vaccine be ordered on a no-regrets basis; accordingly, UNICEF partnered with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance to procure 4.6 million doses of oral cholera vaccine for 10 districts. UNICEF has also strengthened its monitoring and quality control, epidemiological capacity and cholera preparedness.

73. A formative evaluation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) was undertaken to analyse the progress that Governments have made to reduce the number of children who are out-of-school, and to verify the contribution of UNICEF and partners. The evaluation concluded that OOSCI has helped to shape national priorities

and formulate robust sector plans. However, OOSCI was less effective in helping to translate strategies into concrete practice, and resources and political commitments were insufficient to address the main challenges. The evaluation recommended a revision of the theory of change and methodological framework of OOSCI to encompass the entire basic education cycle (pre-primary to upper-secondary) and include key vulnerable groups. It also recommended greater support to implementation and monitoring arrangements.

74. The Evaluation Office oversaw an independent review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. The review provided recommendations on strengthening management accountability; engaging with communities; prevention; the establishment and strengthening of reporting mechanisms and investigation processes; and the provision of support to survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse. The implementation of these recommendations will allow UNICEF and partners to strengthen their capacity to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.

75. The Evaluation Office also oversaw an evaluation of the organization's drinking water supply programming in rural areas and small towns, 2006–2016, which was aimed at helping to determine how UNICEF could optimize its contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 6. The evaluation concluded that UNICEF had made significant contributions to rural water supply. However, UNICEF only partially delivered on its rural water supply commitments, and it lacked a holistic and systematic approach. Persistent weaknesses in monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management remain. The evaluation recommended the development of programme guidance on rural water supply as well as improved programme planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems. Increased support and quality control from regional offices were also recommended.

76. A synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016, was conducted, resulting in several recommendations. It highlighted that the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action are not fully fit-for-purpose to guide UNICEF action across the diversity of humanitarian situations. UNICEF is currently reviewing and updating the Core Commitments accordingly. UNICEF is also working to reinforce the implementation of its simplified procedures to ensure faster, more-effective delivery at-scale. The analysis detailed measures designed to enhance the use of evaluations in humanitarian action, such as the need to define clearer triggers for humanitarian evaluations, which have now been incorporated into the revised evaluation policy.

77. A review of the UNICEF response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh was undertaken. Overall, the evaluation noted a range of impressive achievements in such areas as scaling-up, advocacy, sector leadership and service delivery. It identified several areas in need of improvement, including analysis and planning, coordination, protection and advocacy. The evaluation recommended that UNICEF (a) invest in better analysis to inform preparedness; (b) clarify lines of accountability with partners; (c) review its guidance on advocacy in emergencies; and (d) strengthen efforts to address protection risks, including gender-based violence, and ensure the mainstreaming of gender in all aspects of the response.

78. An evaluation of the UNICEF girls' education portfolio, 2009–2015, assessed the effectiveness of UNICEF programmes and interventions, including their contribution towards gender parity and achieving international education goals. Among the conclusions, the evaluation found that girls' education and gender equality programming were often a not a major part of an overall education programme, and targeted interventions on a scale too small to make a lasting difference. Relatedly, while UNICEF interventions were gender-sensitive, country offices did not

systematically employ gender mainstreaming as a strategy. The report recommended strengthened support to country offices in gender mainstreaming and that UNICEF agree on further targets and approaches to advance girls' education and gender equality in education, including measurable results in CPDs.

79. A formative evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programme performance in strengthening child protection systems was finalized in 2018. The evaluation found an overall lack of conceptual clarity around child protection systems strengthening in UNICEF. Staff lacked guidance on operationalizing the approach, and investments in staff capacities have been inadequate. While UNICEF has successfully advanced the child protection system agenda, many national partners have not invested adequately, and some donors continue to distribute funding on an issue-specific basis using parallel systems. Programme performance in child protection systems strengthening was uneven, with stark gaps in low-income, fragile and humanitarian contexts. Nevertheless, the evaluation identified some interventions that were particularly effective for strengthening child protection systems, including capacity-building; leveraging public resources, evidence and research; and policy advocacy. The evaluation recommended that UNICEF further refine its role in child protection systems strengthening and ensure that this approach is reflected in organizational strategies, policies and plans as well as financial and results tracking systems. It also recommended the further strengthening of staff and partner capacities.

#### **E. Examples of notable evaluations undertaken by country offices**

80. In Cambodia, UNICEF and the Government conducted an outcome evaluation of the Education Capacity Development Partnership Fund. The evaluation found that the fund was well aligned with relevant strategies and had achieved significant outcomes for capacity development, especially at the individual and institutional levels. Less change could be observed at the subnational level, where persistent capacity constraints remained. There was room for improvement in terms of efficiency and sustainability, and in fully integrating equity and gender equality. The findings will inform the development of the Education Capacity Development Partnership Fund Phase III, 2018–2021.

81. In India, UNICEF commissioned an evaluation of its community-based disaster risk reduction and school safety programme in Bihar. The evaluation found that the programme had provided an effective platform for vulnerable communities to engage with Government and other partners on disaster risk. It was also effective in increasing preparedness for disasters among children and women. However, there was further scope for the involvement of women in disaster risk reduction planning. The evaluation recommended that the programme be expanded to other villages and suggested strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders. It also recommended that young people be trained and deployed as disaster risk reduction sentinels.

82. UNICEF Kazakhstan conducted an evaluation of its pilot programme in adolescent mental health and suicide prevention. The evaluation found that the adolescent suicide prevention programme had strengthened the capacity of adolescents to cope with mental health problems and of the health and education sectors to address mental health needs. The evaluation made recommendations around capacity-building and enhanced training designed to improve referral pathways and treatment options. It also recommended further research on the gender-based norms that affect self-directed violence. It was proposed that UNICEF shift from implementer to lead technical assistance provider. These recommendations will inform the future development of the programme, which is currently being rolled out at the national level.

83. UNICEF Haiti conducted an evaluation of its response to Hurricane Matthew. The evaluation found that, overall, the response was rapid, appropriate and effective, but that there were some bottlenecks and areas in need of improvement. During the first weeks, geographical coverage was insufficient, and the initial estimate of needs was not always realistic. Among the constraints, the evaluation highlighted the lack of multi-year funding, as well as the reluctance of donors to fund preparedness and the rehabilitation of key infrastructure. Engagement with affected communities needed improvement. In addition, the evaluation noted a lack of explicit planning for the transition phase. The most urgent recommendations include the need to strengthen standby partnership arrangements, and to develop a resourcing strategy for preparedness and disaster risk reduction.

84. UNICEF Zimbabwe conducted a summative evaluation of its support for education, as provided through the Education Development Fund from 2012 to 2015 and the Global Partnership for Education fund from 2014 to 2016. The evaluation concluded that, despite a challenging context, the funds achieved remarkable success in delivering the expected outputs and were relevant to the needs of the sector. At the same time, the evaluation found a misalignment between the ambitions of the programmes and the realities of a deteriorating situation. The report suggested that UNICEF could have been better supported by development partners during difficult moments. While both programmes were found to have been effective in promoting gender equality, the gains made on geographical disparities were less clear. The evaluation made several recommendations, including: (a) ensure that development partners play a more strategic role; and (b) ensure that equity is central to the school financing policy.

## V. Programme of work for 2018 and 2019

Table 6  
Programme of work

<i>Initiated before 2018 and completed in 2018</i>	<i>Initiated and completed in 2018</i>	<i>Initiated in 2018 will be complete in 2019</i>	<i>Initiated in 2019</i>	<i>Comments</i>
				Completed and presented at the informal briefing of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards in January 2018
				Completed and presented to the Executive Board at its 2018 annual session
				Completed
				Completed and presented to the Executive Board at its 2018 first regular session
				Completed
				Completed
				Completed
				Completed and presented to the Executive Board at its 2018 second regular session

<i>Initiated before 2018 and completed in 2018</i>	<i>Initiated and completed in 2018</i>	<i>Initiated in 2018 will be complete in 2019</i>	<i>Initiated in 2019</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Evaluation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative				Completed and presented to the Executive Board at its 2019 first regular session
	Evaluation of the UNICEF L3 response to the Rohingya Bangladesh refugee crisis			Completed
Evaluation of UNICEF drinking water supply programming in rural areas and small towns (2006–2016)				Completed
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to health systems strengthening				Completed
Strengthening child protection systems: evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programme performance				Completed
	Independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse			Completed and presented to the Executive Board at its 2019 first regular session
	Strategic review of the UNICEF research architecture: supporting the generation and use of knowledge			Completed
		Evaluability assessment of child protection in conflict situations		Under way
		Independent midterm review (2019) of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage		Under way
		Evaluation of the UNICEF-UNFPA joint programme on female genital mutilation/cutting		Under way

<i>Initiated before 2018 and completed in 2018</i>	<i>Initiated and completed in 2018</i>	<i>Initiated in 2018 will be complete in 2019</i>	<i>Initiated in 2019</i>	<i>Comments</i>
			Evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan	Under way
			Evaluability assessment of UNICEF work on children in cities	Under way
		Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies		Completed and to be presented to the Executive Board at its 2019 annual session
			Evaluation synthesis on actions towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (jointly with UNESCO)	Under way
		Evaluability assessment of adolescent participation and empowerment		Under way
		Evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 response to the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo		Under way
		Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the drought response in Ethiopia (contributor)		Under way
			Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on “Empower Women and Girls” (contributor)	Under way
		Evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 response to the crisis in South Sudan		Under way

<sup>a</sup> The six agencies are the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Bank, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).



## VI. Conclusion

85. Several important lessons are already emerging in the first year of implementation of the revised evaluation policy and the plan for global evaluations. First, in an era of reform, the UNICEF evaluation function should continue to support more joint evaluations and more country-led evaluations in support of the 2030 Agenda. Linked to this, enhancing the evaluation capacity of UNICEF staff to contribute to these processes is vital. The ongoing UNICEF evaluation capacity enhancement initiative with the United Nations System Staff College will help strengthen the skills of staff to provide high-quality support to country-led evaluations. Finally, there is also a need for improvements in the timeliness of evaluations if they are to be used optimally. In this regard, new guidance, especially for rapid and timely humanitarian evaluations, will help to expedite the conduct of such evaluations so that the findings and recommendations are utilized when needed most for decision-making. These lessons are already informing the implementation of the revised policy.

86. As this report has shown, systematic attention to the drivers identified in the theory of change of the evaluation function has begun to show results. Both the quantity and quality of evaluations have improved. A greater emphasis on evaluations at the outcome level as well as on joint evaluations as called for in the Secretary-General's reform agenda, show that UNICEF is engaging partners more systematically across a growing number of countries in strategic evaluations that generate evidence on what works and what does not to achieve results for children. Evaluations from all levels of the organization are publicly disclosed and management responses have been submitted for 100 per cent of the evaluations conducted in the previous year. Support for national evaluation capacity development is being expanded and the utilization of evaluation evidence is being prioritized.

87. The coming year will be one of preserving this momentum while consolidating the gains achieved in 2018. UNICEF will continue to strengthen the evaluation function to ensure that the organization has the evidence necessary to learn, adapt, improve and be held accountable, with the ultimate aim of maximizing the UNICEF contribution to the 2030 Agenda and the promise to leave no child behind.

## VII. Draft decision

### *The Executive Board*

*Takes note* of the following documents presented to the Executive Board at its annual session of 2019:

1. Annual report for 2018 on the evaluation function in UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2019/14](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2019/15](#));
2. Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies, its executive summary ([E/ICEF/2019/16](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2019/17](#)).

# Annex

## Theory of change for the evaluation function

