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Update on UNICEF humanitarian action with a focus on linking humanitarian and development programming

I. Introduction

1. UNICEF humanitarian programmes address the urgent needs of children affected by crises in the short- and medium-term, while its development programmes contribute to reducing their needs, vulnerabilities and risks in a sustainable and longer term manner. Both therefore contribute to delivering the Sustainable Development Goals for the world’s most disadvantaged children. In light of recently reaffirmed international commitments to improve aid effectiveness and efficiency, UNICEF is strengthening and systematizing its approaches to better link humanitarian and development programming.

2. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ongoing reforms of the United Nations recognize the positive role sustainable development can play in mitigating the drivers of conflicts, humanitarian crises and complex emergencies, and in building preparedness for future crises. That positive role was also underscored at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan, where participants adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 to better integrate disaster risk reduction into development programming.

3. In 2016, further commitments were made to address growing humanitarian needs by promoting new ways of working that strengthen the linkage between humanitarian and development aid, prioritizing the needs and vulnerabilities of those who have been left furthest behind by development progress, including disadvantaged children and young people. While contributing to collective outcomes, humanitarian action remains guided by humanitarian principles and focused on its objectives of saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity during and in the aftermath of crises.

4. Concurrently, the prevention agenda advanced by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres calls for all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to strengthen humanitarian and development linkages as a means of

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reducing long-term risks, preventing future crises and building more resilient societies.

5. This paper presents an update on UNICEF implementation of the main strategies to further strengthen the link between humanitarian and development programming in response to the above commitments.

II. The approach of UNICEF to linking humanitarian and development programming

UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

6. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 includes the organization’s clearest commitment and institutional accountability framework to date for strengthening the linkages between its humanitarian and development mandates. UNICEF developed specific change strategies and a set of targets to track results, which are in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, United Nations development system reforms and the United Nations prevention agenda. They are also grounded in the mandate of UNICEF pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its full respect of and commitment to international human rights and humanitarian law, and humanitarian principles.

7. The Strategic Plan highlights key humanitarian results under each of its five Goal Areas and identifies critical opportunities for strengthening the linkages between humanitarian and development programming. The Strategic Plan seeks to improve the contribution of UNICEF to collective outcomes which are responsive to the needs of children and reduce their vulnerability and risks over time. UNICEF programmes will foster the coherence and complementarity between humanitarian and development actions to strengthen systems that deliver essential services to the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. UNICEF-supported programmes should reach those populations first, so that no one is left behind. UNICEF country programmes should also be designed to strengthen policies and programmes related to climate change, disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding, with the aim to mitigate risks and build resilience for children and their communities.

8. UNICEF has, in some situations and countries, established strong linkages between humanitarian and development programming and supported countries to strengthen capacities and systems when preparing and responding to emergencies and, conversely, to mitigate risk and build resilience when engaged in longer term socio-economic development. The strategic approach of UNICEF follows four main elements of risk-informed programming, which are increasingly being adopted by Governments and across the United Nations system as an approach to building and achieving collective outcomes in fragile and crisis-affected contexts:

(a) Responding to emergencies in a way that strengthens capacities and existing systems;

(b) Implementing development programmes based on a common risk assessment that builds resilience and reduces risk for communities by strengthening social service systems most subject to shocks and stresses (conflict, disasters, climate change and other human-caused emergencies);

(c) Being well prepared for residual risks with contingency plans, prepositioned supplies, hiring of responders etc.;
(d) Convergence of different sectoral programmes in geographical areas for populations of greatest vulnerability and lowest capacity.

9. UNICEF has its origins in emergency response for children, and its country programme approach and presence in 137 countries before, during and after emergencies. It has been linking humanitarian and development approaches for many years although it needs to do so more systematically. UNICEF has recently conducted several internal reviews that have led to developing new and updated tools for risk-informed programming, preparedness and working in fragile and crisis-affected contexts, all of which focus on reaching the furthest left behind and building resilience. It has also developed an executive directive to systematically link humanitarian and development in different contexts building on good practices already implemented. UNICEF will continue to explore new partnerships opportunities, including public-private partnerships, to invest in solutions and innovative financing that provide more predictable and sustainable services to children and their communities in humanitarian and fragile contexts. An example of investment in public-private partnerships is the provision of a sustained access to safe water through the drilling of climate resilient boreholes by a private water company and local authorities.

10. In 2017, of the 61 countries that had Humanitarian Action for Children appeals, 58 reported employing programming strategies that aimed to meet immediate humanitarian needs while contributing to longer term development outcomes; of these just under half are employing such strategies across multiple sectors (three or more). In 36 countries, UNICEF is establishing or rehabilitating water systems as part of its humanitarian response; in 25 countries, UNICEF engages with local communities, networks and authorities to strengthen mechanisms for prevention and response to cases of violence, exploitation and abuse of children; and in 19 countries, UNICEF is strengthening health systems through improved infrastructure and capacity-building of government health workers.

III. Key programme and operational strategies

A. Strengthening systems and localizing humanitarian and development programming

11. UNICEF implements its programmes within a broader development and humanitarian agenda and promotes a coherent and coordinated approach of the whole United Nations system response, in support of national development goals and emergency preparedness and response. For example, UNICEF supports the decentralization and strengthening of primary health care systems in areas most susceptible to natural disaster and conflict (e.g. Ethiopia and India); strengthens school buildings and other infrastructure from hazards such as flood (e.g. Bangladesh), hurricane (e.g. the Philippines) or earthquake (e.g. Chile) as determined by risk assessments. In emergencies, UNICEF establishes water and sanitation infrastructure as soon as possible and keeps water trucking and desludging to a minimum (e.g. Za’atari refugee camp in Jordan; Pugnido refugee camp in Gambella, Ethiopia).

12. The extent to which Governments take leadership in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable is key to linking humanitarian and development actions. The example of Lebanon illustrates how. Lebanon hosts the highest concentration of refugees per capita globally; currently, one in four people in Lebanon is a refugee. Among the 1 million Syrian refugees, more than half are of school-age (between 3 and 18 years of
In need of basic services, including education. In response, the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) rolled out a comprehensive response plan that bridges emergency interventions with longer term development perspectives. The Reaching All Children with Education (RACE II) five-year plan defines multiple programmes to improve vulnerable (Lebanese and refugee) children’s access to quality and inclusive formal and non-formal education. RACE II also draws on the opportunity of humanitarian funding to improve the quality and resilience of the overburdened public education system. As a key technical and operational actor of RACE II, UNICEF has accompanied the MEHE, its institutions, and the education sector in designing and implementing key interventions. As a result of this strong partnership, the MEHE and UNICEF have successfully supported more than half a million children (200,000 Lebanese and 300,000 refugee children) in accessing formal and non-formal education opportunities. This MEHE-UNICEF partnership has resulted in improved child-centred teaching practices in public schools, in the development of the first child protection in schools policy in Lebanon (in response to the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommendations), and the opening of the country’s first set of inclusive schools. MEHE’s other key technical partners (the World Bank, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) have also furthered the humanitarian-development agenda by investing in curricula reform, data management systems and community-resilience initiatives.

13. In 2016, UNICEF committed to allocating at least 30 per cent of humanitarian funding to local and national actors. In 2017, UNICEF met this target, with transfers to local and national responders accounting for 31 per cent of humanitarian expenditure. However, it is premature to demonstrate the contribution of such a strategy to sustainable solutions. Further efforts are needed to increase and support (multi-year) investments in the institutional capacities of local and national responders, including preparedness, response and coordination. There is a need to adopt a more systematic approach to localization to maximize its impact.

14. UNICEF will continue to increase its support for existing systems and for decentralizing services, information systems and supply-chain management. The decentralization of humanitarian and development programmes will channel more aid through local organizations and local governments. It will also mean building the capacity of community-based service providers, first responders and civil society, and better equipping them to scale up life-saving and protection services when necessary.

15. As an example of the commitment of UNICEF to partnering with national organizations, the South Sudan country programme transferred $55 million to 149 civil society implementing partners in 2017 (two thirds of which are local or national partners). UNICEF South Sudan also focused on increasing the number of partnerships with local civil society organizations in 2017 to reach children in previously hard-to-reach areas and build civil society capacity to deliver essential community-level services.

16. Some of the main challenges to the localization of aid are related to the limited involvement of local organizations in aid coordination mechanisms and systemic institutional building. This is a bigger barrier for institutions and local organizations of vulnerable and marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities and displaced populations. Reports also point to the unpredictability of multi-year financing, limited unearmarked funding to local humanitarian organizations and their low access
Another set of challenges to localization, in particular in high-risk and complex emergencies, may be related to the robustness of the local entities’ financial systems and due diligence processes. Furthermore, when the number of local partners who can deliver a specialized service in a particular area is scarce, there is a risk of overburdening them, and their management and operational systems may not be fit to absorb the demand or cope with the risks transferred to them. More systematic and adequate measures are critical to invest in strengthening local partners’ institutional capacities and to mitigate those risks.

B. Risk-informed programming

17. UNICEF recognizes that the suffering, losses and damage related to violent conflict, disasters, the compounding effects of climate change, epidemics and economic shocks, can be greatly reduced. To this end UNICEF is working with its partners in more than 40 countries on risk-informed programming which helps to prevent, mitigate and prepare for crisis. Risk-informed programming is defined as strengthening resilience to shocks and stresses by identifying and addressing the root causes and drivers of risk, including vulnerabilities, lack of capacity and exposure to various shocks and stresses.

18. At the heart of risk-informed programming is a multi-hazard risk analysis carried out jointly with partners. The risk analysis informs humanitarian and development strategies including preparedness, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and peacebuilding, that aim to protect children and to build more resilient service delivery systems, national and local governments and communities. When risk-informed programming is built into humanitarian response plans, it contributes to addressing underlying risk factors, promotes a do-no-harm approach, strengthens short-term preparedness and can bolster existing service delivery systems.

19. UNICEF experience in risk-informed programming includes investing in child and community-led risk assessment (e.g. Nepal); the formation of water committees in conflict affected communities to address social cohesion (e.g. Somalia); investment in safe school structures and school preparedness plans to adapt to climate change (e.g. Madagascar); and consultation with children and adolescents to inform the humanitarian response and post-disaster needs assessment (e.g. the Philippines).

20. In India, collaboration between the Government and UNICEF has taken risk-informed programming to scale. Following devastating floods in Bihar in 2008, UNICEF supported the state Government to establish a strategy to reduce disaster and climate risk (the Sendai Roadmap), a school safety programme as well as a community-based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR) initiative. The CBDRR initiative, which focused on reducing the underlying vulnerabilities to flood and drought directly related to child protection, education, nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), has reached more than 1,130 villages in six districts. For example, in flood prone villages, community accredited social health activists provided education on the protection of water sources and kept records of pregnant women. Moreover, adolescents sensitized in school safety programmes learned how to interpret early warning signs, how to take shelter and warn the community. While the CBDRR initiative is being credited as one reason for no loss of life in six districts during the 2017 floods, UNICEF has since worked with the Government of India to

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scale up the approach by supporting multi-hazard child-centred risk assessments in eight states.

21. In Burundi, communities had been experiencing an increasing number of small cholera outbreaks, particularly after the crisis in 2015. In response, in 2016, UNICEF supported the Government of Burundi with WASH preparedness and response activities to strengthen the Ministry of Hydraulics, Energy and Mines and the Ministry of Public Health and the Fight against AIDS and their partners’ capacities to prevent and respond to these outbreaks, including through increased surveillance, prepositioning of stocks, community-based training of key actors and coordination mechanisms at national and community levels. As a result, there have been no cases of cholera since October 2017 which is attributed, in part, to this type of programming around preparedness, response, prevention and strengthening government systems’ capability to respond.

22. In order to have a more coherent, consistent and predictable approach to risk-informed programming, UNICEF has developed guidance on risk-informed programming (GRIP) to support country offices, United Nations partners, Governments and civil society to conduct a child-sensitive risk analysis, and to make programme adjustments. The guidance has already been rolled out as part of results-based management (RBM) or as stand-alone in more than 15 countries.

23. In moving forward towards ensuring that all fragile and risk prone country programmes are risk-informed, some challenges have been identified. While the common challenge of staff and partners facing competing priorities has been mitigated by including GRIP in RBM, the lack of capacity to carry out a robust risk assessment as well as the low level of knowledge and skills to make programme adjustments will continue to be addressed. This will be done through regional capacity-building workshops, an online learning course targeting both programme monitoring and evaluation and programme sector staff, as well as holding risk-informed programming workshops, such as those held in Peshawar and Karachi, Pakistan in November 2018, to support planning processes and capacity development of UNICEF, government and partner staff.

C. Strengthening participation of affected populations to place them at the centre of humanitarian and development action

24. UNICEF is more systematically creating space for affected people to voice their distinct needs, using that feedback to inform the design and provision of services and take corrective measures. Special attention is given to developing platforms for adolescent participation. UNICEF will build on investments in development programming for community engagement, behaviour change and real-time monitoring—all of which can strengthen the organization’s accountability to vulnerable children and families in crisis-affected situations.

25. In May 2018, UNICEF adopted an institutional strategy and action plan for scaling up accountability to affected populations (AAP). Its scope covers the whole organization at country, regional and global levels. It is based on two fundamental premises: first, progress will be achieved only through a systematic and coherent organization-wide approach that is embedded in existing organizational processes and systems; second, AAP must not be a stand-alone concept but rather be an integral part of good quality programming in development and humanitarian situations alike. The integration of AAP into the work of UNICEF will be achieved when:
(a) Affected families, children and adolescents participate in the decisions that affect their lives and receive the information they need to make informed decisions, across all programmes;

(b) Views and feedback from affected families, children and adolescents systematically inform the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes; and

(c) UNICEF has mechanisms in place for acting upon the feedback and complaints received by affected families, children and adolescents.

26. UNICEF is increasingly using U-Report, a short message service-based messaging and social media tool currently available in 53 countries, to complement traditional participatory methods for community engagement. For example, in August 2017, through U-Report, within 24 hours of a 6 kilometre mudslide event in Sierra Leone, the UNICEF country office collected data from communities on how their water supply was affected. At this critical time, there was no other way to collect this type of information. The planned first response was to truck in water supplies. However, an initial poll showed that 72 per cent of the communities in Freetown had had their water supply disrupted but only a minority could receive trucked water, in large part due to inaccessibility. This information led to programmatic changes and WASH teams distributed water harvesting kits and worked with local young people to build and install the kits.

27. UNICEF has been leading the communication and community engagement initiative since 2017, in partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and several other partners. This inter-agency initiative seeks to establish more systematic, predictable and coordinated approaches to community engagement and accountability in humanitarian responses. Five countries have been supported since 2017 to develop collective approaches (Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Chad, Haiti and Yemen) and an additional 20 countries from Africa and Latin America have committed to implementing collective approaches following regional workshops held in 2018 in these two regions.

28. UNICEF also sees the value of using communication for development (C4D) programming to improve humanitarian preparedness and response, as a means of building community engagement and accountability to children and their communities, and as a key contribution to fulfil the AAP commitments. For example, during the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa in 2014–2015, the UNICEF experience demonstrated that the response was more effective once it had built in feedback mechanisms, including through real-time data technologies; where C4D programmes built on partnerships with communities and religious leaders and groups; and where these channels facilitated feedback to adjust messaging to affected populations and informed the adaptation of the whole response across sectors. These investments were considered critical to strengthening the health systems’ capacity and enabling recovery from the crisis.

29. In Bangladesh, in 2017, UNICEF engaged approximately 1,000 community mobilizers to improve knowledge on life-saving behaviours and available services for 200,000 Rohingya refugees from neighbouring Myanmar living in camps in Cox’s Bazar. Eight information and feedback centres were established in refugee camps to ensure a two-way dialogue on these critical issues and respond to feedback and queries. These centres have received more than 11,000 pieces of community feedback along with queries and complaints, collected digitally through an online data management system allowing for real-time analysis and ensuring that issues were resolved in a timely manner.
D. **Strengthening social protection systems to scale up cash transfers in emergencies**

30. Improving the preparedness of social protection systems to respond to crises can facilitate larger scaling up of coordinated cash transfer programmes in humanitarian situations. While UNICEF supports the use of cash transfers in its emergency response, it also seeks to leverage pre-crisis and longer term investments in building the readiness and resilience of national social protection systems for future humanitarian crises and future development programmes. An example would be establishing capacities and systems for emergency cash transfers that could be used later for universal child grants. It can be challenging to target and reach affected children and their communities with adequate social transfers, especially in the absence of preliminary knowledge of national systems and markets, and a solid understanding of their ability to absorb additional specific needs. Robust risk management mechanisms are also critical to cash-based programming in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Inter-agency coordination towards common approaches adapted to each particular context requires a highly collaborative approach. Internal guidance has been developed to support UNICEF country programmes’ systematic approach to humanitarian cash programming and on strengthening shock-responsive social protection systems.

31. For example, during the response to the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, UNICEF used an existing pilot programme, which provided grants for children, to negotiate with the Government and international partners for an emergency ‘top up’. In the 19 districts worst affected by the earthquake, this allowed for the provision of additional support for vulnerable families with children under 5 years of age who were already receiving benefits. A recovery-phase cash transfer followed in 2016. The use of cash transfers in the earthquake response has informed UNICEF social protection programming in Nepal towards a more inclusive, resilient and responsive national system in the longer term, with capacity for rapid expansion in times of crisis.

32. In Yemen, UNICEF is supporting social protection systems as the protracted humanitarian crisis has led to a growing number of households being unable to afford the rising cost of basic services and commodities. Meanwhile, and until the national social welfare system is able to reach children and families in need, UNICEF stepped in with an emergency cash transfer (ECT) project. Through the ECT, unconditional cash transfers are provided to former beneficiaries of the Social Welfare Fund (SWF)—the national social protection programme which had to suspend operations. The ECT project ensures cash transfers to 1.5 million families and impacts about 9 million people across all 333 districts within the 22 Yemen governorates. UNICEF worked directly with partners on project design and implementation. Importantly, while the project is designed with a view to resume operations of SWF, UNICEF is already contributing to future systems’ restoration by updating the SWF database (recertification of all listed beneficiaries; community verification of those who have lost identification documents; re-application of the eligibility criteria to suspect cases), developing new payment mechanisms, new monitoring tools, and new grievance and redressal procedures.
E. Emergency Preparedness

33. Analysis of emergency preparedness activities conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Boston Consulting Group between 2014 and 2017\(^2\) found that every $1 invested early in high-risk humanitarian contexts saves a median of $1.50—a net of $1.50 savings—against the next emergency, and also speeds up operations by an average of 14 days.\(^3\) Despite this and ample other evidence that preparedness contributes to aid efficiency and effectiveness, UNICEF has found that incentives for country programmes to invest in preparedness plans and measures remained challenging. Mobilizing adequate resources for preparedness has proven particularly difficult. UNICEF has used its regular resources to cover critical investments where feasible, but more needs to be done for a systematic implementation of preparedness measures to more effectively address critical needs of populations at risks.

34. In 2018, UNICEF launched the emergency preparedness platform (EPP), an online tool that helps country offices to analyse risks, self-assess the capacity in-country, identify high-return actions and get ready to respond before an emergency happens or a situation deteriorates. All country offices completed their preparedness plans through the EPP by end of June 2018. As at 1 July 2018, the average preparedness score globally was 72.5 per cent (a measure of country offices’ progress in meeting UNICEF minimum preparedness standards). As at 5 November 2018, the average preparedness score had increased to 87.9 per cent.

35. A striking example of how the EPP has enabled a swifter and more agile response is found within the Liberia Country Office, one of the pilot countries to test run the EPP. The Liberia Country Office identified floods as a potential emergency. During the preparedness phase, an Emergency Management Team was established and supply and logistic contingency strategies were developed. Key potential implementing partners were also identified for standing agreements. As a result, in 2018, UNICEF, with other United Nations agencies and partners, responded within 48 hours to heavy rainfall that resulted in extensive flooding across three counties, including the capital city of Monrovia. Assessment teams were deployed and a response, led by the National Disaster Management Agency of the Government of Liberia, was implemented. Close to 9,500 children and thousands of people benefited with WASH services.

36. As country offices developed preparedness plans using the EPP to identify preparedness gaps, actions and support requirements from regional offices and headquarters, the process highlighted some challenges, including the need to clarify the role that UNICEF plays in supporting preparedness in high and middle-income settings. For example, this was initially an issue in preparing and responding to the earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia in 2018. Moving forward, efforts will be made to ensure a consistent, context specific and quality preparedness plan in every country and to strengthen the priority assigned to preparedness by all UNICEF offices and donors, including using existing funding for preparedness actions.

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\(^3\) Average savings came to $2.62 per $1 invested early, with high return outlier investments skewing results higher than the median.
F. Enabling inter-agency, system-wide strategies

37. Planning and coordination processes, such as joint emergency needs assessments and joint analysis that also look at risks, joint sector and cluster strategies, or long-term planning with national partners and donors in chronic crises, are key instruments that contribute to increasing coherence and effectiveness of humanitarian and development aid for the most vulnerable populations.

38. UNICEF frequently leads country-based sector-wide coordination forums, including clusters where they are activated, in line with system-wide Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) protocols. Whenever possible, UNICEF will leverage this role to strengthen the link between humanitarian response and effective, sector-wide planning and coordination beyond the emergency response. To this end, for example, the Education Cluster develops strategies that align, to the extent possible, with the education in emergency response of the government education sector plans. UNICEF will continue to lead needs assessments, joint analysis and planning towards collective outcomes.

39. At the global level, UNICEF engages in similar collaboration through United Nations and inter-agency bodies working on humanitarian and development collaboration—in particular, the United Nations Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development collaboration, and the IASC and its subsidiary bodies. UNICEF engagement is primarily directed at facilitating country level response and addressing institutional or systemic bottlenecks. For example, systematic approaches towards joined-up assessments, collective outcomes, multi-year plans and resource mobilization strategies, are still challenges that require further investments towards standardized methodologies.

40. UNICEF will continue using its position in United Nations country teams and humanitarian country teams, and as a cluster lead agency, to support multi-year humanitarian response strategies and inter-agency plans. These strategies and plans will dovetail with longer term development plans to reduce people’s needs, risks and vulnerabilities, and increase their resilience. UNICEF will also leverage its planning role to advance the humanitarian-development linkage by working towards United Nations Development Assistance Framework plans that are more strategic; focused on the most vulnerable children and communities; anchored in human rights standards; aligned with national priorities; and based on common needs assessments and analyses. For example, in Nigeria, where the coordination of nutrition activities is institutionalized in the state ministries of health, UNICEF has been building ministry officials’ capacity to undertake coordination functions beyond the emergency response. A similar approach has been applied in Kenya and Ethiopia where the nutrition coordination structures created for emergencies are now fully integrated with the government coordination framework, while funding for emergency nutrition has contributed to systems’ strengthening and resilience building within the health system. In Yemen, north-eastern Nigeria, South Sudan and Somalia, the cluster system has been instrumental in promoting an integrated response to achieve a better nutrition outcome thus averting the famine that was looming in 2016–2017.

G. Galvanizing partnerships to mobilize quality resources

41. The last decade has seen unprecedented growth in humanitarian needs and the resources required to respond. Conflicts, natural disasters and other crises continue to undermine development gains and block the path out of poverty and towards
sustainable development. Despite growth, humanitarian funding levels remain insufficient to effectively respond with predictable and quality programming. These unparalleled challenges in humanitarian emergencies require new and innovative solutions to bring the required resources to address humanitarian needs, strengthen the linkages between humanitarian and development efforts, while increasing efficiencies and effectiveness of both financing and programmes.

42. Short-term and earmarked funding negatively impacts responses, by reducing predictability, flexibility and increasing transaction costs, and can inhibit closer linkages between humanitarian action and development programming. To address this, resource mobilization efforts by UNICEF focus on implementation of its Strategic Plan to strengthen two critical quality funding elements that can support better linkages between humanitarian and developing programming—increasing multi-year and thematic/flexible funding while working with partners to reduce the level of earmarking.

43. While regular resources remain the most flexible contributions for UNICEF, thematic funds, categorized as other resources, are the second-most efficient and effective contributions to the organization. Thematic funding contributions are pooled funds designed to support the achievement of outcomes or results in the Strategic Plan through flexible multi-year funding windows and to achieve the organization’s dual mandate. The Strategic Plan has five Goal Areas supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, for which 10 programme-specific funding pools have been developed, including on humanitarian action. The flexibility of thematic funding allows UNICEF to respond more effectively to emerging needs. It facilitates longer term planning, sustainability and savings in transaction costs, allowing for more resources to be delivered directly to children through UNICEF programmes.

44. A variety of funding mechanisms already contribute to linking humanitarian and development programming through integrated financing. The Education Cannot Wait Fund, for example, enables humanitarian and development actors to provide quick, strategic and agile support that helps meet the education needs of children in crisis. The World Bank Group’s International Development Association (IDA) has provided critical development funding to Yemen that has helped UNICEF and the World Health Organization keep the health sector functioning, mount a cholera response, and provide much needed nutrition services to victims of famine. IDA development funding is also helping UNICEF maintain social protection programmes through an emergency cash transfer programme for the most vulnerable. IDA support is critical to maintain essential systems and allow the country to build back once the conflict abates. UNICEF is also working closely with the World Bank and other partners in the development of financing mechanisms, involving public and private finance, that will enable early action to prevent humanitarian situations from reaching crisis levels. One example is the pandemic emergency financing facility, which has allowed UNICEF to support early action to address the 2018 Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo. UNICEF is also supporting the establishment of a famine early action mechanism to respond to malnutrition and food crises in a timely manner.

45. Where gaps remain, UNICEF is looking to create its own innovative financing instruments to strengthen preparedness and bridge humanitarian and development programming in high-risk humanitarian contexts. These initiatives target win-win investments that yield improved results for children while optimizing cost-efficiency and reducing the organization’s carbon footprint. For example, UNICEF is exploring the creation of a revolving fund to counter escalating emergency risks to children with preparedness and prevention resources dispatched at the first early warning
signals. A nutrition pre-financing window and accompanying pre-positioning stockpile is also under discussion to eliminate breaks in the ready-to-use therapeutic food pipeline caused by short-term funding gaps and insufficient emergency stockpiles. Lastly, a global investment portfolio of cost- and carbon-efficient WASH investments in humanitarian contexts is being assembled to replace water-trucking and fossil fuel-powered WASH systems with sustainable infrastructure and renewable energy systems. For example, a $2 million infrastructure rehabilitation investment to replace water trucking for 85,000 people in northern Nigeria would break even in five months and save a projected $17 million in five years, as well as over 170 metric tons of CO₂. These interventions illuminate a pathway out of the spiralling crisis of humanitarian needs of the last decade, but they require vision and trust among partners to execute at scale.

46. Resource mobilization strategies for humanitarian and development programming in the coming years will have to meet the gaps in addressing humanitarian needs, as well as the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals. They should also take into account the important role of host Governments and local partners to lead on interventions that can be scaled up to deliver the transformative results envisioned by the Sustainable Development Goals. Finally, these strategies should address the continuing imperative to respond to humanitarian needs in increasingly complex crises.

47. Even more innovative, principled, flexible and predictable funds and partnerships are needed to support UNICEF programmes and advocacy for children—including efforts to strengthen systems and build resilience, enhance preparedness, link humanitarian action to longer term goals and localize humanitarian and development programming. New funding mechanisms and frameworks for collaboration will be critical to achieving these ambitious outcomes. UNICEF will continue to explore and pursue new opportunities through public-private partnerships, including the use of blended financing instruments—such as insurance and guarantees.

**IV. Conclusion**

48. UNICEF efforts to support government and other partners to strengthen and systematize the linkages between humanitarian and development programming will contribute to delivering better results for children and their communities. Strengthening local and national systems, including social services, to be more risk-informed, can reduce vulnerability while also meeting humanitarian needs in all contexts, whether chronic acute emergencies and fragile settings or more stable contexts hit by sudden-onset emergencies.

49. To this end, an executive directive to institutionalize the approaches of UNICEF outlined in this Board paper is currently being drafted and will be issued shortly. This directive will be an important step in systematizing the organization’s approach to strengthening linkages between humanitarian and development programming by making the risk approach, preparedness and system strengthening mandatory, and setting out standards for measuring and monitoring progress.

50. In addition, the recent UNICEF evaluation policy, approved in June 2018, emphasizes the need for humanitarian evaluations to assess the links between humanitarian and development programming and for country programme evaluations to encompass the shorter term humanitarian response. This will provide a consistent feedback to organizational learning in this area. Further, a global thematic evaluation
is planned for 2020 on the UNICEF contribution to enhancing humanitarian-development integration.

51. UNICEF strategies are aligned with and support inter-agency efforts currently being undertaken among IASC members, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and Member States towards the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as with the agenda of the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration, while strengthening the collective humanitarian commitments. UNICEF calls on donors and its Executive Board members to support these strategies by providing flexible and quality funding that will enable this new way of working, and to invest in initiatives that will make the implementation of these strategies more predictable, systematic and at scale, and enable accelerated humanitarian and development results for children and their communities.