

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 72/279 ON “REPOSITIONING OF THE UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM”

INFORMATION NOTE

UNICEF Executive Board – Annual Session 2020

I. Introduction

UNICEF is pleased to provide its Executive Board with an update on its engagement in the repositioning of the UN Development System, supplementing earlier Information Notes presented to the Board in 2019 and 2020. UNICEF continues to engage closely in the reform process, providing significant contributions and inputs, supporting implementation, and making necessary internal adjustments and alignments. It does so in close coordination with the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, and with the support of the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO).

This Information Note provides an update on developments since January 2020 across the areas of UNICEF’s support and implementation of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) repositioning process.

II. Supporting the new Resident Coordinator system

Nearly two years after the UN General Assembly passed its landmark resolution on repositioning the UN development system, UNICEF is continuing to support (i) the new generation of Resident Coordinators (RCs) and coordination offices in country settings, (ii) the implementation of the country level chapter of the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF), and (iii) the agreed funding arrangements for the RC system, including though the collection of the 1% levy.

To obtain **UNICEF Representatives’ (Reps) perspectives on the progress, challenges and opportunities of UNDS reform**, UNICEF conducted a comprehensive internal survey. Our survey built extensively on a survey which UNFPA had first developed; we also worked closely with UNDP to ensure comparability of the findings. The overall response rate of our UNICEF survey was 78%. Responses by region are: ESARO 21%; LACRO 18%; WCARO 17%; MENA 15%; EAPRO 13%; ECARO 12%; ROSA 4%. **Overall, the survey findings show strong support for UNDS reform.** They indicate that the new reform tools such as the MAF or the new cooperation framework guidance, are working, and that UNICEF is actively engaged. While it appears too early to determine the overall impact of reform efforts in the field, **responses indicate positive trends in several areas but also some remaining challenges.**

a) Positive progress made

The majority of Reps (61%) report that the **spirit and roll-out of the UNDS reform has been positive.** 54% also see that the reform is **strengthening collaboration within the country team.** A significant majority (75%) of respondents confirm that they have been active in local discussions on the new **MAF.** Almost half of the respondents (47%) indicate that **UNICEF's strategic engagement with the RC**

has improved overall since the adoption of the MAF. UNICEF representatives **report a high degree of familiarity with reform elements which are key at country level**: more than 80% are very familiar with the country level chapter of the MAF and the new cooperation framework guidance. 77% say that they are also very familiar with common business operations.

Almost half of the respondents suggest that **RC ability to pursue funding on behalf of the UNDS** as a whole has increased. When asked to indicate the level of RC support to UN Country Team (UNCT) members in identifying and **accessing joint and pooled funding opportunities**, nearly a third (31%) rated RC support as high, and 48% as intermediate. Over a third of respondents indicate that UNICEF's **access to pooled funding opportunities** has increased since the new MAF was introduced. Similarly, the majority (63%) considers **UNICEF's ability to engage in joint and/or pooled funding mechanisms** as high.

Almost half of the respondents (46%) indicate an increase in the **RC's ability to facilitate dialogue between the UNCT and the national government**.

b) Challenges encountered

A significant portion of respondents (22%) indicate that **UNICEF's access to the highest level of local governments** (Head of State/Government) has decreased since the introduction of the new MAF.

Almost half of respondents (46%) have not seen the UNDS reform generate cost savings for UNICEF. A significant number of Reps (27% of respondents) also indicate that the RC has **asked UNICEF to cover local costs in support of RC Office needs**. In 13% of cases, the RC has asked UNICEF to second staff to cover RC Office posts pending DCO recruitment. UNICEF is actively following up on these findings with DCO. We note that local cost share requests should effectively become redundant because of our doubled global cost-share. We also attach importance to continued access of our Reps to host governments and donors in line with the provisions of the MAF.

21% of our Reps indicate that local donor missions are generally not very familiar with the **1% coordination levy**. A quarter of respondents would appreciate more help from RC Offices to familiarize donor missions with the levy.

c) Opportunities to explore

It is **too early to say whether the reform will have the impacts Member States expect**. For instance, more than 50% of our Reps do not see that the reinvigorated RC function is improving the collective UN support to national governments. A fifth (19%) of responding Reps indicate an **increase in UNICEF's ability to advocate and strategically communicate on children's issues** with external stakeholders. Between 23-27% of respondents also indicate an increase in their ability to **engage on normative issues** (including the children's rights agenda) with other UNCT members and the RC. UNICEF has been very engaged in the **development of new Common Country Analyses (CCAs)** (41%) **and the design of new UNSDCF's** (36%) in the few countries where this process has already commenced.

We will continue to analyze the survey results to better understand the range of feedback received and formulate corporate responses, as needed. This feedback will also inform our contribution to the **UNSDG review of the country-level chapter of the MAF** which we expect to start soon. In addition, we anticipate that these findings will provide valuable insights for the design of a strong regional chapter of the MAF. UNICEF, together with other UN agencies, is also working closely with DCO to address country-specific issues on reform roll-out.

Since January 2020, UNICEF has made significant progress on mutual performance appraisals of RCs and UN Country Team (UNCT) members and strengthening the RC talent pool. As outlined in the MAF, RCs appraise the performance of UN representatives in their capacity as members of the UNCT. Representatives also contribute to the performance assessment of RCs. The job descriptions of UNICEF Representatives reflect the responsibilities and accountabilities as UNCT members and their relationship with the RC in line with the MAF. UNICEF has included a performance indicator linked to UN-wide results in the performance assessment tool for all Representatives. We also seek input from RCs during the assessment process for Representatives.

For the 2020 work planning and performance assessment cycle, UNICEF provided guidance to all Regional Directors and Representatives. RCs should be contacted to discuss the UNCT-specific performance indicator to be included in the 2020 workplan. In addition, at the end of the year, UNICEF Regional Directors and Representatives should reach out to RCs to request feedback on this indicator to be included in the performance assessment of the UNICEF Representative. A similar message was sent to RCs by DCO, and both DCO and UNICEF will monitor compliance with this arrangement.

UNICEF continues to be actively engaged with DCO to create a **pipeline of strong talent for Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)** positions. UNICEF is participating actively in the UNSDG Task Force on RC Talent Management, Assessment and Selection, led by DCO. The task force looks at designing an RC/HC Talent Pool to build an effective pipeline of high caliber candidates, updating the RC Assessment Centre to align with the UN Leadership Framework, and revamping the RC selection system. UNICEF is increasing the number of qualified UNICEF staff members in the RC pool and promoting the RC/HC track as a career path option for senior staff. Through a structured nomination process, UNICEF supports candidates to prepare for the RC/HC assessment through an individual development plan including customized coaching. We also aim to ensure smooth movement between the RC/HC and UNICEF Senior Staff tracks, including a return right to UNICEF.

We are also participating in the **UNSDG Leadership Development Task Force** to design a learning and leadership development strategy for RCs and RC Talent Pool members to ensure that they have the required knowledge (e.g. system leadership) and skills (e.g. management and interpersonal skills, impartial broker, convening and negotiation skills, etc.) to fulfill their roles effectively. Under the proposed RC leadership development strategy, UNICEF is emphasizing the need to support the development of not only incumbent RCs (especially first time RCs), but also those in the RC/HC Talent Pool and the RC pipeline who are being groomed to join the RC/HC Talent Pool.

UNICEF remains committed to the **funding of the RC system** in line with the arrangements outlined in GA Resolution 72/279. UNICEF's was among the first agencies to pay their full 2020 contribution to the

UNSDG cost-sharing (\$8.3 million), transferring the funds in December 2019. In the months ahead, UNICEF looks forward to actively engaging in the UNSDG review process which we hope will aim to equitably update the global cost sharing formula. To date, UNICEF has transferred \$3.7 million to DCO for the 1% coordination levy.

As previously outlined to the Executive Board, UNICEF conducted an in-depth review of the **levy arrangements** and its financial and programmatic impact. The detailed findings of this review will be shared with the Board.

III. Funding and financing

The Executive Board will receive a comprehensive report on the **Structured Funding Dialogue** during the Annual Session, which outlines the progress that has been achieved on the **Funding Compact** to date. For further information on funding trends and statistics on the Funding Compact commitments, please refer to the Structured Funding Dialogue report and its Annexes.

UNICEF continues to be actively engaged in the **Joint SDG Fund**, and as a member of the Operational Steering Committee plays an active decision-making role in programmatic and operational processes. UNICEF offices have been actively involved in putting forward joint inter-agency proposals for the first call of Joint SDG Fund. Out of the 102 proposal submissions, 62 were approved for funding with UNICEF participation in 43 countries. UNICEF is also actively engaged in the second component of the fund on SDG Financing, preparing to take part in almost 100 joint interventions, mostly in Least Developed Countries. Such interventions are critical to strengthening national financing frameworks to be resilient to crisis.

UNICEF supported the creation of the **Secretary General's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund** and our Deputy Executive Director for Partnerships is an active participant in the Advisory Committee. We also extended our support the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (as the Administrative Agent), for instance through the development of communication materials related to the Fund. The Fund will focus on 18 health emergencies, 8 on the socio-economic impact and 4 in both windows. The geographic focus is on 23 countries in Africa and Asia remaining 7 are in Latin America, Eastern Europe and Pacific. The total funding envelope is US\$ 28.6 million; however, it is yet not determined how much of this funding will be allocated to UNICEF. UNICEF, in collaboration with sister UN agencies, is set to operationalize Joint Programmes on health system emergencies and socio-economic impacts in 30 countries mainly in Africa and Asia – this represents 65% of the countries out of the total 47 the Fund is operational in.

IV. Strengthening system wide support to SDGs and the 2030 Agenda

In September 2019, the SG announced a global call for a **Decade of Action** to deliver the SDGs by 2030. This appeal to governments, the UN system and all development partners, sets out a need for scaled up ambition and urgent action for the goals. UNICEF is committed to do its part. To that end, UNICEF has produced a newly launched [SDG portal](#) that outlines why the SDGs matter for children and why child rights matter in achieving the SDGs. Drawing on the new assets, structures and working methods ushered in as part of the reform, UNICEF and other UNSDG entities are aiming to intensify integrated implementation efforts.

The UNSDG's work on the **mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support (MAPS)** approach, co-chaired by UNDP, ILO and UNICEF, offers additional illustrations of enhanced UN collaboration. For example, UNICEF provided critical leadership support to the UNDP-led interagency MAPS mission in Cabo Verde, partnering with the European Union and the World Bank. UNDP and UNICEF co-created a MAPS project team, which was resourced and staffed jointly by the two agencies. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MAPS project team is developing virtual MAPS engagements to continue providing integrated policy support at the national level.

UNICEF continues to co-chair the **Country-Focused Data and Reporting** task team under the UNSDG and is supporting the capacity of new Data Officers in RC offices to help UNCTs better advise countries conducting SDG monitoring. This has become even more urgent in the context of COVID-19, not only because data demands are greater, but because some traditional sources of data are not available. UNICEF has also been a leading agency in the preparation of the Secretary General's Data Strategy for the UN, as well as the Roadmap for Modernization of the UN Statistical System, to ensure that measurement and communication of data and statistics related to children are supported across the work streams of the UNDS.

UNICEF has significantly contributed to the finalization of the **UNSDCF Companion Package** that was approved by UNSDG Principals in May 2020. The final **UNSDCF Companion Pieces** include the Companion Package that provides detail guidance on Common Country Analysis, UNSDCF design, implementation, monitoring, learning and evaluation. In addition, there are four Companion Pieces on: i) Humanitarian-Development-Peace collaboration, ii) UNSDCF funding framework and SDG financing, iii) Economic transformation, and iv) Guiding Principles. As the Cooperation Framework guidance focuses on the "what" of the new generation of planning and management instruments, the Companion Package and Pieces provide RCs and UNCTs with the "how", including tools, templates and examples.

The complete Companion Package is accessible to UNICEF staff on a new internal Gateway Platform for programming guidance – the PPPX. The Platform has been created to facilitate the alignment of UNICEF country programmes with the UNSDCF, and more broadly to provide all UNICEF staff with immediate access to the guidance they need at any stage of the programme cycle. As previously noted to the Board, UNICEF is fully aligning its CPDs with the Cooperation Frameworks. Inspired by Wikipedia, the platform provides concise and straight-to-the-point information, correlated by templates, good practices and other resources.

The Platform is continuously evolving to meet the needs of its users in an everchanging programming environment. The latest development is a comprehensive section on programming during COVID-19 pandemic that gathers the most relevant UN and UNICEF updates on adjusting planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting during the pandemic across programme areas. The document also includes staff wellbeing links.

UNICEF has taken concrete steps to support the **system-wide evaluation** effort, including the secondment of a senior evaluation staff to the Executive Office of the SG to support current reform endeavors. UNICEF has also actively engaged in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) to support the production of the draft system-wide evaluation policy. Furthermore, the UNICEF Evaluation function has increased the

number of joint evaluations from 1 in 2018 to 9 in 2019. Going forward, UNICEF will continue to advocate for greater joint evaluation support to the country level, including to UNCTs for UNSCF evaluations, and to Member States as they evaluate their progress towards the SDGs. UNICEF will also advocate for secure funding for system-wide and joint evaluations.

UNICEF continues to work closely with several **UN partners on joint programmatic and innovative actions** in areas where we see opportunities for a major step change in efficiency and effectiveness, demonstrating UN reform in practice.

V. Advancing shared business operations and common premises

UNICEF continues to work closely with the **UNSDG Business Innovations Group (BIG)** to take forward the four workstreams proposed by the SG in the areas of Business Operations Strategies, Common Back Offices, Global Shared Service Centers and Common Premises. The BIG continues to design comprehensive approaches and finetuning methodologies for clear business cases and reliable savings estimates. This is critical to ensure changes are based on robust analysis in order to effectively measure and collectively report on progress. UNICEF currently seconds one dedicated staff member to the BIG project team.

The BIG project team which has been driving operational aspects of UN Reform is likely to wind down its activities over the next few months. Ongoing initiatives such as **Business Operations Strategy (BOS)**, as well as the rollout of Common Business Operations and Common Premises will now be driven by DCO, with active engagement from UNICEF. UNICEF is on target to achieve 100% BOS in all country offices by 2021 and is utilizing the new reporting tool rolled out by DCO to track agreements.

UNICEF has already achieved 50% **Common Premises**, although the percentage achieved across the whole UN is only 19%. UNICEF is currently Chair of the Task Team on Common Premises and is working with other agencies to increase the rate of Common Premises, whilst recognizing that we need to do this without incurring significant capital costs. As indicated in previous Executive Board Notes, UNICEF will aim at co-location as the new norm when opening new office locations moving forward. UNICEF is also currently the Chair of the Task Team on Common Premises + Facility Services.

In 2019, UNICEF undertook its own study to identify scenarios where it can realize savings at country level through either **Common Back Offices** (now renamed **Common Business Operations (CBO)**) or by moving non-location dependent services to a **Global Shared Service Center**. The study identified that the largest savings were in Administration and ICT activities, which supported the case to move to a CBO model in larger offices. It was further agreed by UNICEF that in certain country settings it could be a provider of services to other agencies. Moving forward, DCO will take over implementation of this initiative from the BIG and is currently finalizing a guidance and FAQs to be rolled out to all RCs by mid-2020. UNICEF will complement the roll-out of this guidance by both strengthening its internal guidance on **mutual recognition** (a key enabler for CBO) as well as setting some criteria for UNICEF offices looking to provide services.

UNICEF has also fed into two 'marketplace' surveys conducted by the BIG and identified specific service areas where we could either provide or receive services from other agencies. UNICEFs Global Shared

Service Center in Budapest has had discussions with a couple of UN agencies about provision of services but has not yet reached any formal agreements.

In general, UNICEF remains strongly committed to **achieving efficiencies** wherever possible. As indicated in the previous Information Note, UNICEF has shared internal studies with the BIG that show that the biggest potential for savings stem from ‘vertical integration’, i.e. through centralization of specific functions and associated specialization.

VI. Delivering in a new UN Development System

The Interagency Review Team (IRT) for the **Regional Review** concluded its work in December and submitted its final report to the Deputy Secretary-General. The agreements that were reached by the IRT, including on the functions and governance of the Regional Collaborative Platforms, were reflected by the SG in his report on the ‘implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system’ to ECOSOC’s Operational Activities Segment for Member State consideration. Pending the outcome and guidance received from Member States, UNICEF will continue to be an active participant in the new Regional Collaborative Platforms, and where appropriate, co-lead regional Issue-Based Coalitions.

The Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on the **Multi-Country Office (MCO) Review**, co-led by UNDP and UNEP, completed its work in December 2019. UNICEF actively engaged in the work of this Group and contributed to the final recommendations of the report. These recommendations were also reflected by the SG in the QCPR report for Member State deliberation and guidance. Following the final endorsement of Member States, UNICEF is committed to be an active participant in the next steps of any MCO follow-up process and ultimately the operationalization of the recommendations proposed by the SG.

Similarly, the SG has requested feedback from Member States on the **System-Wide Strategic Document** through his QCPR report to ECOSOC. Pending endorsement, UNICEF stands ready to begin using the document to strengthen the UNDS’ collective support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

UNICEF utilized the **Midterm Review (MTR) of the Strategic Plan** as an opportunity to assess the programmatic and operational implications of UNDS reform. The Executive Board will receive a comprehensive report on the **Report on the Midterm Review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan** during the Annual Session. Please refer to this report for further information.

UNICEF was an active member of the core drafting group for the **UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19**. At the country level, UNICEF is committed to actively participating in the roll-out and implementation of the Framework, under the overall leadership of the RC, for effective programmatic responses by the UNCT. We will also be focusing on smart and timely data collection and analysis to better inform programmatic activities that focuses on the urgent and longer-lasting socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. UNICEF is also leading in establishing clearer coordination between humanitarian and development mechanisms on the ground.

UNICEF continues to prioritize and strengthen its **internal communication** to staff on the implementation of UNDS reform, including at the highest levels of the organization. For example, our Deputy Executive

Director of Partnerships hosts regular monthly conference calls with all Regional Directors where UNDS Reform is a standing agenda item. In addition, UNICEF continues to hold informative webinars, conference calls and regularly updates its numerous intranet sites related to reform issues (e.g. PPPX on programme guidance, UNICEF & UNDS Reform, etc.) Lastly, a regular newsletter - the UNDS Reform Pulse - is communicated bi-weekly to regional and country offices to update on the latest UNDS Reform developments. We will continue to strengthen our internal communication streams in HQ and with country and regional offices to further build capacities and better support UNDS reform efforts on the ground.

VII. Conclusion

Halfway through 2020, there are still a few aspects of UNDS Reform that remain open, specifically the Regional and Multi-Country Office Reviews; the agreement of the regional and global chapters of the MAF; and agreement on the System-Wide Strategic Document. UNICEF remains committed to these efforts and will continue its active engagement. Moving into the second half of 2020 and into 2021, the focus must be on implementation.

As key elements of UNDS reform are rolled out, implementation at **country level** will be paramount, especially within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the months ahead, UNICEF will continue to analyze the outcomes from its country level survey on reform implementation, collate success stories and best practices, and identify challenges and bottlenecks. We will share the outcomes from the survey with the Executive Board during the Second Regular session in September.

At the same time, UNICEF will continue to promote system-wide solutions at the **regional and global** levels, particularly for the development of regional and global chapters of MAF; for a strengthened RC pool; and for the full implementation of Funding Compact commitments.

On the horizon, the next big milestone for reform this year will be the new QCPR. During the recent ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment the SG outlined key proposals and suggestions to Member States on the new QCPR, which UNICEF fully supports. Now is the time to consolidate the progress achieved and focus on the 'unfinished business' of the UNDS reform agenda. This will be all the more crucial as the COVID-19 pandemic demands a UN system that works together for a truly whole-of-system response.

UNICEF looks forward to close engagement with the Executive Board on all aspects of UNDS reform implementation throughout the year ahead.