

# UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025

## Background Paper

Executive Board Informal Briefing Session 2020

### Background

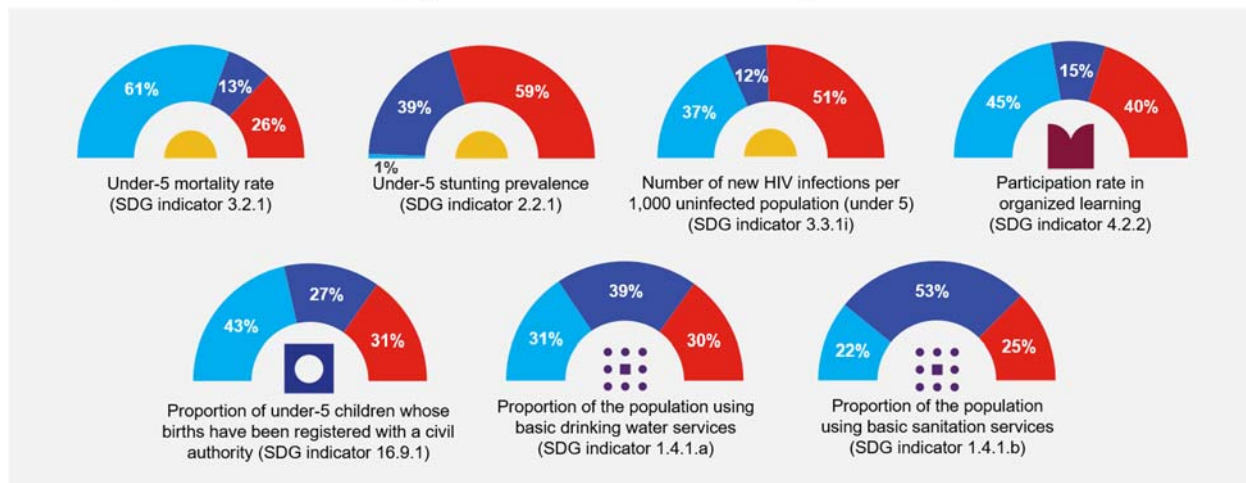
1. With the conclusion of the midterm review (MTR) of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF is maintaining the momentum of recent months and moving directly into the development of a new Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. This will be UNICEF’s second strategic plan since the launch of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and it will be developed in the context of extraordinary times as the world deals with an unprecedented health crisis with far-reaching socio-economic consequences, the full scale of which has yet to be determined.
2. The organization will formally present the draft Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, at the Annual Session of the Executive Board in 2021 and the final version at the Second Regular Session later that year. The new Strategic Plan will be developed along with a new Integrated Budget for the 2022–2025 period, in addition to several annexes including a new results framework.
3. The development of the new Plan will also take place as negotiations begin on the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) resolution in the autumn of this year. We are now several years into the UN reform process and UNICEF, just like the United Nations Development System (UNDS) as whole, will be mindful of the need to ensure that strategic planning processes and outcomes advance the objectives of UN reform, live up to our end of the Funding Compact, and start to deliver reform dividends more concretely at country level. Discussions with other agencies during the development of the plan, (including, amongst others, agencies with Common Chapters), will be an important part of the process. In full accordance with the normative and human rights aspect of UNICEF’s mandate, the strategic planning process will also be firmly anchored in the CRC, (including the outcome of CRC@30), CEDAW, CRPD , and the full spectrum of UN human rights treaties and instruments.
4. The recently concluded MTR exercise has ensured that the organization already has a strong analytical basis which it can build on over the next year to develop a new Strategic Plan. Through the MTR, UNICEF was able to analyse the key strategies, risks and assumptions that are shaping the organization’s performance. It also served as a basis for exploring emerging opportunities and initiatives (Generation Unlimited, Business for Results, etc.), and strategic shifts and changes at global level that will now have implications for UNICEF’s operations and positioning in the new Strategic Plan, not least scaling up our work on climate change, mental health and working with young people around the world.
5. The MTR analysed almost every facet of UNICEF’s work and developed lessons learned, findings and recommendations that are already being taken forward in the final 18 months of the current Strategic Plan but will be further advanced in the development of the new Strategic Plan. Most notably, the MTR represented UNICEF’s initial response to the Decade for Action and the call for acceleration on key results for children. The critical factor governing our strategy will continue to

be the uncomfortable truth that the world was already off-track on the SDGs before the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic started changing the world a few months ago.

## THE WORLD WAS OFF-TRACK BEFORE COVID-19



Proportion of countries assessed on progress towards selected child-related SDG targets



2019 assessment of progress against major child-related SDG indicators, 2010 - 2018. Due to rounding, the totals may not add up to 100 per cent.

6. Through the MTR, UNICEF resolved to prioritize accelerating results in relation to learning outcomes; stunting and wasting; maternal and neonatal health and immunization; basic sanitation and ending open defecation; reducing violence against children; scaling birth registration; climate action; and improving mental health for children and young people, in order to 'bend the curve' with respect to related SDG targets. The new Strategic Plan will look to build on the organization's work in accelerating progress in these and other areas and coming up with the right blend of strategies and partnerships to get the world on-track for achieving child-focused SDG targets.
7. While already implementing the MTR recommendations and working to accelerate progress in these key areas, the organization will build further on the methodology and related analysis in relation to acceleration to develop a results architecture and monitoring framework that strengthens the link between UNICEF's operations and the main child related SDG indicators and targets, moving the focus of attention from outputs to outcomes for children, and rationalizing our use of indicators in the Plan to better tell the UNICEF story and have an accountability framework that is better suited to the ambition, universality and integrated nature of the SDGs.
8. We also know that the most vulnerable and marginalized children will continue to be those that are affected by conflicts, displacement, public health emergencies like COVID-19, disasters, protracted crises or fragility, so the new Plan will also aim to improve quality and coverage of humanitarian action, guided by the renewed Core Commitments for Children (CCCs), while enhancing programming that promotes long-term development and sustainable peace together with humanitarian action.

9. Building on the MTR findings (and those of the GAP II evaluation) on UNICEF's gender work the new Strategic Plan will also address the need to increase, strengthen and systematize learning, research and knowledge on gender and gender-based analysis and programming. It will also outline the organization's intention to expand staff training on gender equality and to enhance data and evidence across sectors. The plan will also be more ambitious in addressing the need for a deeper reckoning with gender norms through its work across several sectors, including child protection.
10. Further to the MTR findings and recommendations, the development of the new Strategic Plan will also look to fully incorporate findings and recommendations of major evaluations undertaken during the implementation of the current Strategic Plan, including the evaluability assessment of the Common Chapter, the evaluation of the Gender Action Plan II, and humanitarian review, and the evaluation of the Strategic Plan (to be presented to the Executive Board in 2021).

## Scope and Principles

11. The overarching aim of the development of the new Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, will be to further accelerate the implementation of key SDG-related results for children and frame UNICEF's full role in the Decade of Action.
12. The new Plan will build on the progress and achievements of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2022, and will look to retain the fundamental structural elements in terms of WHATs (goal/outcome areas), HOWs (change strategies) and Enablers (organizational effectiveness and efficiency). The number and composition of these core elements may change based on lessons learned to date, and/or projected changes and trends in the operating landscape for UNICEF and its partners (including development financing in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic).
13. The new Plan will look to better articulate UNICEF's role in SDG acceleration and present a more comprehensive Theory of Change with greater focus on the outcome level changes that are needed to realize the SDGs for children. It will also further integrate humanitarian contexts, data and projections more systematically into both its operational and policy dimensions. It will build further on ongoing work regarding UNICEF's role in high-income countries to give full and adequate reflection to the global and universal nature of the SDGs and Agenda 2030.
14. The new Plan will be developed as UNICEF steps up internal change management efforts in order to become an even more agile and responsive organization, better suited to the rapidly evolving challenges of our century, and less encumbered by processes and administration. The outcome of that internal change process will largely inform the management element of the Strategic Plan and the framing of the corresponding Integrated Budget for 2022–2025.
15. The development of the Plan will also be framed by a number of core principles that apply across all aspects of UNICEF's work around the world but are worth restating as core principles for the development of this new Plan:

- Human rights: The Plan, and the process leading to its development, will be shaped by UNICEF's identity as a rights-based organization, committed to advancing child rights and to the broader range of rights, norms and standards for which the United Nations as a whole stands.
- Gender: As cross-cutting priorities of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, gender equality dimensions will continue to be articulated across all main components of the new Strategic Plan (WHATs, HOWs and organizational enablers) and the synchronous development of the new UNICEF gender policy and action plan will be critical inputs into how gender is reflected across the Strategic Plan narrative and results framework.
- Universality: In keeping with both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Agenda 2030, the new Strategic Plan will clearly frame UNICEF's work in support of the most disadvantaged children everywhere around the world and at outcome and impact levels will strive to measure progress in addressing the challenges faced by the most disadvantaged children in all categories of countries.
- Innovation: UNICEF will use the strategic planning process to further advance the use of innovation as a means for accelerating results and performance, advancing rights and coalitions for change, and making the organization more efficient and agile for the challenging years ahead. It will look to systematically integrate the Innovation Strategy into its thinking across all of its programmatic and operational work and more systematically track and report on its impact over the coming years.

## COVID-19

16. The development of the new Strategic Plan will take place at a time of great uncertainty as the world continues to grapple with the effects of the greatest public health crisis in living memory. The challenge of developing a Strategic Plan in this context cannot be overstated but the organization will respond to the clarion call of Member States by recommitting to the SDG targets for children, reaffirming our response to the Decade of Action, and working with Member States and the rest of the UNDS to build back better and greener. The crisis continues to evolve, so UNICEF will develop its new Strategic Plan while assessing the impact of the health crisis and the socioeconomic impacts of measures introduced to mitigate it.
17. Looking ahead, the extraordinary impact on children in the short-term not only challenges the organization's agenda for accelerating progress towards the child-related SDGs, as laid out most recently in the organization's midterm review of the Strategic Plan, but jeopardizes many years of progress in advancing children's welfare and rights. In developing the new Strategic Plan, UNICEF must plan in the face of unprecedented uncertainty, as medium and longer-term impacts on children depend on how soon and to what extent the pandemic is brought under control, and how countries respond to its socioeconomic impacts.
18. In times like these, our ability to undertake predictive modelling and trend analysis will be ever more critical. Challenging times present the greatest tests to organizational strategies and it is already clear that focus and prioritization will be critical ingredients of the new Strategic Plan as the organization works with partners to mitigate against the medium to long term impacts of the crisis. But even amidst the current uncertainty, some things are clear. We know that countries' resources will continue to be constrained, so safeguarding progress in some sectors will likely

necessitate, for example, the targeted promotion and defence of investments in social services for children.

19. As UNICEF develops the new Plan and identifies strategies and approaches that will equip it to meet a range of outcomes, it will also continue working together with the UN system in all aspects of the response, recovery and rebuilding, to offer the most vulnerable countries and communities integrated support that meets their needs and strengthens national systems. As noted during the MTR, the pandemic response has been a test of UN reform, not only demonstrating its progress but also strengthening development coordination in the process. UNICEF will work with other agencies across the system to keep identifying ways through which reform and response can be mutually reinforcing and framed within the context of longer-term Strategic Plan objectives.

## Deliverables

20. The final set of documents that will be presented for approval at the Second Regular Session in the autumn of 2021 will be as follows:
  - **Strategic Plan 2022–2025:** This narrative document will be presented in draft form to the Annual Session of the Executive Board in June 2021 and subsequently presented for approval in the Second Regular Session in September 2021.
  - **Results Framework:** The results framework of the Strategic Plan will present the key results at impact, outcome and output levels and the associated indicators. Early drafts showing the broad structure and content of the results framework will be shared by March 2021, an advanced draft will be presented at the Annual Session in June 2021 and the final version with all results and indicators will be presented for approval at the Second Regular Session in September 2021.
  - **Theory of Change:** The theory of change paper complements the Strategic Plan narrative and results framework by elaborating the broad theory of change that underpins the Strategic Plan and the more specific outcome level theories of change that help explain how UNICEF will contribute directly to the outcomes in the plan and the assumptions and risks framing its work.
  - **UNICEF Integrated Budget 2022–2025:** The integrated budget for 2022–2025 will contain an outline of the resources that will contribute to the achievement of the UNICEF integrated results and resources framework, including the Global and Regional Programme.
21. In the course of the development of the new Strategic Plan, updates and background notes and other documents will be shared with Member States and other stakeholders – particularly in preparation for informal briefings, consultations and workshops. This will be done in a harmonized way and in partnership with sister UNDS entities wherever possible, with whom we will also be engaging substantively on areas of shared concern or where mandates and/or operations are complementary.

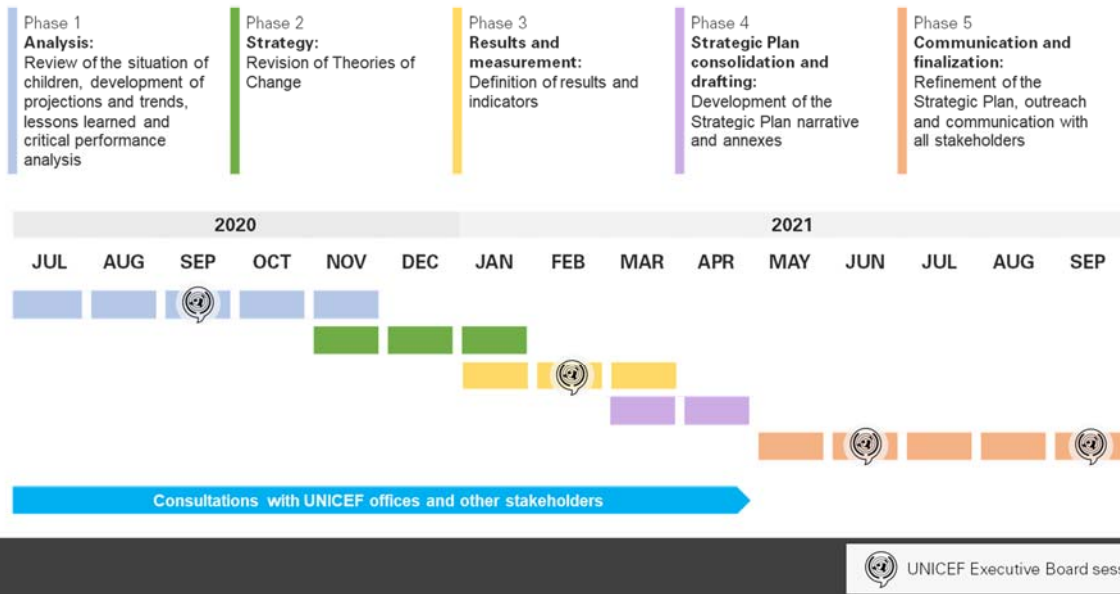
## Methodology

22. A core principle for the development of the new plan is that it will be evidence-based. The MTR has already generated a sizeable body of evidence-based analysis in addition to incorporating the evidence presented by evaluations, reviews and other analytical exercises. Building on that experience and using the analysis marshalled over the past year through that exercise, the new Strategic Plan will take the 41 child-related SDG targets as a starting point and the lens through which it will assess progress in the situation of children around the world. It will conduct exercises in predictive analysis, looking at trends in the trajectory of change in these areas, and mapping out the scale of projected gaps and shortfalls in SDG achievement between now and 2030.
23. Importantly, these projections and the related analysis will incorporate four critical dimensions, the criticality of which were identified as lessons from the MTR process: a) highlighting SDG targets for which there are problematic data gaps and identification of options for strategic planning against global impacts when data is insufficient or unavailable; b) incorporation of humanitarian contexts and mapping those SDG targets for which ongoing challenges in the humanitarian space will present particular obstacles at the global aggregate level; c) scenario building and modelling with respect to the impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic and other global strategies shifts/headwinds/tailwinds; and d) a projection of which countries and regions are most critical to progress and closing gaps in achievement of specific SDG targets.
24. While scaling up our analytical efforts on the situation of children, the organization will build further on the MTR findings and critically interrogate the effectiveness of its strategies and approaches across the Goal Areas of the current Strategic Plan, building in particular on key evaluations and reviews; including the development of the new CCCs, the humanitarian review, the Strategic Plan evaluation, the evaluation of UNICEF's second Gender Action Plan, and other relevant programme evaluations.
25. Based on this analytical work, UNICEF will look to update and revise, as appropriate, its current Theories of Change, consulting and socializing the key features and revisions with internal and external stakeholders. Based on broad consensus on the Theories of Change the organization will begin framing the plan itself and the corresponding results framework – changing, where possible, the focus from output to outcome levels where real change for children is most evident, and through which UNICEF and its partners can better gauge and manage its SDG contribution.
26. In managing the process of developing the new Strategic Plan, the organization has outlined a five-phase approach, with regular updates provided to the Executive Board through formal sessions and informal briefings/ consultations
  - Phase 1 (Analysis), July 2020 to November 2020: analysis of the situation of children, including the health and socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on children; developing projections and mapping trends; lessons learned and critical performance analysis.
  - Phase 2 (Strategy), November 2020 to end January 2021: revising Theories of Change.



- Phase 3 (Results and Measurement): January 2021 to end March 2021: defining the results and indicators based on the new Theories of Change.
- Phase 4 (Consolidation and drafting), beginning March 2021 to end April 2021: Development of the Plan narrative and annexes.
- Phase 5 (Communication and finalization), May 2021 to September 2021: further refinement of the plan, outreach and communication with all stakeholders.

## Strategic Plan 2022–2025 | Phases of the development process



Development of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025: Five phases of the process

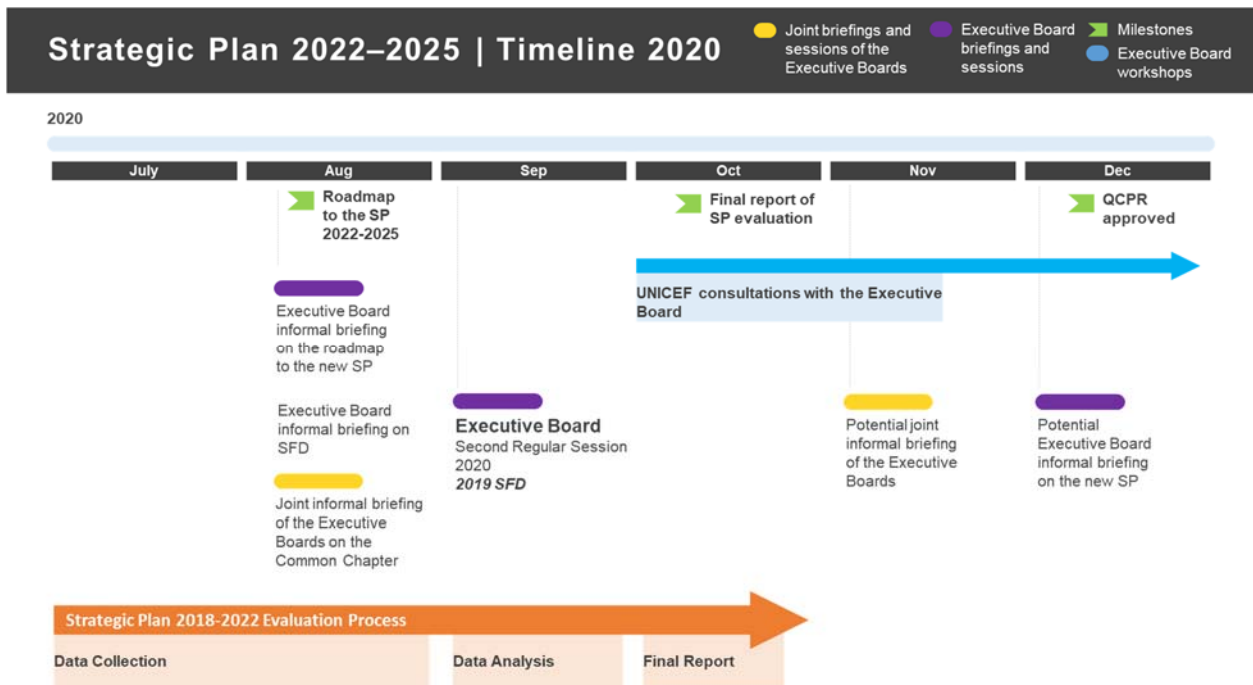
27. The new Strategic Plan will strive toward greater rationalization and simplification including by changing the balance from output to outcome levels where real change for children is most evident, and a real value-added contribution to SDG acceleration can be better understood and articulated.

## Structure and timeline

28. UNICEF will work with other UN agencies to harmonize the Strategic Plan process wherever feasible and rational, given their differing mandates, business models, and global presence. Furthermore, it will work throughout the strategic planning process to deliberately leverage the opportunities stemming from UNDS reform including those that entail thought leadership and good practice on linking humanitarian, development and peace efforts.
29. Throughout the strategic planning process the organization will strive to undertake joint briefings and interactions with Member States on issues of shared interest and focus across agencies throughout the Strategic Plan development process. The overall indicative timeline for consultations with the Executive Board on the Strategic Plan is presented below (please note that

further refinements will be incorporated, particularly as the timing and focus of joint events is finalized).

30. The new plan and Integrated budget will be evidence-based and consultative. As such, UNICEF will involve offices at country, regional and HQ level, as well as engaging a broad range of stakeholders from public and private sectors, including governments and civil society. The organization will also strive to create space for children and young people to be engaged in the process of developing the Strategic Plan.



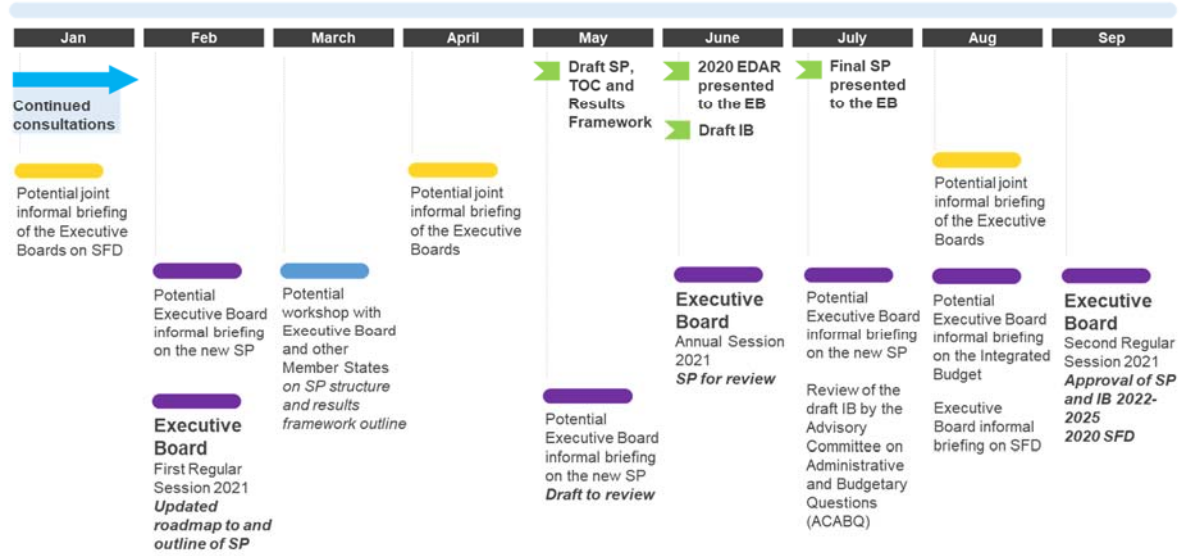
Development of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025: Process Timeline 2020



# Strategic Plan 2022–2025 | Timeline 2021

- Joint briefings and sessions of the Executive Boards
- Executive Board briefings and sessions
- ▶ Milestones
- Executive Board workshops

2021



Strategic Plan 2022-2025: Process Timeline 2021