

# UNICEF Mid-Term Review Background Paper

## Executive Board First Regular Session 2020

### Background

1. UNICEF is currently conducting a Mid Term Review (MTR) of the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan (SP) and Integrated Budget (IB), a process which began during the second half of 2019. The organization will formally present the subsequent results of the MTR of the Strategic Plan and Integrated Budget to the Executive Board at its Annual Session in June 2020, including findings and recommendations for the remaining period of the Strategic Plan's implementation.
2. The MTR is reviewing the first two years of SP implementation, analysing the key strategies, risks and assumptions in relation to the organization's performance, emerging opportunities and initiatives (Generation Unlimited, Business for Results, etc.), and strategic shifts and changes at global level that will have implications for UNICEF's operations and positioning. Findings and recommendations are being developed through this process. These findings and recommendations are being taken forward in the remaining two years of the Strategic Plan and will lay the analytical groundwork for the development of the next UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025.
3. The review also takes place in the context of the UN reform processes, some of which relate directly to strategic planning within the United Nations Development System itself, such as the development of the System Wide Strategic Document and the roll-out of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - all of which are seen as having far-reaching implications for UNICEF and its sister agencies. A key task for the MTR is to analyse how UNICEF can best support and identify opportunities in these and other reforms while meeting evolving Member State expectations.
4. Most recently the launch by the Secretary-General in September 2019 of the Decade of Action has further stimulated internal analysis and discussion of UNICEF's role in accelerating SDG progress within the larger UN Development System, particularly with its focus on mobilization for action at the global, local, and 'people' levels.

### MTR Implementation

#### Scope and Objectives

5. The MTR of the Strategic Plan and Integrated Budget are analysing how the organization is implementing the Strategic Plan in the five Goal Areas, how UNICEF is applying the Change Strategies and Enablers, and how well it is performing against financial targets. The scope of the review is influenced by the need to accelerate programme implementation, manage the availability of resources, understand and respond to the implications of UN Reform, and advance on organisational priorities. The overarching aim of the MTR is to accelerate the implementation of Strategic Plan results towards increasing UNICEF's contribution to goals and targets of the SDGs that are crucial for the well-being of all children and will enable UNICEF to play its full part in the Decade of Action.
6. The main components of the review are Programme, UN Reform, and Management - all reviewed within the context of a) UNICEF's financial forecasts for the remainder of the Strategic Plan period and b) ongoing efforts to ensure positive changes in UNICEF's internal work culture.

Figure 1. Main components of MTR

## SP MTR Process: 3 components



7. The specific objectives for each of the three main components are as follows:

### Programme

- Assess and analyze performance against the Strategic Plan goals and targets;
- Identify actions to ensure strengthened performance and delivery on a specific subset of indicators where acceleration is required.
- Review the approaches and assumptions in the theories of change of the five Goal Areas and the effectiveness of cross cutting strategies;
- Incorporate findings from evaluations and identified lessons learned.

### UN Reform

- Analyze the implications of ongoing UN reforms for UNICEF's operations
- Review the contribution of the Common Chapter
- Identification of where and how the inter-agency reform process has led to greater efficiencies and effectiveness (as per specific Board request at 2019 Annual Session)

### Management

- Review the Change Strategies of the Strategic Plan
- Review the Enablers to identify areas where further efficiencies can be introduced, including through modernization of business processes.

8. As cross-cutting priorities of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 both gender equality and humanitarian action dimensions are integrated across all three main components and their related objectives. In the case of humanitarian action, the MTR has been informed by the recent evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies. However, it also being informed on an ongoing basis by the revision of the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) and the Humanitarian Review (Strengthening UNICEF's Capacity for Humanitarian Action).

9. Likewise, in the case of gender equality, the MTR is being undertaken as the evaluation of the Gender Action Plan 2 (GAP 2) is reaching its conclusion and work has been ongoing to ensure that the emerging findings and recommendations from that exercise are systematically informing the MTR process across the totality of its scope and its objectives.

10. The MTR of the Integrated Budget 2018-2021 is also closely linked and forms an integral part of the MTR of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

### Harmonization with other agencies

11. The MTRs of the four New York based agencies are being undertaken with an agreed scope of harmonization along three main streams of cooperation: 1) process harmonization; 2) methodological harmonization; 3) and harmonized analysis.

#### Process Harmonization

- All four agencies have identified a subset of shared areas of review across the ToRs of their MTRs, namely: UN Reform, review of milestones and targets; and management efficiency.
- The four agencies are coordinating through the development of a shared MTR process calendar which is being used as we aim for closer coordination of MTR processes from Q4 2019 to Q2 2020.
- All four agencies will hold a joint briefing in March on the Common Chapter.
- All four agencies will present a Common Report on the Common Chapter, a QCPR annex using a harmonized format, and a harmonized results scorecard as part of their MTRs.
- All four agencies are holding regular technical level meetings to coordinate their MTRs at the technical level.

#### Methodological Harmonization

- All four agencies agree on a set of harmonized principles for calculating revisions to milestones and targets. Those principles are as follows: a) All revised milestones and targets are evidence based; b) All revised milestones and targets will have documented rationale governed by a methodology; and c) All revised milestones and targets will be developed using existing programming and results data as the main source where possible.
- All four agencies will use the same methodology for the calculation of 'progress rates' in relation to their output indicators and also use the same methodology to assign scorecard 'colors' to the rates in their Data Companion documents (or equivalent).

#### Harmonized Analysis

- All four agencies are approaching the MTR as an opportunity to prioritize and identify ways of working (strategies, approaches, partnerships, etc) that will help accelerate critical SDG related results for the last two years of their SPs.
- All four agencies are looking to retain the core logic of their results frameworks through the MTR process and are instead focusing primarily on other critical dimensions of their ToCs such as approaches, strategies and assumptions.
- All four agencies will undertake and present a common and harmonized analysis on the Common Chapter covering both the presentation of 2019 results and the Mid-Term review of the Common Chapter.

- Each of the four agencies are undertaking a ‘lessons learned’ dimension of its MTRs and will look to systematically ‘cross-fertilize’ the findings with each other to identify key lessons that are emerging as having a cross-agency and cross-mandate significance for SDG progress.

## Structure and timeline

12. Since the MTR process was launched in Summer 2019 there have been three main levels of its coordination and management: the Steering Committee, the Technical Group, and the Task Teams. The overall MTR process is being guided and led by a Steering Committee chaired by the Deputy Executive Director of Programme and comprised of other Deputy Executive Directors and Divisional and Regional Directors. This group is providing overall guidance and leadership to the process and is meeting periodically at important reflection or decision points in the MTR process. UNICEF’s newly formed Division for Data, Analysis, Planning and Monitoring (DAPM) is serving as the secretariat of the Steering Committee.

13. Working below the Steering Committee, UNICEF has convened the MTR Technical Group led by the Director of DAPM and comprised of Deputy Directors/Deputy Regional Directors from across the organization. This groups reports to the Steering Committee and has been providing more regular management and oversight of the work of the MTR, tracking the completion of tasks related to the process and ensuring that inputs are of the highest quality. The Technical Group also directly oversees the main workstreams of the MTR as undertaken by the various Task Teams that have been conducting analysis since Q3 2019.

## Analytical workstreams

14. Under the guidance of the MTR Steering Committee, UNICEF established four Task Teams to undertake the core of the analytical work across the main workstreams of the MTR. The four Task Teams were established in Q3 2019 and assigned analytical tasks and deliverables in relation to the broader MTR scope and objectives.

### Programme Review Task Team

15. This Task Team was the first to be established in order to address the MTR’s programmatic objectives to a) assess and analyze performance in relation to SP goals and targets; b) review approaches and assumptions in the Theories of Change of the five Goal Areas and the effectiveness of cross-cutting strategies; c) identify actions to ensure strengthened performance and delivery on a specific subset of indicators where acceleration is required; and d) incorporate findings from evaluations. The Programme Review Task Team started work in Q3 2019 and has:

- Led a corporate process of reviewing SDG progress and situational data on children, set against organization performance trajectories, to identify results and targets for which acceleration is required for the remaining Strategic Plan period and beyond.
- Developed criteria and a process for sectoral programmatic teams to follow in the review and proposed revision of milestones and targets in the Strategic Plan results framework.
- Developed and supervised a rigorous, data driven and evidence-based process for reviewing the corresponding theories of change for the five UNICEF Goal Areas and supported the identification and ongoing validation of corrective actions.

16. Some of the Programme Review Task Team’s high-level preliminary analysis and emerging findings are presented later in this paper.

### UN Reform Task Team

17. Pursuant to the MTR objective: “Review the contribution of the Common Chapter on the UNICEF performance and the broader progress of UN reform and its implications for UNICEF”, the UN Reform Task Team convened initially in Q3 2019 and has conducted a preliminary assessment of the programmatic and operational implications of some key elements of the UN reform process for UNICEF, including changes to the Resident Coordination function, the new UNSCDF, the System Wide Strategic Document.

18. The work of this Task Team was undertaken specifically in relation to the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and is complimentary to the broader ongoing work of the organization on UN Reform as captured in the “Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system” presented in the 2020 First Regular Session of the Executive Board.

19. It should also be noted that the work of this Task Team was also complimentary to a) the inter-agency process of analyzing and reporting on the implementation of the Common Chapter which will be done through a Joint Common Annex by all four participating UN entities and b) the process of identifying how inter-agency reform processes are contributing to gains in effectiveness and efficiencies which is being assessed through the Management workstream of the MTR process.

### Management Task Team

20. The broader objectives in the Management component of the MTR are to a) review the four “Enablers” in the Strategic Plan to identify areas where further efficiencies and effectiveness can be introduced, including streamlining processes, sharing resources and moving functions that will result in reduced management overhead costs and free up time for staff to pursue the targets in the Strategic Plan 2018-2021. As noted above, this Task Team is also identifying where and how the inter-agency reform process is leading to greater efficiencies and effectiveness for UNICEF (*as per specific Board request at 2019 Annual Session*).

21. In furtherance of these broader objectives, the Task Team is:

- Reviewing and validating the Enablers and progress against the Enablers targets, including within the context of UN reform.
- Identifying functions and processes that can be simplified and modernized for Offices/Divisions to follow to ensure maximum efficiency while properly managing risk, including those that can be simplified and modernized due to UN reform.

### Change Strategies Task Team

22. Pursuant to the MTR’s broader objective to review the Change Strategies, the MTR Change Strategies Task Team started work in Q3 2019 and after consultation with the members of the MTR Steering Committee determined to focus on a subset of the eight Change Strategies for which more in-depth analysis was felt to be particularly critical and timely for the successful implementation of the Strategic and the achievement of its objectives, namely:

- a) Change Strategy 3: Winning support for the cause of children from decision makers and the wider public;
- b) Change Strategy 4: Developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children;
- c) Change Strategy 5: Harnessing the power of business and markets for children;

23. The Task Team developed a set of critical questions for each of these change strategies that were subsequently answered through a combination analysis and field consultation. Broadly speaking, this consultation and analysis reflected on the effectiveness of each Change Strategy along agreed and predefined lines of inquiry such as: their operationalization (globally, across Goals Areas, and across country typologies), their effectiveness in accelerating programmatic results, and key lessons learned.

24. The preliminary analysis which was concluded in December 2019 also examined the implications of any major external trends or events requiring a strategic shift how UNICEF approaches the Change Strategy. As the Task Team's analytical work reached a more advanced stage in December 2019 and January 2020, its work was increasingly focused on developing emerging synergies with the analytical work of the Programme Review Task Team, working collaboratively across UNICEF Divisions to identify ways in which these three critical Change Strategies could be best used to help accelerate in the key programmatic areas emerging from the MTR's preliminary findings.

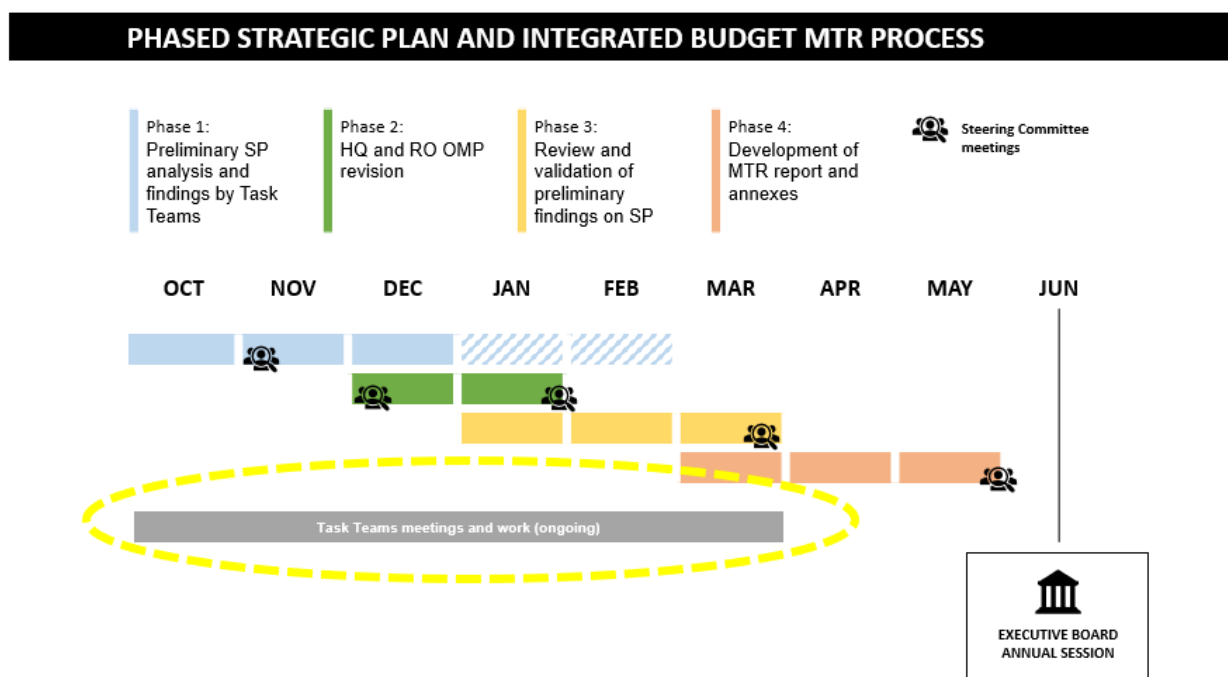
### The Phased Approach

25. In October 2019 the MTR Steering Committee adopted a "Phased Approach" to the MTR of the Strategic Plan and Integrated Budget in order to promote maximum coordination and synergies across workstreams and ensure the timely identification and validation of findings and recommendations. The phased approach also allows UNICEF to ensure Steering Committee endorsement of progress and findings at the transition point between each phase so that the input of senior management is both strategic and timely.

26. Phase 1 started with the launch of the MTR itself in the third quarter of 2019. This phase focused primarily on launching the review across UNICEF and developing a set of preliminary findings across each of the workstreams. This phase ended in December 2019 when most of the preliminary findings from the workstreams were presented to the MTR Technical Group.

27. Phase 2 started in December 2019 with the development and circulation of guidance for the mid-term review of the plans of individual Headquarters Offices/Divisions and Regional Offices and the further exploration and internal dissemination of the preliminary findings identified during the first phase. During this phase, Task Teams are working with the Division of Data, Analysis, Planning and Monitoring to identify any remaining gaps in the preliminary analysis and findings, identify and build on synergies across MTR workstreams, and further test some of the emerging recommendations and findings. As part of this phase, five inter-divisional workshops were organized in mid-January to interrogate the preliminary findings of the MTR Programme Review Task Team and strengthen synergies with the UN Reform and Change Strategies workstreams.

Figure 2. MTR process



28. Phase 3 is beginning in late January and early February 2020 as the 2019 field level reporting data becomes available and many Headquarter divisions turn their attention to performance analysis and will look to ensure that the preliminary findings of the MTR remain credible and consistent in light of the additional year of performance data that is now at hand. Phase 3 also sees a marked increase in outreach and engagement with stakeholders including Member States through an informal briefing of the Executive Board (January 30<sup>th</sup>) an update at the First Regular Session of the Executive Board (February 12<sup>th</sup>), an MTR workshop with the Executive Board (February 26<sup>th</sup>) and a Joint Briefing on the MTR of the Common Chapter (March). Finally, Phase 4 in starting in March is mainly concerned with the development of the final MTR report which will be presented in combination with Executive Director’s Annual Report for 2019. Phase 4 will also see continued outreach and engagement with stakeholders as the documents are finalized.

### Preliminary Analysis and Emerging Findings

29. The preliminary analysis undertaken in Phase 1 of the MTR across all four workstreams built on the pre-existing body of data and evidence, including concluded and ongoing evaluations and reviews related to UNICEF’s development and humanitarian work. Based on these preliminary findings it became evident that after just two years of Strategic Plan implementation, the overall structure and direction of the UNICEF Strategic Plan remains sound and the organization will continue to frame its work around the current set of Goal Areas, Change Strategies, and Enablers. The only exception envisaged at present is potential introduction of a new component to the Strategic Plan structure to enable better reflection of the organization’s efforts to improve work culture.

30. The preliminary findings show that the organization is doing better and seeing more progress in some areas than in others and where this is the case, proposals have been developed for adjusting targets and corresponding Theories of Change. This is helping UNICEF to ensure that it is learning lessons from the first two years of the Strategic Plan, adjusting the calibration of ambition, and reviewing the balance of approaches based on where evidence and analysis indicates it can make the most difference.

31. At the heart of the emerging programmatic findings and recommendations is the organization’s commitment to live up to the ambition of the SDGs and the call for a Decade of Action. To that end, all of the 25 Result Areas in the UNICEF Strategic Plan have been reviewed through the lens of SDG acceleration. Figure 3 below illustrates the scope and sequencing of analysis that has been undertaken and has framed the preliminary analysis on milestones, targets, and the Theories of Change that underpin them. Figures 4.1-4.5 show the logic of acceleration applied across all Goal and Result Areas in the UNICEF Strategic Plan. The application of an SDG acceleration lens to the MTR has enabled a highly systematic and comprehensive process of analysis and is driving the organization to challenge itself to do more with the resources at its disposal.

Figure 3. MTR logic of acceleration

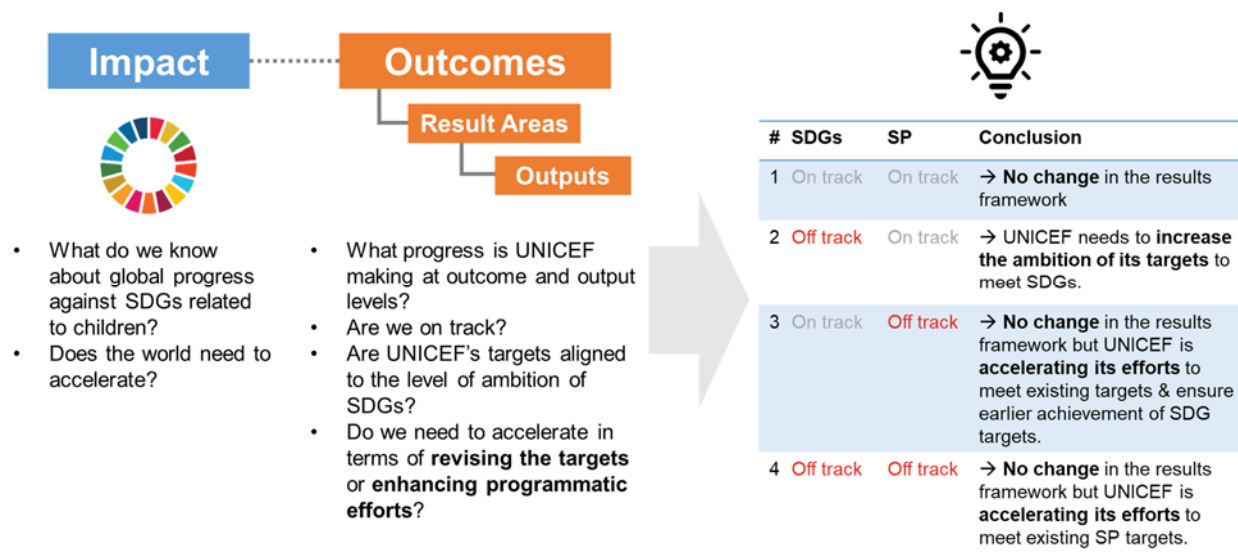



Figure 4-1. Acceleration in Strategic Plan Goal Area 1


 **Every child survives and thrives.**

| Result Areas   | SDGs         | SP                     | Conclusion  |
|--|--------------|------------------------|---|
| Maternal and Newborn Health, Child Health and Immunization | Off-track    | Off track (in general) | → <b>Increase targets</b> to demonstrate the needed acceleration; Accelerate programmatic efforts in <b>primary healthcare</b> systems. |
| Nutrition  | Off track    | On track               | → <b>Increase targets</b> and <b>sharpen focus</b> on <b>preventive nutrition</b> to reduce levels of stunting and wasting.             |
| Adolescent Health and Nutrition                            | Lack of data | On track               | → <b>Accelerate programmatic efforts.</b>   |
| HIV/AIDS   | Off track    | On track               | → <b>Increase ambition</b> in improving programme performance in target countries to meet SDGs.   |
| Early Childhood Development                                | Off-track    | Off track              | → <b>Accelerate efforts</b> to meet existing SP targets.  |



32. In the areas of maternal, newborn and child health, immunization, nutrition, HIV/AIDS and early childhood development, the world is not on course to meet the SDG targets by 2030. Based on preliminary findings from Phase 1 of the MTR and subject to further validation over the coming weeks, UNICEF is looking to enhance programmatic efforts in the revitalization of primary healthcare and improving the food environment for children, with a focus on preventive nutrition to reduce levels of childhood stunting, wasting and obesity. On HIV/AIDS, UNICEF will focus on improving programme performance in target countries to help meet the relevant SDGs. In early childhood development where neither the world nor UNICEF is on track, UNICEF will sustain the momentum on implementation of multisectoral packages, and keep the investments needed in capacities and skills of frontline workers and parents.

Figure 4-2. Acceleration in Strategic Plan Goal Area 2



**Every child learns.**

| Result Areas               | SDGs             | SP  | Conclusion  |
|----------------------------|------------------|---|---|
| <b>Access to Education</b> | <b>Off track</b> | Equitable education systems for access                                  | <b>Off track</b> → <b>Accelerate efforts</b> to meet existing SP targets.             |
|                            |                  | Early learning or education support in humanitarian situations          | <b>On track</b> → <b>Increase the ambition of targets</b> to meet SDGs.               |
| <b>Learning Outcomes</b>   | <b>Off track</b> |   | <b>On track</b> → <b>Increase the ambition of targets to address learning crisis.</b> |
| <b>Skills Development</b>  | <b>Off track</b> | Learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability | <b>Off track</b> → <b>Accelerate efforts</b> to meet existing SP targets.             |
|                            |                  | Institutionalization of gender-equitable skills                         | <b>On track</b> → <b>Increase the ambition of targets</b> to meet SDGs.               |

33. The projection of global education data indicates that the world is not likely to meet its 2030 ambition in providing children with equitable access to education, improving their learning outcomes, or helping adolescent skills acquisition. Recognizing that still too many children and youth fail to learn despite a continued increase in school participation UNICEF is determined to address the learning crisis as a critical programmatic accelerator in the education Goal Area. In early learning, education in humanitarian situations, and gender-equitable skills development where UNICEF is on track, UNICEF is looking to increase the ambition expressed in Strategic Plan targets and augment its contribution to the SDGs.


Figure 4-3. Acceleration in Strategic Plan Goal Area 3

 **Every child is protected from violence and exploitation.**

| Result Areas                     | SDGs      | SP  | Conclusion   |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---|--|
| Ending Violence against Children | Off track | Physical punishment and sexual violence                                   | Off track → Accelerate efforts and increase ambition of targets to end <b>Violence against Children</b> by focusing on prevention, social norms change, and case management. |
|                                  |           | Parenting programmes, health and social workers, law enforcement services | On track   |
| Harmful Practices                | Off track |   | On track → Increase the ambition of targets to meet SDGs.  |
| Access to Justice                | Off track | Justice   | Off track → Accelerate efforts to meet existing SP targets.  |
|                                  |           | Birth registration  | On track → Accelerate efforts towards universal <b>birth registration</b> .  |

34. As can be seen from Figure 4-3, the world is off track on ending violence against children. Attitudes and behaviours remain hard to change. Based on preliminary MTR findings, UNICEF is looking to scale up prevention interventions, reinforce its work on social norms change, and strengthen case management so that fewer children experience violence and those affected seek help and access services. Evidence suggests that positive parenting programmes work, and UNICEF may increase the ambition of its Strategic Plan target and scale up in this area. For harmful practices, UNICEF is looking to leverage the global joint programmes with UNFPA and learn from evidence to inform expansion to new countries. To accelerate global effort towards universal birth registration, UNICEF will focus on the new UN Legal Identity Agenda, a multi-partner trust fund that will support programming in 13 priority countries.


Figure 4-4. Acceleration in Strategic Plan Goal Area 4

 **Every child lives in a safe and clean environment.**

| Result Areas                | SDGs         | SP        | Conclusion  |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------|---|
| Basic Water                 | Off track    | On track  | → Increase the ambition of targets to meet SDGs.  |
| Basic Sanitation            | Off track    | Off track | → Accelerate focus and programmatic efforts to <b>end open defecation</b> and increase the ambition of targets.               |
| Disaster Risk Reduction     | Off track    | On track  | → Increase the ambition of targets to meet SDGs.  |
| Climate and Environment     | Off track    | On track  | → Increase the ambition of targets to meet SDGs and integrate <b>climate related solutions</b> in programming and operations. |
| Urban Settings for Children | Lack of data | On track  | → Increase the ambition of targets.   |

35. The world and most regions are not on track towards safely managed drinking water and sanitation services. Many countries are not on track to eliminate open defecation, and UNICEF is redoubling its efforts primarily targeting regions that are left behind while leveraging high-level political commitment. The world is far from where it needs to be to avoid the worst effects of climate change. Natural disasters are becoming more frequent. Based on preliminary findings from Phase 1 of the MTR and subject to further validation over the coming weeks and months, UNICEF is looking to accelerate the integration of climate-related solutions in its programming and operations, as well as reinforce youth engagement for climate change.

Figure 4-5. Acceleration in Strategic Plan Goal Area 5

 **Every child has an equitable chance in life.**

| Result Areas           | SDGs         | SP        | Conclusion   |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------|--|
| Child Poverty          |              | On track  | → Support measurement & update approaches.                                     |
| Social Protection      |              | Off track | → Target and baseline need to be revised.<br>→ Some approach adjustments.      |
| Adolescent Empowerment | Limited data | On track  | → <b>Increase the ambition of targets and accelerate programmatic efforts.</b> |
| Gender Equality        |              | On track  | → <b>Accelerate programmatic efforts.</b>                                      |
| Disability             |              | On track  | → <b>Accelerate programmatic efforts.</b>                                      |

36. In Goal Area 5 (Figure 4-5), international comparable data is still a challenge. UNICEF’s analysis shows that progress in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is being outpaced by population growth; consequently, the region is the one with highest child poverty numbers and lowest social protection coverage. Preliminary MTR findings show that for UNICEF to increase its programmatic contribution to the SDGs related to this Goal Area, there is a need to accelerate work on social spending efficiency and effectiveness by building staff capacity and partnerships in public finance, to expand UNICEF’s approach on cash plus, to further scale up gender programming, and to accelerate disability-inclusive programmatic efforts in both humanitarian and development contexts and disabilities.

37. More detailed findings and recommendations are being developed and validated, and in each case UNICEF is already strengthening the evidence base for identifying the right blend of strategies and approaches to help it accelerate global progress. Crucially, the organization is also ensuring that strategic decisions undertaken through the MTR process are being reflected in the workplans and budgets of UNICEF Divisions and Regional Offices with priority consideration being given those that focus their revised plans on advancing the programmatic areas identified for acceleration and prioritization through the MTR.

38. Accelerating progress in certain result areas while also addressing emerging issues, such as climate, and mental health and psychosocial support, requires increased funding, especially flexible funding. Overall, while UNICEF’s total income in 2019 increased by 6% compared to 2018, core resources declined by 4% in 2019. If this trend is not reversed in 2020, it could undermine the ambitious results envisaged in the remaining years of the Strategic Plan. UNICEF has developed new strategies to accelerate the

mobilization of regular resources that include more targeted strategies to rally more partners around regular resources, thereby diversifying our funding base.

39. One of the key lessons already identified through the MTR is that the organization needs to do more to match the programmatic result to the best strategies for delivering results at scale. Likewise those strategies need to be flexible and responsive to the specific demands of evolving programmatic priorities. The MTR is also looking at the issue of programming in high-income countries and how to achieve seamless programming and funding with Natcoms as we look to meet the commitment to ‘universality’ enshrined in Agenda 2030 and find the best model for programming in diverse contexts.

40. Notwithstanding the incorporation of findings and recommendations from a) recent evaluations related to humanitarian action; b) the revision of the Core Commitments for Children, c) the Humanitarian Review, and d) ongoing analysis of UNICEF’s efforts to ensure more systematic integration of humanitarian and development considerations in programming; UNICEF has also ensured that the humanitarian dimension of its work is reflected in the broader MTR effort, including the development of preliminary findings. During the MTR process to date, the necessity for analysis of the scale and trajectory of children in humanitarian situations on SDG acceleration efforts became clearly evident and is an ongoing area of focus. Other early recommendations and findings include: implementing a systematic approach to fulfilling the Core Commitments for Children in humanitarian and fragile contexts; the criticality of factoring in humanitarian data at an early point in target setting; ensuring that advocacy for each UNICEF Goal Area should reflect emergency concerns such as access.

41. On gender equality, the other major cross-cutting dimension of UNICEF’s work, the MTR has sought to ensure that findings and recommendations emerging from the GAP 2 evaluation are fed into the review and analysis process. Critically the organization has sought to bring the findings from the GAP 2 evaluation into the discussions across different MTR workstreams but particularly the full scope of the Programme Review Task Team, in order to ensure that its findings and recommendations are mainstreamed into the MTR analysis and deliberations in UNICEF’s most critical sectors. The key insights from the GAP 2 evaluation that are informing the MTR to date include: a) strengthening institutional ownership and accountability; b) accelerating programmatic results and increase investment in key areas; c) building an inspired, skilled workforce - innovations in capacity development and learning; and d) having a forward-looking, field-focused Gender Team. This has been further unpacked into recommended actions and used to identify key areas where the momentum from the GAP 2 evaluation and the MTR can be used to drive programmatic acceleration.

42. On UN Reform, the MTR Task Team has developed a set of recommendations that includes: strengthening alignment and programming towards SDGs through systematic partnerships; mainstreaming SDG financing, including from private sector, across all areas of work; proactively pursuing “holistic programming” across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding-human rights spectrum; better reflecting UNICEF’s accountabilities in relation to RCs/DCO and other UNDS entities at country, regional and global level; balancing UNICEF’s brand and fundraising ability; realizing efficiency gains made possible by UNDS reform, wherever possible; and investing in staff and strengthening our ability to drive the reform at all levels. The MTR has also prompted the organization to look deeper and more programmatically than before at the full and differentiated implications of UN reform on its work across different sectors and result areas and this has been identified as an area of analysis that needs further strengthening.

43. High level MTR findings and recommendations will be discussed further with Member States over the coming months and will be presented as part of the Executive Director’s Annual Report and Mid Term Review of the Strategic Plan. Additional **analysis** will be made available as part of the full package of documents for the Annual Session of the Executive Board, including through an Annex presenting Lessons

Learned from the MTR – which will focus on capturing and presenting lessons from across the five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan and a subset of cross-cutting issues such as UN Reform, Systems Strengthening, and Leaving No Child Behind.

## Next Steps and deliverables

44. UNICEF is now beginning to implement Phase 3 of the MTR and review field level data to validate and augment the preliminary findings for the MTR and finalize proposed changes to the Strategic Plan results Framework. In the interim, the MTR Workshop with the Executive Board on February 26<sup>th</sup> 2020 will allow for a more thorough discussion of the findings and emerging recommendations across the different components and workstreams of the process.

45. Work on the draft MTR documents will not begin until March when the 2019 field data has been assessed and the MTR workshop has taken place.

46. The following documents will be presented at the 2020 Annual Session of the Executive Board:

- Board document: Midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 and the Executive Director' Annual Report
- Annex: Report on the implementation of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021
- Annex: Data Companion and Scorecard 2019
- Annex: Report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
- Annex: Working together to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Joint annex on implementation of the common chapter of the Strategic Plans 2018–2021 of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women.
- Annex: Revised Results Framework for the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021
- Annex: Lessons Learned on Key Issues through the mid-term review of the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan.
- Revised Integrated Budget