For every child, ANSWERS
Evidence for impact
Who we are

UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti conducts research to inform policymaking and implementation. We strengthen evidence to make programmes and systems for children more effective. We analyse the impact of development interventions. We convene the world’s leading minds to examine complex problems and find innovative solutions. We build capacity and assure quality for ethically generated research across UNICEF.

Key facts

Florence, Italy
Hosted in the 600-year-old Ospedale degli Innocenti – a centre dedicated to serving the most vulnerable children since 1419.

100 Countries
Innocenti is on the ground in about 100 countries, in every UNICEF region, conducting empirical research in low-, middle- and high-income countries and providing advisory technical support.

Expertise
We are a diverse team of research experts supported by top knowledge management, communication and operations teams.

30 Years
From our inception we have probed the deepest questions facing children, to find solutions that can help realize their rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

200 Partnerships
Our work is carried out through a unique collaboration with UNICEF programme offices, governments, research institutes, multilateral and UN Agencies, the private sector, donors and development policy think tanks.

1000 Publications
Since 1989 we have produced a catalogue of over one thousand peer-reviewed papers, academic journal articles, edited scientific volumes, working papers, digests, descriptive reports, case studies, policy briefs and studies.

Our journey

1989
STUDIES ON THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
Key early analysis on the best interest of the child, the ladder of child participation, inter-country adoption and national child rights implementation capacity.

1990
MONITORING IMPACT OF CRITICAL EVENTS
Elaborating the principle of ‘adjustment with a human face,’ monitoring the impact of the fall of the Soviet Union on children and studying responses to global financial collapse.

2000
CHILD POVERTY AND WELL-BEING
Developing the first multidimensional child poverty models, reporting on child well-being in high-income countries and pioneering evidence base on what works in social protection.

2010
FOUNDATION FOR CHILD PROTECTION
Innocenti spearheaded the earliest studies, conferences and policy papers on trafficking, juvenile justice, child labour, children in armed conflict and violence affecting children.

TODAY
INNOVATION ON EMERGING ISSUES
Leading a rapid research response on COVID-19 and children, analyzing the impact of environmental change on children, research on children and ICTs, children on the move and convening on child and youth mental health.

We sometimes refer to UNICEF’s mission, which now becomes the mission of our centre in Florence, as striving to create a worldwide ethos of ‘Children First.’ Where better to establish a centre dedicated to this mission than here in this inspiring city of Florence.

JIM GRANT
former UNICEF Executive Director, inaugurated UNICEF Innocenti in 1988
What we do

Innocenti’s work can be framed according to three broad pillars: 1) Generating high-quality research; 2) Equipping UNICEF and partners to generate evidence that conforms to ethical standards; and 3) Convening on issues affecting children and young people.

UNICEF Innocenti plays a leadership role in realizing the agenda to generate knowledge. I cannot think of a more important and urgent time for us to be investing in research to generate the knowledge that policymakers and programmers need around the world to address the health needs of children who have been so profoundly affected by the pandemic.

DR. VIKRAM PATEL
Professor at Harvard School of Medicine,
Co-founder of Sangath Foundation
Childhood exposure to crises and shocks remains poorly understood. Innocenti is looking at how best to respond, striking a balance between humanitarian and development action.

Examining how gender-responsive and age-sensitive social protection can reduce poverty and achieve gender equality and prevent vulnerabilities driven by sex or age.

Spotlighting high-quality research in UNICEF that has shaped programming and policy for children around the world with high potential for scaling up.

Generating and using quality research to address the global learning crisis, with a focus on embedding research deeply into UNICEF programmes, using co-creation with intended beneficiaries.

Measuring multidimensional child poverty through analysis of overlapping deprivations in 50 national and 3 regional studies.

Focusing on the well-being of children in high-income countries, with league tables ranking OECD and EU countries according to the latest available comparative data.

Generating and using quality research to address the global learning crisis, with a focus on embedding research deeply into UNICEF programmes, using co-creation with intended beneficiaries.

Evaluating strategies to combat child labour; advancing global evidence on violence against children; amplifying the voices of children on the move to better understand their mobility pathways.

Expanding the first global partnership for cross-national comparable evidence on children’s internet use to better understand digital risks and opportunities.

Focusing on the well-being of children in high-income countries, with league tables ranking OECD and EU countries according to the latest available comparative data.

Rapid research response offering the latest evidence on education, health, social protection and child protection in a pandemic.

Focusing on the well-being of children in high-income countries, with league tables ranking OECD and EU countries according to the latest available comparative data.

Spotlighting high-quality research in UNICEF that has shaped programming and policy for children around the world with high potential for scaling up.

We undertake high-quality research with programme and policy relevance. We set research standards and provide guidance to other parts of UNICEF, including ethical considerations. We catalyse and convene partners to support dialogue and advocacy on issues affecting children, engaging with next generation questions. Some current priorities:
Showcased evidence on social protection’s potential to tackle multidimensional vulnerabilities.

ECUADOR
Research found that economic transfers, including cash transfers, improved social cohesion among Colombian refugees.

BRAZIL
Innocenti led global research that contributed to digital strategies for both child protection online and digital inclusion.

GHANA
Studies found that combining cash transfers and health measures increased enrolment in Ghana’s national health insurance programme.

ITALY
Co-hosted inaugural Leading Minds for Children and Young People conference on youth mental health and organized the first UNICEF Innocenti Film Festival on child rights.

MAURITANIA
Partnership with Akelius Foundation is scaling up evidence generation on digital language learning platforms for vulnerable children.

MALAWI
Research showed cash grants can improve adolescents’ mental well-being and help break the cycle of poverty and poor mental health.

MAURITANIA
Research on vulnerabilities faced by children on the move documented why and how young people seek to migrate from their own perspective.

LEBANON
Research showed how cash transfers in humanitarian settings support reductions in child labour and improved outcomes in education, nutrition and well-being for refugee children.

JORDAN
Research demonstrated cash-based programming helped refugee children to stay in school and enhanced their mental health and nutrition.

INDIA
A national workshop identified data and knowledge gaps on child labour in South Asia to guide future efforts to eliminate child labour in the region.

OECD & JAPAN
Research on family-friendly policies prompted Japan’s Ministry of Labour to increase subsidies for companies whose employees take paternity leave.

EAST ASIA & THE PACIFIC
Evidence workshop engaged UNICEF regional and country offices to identify a vision and actions to strengthen the evidence culture in the region.

NEW ZEALAND
Report Card 15 referenced in the first national Government of New Zealand strategy to achieve well-being for all children and young people.

JORDAN
Research demonstrated cash-based programming helped refugee children to stay in school and enhanced their mental health and nutrition.

RWANDA & UGANDA
Results of the teacher absenteeism project studies were used for national policy dialogue.

I’m particularly proud to live in a country that in the 1400s created an institute dedicated to abandoned children, and UNICEF Innocenti is a great example of how we continue this tradition of serving community and children now in the global sense. We are proud to support UNICEF Innocenti and we are also very keen to make sure that its mandate is translated into concrete actions.

EMANUELA DEL RE, Italian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Thinking forward

UNICEF Innocenti’s forward-looking research aims to be adaptive and to focus on issues that are increasingly shaping children’s chances to enjoy a safe and secure childhood and adolescence. These will include seeking answers to societal, developmental and environmental challenges that affect their present and threaten their future.

Convening Leading Minds
Convening experts, practitioners, policymakers and youth leaders to identify evidence gaps, share good practices, and set research and policy agendas for the future.

Mental Health
Defining a research agenda for child and youth mental health in conjunction with key knowledge brokers to chart pathways for evidence generation and policy action.

Climate and Environment
Studying impact of air pollution on children, exploring causal analysis and quantifying how air pollution may be affecting critical child outcomes.

Behavioural science
Innocenti is developing a research and capacity-building agenda for enhanced use of behavioural science to accelerate results for children.

Digital Service Delivery
Examination of the efficacy and implications of the global shift toward digital basic services delivery from health to learning and beyond.

UNICEF’s Office of Research-Innocenti is a unique and influential hub of research and knowledge on children’s issues. For over three decades, it has been a magnet for the world’s top researchers to come together, share their work, and help us shape cutting-edge, lifesaving programmes and interventions. As children face an increasingly challenging world, this work is more vital than ever. The research, evidence and ideas generated at Innocenti can help drive innovative new solutions that can improve, and save, children’s lives.

HENRIETTA H. FORE
Executive Director, UNICEF
Innocenti is the heart of UNICEF’s global research work. It has led the generation of a robust body of evidence and knowledge which has shaped the UNICEF work in Eastern and Southern Africa with regard to social protection. One good example is the Transfer Project which has helped to measure the impact of cash transfers on children, and better inform government policy in this area.

MOHAMMED FALL
Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa