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**For decision**

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## United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

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Item 8 of the provisional agenda\*

### **Management response to the evaluation report**

### **Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies**

#### *Summary*

The formative evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies provides an assessment of progress towards the overall goal of strengthening the coverage and quality of UNICEF humanitarian action in such emergencies. The evaluation challenges UNICEF to adapt the quality and depth of its humanitarian response to tackle complex humanitarian emergencies, which have increasingly come to absorb the larger share of humanitarian expenditure; this in turn requires a rethinking on business processes and capacities in the institution to fully meet its commitments. It requires also ensuring that the complexities of the context and required response are managed through light processes that help the country offices to be agile and responsive to shifting humanitarian needs and priorities.

The evaluation points to challenging requirements for change that will require a multi-year effort to achieve. It also identifies issues requiring further assessment to indicate a clear way forward and which are likely to have resource implications; these include: (a) addressing the implications for UNICEF global capacity of more-ambitious commitments on coverage, quality and equity; (b) determining a more comprehensive approach to localization; and (c) strengthening a light but multidimensional analysis bringing together the dimensions of vulnerability, access constraints, partnerships and modalities for operational presence, to better guide advocacy and operational programme strategy.

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\* E/ICEF/2019/9.

*Note:* The present document was processed in its entirety by UNICEF.



It is important to highlight that the evaluation raises significant issues and challenges that UNICEF shares with the humanitarian system as a whole. Addressing these challenges will also require a shift in inter-agency practices towards a stronger, more principled and needs-based approach to humanitarian planning, monitoring and reporting; a more systematically principled approach to humanitarian negotiations with non-State actors and host Governments; and efforts to extend access to the most vulnerable. UNICEF can advocate for these changes as a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and humanitarian country team as well as in its cluster lead agency role. Successful change will still depend upon parallel action by other bodies and agencies.

The findings and recommendations highlight several issues that were already embraced in the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and its ongoing implementation plans. It provides useful evidence to update the current baseline analysis and inform key strategies of change. Several recommendations point to reinforcing measures newly embedded in corporate commitments and reporting. UNICEF acknowledges that the ongoing revision of the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action offers an opportunity to define more-robust policy, programme and operational commitments that are most relevant to principled humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies.

Elements of a draft decisions are provided in section II.

## I. Key evaluation recommendations and UNICEF management response

<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible section(s)</i>	<i>Expected completion date</i>	<i>Actions taken and implementation stage:</i> <i>Not started</i> <i>Under way</i> <i>Completed</i> <i>Cancelled</i>	<i>Supporting documents</i>
<p><b>Evaluation overarching recommendation</b></p> <p>A strategic vision for achieving coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies</p> <p>The overarching recommendation of this evaluation is for UNICEF to articulate a strategic vision for accessing those who are in greatest need of assistance in a timely and principled manner, particularly in contexts where there is limited funding. This should address the dilemmas associated with meeting the UNICEF mandate in complex humanitarian emergencies that are outlined in the recommendations below.</p> <p><b>Management response: Agree</b></p> <p>UNICEF recognizes the need for clarity of commitments in relation to coverage, quality and equity in the face of inadequate funding, in general, as well as in the face of access constraints in complex humanitarian emergencies. Strengthening this requires clarification at a policy level as well as support for more-consistent positioning and capacity in UNICEF engagement at the country level within the humanitarian country teams and with humanitarian and national counterparts, as applicable to all humanitarian emergency contexts, including complex emergencies. While UNICEF commits to advocate for greater consistency and transparency in balancing coverage, quality and equity in principled humanitarian action, change will also depend upon a corresponding shift in inter-agency guidance and practice. Such a shift entails a challenge for the wider humanitarian community.</p>				
<p><b>Action 0.0.1</b></p> <p>Clarify UNICEF commitments in relation to coverage, quality and equity in the ongoing revision of the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. This will be followed by an extensive roll-out and dissemination strategy for the Core Commitments overall, which will support culture change on these points along with others.</p>	<p>Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS)</p>	<p>Q4 2019</p>	<p>Under way</p> <p>Core Commitments revision scoping concluded</p> <p>Drafting initiated</p>	
<p><b>Action 0.0.2</b></p> <p>Assess UNICEF organizational capacity (policy, structure, accountability, systems, resources) to deliver on its commitments on coverage, quality and equity, including as provider of last resort.</p>	<p>EMOPS</p>	<p>Q4 2019</p>	<p>Not started</p>	

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<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 1</b></p> <p>Strengthen the generation of evidence by UNICEF and its evidence-based decision-making in complex humanitarian emergencies, to determine coverage and quality</p> <p><b>Management response: Agree</b></p> <p>However, the detailed recommendations that follow (recommendations 1.1, 1.2, 1.3) do not address the major underlying challenge: the assessment and monitoring of humanitarian needs, beyond initial approximate rapid assessments, and finding manageable solutions to track shifts in humanitarian needs and outcomes, including disaggregation for most vulnerable populations. This requires a collaborative approach across humanitarian actors as well as connections to data investments in the development sector and innovative adaptations of existing methodologies and technologies for data collection and information management. As noted in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, this focus on outcome-level data is planned as an evolving area of work under the UNICEF data strategy for children. The following actions are planned as next steps to build collaboration with humanitarian partners to address this; progress in this area is, again, a challenge that must be taken up throughout the wider humanitarian system.</p>				
<p><b>Action 1.0.1</b></p> <p>Develop a vision and plan for UNICEF to leverage the full continuum of situation data relevant for effective decision-making in humanitarian and fragile contexts, including complex emergencies, as well to build collaboration across humanitarian actors; articulate what is possible and at what cost, and mobilize resources to execute the plan.</p>	<p>Division of Data, Research and Policy (DRP) with EMOPS, Programme Division (PD) and regional offices</p>	<p>Q1 2020 (vision and plan) Q3 2020 (initial resources in place)</p>	<p>Not started</p>	
<p><b>Action 1.0.2</b></p> <p>Establish an interdivisional humanitarian data task team to support coordination and the consolidation of humanitarian data work across the organization, with a focus on data in complex emergencies.</p>	<p>DRP with EMOPS, PD</p>	<p>Q3 2019</p>	<p>Terms of reference drafted</p>	<p>Draft terms of reference</p>

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<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 1.1</b></p> <p>UNICEF and the clusters it leads should calculate targets based on an assessment of people in need. Changes in targets should be consistently monitored and transparently reported. This will provide the strongest evidence base for advocating for adequate resources for humanitarian response:</p> <p>(a) UNICEF should seek to achieve greater consistency in assessing, monitoring and reporting its humanitarian coverage by routinely measuring coverage as a proportion of the people in need for each of its sectors;</p> <p>(b) UNICEF should use its role as cluster lead agency to advocate to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) for the consistent measurement of coverage as a proportion of people in need to be adopted across clusters;</p> <p>(c) To improve evidence of its humanitarian results, UNICEF should strengthen its investments in innovation and technology so that it can more consistently monitor the coverage and quality of its programmes at a disaggregated level. Where progress is made, it should seek to work with its partners and clusters to strengthen practice at the inter-agency level;</p> <p>(d) Acknowledging that UNICEF targets will change as a consequence of internal and external constraints (e.g., access, capacity, funding, security), UNICEF should be more transparent in documenting and reporting the basis on which initial targets have been calculated and how these change throughout the year.</p> <p><b>Management response: Agree</b></p> <p>The recommendations are aligned with a range of ongoing UNICEF efforts to strengthen UNICEF-led cluster and country-office inputs to the humanitarian needs overview and humanitarian response planning processes and are also aligned with UNICEF-specific Humanitarian Action for Children appeal processes and internal response planning, tracking and reporting processes, both initiated in 2018. Ongoing efforts address major challenges, including: quality needs assessment, including the stronger identification of the most-vulnerable populations; the calculation and use of population-in-need estimates, including some of the sector-specific challenges in projections of need; humanitarian response strategy development; equity and needs-based target-setting for appeals and related costing methods; the setting and tracking of adjusted operational targets based on funding received; and more-transparent and systematic reporting of results in relation to figures on populations in need, initial targets and adjusted targets, as relevant. Across all these detailed technical shifts, UNICEF is also balancing an overarching concern to keep processes light and effective for country office management.</p>				
<p><b>Action 1.1.1</b></p> <p>(Ref. 1.1 (a) and (d)) Build on ongoing improvements in guidance, training and technical support on needs assessment, planning, monitoring and reporting for UNICEF-led cluster/sector coordinators and UNICEF country offices, addressing major challenges, as outlined above, in</p>	<p>EMOPS with PD, regional offices</p>	<p>Q4 2019</p>	<p>Under way</p> <p>Initial training and technical support reached over 25 countries in Q3–4 2018 in support of the 2019 process for the</p>	

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line with Core Commitments, including humanitarian principles.			humanitarian needs overview (HNO), humanitarian response plans (HRPs) and the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal.	
<p><b>Action 1.1.2</b> (Ref. 1.1 (a), (b) and (d)) Continue with ongoing annual stock-taking analysis of the quality of the HNO and HRPs from the UNICEF-led cluster perspective and of Humanitarian Action for Children appeals and internal response plans, to feed into further refinements to training and technical support.</p>	EMOPS with PD	Ongoing	Under way Review of 2018 HNO, HRPs, and Humanitarian Action for Children appeals	
<p><b>Action 1.1.3</b> (Ref. 1.1 (b)) UNICEF will advocate through IASC and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for more consistent and transparent inter-agency approaches to calculating population in need and inter-agency targets.</p>	EMOPS	Q2 2019	Under way Inputs to OCHA review of HNO and HRP guidance	
<p><b>Action 1.1.4</b> (Ref. 1.1 (c)) Finalize and roll out eTools partner reporting portals (for cluster and UNICEF implementing partners) to support the improved disaggregation of coverage data; and the eTools field monitoring module to support the ongoing monitoring of programme quality, integrating both feedback mechanisms from affected people and</p>	Field Results Group (FRG) with EMOPS and regional offices	Q3 2020	Under way UNICEF implementing partner reporting portal piloted in three country offices First user acceptance test of cluster partner reporting portal	

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the tracking of follow-up response.			completed Development of field monitoring module under way	
<p><b>Action 1.1.5</b> (Ref. 1.1 (c) and 4.1 (d)) In the context of establishing a revised organizational monitoring architecture globally, establish clear standards for monitoring coverage, quality and equity across the humanitarian-development nexus, including in complex emergencies, as part of a minimum monitoring package for country offices, taking into consideration different contexts, operational constraints and programme scale.</p>	FRG with EMOPS, PD, DRP, regional offices	Q4 2019	Under way Draft policy circulated to regional offices	
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 1.2</b> UNICEF should clarify its corporate expectations for the delivery of coverage with equity in complex humanitarian emergencies. This should explicitly address the concern highlighted in the evaluation of how country offices should balance reaching the greatest number of people with reaching those in greatest need.</p> <p>(a) UNICEF should resolve the dilemma of how to balance coverage and equity in complex humanitarian emergencies with a view to clarifying its approach;</p> <p>(b) In their response strategies, country offices should include a vulnerability analysis that draws on the relevant HNO and clearly identifies the people most in need and provides a justification for the targeting of certain groups rather than others;</p> <p>(c) In Level 3 and humanitarian evaluations, UNICEF should routinely include an examination of coverage with equity to build an evidence base for assessing its performance.</p> <p><b>Management response: Agree</b> See also actions planned in response to the overarching recommendation and recommendations 1.1 and 2.1.</p>				

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<p>Recommendations 1 (overall) and 1.2 (a) are also addressed through the following actions:</p> <p>(a) 0.0.1, regarding clarifying commitments in the revised Core Commitments and the extensive roll-out and dissemination strategy accompanying it;</p> <p>(b) 1.1.1, regarding improved guidance, training and technical support;</p> <p>(c) 2.1.1, regarding guidance and support mechanisms to address dilemmas in achieving principled humanitarian access, with a focus on coverage, quality and equity.</p>				
<p><b>Action 1.2.1</b></p> <p>(Ref. 1.2 (b)) Improve guidance, training and technical support as outlined above in 1.1.1, including light planning tools to support greater clarity in the UNICEF approach to reaching the most-vulnerable population groups across sectors (one among other key elements of response strategy).</p>	EMOPS with PD and regional offices	Q4 2019	Under way	
<p><b>Action 1.2.2</b></p> <p>(Ref. 1.2 (c)) Develop and introduce evaluation methodology to assess the coverage, quality and equity of UNICEF humanitarian action in humanitarian evaluations led by the Evaluation Office and regional and country offices (to be embedded in the guidance note for humanitarian evaluations already under development).</p>	Evaluation Office with EMOPS and PD	Q4 2019	Under way	

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<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 1.3</b></p> <p>UNICEF should undertake regular analysis to adapt programme approaches and partnerships to maximize their relevance and their potential to reach those in greatest need. Underpinning this should be an approach that consistently prioritizes agency presence and ensures the greatest proximity to affected people.</p> <p>(a) UNICEF should routinely develop light operational analysis to permit evidence-based planning and programme delivery in complex humanitarian emergencies. At a minimum, this should include actor mapping; conflict, needs, coverage and gap analysis; and changes in access;</p> <p>(b) Context analysis should be used as a lens to regularly review programme approaches to ensure their relevance and to critically assess the scope that may exist to adapt or expand programmes to exploit changes in access (coverage), address new or unmet needs (equity) or to adapt approaches to strengthen quality;</p> <p>(c) Context analysis should also be used as a means of regularly reviewing UNICEF partnerships with a view to ensuring that partners are best able to provide principled assistance, maintain the greatest presence and proximity to affected people and have the skills and capacity to deliver programme quality;</p> <p>(d) Regional offices should monitor and support country offices in this task and trigger periodic strategy reviews and shifts, if required.</p> <p><b>Management response: Agree</b></p> <p>UNICEF considers that the underlying challenge to this recommendation is to strengthen light, agile and multidimensional analysis at the country level, simplifying and bringing together different analysis lenses and professional specializations within the country office and regional/headquarters support functions.</p>				
<p><b>Action 1.3.1</b></p> <p>(Ref. 1.3 (a), (b) and (c)) Assess and propose the way forward on country office support mechanisms for agile, timely and multidimensional analysis and strategy development (linking the dimensions of vulnerability and access analysis; partnerships; and operational presence).</p>	EMOPS	Q4 2019	Not started	

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<p><b>Action 1.3.2</b> (Ref. 1.3 (b)) In fragile contexts, including complex emergencies, and in new country programme documents, intensify global support to mandatory country-level risk analysis and its use in risk-informed programming and humanitarian response strategy, including a focus on the analysis of vulnerabilities. This is a priority focus within the 2019 roll-out of the new procedure on linking humanitarian and development programming.</p>	<p>PD with DRP and EMOPS</p>	<p>Q4 2019</p>	<p>Under way</p>	
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 2</b></p> <p>Strengthen the capacity of UNICEF to deliver principled humanitarian action and resolve ethical dilemmas in complex humanitarian emergencies to strengthen humanitarian access.</p> <p><b>Management response: Partially agree</b></p> <p>UNICEF highlights that the challenges are as much ethical as operational and emphasizes the need to develop capacity at multiple levels of the organization to fully operationalize humanitarian principles. See caveats in response to recommendation 2.1 .</p>				
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 2.1</b></p> <p>There is a need to strengthen the understanding and capacity of all UNICEF staff (at both the headquarters and country-office levels) and partners about the practical use of humanitarian principles to make structured, ethical decisions on programme access, coverage and quality.</p> <p>(a) At the country-office level, UNICEF must ensure that its front-line staff understand and can use humanitarian principles to make operational decisions. Any knowledge gaps that exist should be identified and addressed through training;</p> <p>(b) At the country-office and field-office levels, UNICEF should designate a staff member to lead on access to provide specialist support and maintain an overview of the UNICEF approach. Staff selection for these roles should prioritize understanding of context, conflict and power dynamics as well as personal networks and integrity;</p> <p>(c) UNICEF should strengthen its engagement with partners on humanitarian principles and access. Commitments should be routinely referred to in programme documents, training should be provided if required and UNICEF should monitor how its partners and third-party service providers achieve access;</p> <p>(d) UNICEF and its partners should also more deliberately and consistently communicate the use of principles with communities as</p>				

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<p>a means of strengthening acceptance;</p> <p>(e) UNICEF should be more consistent in using its humanitarian country team membership and broader networks with Governments to advocate, when required, for principled access for itself and its partners;</p> <p>(f) At the headquarters level, UNICEF should foster an organizational culture that recognizes, discusses and documents significant ethical dilemmas and decisions to build knowledge, promote transparency and permit consistency in decision-making;</p> <p>(g) EMOPS should produce a short guidance note that outlines the dilemmas inherent in the UNICEF mandate and provide a decision-making framework to assist in prioritizing principled assistance in complex humanitarian emergencies;</p> <p>(h) Acknowledging that decision-making will be context-specific, it is recommended that a framework to guide principled decision-making on donor conditions be developed by the UNICEF Public Partnerships Division (PPD).</p> <p><b>Management response: Partially agree</b></p> <p>Management agrees with the general recommendation to take a more systematic and principled approach to humanitarian access, however, the institutional modalities to do so may differ according to context and would engage several staff members in different capacities. Developing staff capacity and providing support not only at the country-office level but also at the regional-office and headquarters levels would also be relevant in most circumstances.</p> <p>As noted in the evaluation, the impact of donor conditions varies from context to context and, therefore, a standard operating procedure, rather than a framework, will be introduced to allow for context-specific analysis and approaches.</p>				
<p><b>Action 2.1.1</b></p> <p>(Ref. 2.1 (a), (f) and (g). See also 1.2 (a)) Produce short, technical guidance on humanitarian principles and approaches to address the main dilemmas in upholding these in humanitarian action (including how to balance coverage, quality and equity, donor conditions, the impact of sanctions, civil military coordination, integrated missions, etc.) and develop a mechanism for the systematic support of country and regional offices.</p>	EMOPS	Q3 2020	Under way	

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<p><b>Action 2.1.2</b> (Ref. 2.1 (a), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) and (h). See also 1.2 (a), 2.2 (c), 3.2 (d) and 5.2) Mainstream humanitarian principles systematically in key programme, advocacy and operational support policies, guidance, trainings and relevant decision-making procedures, articulating the specific applications of humanitarian principles (e.g., integrated in the Core Commitments review, the emergency preparedness and response review, advocacy strategies, etc.).</p>	EMOPS with regional offices PD	Q3 2020	Under way	
<p><b>Action 2.1.3</b> (Ref. 2.1 (b), (c), (d) and (e)) Launch the dissemination plan of the UNICEF Humanitarian Access Framework with the aim to cover all relevant functions in the organization and to provide the mechanisms to support country offices in a more systematic manner to develop and implement humanitarian access strategies.</p>	EMOPS with regional offices	Q4 2019	Under way	
<p><b>Action 2.1.4</b> (Ref. 2.1 (h)) Consolidate analysis of how donors' conditions hamper effective UNICEF programming and use it for advocacy with Member States, including with political, technical and legal interlocutors.</p>	PPD with EMOPS	Q3 2020	Under way	
<p><b>Action 2.1.5</b> (Ref. 2.1 (h)) Acknowledging that UNICEF humanitarian action is principled, and that each context requires a specific course of action and</p>	PPD with EMOPS	Q3 2020	Under way	

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decisions, establish standard operating procedures for country and regional offices on the treatment of donor conditions, including a process for escalation.				
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 2.2</b></p> <p>UNICEF should take a more structured approach to identifying, equipping and supporting staff at the country level who engage in humanitarian negotiations with non-State entities and host Governments.</p> <p>(a) Disseminate widely among staff working in complex humanitarian situations the UNICEF revised guidance on engaging with non-State entities, which provides an enhanced framework for decision-making and includes an accountability and decision-making tree;</p> <p>(b) At the country-office and field-office levels, UNICEF should designate staff members to lead on negotiations; selection for this role should draw on personal knowledge, experience, integrity, networks and profiles. Where appropriate, these responsibilities should be merged into the humanitarian access role (see recommendation 2.1 (b));</p> <p>(c) UNICEF should take a more structured approach to training and supporting staff tasked with negotiating access at both the operational and strategic levels, and should engage with staff in advance of, during and after negotiations to assess risk and to provide support (see recommendation 2.1(a)).</p> <p><b>Management response: Partially agree</b></p> <p>Management agrees with the general recommendation to take a more structured approach to UNICEF engagement with non-State entities and host Governments for humanitarian action. However, the institutional modalities to do so may differ according to the purpose of the engagement and would engage several staff members in different capacities. Developing staff capacity and providing support not only at the country-office level but also at the regional-office and headquarters levels would also be relevant in most circumstances. In addition, the recommendations do not adequately reflect that humanitarian negotiations require inter-agency coordination and that, in many cases, UNICEF is not alone or in the lead in undertaking humanitarian negotiations with non-State entities and host Governments.</p>				
<p><b>Action 2.2.1</b></p> <p>(Ref. 2.2 (a)) Launch the dissemination plan of UNICEF non-State entity engagement manual, including the accountability and decision-making process, with the aim of covering all levels and relevant functions of the organization.</p>	EMOPS with regional offices	Q3 2019	Under way	

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<p><b>Action 2.2.2</b> (Ref. 2.2 (c). See also 2.1, and 5.2) Develop mainstreamed training modules for UNICEF staff on principled humanitarian access, both generic and tailored to specific functions (e.g., leadership, security management, etc.), and identify advanced training service providers on humanitarian negotiations skills.</p>	EMOPS with regional offices	Q3 2020	Under way	
<p><b>Action 2.2.3</b> (Ref. 2.2 (b). See also 2.1.) Develop mechanisms to support country offices in a more systematic manner to develop and implement engagement strategies with specific non-State entities for specific purposes, in line with the UNICEF mandate, including the clarification of roles, risks and management measures.</p>	EMOPS with regional offices	Q3 2020	Under way	
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 2.3</b></p> <p>In fragile and conflict-prone countries, UNICEF must ensure that its engagement with the Government is consistent with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. This is particularly important in situations in which the Government is party to the conflict, is not meeting its responsibilities under international humanitarian law or is otherwise contradicting humanitarian principles.</p> <p>(a) UNICEF should communicate the importance and value of humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law as part of its engagement with the State on systems-strengthening for preparedness and response;</p> <p>(b) To preserve its adherence to humanitarian principles, UNICEF must ensure that it tempers its engagement with the State in countries in which the State is a party to the conflict;</p> <p>(c) In cases in which the State makes demands of UNICEF and the wider humanitarian community that undermine humanitarian principles, UNICEF should collaborate with others in the United Nations country team or the humanitarian country team to defend principled assistance and advocate for the State to meet its responsibilities as outlined in international humanitarian law;</p> <p>(d) As part of its context analysis in complex humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF should routinely elicit and monitor community and partner perceptions about its engagement with the State and its impact on the way it is perceived in conflict-affected areas.</p>				

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<p><b>Management response: Agree</b></p> <p>See also actions planned in relation to recommendation 3, which will also address strengthening routine engagement with communities and partners to monitor perceptions of UNICEF humanitarian action.</p>				
<p><b>Action 2.3.1</b> (Ref. 2.3 (a), (b) and (c). See also 2.1.1 and 2.1.2.) Strengthen existing mechanisms to more systematically support country offices' engagement and advocacy with Governments and relevant duty-bearers to enable principled humanitarian action and uphold international humanitarian law.</p>	EMOPS with regional offices	Ongoing	Under way	
<p><b>Action 2.3.2</b> (Ref. 2.3 (a), (b) and (c)). Develop technical briefs on relevant international humanitarian law-specific issues to inform UNICEF advocacy, dialogue and operational response with relevant duty-bearers, including host Governments.</p>	EMOPS	Q2 2020	Under way	
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 2.4</b></p> <p>UNICEF has a moral obligation to ensure that its partners, including non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, third-party service providers and contractors, have measures in place to ensure duty of care for their staff in complex humanitarian emergencies.</p> <p>(a) In complex humanitarian situations, as part of due diligence, UNICEF section staff should determine that partners have adequate security risk management systems in place and explicitly include this as part of its selection criteria;</p> <p>(b) While UNICEF engagement with third-party service providers is governed by the long-term agreements that it has in place, as part of its due diligence, UNICEF should assess the existing risk management systems and explicitly include this as part of its selection criteria.</p> <p><b>Management response: Partially agree</b></p> <p>The legal obligation is well defined for third-party service providers in UNICEF contracts and covers assurance of duty of care of their staff. UNICEF cannot "ensure" that partners have measures in place but can establish their responsibility to do so through the UNICEF</p>				

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General Terms and Conditions, which is annexed to and forms an integral part of every UNICEF contract. These provisions are the same for third-party providers whether through long-term agreements or stand-alone contracts. At the same time, UNICEF can and does propose to push further on both communicating these responsibilities to service providers and partners and strengthening country office capacity to carry out due diligence with regard to these provisions in the context of complex emergencies.				
<p><b>Action 2.4.1</b></p> <p>Promote the use of the recently launched United Nations Partner Portal (UNPP) (UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP)) as the entry point for due diligence with actual and prospective civil society implementing partners regarding their security risk management systems. The online platform allows civil society partners to share their profiles as well as apply for partnership opportunities. It includes key questions, e.g., on security risk management systems, and allows United Nations agencies to define selection criteria, including access/security considerations.</p>	EMOPS with FRG and regional offices	Ongoing	Under way United Nations Partner Portal introduced in three complex emergencies (Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan)	UNPP ( <a href="http://www.unpartnerportal.org">www.unpartnerportal.org</a> )
<p><b>Action 2.4.2</b></p> <p>(Ref. 2.4 (a) and (b)) Provide technical support to country offices to undertake due diligence in assessing that partners and third-party providers have adequate security risk management systems, processes and resources to identify, prevent, mitigate and respond to security incidents.</p>	EMOPS with regional offices	Ongoing	Not started (to follow 2.4.1)	
<p><b>Action 2.4.3</b></p> <p>(Ref. 2.4 (b)) Strengthen guidance and awareness around obligations in the General Terms and</p>	Supply Division	End of 2019		

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Conditions annexed to all contracts with service providers, including dissemination to UNICEF country offices, with a focus on those in complex emergencies.				
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 3.0</b> Strengthen the accountability of UNICEF to key rights-holders in complex humanitarian emergencies.</p>				
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 3.1</b> UNICEF staff in humanitarian crises need to better understand and act on their accountability commitments to people receiving their assistance and ensure that these are being routinely met.</p> <p>(a) UNICEF must ensure that its staff are familiar with how it defines its accountability to vulnerable communities and the responsibilities that this entails;</p> <p>(b) Linked to the recommendation above, it is important that UNICEF clarify the practical steps required for it to meet these obligations in the context of working in partnership;</p> <p>(c) UNICEF has used innovative approaches to support its staff and partners to engage with affected people targeted by UNICEF - funded assistance. There would be value in determining whether these are relevant to complex humanitarian emergencies and scalable as a means of meeting its accountability obligations as well as for increased programme effectiveness;</p> <p>(d) One of the key purposes of engaging with communities is to gauge satisfaction with the appropriateness and effectiveness of assistance. At the country-office level, UNICEF has a responsibility to routinely collect, analyse and use this information to address concerns that are raised. To achieve this, UNICEF must ensure that there is latitude within its programmes to make course corrections to address communities' concerns about coverage and quality</p> <p><b>Management response: Agree</b></p> <p>Recommendation 3.1 is in line with a broader UNICEF business case and plan of action for scaling up accountability to affected populations (AAP). This will also include attention to strengthening routine engagement with communities and partners in complex emergencies to monitor perceptions of UNICEF engagement with State and non-State actors. See also actions planned in response to recommendation 1.3.1, which addresses processes to support flexibility in shifting programme strategy.</p>				

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<p><b>Action 3.1.1</b> (Ref. 3.1.1 (a), (b) and (c)) Continue the ongoing implementation of the UNICEF business case and action plan for scaling up AAP including:</p> <p>(a) Develop a global AAP handbook and related training modules for face-to-face training, to be included in relevant training opportunities at the country-office and regional-office levels, and e-training on the global training platform;</p> <p>(b) Support knowledge-sharing and the documentation of good practices;</p> <p>(c) Conduct a benchmarking exercise against the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, to provide a robust baseline of current practices and guide future improvement efforts;</p> <p>(d) Assess and map a more consistent way forward to support country office feedback and complaint mechanisms; feedback loops to programme design and course correction; and collective mechanisms for the wider humanitarian response.</p>	EMOPS, PD with regional offices	Q4 2019	Under way	
(Ref 3.1 (d). See also action 1.3.1, which addresses processes to support flexibility in shifting programme strategy.)				
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 3.2</b></p> <p>UNICEF should provide greater and more sustained support to local and national NGO partners in complex humanitarian emergencies, particularly in contexts in which these organizations are best placed to strengthen coverage and quality.</p> <p>(a) In line with the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF should ensure clarity among its staff about its commitment to localization as a strategic engagement with local and national partners and its implications for the ways in which UNICEF seeks to support and</p>				

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<p>strengthen such partners;</p> <p>(b) In access-constrained environments, UNICEF partner review committees should assign priority to partners with the profile, contacts and networks to gain access to communities in greatest need of assistance, even when this means that UNICEF will need to address capacity weaknesses;</p> <p>(c) With a view to strengthening coverage and quality, UNICEF should routinely undertake capacity assessments of its NGO partners in complex humanitarian emergencies as a means of identifying priorities for implementing capacity development strategies with partners;</p> <p>(d) As outlined in the recommendation on humanitarian principles above, UNICEF should (i) strengthen its engagement with partners on issues of gaining and maintaining principled access; (ii) be more proactive in using its network of interlocutors to advocate for partner access where assistance is requested and required; and (iii) strengthen the provision of support to partners for managing risk.</p> <p><b>Management response: Agree</b></p> <p>This recommendation requires taking a comprehensive approach to address systematically the different dimensions of localization, such as partnerships, coordination, capacity development and risk management. The UNICEF approach to localization encompasses engagement with both national and subnational Government and civil society partners. The actions detailed below provide the first steps in outlining a systematic way forward.</p>				
<p><b>Action 3.2.1</b> (Ref. 3.2 (a). See also 2.) Develop a framework on the UNICEF approach to localization in humanitarian emergencies to support country offices.</p>	EMOPS with FRG, PD	Q3 2019	Under way	
<p><b>Action 3.2.2</b> (Ref. 2.2 (b). See also 2.1.) Develop mechanisms to support country offices in a more systematic manner to develop and implement engagement strategies with specific non-State entities for specific purposes in line with the UNICEF mandate, including the clarification of roles, risks and management measures.</p>	EMOPS with FRG, PD	Q3 2020	Not started	

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<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 4</b> Influence inter-agency humanitarian architecture to improve coverage and quality</p>				
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 4.1</b> UNICEF should bring to the attention of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) the evidence from the present evaluation, the recent WFP access evaluation and the Presence and Proximity study to promote greater consistency in how the Department of Safety and Security applies its policies. Concurrently, UNICEF should continue to recruit and deploy high-capacity security officers to complex humanitarian emergencies to strengthen its access.</p> <p>(a) UNICEF should seek allies in IASMN with which to promote positive change in the United Nations security management system;</p> <p>(b) Until change occurs, it will be important for UNICEF to continue to select high-calibre senior security officers to liaise with the humanitarian country team and the Department of Safety and Security and to support country offices in their role of engaging with the designated official to find relevant and principled approaches for humanitarian access;</p> <p>(c) If the use of the programme criticality framework and the decisions of the designated official are considered overly restrictive, UNICEF should consistently document instances in which access requests are rejected to have evidence to escalate concerns and to support its advocacy on expanding access;</p> <p>(d) In complex humanitarian situations, there is scope for country representatives to provide clearer guidance about expectations for staff travel to field offices and programme locations for the purposes of monitoring programme progress and providing support to partners;</p> <p>(e) The use of low-profile missions is considered good practice in volatile environments and has played a key role in permitting UNICEF to support and monitor its programmes, but their use is limited to a small number of countries. UNICEF should seek to distil and share good practices to promote this approach more widely.</p> <p><b>Management response: Agree</b> See also actions planned in relation to 1.1 and 5.1.</p>				
<p><b>Action 4.1.1</b> (Ref. 4.1 (a)) The Principal Security Coordinator, in consultation with Regional Security Advisers, advocates with counterparts, especially IASMN Steering Group, for the proper implementation of the current security risk management process and</p>	EMOPS	Ongoing	Under way Advocacy to IASMN	IASMN Steering Group and full meetings report

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for the development of new approaches to enable access and the delivery of humanitarian programs.				
<p><b>Action 4.1.2</b> (Ref. 4.1(b)) Develop a human resources strategy for the UNICEF security workforce and allocate the right level of security adviser posts, depending upon, inter alia, the complexity and size of operations.</p>	EMOPS with Division of Human Resources, regional offices	Q4 2019	Under way First meeting with regional security advisers scheduled for May 2019	
(Ref 4.1 (c), (d) and (e). See action 1.1.5, which addresses the broader effort to establish clear standards for monitoring coverage, quality and equity, including in complex emergencies, and 5.1.1, which addresses a more systematic knowledge-management and learning strategy for complex emergencies, including approaches to sustain presence.)				
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 4.2</b> UNICEF should coordinate with WFP and the World Health Organization (WHO) to strengthen the institutional basis for and to provide technical direction on the continuum of care for acute malnutrition cases (i.e., the integration of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) treatment).</p> <p>(a) UNICEF, WFP and WHO should share evidence and lessons from the integrated approach adopted in Somalia to strengthen the evidence base for joint action;</p> <p>(b) These should be reviewed alongside similar practices elsewhere to provide a benchmark for the adoption of integrated SAM/MAM programmes in contexts characterized by poor continuity of care;</p> <p>(c) To provide a foundation for the promotion of integrated programming, the memorandum of understanding between UNICEF, WFP and WHO should be revised to strengthen institutional support for the approach</p> <p><b>Management response: Partially agree</b> The scope of collaboration between UNICEF and other United Nations agencies should incorporate both the prevention and the treatment</p>				

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<p>of malnutrition, not just treatment for children with SAM or MAM. In early 2017, UNICEF and WFP launched an initiative to improve the partnership in nutrition, with a focus on strengthening the nutrition response in humanitarian contexts in the areas of treatment of acute malnutrition; nutrition situation analysis and data; infant and young child feeding; leveraging health; water, sanitation and hygiene; and food security. A collaboration framework has been developed. It does not replace the current memorandum of understanding nor the respective agency commitments to nutrition in humanitarian contexts. The mandates, roles and responsibilities of UNICEF and WFP remain the same. The framework instead includes practical recommendations for the operationalization of the memorandum of understanding between the two agencies' country offices at the country, regional and headquarter levels to better support national nutrition policies, plans and actors. The collaboration framework will be released in 2019. In addition, UNICEF, WFP and WHO are collaborating on the policy and evidence levels to optimize and improve current models for the identification and treatment of acute malnutrition.</p>				
<p><b>Action 4.2.1</b> Collaborate with WFP and other partners (Action against Hunger, the Alliance for International Medical Action, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the International Rescue Committee) to pilot simplified combined protocols as part of a combined protocol task force in West Africa.</p>	<p>PD with West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO)</p>	<p>Q4 2020</p>	<p>Under way Piloting timeline established Combined protocol task force in place</p>	
<p><b>Action 4.2.2</b> Contribute to the planned technical meeting, led by WHO (March 2019), in which UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR will seek guidance from WHO to move forward with the use of simplified protocols based on the best evidence to date. The meeting will contribute to the updating of normative guidance, interim or definitive.</p>	<p>PD with WCARO</p>	<p>Q1 2019</p>	<p>Under way Meeting planning under way</p>	

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<p><b>Action 4.2.3</b></p> <p>Co-convene a global summit on the prevention and treatment of wasting with WFP and WHO (September 2019) to frame child wasting in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. Further, the summit will define practical solutions to ensure that wasting prevention and eventual treatment are considered development imperatives in all contexts, not only in humanitarian settings.</p>	<p>PD with WFP, WHO</p>	<p>Q4 2019</p>	<p>Under way</p> <p>Meeting planning under way</p>	
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 5</b></p> <p>UNICEF to adapt its internal approaches and systems to improve coverage and quality</p>				
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 5.1</b></p> <p>As part of the revision of the simplified standard operating procedures (SSOPs), UNICEF should seek to determine the reasons for not applying the simplifications. It should also consider the use of specific simplifications to support humanitarian response outside of Level 2/Level 3 emergencies.</p> <p>(a) Given that the SSOPs strengthen the humanitarian effectiveness of UNICEF, the variability in their uptake should be explicitly addressed in the revisions currently under way;</p> <p>(b) Given the broader use of SSOPs outside of Level 2/Level 3 emergencies, it is recommended that UNICEF strengthen the transparency and consistency of its decision-making by outlining broader humanitarian criteria under which the SSOPs may be applied. Included in this should be a requirement to document the reasons that country offices choose not to adopt the simplifications;</p> <p>(c) UNICEF should define a light approval process for Level 1 emergencies to provide the country office with simplified fast-track human resources procedures and to give the country representative the option to activate, with a well-documented justification approved to the regional director, full access to any Level 2/Level 3 simplifications pertaining to the country-office level deemed critical for the coverage and quality of the humanitarian response;</p> <p>(d) The slow pace of programme document submission and approval led to significant delays in humanitarian responses across all the case study countries. Although the simplifications offer time reductions, they are not consistently applied. It is recommended that UNICEF review the programme cooperation agreements/programme document processes with a view to streamlining.</p>				

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<p><b>Management response: Agree</b></p> <p>The recommendations are aligned to the procedural simplifications already under way.</p>				
<p><b>Action 5.1.1</b></p> <p>(Ref. 5.1 (a), (b) and (c)) The SSOPs will be further simplified and will apply to all Level 2/Level 3 emergencies. Specific SSOPs will also be able to be activated for Level 1 emergencies upon the request of the regional director and the approval of the Director of EMOPS. Measures will be in place to evaluate the use and impact of simplified procedures through humanitarian evaluations and internal audit.</p>	EMOPS with regional offices	Q4 2019	Under way Draft revised corporate emergency activation procedure developed, including measures to expedite and evaluate the use of fast-track emergency procedures (currently called SSOPs).	
<p><b>Action 5.1.2</b></p> <p>(Ref. 5.1 (d)) Roll out recently released partnership tools/instruments with increased oversight and monitoring to support systematic implementation.</p>	FRG with regional offices	Q4 2019	Under way The revised procedure (issued in February 2019) simplifies the humanitarian programme cooperation agreement and programme document, with a revised benchmark of a 15-day process for signature.  The United Nations Partner Portal digital solution (UNPP) is deployed to support further simplification and increased transparency and efficiency in due	Civil society organization procedures and templates UNPP ( <a href="http://www.unpartnerportal.org">www.unpartnerportal.org</a> )

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			diligence in the partner identification/selection process.	
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 5.2</b></p> <p>UNICEF should develop more coherent, modular humanitarian learning and knowledge management mechanisms to ensure that staff working in complex humanitarian emergencies have adequate knowledge, skills and capacities to address the challenges that UNICEF experiences in achieving coverage and quality.</p> <p>(a) Based on the findings of the evaluation, key areas of focus should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Delivering coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies: key principles, UNICEF commitments and approach and how to resolve common dilemmas;</li> <li>(ii) Operationalizing the approach of UNICEF to equity in the context of complex humanitarian emergencies;</li> <li>(iii) Understanding and operationalizing humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law in complex humanitarian situations;</li> <li>(iv) Engagement with States and non-State entities in contexts of conflict and fragility;</li> <li>(v) The challenges of leadership in humanitarian action;</li> <li>(vi) Community engagement and translating the UNICEF accountability framework into practice;</li> <li>(vii) Understanding programme integration in UNICEF and laying the foundations for it in complex humanitarian emergencies;</li> <li>(viii) Risk-informed programming;</li> <li>(ix) Principled approaches to strengthening humanitarian-development linkages in complex humanitarian emergencies;</li> </ul> <p>(b) The adopted strategies must take into consideration the specific challenges faced by country offices in these contexts, which include high turnover, the need to onboard staff with modest prior humanitarian experience and the significant responsibilities held by national staff. Prioritization for learning should be placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Minimum levels of individual skills/knowledge differentiated by function (with the potential of links to individual testing);</li> <li>(ii) Minimum capacities/functions at the level of the country office team (with links to country office self-diagnosis and regional office quality assurance, triggering team-based learning on challenging skills application).</li> </ul>				

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<p><b>Management response: Agree</b></p> <p>The response to this recommendation is also supported by a restructuring change in UNICEF headquarters support mechanisms by which humanitarian evidence, knowledge management and learning functions in EMOPS have been brought together in one strengthened section, the Humanitarian Evidence and Learning Section.</p>				
<p><b>Action 5.2.1</b></p> <p>Humanitarian learning and knowledge management strategy is developed addressing priority gap areas identified with specific content and a targeted approach for team and individual learning to reach country offices in complex humanitarian emergencies. Priority focus is to be on (a) humanitarian leadership and security management and (b) the application of humanitarian principles.</p>	EMOPS with PD	Q4 2019	Under way Concept note under development	
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 5.3</b></p> <p>The case for strengthening UNICEF programme integration in complex humanitarian emergencies has been made in previous studies and evaluations. It is now urgent that UNICEF create a policy and practice environment that enables progress to be made in achieving integration where it will strengthen humanitarian outcomes.</p> <p>(a) UNICEF should update key texts, including the Core Commitments for Children, the Programme Policy and Procedures Manual and, in emergency preparedness and response planning guidance, guidance on partnerships, to reflect the expectation that the integrated approach will be applied where it has potential to strengthen humanitarian outcomes and can be achieved in a timely way;</p> <p>(b) Drawing on examples from recent practice, UNICEF should document models of programme integration typically used to address humanitarian situations;</p> <p>(c) To lay the foundations for programme integration, country offices in complex humanitarian emergencies should routinely examine opportunities as part of their preparedness planning and, where these exist, lay the foundations for integrated assessments.</p> <p><b>Management response: Agree</b></p>				

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<p><b>Action 5.3.1</b> (Ref. 5.3 (a) and (c)) Reinforce intersectorality in the ongoing revision of the Core Commitments for Children, identifying minimum elements of integration in humanitarian response. Further revisions to policy and guidance will be cross-referenced with these elements.</p>	EMOPS, PD	Q4 2019	Under way	
<p><b>Action 5.3.2</b> (Ref. 5.3 (a), (b) and (c)) Following from the new procedure on linking humanitarian and development programming, carry out a regular review of the UNICEF response to the top 10 emergencies for quality assurance on key dimensions of linked humanitarian and development programming, including intersectorality.</p>	EMOPS with PD and regional offices	Ongoing	Under way The terms of reference for the first review has been drafted.	

## II. Draft decision

*The Executive Board*

*Takes note* of the following documents presented to the Executive Board at its annual session of 2019:

1. Annual report for 2018 on the evaluation function in UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2019/14](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2019/15](#));
  2. Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies, its executive summary ([E/ICEF/2019/16](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2019/17](#)).
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