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Management response to the UNICEF evaluation report

Strengthening child protection systems: evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programme performance

Summary

The formative evaluation examines the leadership role of UNICEF and the organization's strategies and programme performance in child protection systems-strengthening (CPSS). The Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 identifies systems-strengthening as a focus area for UNICEF work across sectors. The evaluation outlines the contribution of UNICEF at the global and regional levels to the development and implementation of a systems-strengthening approach to child protection and assesses the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency of interventions through 24 country case studies. An innovative qualitative comparative analysis examined which combinations of UNICEF investments were most effective. The evaluation generated a total of 48 findings. Overall, the evidence shows that some of the organization's investments have yielded greater results than others, and that some contexts are more receptive than others to the kinds of systems-strengthening that UNICEF typically offers.

Five evaluation recommendations are addressed in this management response. They relate to clarifying the UNICEF definition of child protection systems and its role regarding systems-strengthening; defining the organization's niche to maximize its impact; strengthening staff and partner capacities; improving the leveraging of partnerships and resources; and addressing data and management challenges.

To strengthen the UNICEF approach at the country level, the dissemination of the evaluation conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations will be accomplished through regional network and management team meetings and child protection meetings. UNICEF headquarters will develop a series of tools and guidance

* E/ICEF/2019/21.



that will clearly articulate the results to be achieved through child protection systems-strengthening (CPSS). These will inform the development of country programme documents and the midterm review of the Strategic Plan.

Externally, UNICEF will advocate to better integrate a systems approach within the work of existing platforms, such as the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, and other key child-protection partners and donors. UNICEF will use the lessons learned from the evaluation to promote child rights in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to influence policy advocacy and programming that address violence against and the abuse, neglect and exploitation of children.

Elements of a decision for consideration by the Executive Board 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>Evaluation recommendation 1</p> <p>Clarify the UNICEF definition of and role in child protection systems-strengthening (CPSS) and ensure that this approach is reflected in organizational strategies, policies and plans.</p> <p>1.1. Through a consultative process, clarify the desired relationship between issue-based and systems approaches in UNICEF child-protection work and refine the draft programme-impact pathway for CPSS.</p> <p>1.2. Through further documentation, lesson learning and research, define the phases of the CPSS process (systems-building, consolidation and reform, or a similar typology to be determined).</p> <p>1.3. Reflect this clarified narrative on CPSS in any future update of the UNICEF Child Protection Strategy of 2008, setting out accountabilities for CPSS work among the various actors within the organization.</p> <p>Management response: Partially agree</p> <p>Since the adoption of the UNICEF Child Protection Strategy in 2008, significant progress has been made to clarify and better articulate the elements of CPSS as well as the priority actions essential to it. In 2010, UNICEF issued a working paper on CPSS that outlined the key concepts and considerations for adapting a systems approach to child protection. Further, in 2012, UNICEF, along with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Save the Children and World Vision, organized a global conference focused on the theory and practice of CPSS. The conference further refined and clarified the concepts, approaches and priority actions related to CPSS. At the same time, the roll-out of the child protection systems approach was evident through the development of tools and guidance at the regional level and the operationalization of the approach using a systems lens at the national level.</p> <p>With the extensive work that has already been undertaken in terms of both developing conceptual clarity and implementing programming related to CPSS (as recognized through this evaluation) and the lessons learned, the Child Protection Section in headquarters will elaborate further guidance on points 1.1 and 1.2 to show the ways in which an issue-based approach can be used to mobilize greater support from global child-protection actors for CPSS.</p>				
<p>Action 1.1</p> <p>Produce a paper^a on the child protection systems-strengthening approach that describes the programme-impact pathways and</p>	<p>Headquarters</p>	<p>March 2020</p>	<p>Not started</p>	<p>“Adapting a systems approach to child protection: key concepts and considerations”,</p>

^a To be accompanied by the benchmarks referred to in action 5.1.

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clarifies the relationship between CPSS and issue-based work as well as the need to address specific vulnerabilities. The paper will define the phases of systems-strengthening (systems building, consolidation and reform), and contextualize these phases across various country typologies (low-income, lower-middle-income and middle-income countries) and define CPSS work in the context of collaboration with allied sectors and the promotion of child participation.				working paper, UNICEF, 2010. ^b “A better way to protect all children: the theory and practice of child protection systems”, conference report, New Delhi, UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children and World Vision, 2012. ^c
Action 1.2 Mobilize global child-protection actors to issue a joint statement in support of CPSS as a global public good.	Headquarters	December 2020	Not started	
Action 1.3 Advocate with Governments for the prioritization of CPSS in national plans and budgets as well as for a key strategy to address child-protection issues.	Headquarters, regional offices and country-office leadership	December 2020	Under way	

^b Available from: www.unicef.org/protection/files/Adapting_Systems_Child_Protection_Jan__2010.pdf

^c Available from: www.unicef.org/protection/files/C956_CPS_interior_5_130620web.pdf

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<p>Evaluation recommendation 2</p> <p>Define the UNICEF niche in CPSS and invest in the most impactful areas to strengthen child protection systems.</p> <p>2.1 Articulate key priority areas of work and possible entry points for CPSS by context in order to guide programming .</p> <p>2.2 Develop a menu of interventions in each priority area, with a different package of options tailored to each phase of the CPSS process as described in recommendation 1.2 (systems-building, consolidation or reform) and clearly setting out what investments are required at different levels (formal/less formal) of the child protection system.</p> <p>Management response: Agree</p>				
<p>Action 2.1</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to country offices to invest in high-impact interventions (namely services workforce strengthening; the leveraging of public resources; evidence and research; policy advocacy; child-protection information systems; and case management and coordination) with options tailored to each phase and level of the CPSS process (systems-building, consolidation and reform) throughout the country programme cycle.</p>	<p>Headquarters, in collaboration with regional offices</p>	<p>December 2020</p>	<p>Not started</p>	
<p>Action 2.2</p> <p>Issue operational guidelines that offer a menu of high-priority interventions related to each phase and context of child protection systems-strengthening, including for CPSS in humanitarian action.</p>	<p>Headquarters, in collaboration with regional offices</p>	<p>March 2020</p>	<p>Not started</p>	

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<p>Evaluation recommendation 3</p> <p>Strengthen staff and partner capacities and learning on CPSS.</p> <p>3.1 At the headquarters level, revise job descriptions for child-protection chiefs and invest in learning and skills development for staff and partners.</p> <p>3.2 At the regional-office level, step up technical assistance for CPSS.</p> <p>3.3 At the country-office level, embrace CPSS as a learning function and a cross-cutting and management responsibility.</p> <p>Management response: Agree</p>				
<p>Action 3.1</p> <p>Strengthen internal capacities, including through hiring and recruitment processes, by updating the capacity-mapping of child-protection staff conducted during the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 period and reviewing the job descriptions of headquarters and regional- and country-level child-protection leads to reflect CPSS-related responsibilities and associated competencies.</p>	Headquarters	December 2019	Under way	“Child protection capacity mapping survey: key findings and recommendations”, UNICEF, 2014 (internal document).
<p>Action 3.2</p> <p>Develop and make available learning resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a mechanism to encourage stretch assignments, staff exchanges and mentorship programmes designed to enhance the capacities of national staff who work on 	Headquarters, in collaboration with regional offices	March 2020	Not started	

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<p>CPSS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and distribute a catalogue of learning opportunities, including training programmes related to CPSS and other related trainings at the global level catering to entry- (including Junior Professional Programme), mid- and senior-level child-protection staff of UNICEF, through an update of the Agora child protection learning pathway. 				
<p>Action 3.3 Facilitate the provision of expert technical assistance and advice on CPSS through long-term arrangements for services.</p>	Headquarters	June 2019	Completed	Global long-term arrangement for services (LTAS) for child protection support, UNICEF Child Protection Section (internal document)
<p>Evaluation recommendation 4 Leverage partnerships and resources for CPSS.</p> <p>4.1 Invest in communication and advocacy, including by putting forward business cases across the range of CPSS contexts .</p> <p>4.2 Develop a partnerships and resourcing strategy for CPSS, assisting donors to open up to supporting systems -strengthening.</p> <p>4.3 Improve the adequacy, equity, efficiency and effectiveness of public finance for child-protection services and systems, building on the successful financial benchmarking work done to date and through closer collaboration with social policy teams at the country level.</p> <p>Management response: Agree</p> <p>For the past two years, the thematic funds for Goal Area 3 have already had a clear focus on systems-strengthening as a priority area,</p>				

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hence the proposed actions below build on those efforts to further leverage funds for CPSS.				
Action 4.1 Issue an advocacy brief on CPSS for national-level policymakers and decision makers that describes the UNICEF child protection systems approach.	Headquarters	June 2020	Not started	
Action 4.2 Develop a business case for CPSS in collaboration with key donors and development partners, building on the investment case on violence against children being developed together with the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.	Headquarters	December 2020	Not started	
Action 4.3 Hold webinars with donors and global networks of child-protection actors to brief them on the evaluation and the management response.	Headquarters	December 2019	Not started	
Action 4.4 Provide guidance to country offices to use the public financial management tool to leverage national resources and increase the efficient use of existing resources for CPSS.	Headquarters	June 2020	Under way	“UNICEF’s engagements in influencing domestic public finance for children” , UNICEF,

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				2017. ^d
Action 4.5 Advocate with donors and UNICEF country-office leadership to leverage resources for CPSS.	Headquarters and regional offices	December 2020	Under way	
Evaluation recommendation 5 Address the CPSS data and measurement challenges 5.1 Invest in coherent corporate-level metrics for CPSS. 5.2 Close evidence gaps along the CPSS programme-impact pathway. Management response: Agree				
Action 5.1 Develop comprehensive CPSS benchmarking tools ^e to assist countries to implement and measure progress on work around systems-building, consolidation and reform based on quality standards.	Headquarters, in collaboration with regional and country offices	March 2020	Not started	“UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, Goal Area 3 “Every child is protected from violence and exploitation”, indicator manual, UNICEF, 2018. ^f
Action 5.2 Improve quality data on CPSS through technical support to the implementation of child-protection modules in 67 multiple indicator cluster surveys.	Headquarters	June 2021	Under way	Webinar “Collecting data on child protection in in multiple indicator cluster surveys, UNICEF.

^d Available from: www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/UNICEF_Public_Finance_for_Children.pdf

^e To accompany the technical note discussed in action 1.

^f Available from: www.unicef.org/documents/unicef-strategic-plan-goal-area-3-indicator-manual

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Action 5.3 Invest in research on the role of CPSS in specific contexts and emerging issues, as modelled by the ongoing research on children on the move.	Headquarters	December 2020	Under way	

II. Draft decision

The Executive Board

Takes note of the evaluation report on strengthening child protection systems: evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programme performance, its executive summary ([E/ICEF/2019/23](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2019/24](#)).
