## Executive Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the evaluation</th>
<th>Reducing Stunting in Children Under 5 Years of Age: A comprehensive evaluation of UNICEF’s strategies and programme performance – Global synthesis report</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sequence No</td>
<td>2017/003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>HQ</td>
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<td>Office</td>
<td>Evaluation Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td>Guatemala, Haiti, Bolivia, Egypt, Niger, Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique, Yemen, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Myanmar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation Type</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
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<td>Year of Report</td>
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### OVERALL RATING

- **Satisfactory**  
  - Meets UNICEF/UNEG standards for evaluation reports and decision makers may use the evaluation with confidence
  - Implications: The report demonstrates many good practices in UNICEF evaluations – with clear purpose, comprehensive evaluation matrix, appropriate methods, and a comprehensive set of evidence. It address a very broad scope with clarity and depth. At the same time, the report does not fully succeed in integrating the analysis of equity, human rights, and gender equality – all of which requires a commitment from the outset to sampling, interview questions, and participatory and/or disaggregated analysis of evidence that is responsive to different groups of rights holders and duty bearers. Since the evaluation does identify such groups, it was evidently aware of this requirement, and would thus have benefitted from additional management attention to ensuring the full implementation of UNEG guidance on implementing human rights and gender equality.

### SECTION A: BACKGROUND (weight 5%)

- **Satisfactory**  
  - The report provides a detailed view of the evolution of UNICEF’s strategic approach to stunting, in terms of the organisational policy framework and its relations to the global policy framework. There is, however, very limited detail on the groups of children under 5 who are most vulnerable to stunting or impacted by its effects. Similarly, there is no explanation of the various institutional arrangements for duty bearers at national level that UNICEF’s nutrition strategy works with. Thus, the policy context is extremely well articulated, but the social and economic contexts for the intervention are somewhat limited. Having noted this, Figure 16 on the prevalence of stunting in case study countries is a good example of context being provided (it would have been even better if it were sex disaggregated).

### SECTION B: EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE (weight 5%)

- **Highly Satisfactory**  
  - There is an excellent sub-section on the needs assessment for the evaluation, and this feeds into a description of purpose and set of objectives that are coherent, realistic, and clear. Although the evaluation report does not explicitly list the primary intended users, these are self-evident from the description of the intended uses of the evaluation (such as improving regional and global strategies in UNICEF).

### SECTION C: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY (weight 15%)

- **Satisfactory**
The methods section provides a clear and helpful description of the data collection and analysis methods used in the evaluation, including a diagram explaining the sequencing and combination of these methods. The limitations described in the report are accurate, although further discussion could have been included about specific methods - such as the limitations of quantifying using rubric in terms of consistency and accuracy. The exclusion of impact as an evaluation criterion appears to be appropriate, although more detail could have been included to justify this decision. Finally, although the management section refers to ethical guidelines and the survey instruments include explicit reference to consent, the report does not explore the means by which ethics standards were applied, which is an expectation in the UNICEF standards.

### SECTION D: EVALUATION FINDINGS (weight 20%)

**Satisfactory**

The report includes an extensive and detailed set of findings. These systematically respond to all of the evaluation questions, marshalling multiples lines of evidence in all cases. A strength of the report is presenting both illustrative evidence (tables, graphs, examples) alongside analytical interpretation. Having said this, the report is quite heavily weighted towards positive findings – and has a strong focus on UNICEF's inputs, approaches and processes. The main evidence regarding the contributions these make is a triangulation of stakeholder perceptions. There are several sub-sections on barriers, risks and areas for improvement, but these are limited in comparison with the coverage of achievements and the report is not always clear on the balance between positive and negative findings. Illustrative of this issue is lack of discussion about any unexpected effects (positive or negative) from UNICEF interventions. The main coverage of weaknesses is in relation to sustainability.

### SECTION E: EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS & LESSONS LEARNED (weight 15%)

**Fair**

The conclusions provide balanced assessments that are evidently derived logically from the findings. The presentation of the conclusions may have benefited from including one-sentence summaries of the main points before the more detailed descriptions to aid the understanding of the reader. However, this is cosmetic rather than substantive. While key conclusions could have gone further in the analysis (for example, the conclusion on effectiveness states how many countries have progressed in reducing stunting without connecting this to the wider trends of what might reasonably have been expected without UNICEF's interventions), in general they help to highlight the implications of the findings for future strategies. More problematic is the absence of specific lessons learned, which are required by both the terms of reference and UNICEF evaluation standards.

### SECTION F: RECOMMENDATIONS (weight 15%)

**Fair**

The recommendations are logically derived from the findings and conclusions, but are surprisingly brief and broad given the level of evidence, detail and analysis in earlier sections of the report. For example, the recommendation to "Incorporate accountability across sections to improve collaboration and cooperation towards better results orientation to reducing stunting and use them as the basis in assessing the achievement of country programme targets (country level)" is sweeping and lacks detail on exactly how this should be achieved. The analysis of which parts of UNICEF's existing accountability mechanisms is insufficient is missing. The recommendation is also unclear as to whether this is a problem that needs to be solved on a country-by-country basis, or requires a corporate response that is implemented at country level.

### SECTION G: EVALUATION STRUCTURE/PRESENTATION (weight 5%)

**Highly Satisfactory**
The report is well written and well structured. The arrangement of the findings section makes reading and understanding the large scope of the evaluation much easier - in addition to helping users to identify the sections that are most relevant to their work.

### SECTION H: EVALUATION PRINCIPLES (weight 15%)

**Fair**

The evaluation includes elements of UNICEF’s commitment to equity, HRBAP, and gender equality – but these are inconsistent and could be better mainstreamed throughout the report. With regard to data sources, the evaluation involved extensive participation of duty bearers, and indicated that site visits were undertaken, but there is no clear information on the extent or justification for the level of participation of rights holders (if any). Analysis of the nutrition policy framework is comprehensive, which implies alignment with international normative human rights frameworks – but the analysis of UNICEF’s role is instrumental (reducing stunting indicators) rather than transformational (addressing the underlying drivers of malnutrition). Equity analysis is more prevalent within the evaluation, with several analyses disaggregated by national income levels. Different dimensions of vulnerability are also identified (one of which is gender), but the assessment of the differentiated experiences of these groups - the extent to which they were reached and benefits from UNICEF interventions - is not included in the evaluation. Gender is addressed in the standalone section on equity, but other opportunities to include gender analysis (such as sex-disaggregating prevalence data, or acknowledging that there are gender dimensions to targeting interventions in secondary schools) are missing from the report.

### SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (weight 5%)

**Fair**

The executive summary for this evaluation faces a significant challenge in compressing a very large amount of information into a concise and informative format. The approach taken achieves conciseness by including only conclusions and recommendations – missing any identification of key findings. The executive summary also does not explain the level of investment the scope of the evaluation covers (either in real or proportionate terms), nor explains the limitations of the approach. While the resulting summary is easy to read and accessible, the absence of these key pieces of information falls below UNICEF standards.

**Does the evaluation meet UN SWAP evaluation performance indicators?**

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<td>6</td>
<td>Approaches requirements</td>
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**Recommendations for improvement**

**Section A**

The report could have provided a brief financial analysis in the opening sections to describe the scale of the UNICEF global investment in addressing stunting (these details are much deeper in the report in Section 8.2). The reader remains unclear of the weighting of this strategy vis-à-vis other UNICEF strategic outcomes – or, indeed, how UNICEF’s investments compare to the other major operators in the space.

**Section B**

There is an extensive discussion of scope, including how this was refined during the inception. Given that the evaluation covers several strategic plans, only the latest of which had explicit results on stunting, additional value could have been added to the scope by describing the boundaries for how inputs were calculated (the report later describes something similar in terms of weighting country strategies based on temporal overlap with the scope).

**Section C**

Given that the evaluation already quantified observations using rubric, and that it included comparison of case studies, the evaluation could have applied a more rigorous implementation of crisp-set or multivariate qualitative comparative analysis (http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/qualitative_comparative_analysis). Furthermore, it would have been advantageous to the report to include explanations of how the UNICEF ethics guidelines were applied, such as through the collection of consent that is evident in survey instruments.
| Section D | Overall, the marshalling and triangulation of multiple lines and levels of evidence – that are clearly presented and transparently analysed – is a real strength of this report. It would benefit from further extending the coverage of unexpected effects and weaknesses with the same level of rigour. |
| Section E | The terms of reference and UNICEF evaluation standards require that lessons are developed as part of the evaluation. |
| Section F | Stronger recommendations would include more details on what the priority actions are, and - ideally - give an indication of the resource implications of these recommendations. |
| Section G | This report is a well produced and no further action is required. |
| Section H | UNICEF and UN-SWAP standards require the analysis of the reach and effects of interventions to go beyond "children" and to consider the differentiated impacts and perspectives of socially defined groups. Since the evaluation report already identifies the main social identities that affect nutritional outcomes, there is an existing basis on which this analysis could have been constructed. |
| Section I | UNICEF standards require that the executive summary includes an explanation of the limitations of an evaluation design and evidence so that decision-makers fully understand the basis of the recommendations being presented to them. |