

Evaluation Communication and Advocacy Strategy

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Glossary of terms

Evaluation

An assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using such appropriate criteria as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful, evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders.

Research

The systematic process of the collection and analysis of data and information, in order to generate new knowledge, to answer a specific question or to test a hypothesis. Its methodology must be sufficiently documented to permit assessment and replication.

Study

An initiative to establish current knowledge around a specific topic through the descriptive summarization, interpretation or assessment of information and data.

Evaluand

The institution or intervention that is being evaluated; the object of an evaluation.

Utility

How useful the findings of an evaluation are expected to be. Evaluations must contribute to learning and improving an organization's work. The findings and recommendations can go beyond an individual intervention or programme to add to the body of knowledge on a particular topic, and to provide lessons to other policy and practitioner audiences.

Advocacy

The act or process of advocating or supporting a cause or proposal.

Campaign

A focused strategy to influence knowledge, behaviours, attitudes or policy in a targeted audience.

Knowledge management

The capture, organization, sharing and use of knowledge for improved organizational performance towards development and humanitarian results for children.

Stakeholders

Individuals, organizations, units, or groups within organizations that have an interest in, will be affected by, or could learn lessons from UNICEF's evaluation function or are affected by the performance of the intervention, or both.

Background and context

The new [UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#) makes a strident call for “nothing less than a transformational and systemic change” to meet the challenges of the next decade. It positions itself as well placed to meet a set of ambitious goals with “a vast, broad network of partners ...; local presence in over 190 countries and territories; and deep expertise and thought leadership based on field evidence, research and data.”¹



Evaluations are a key tool in delivering on these ambitions. They provide evidence on whether and what progress is being made on the journey to ambitious goals, where UNICEF needs to do better to honour the promise it has made to defend the rights of children everywhere, and what lessons can be learned to aid anyone and everyone who shares UNICEF’s vision and mission to protect, support and empower children.

But without recognition of the value of evaluations and communication of the evidence, stories and learning they contain, this powerful tool will remain unused. There is broad recognition that UNICEF makes major investments in generating data, commissioning research and conducting evaluations but that these tools are not put to use strategically and systematically. This critique is echoed in MOPAN’s 2021 UNICEF performance review, which recommended that more needed to be done on utilization of evidence and learning, including evidence-based design and the uptake of lessons learned, and to “strengthen evidence for impact pathways”.²

The Evaluation Communications and Advocacy Strategy (referred to as ‘the Strategy’ for the remainder of the document), as outlined in this document, presents a set of strategic priorities for achieving ambitious objectives over five years and describes the tactics needed to deliver these priorities. The strategy period matches that of the [revised evaluation policy](#),³ complements its aims and aspirations, and is a key driver for its effective implementation.

1 United Nations Children’s Fund, *UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025: Renewed ambition towards 2030*, UNICEF, New York, January 2022.

2 Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), *MOPAN Assessment Brief: Performance at a Glance: UNICEF*, MOPAN, December 2021,

3 United Nations Children’s Fund, *Revised Evaluation Policy of UNICEF*, UNICEF, New York, 4 August 2023, E/ICEF/2023/27.

Strategy purpose and scope

The Strategy works across the evaluation supply side and demand side to enhance use. It deploys the principles of strategic communication to raise the profile and build the reputation of the evaluative function by demonstrating the value of individual evaluations, the body of evidence they build over time, and the evaluative function more broadly. These form the foundation stones for more concerted advocacy around selective topics and stories that have most resonance with the target audience. The Strategy proposes the creation of an enabling environment for uptake by working on things at the top – leadership, incentives and appetite for evaluative evidence – and at the bottom – improving the systematic supply of valuable and accessible insights from evaluations. It recognizes the ‘triangle of tension’ between evaluation quality, quantity and use and proposes doing more with less as a way of managing the tension.

Increase ownership and understanding of UNICEF’s evaluation function by both internal and external stakeholders and partners



stimulate internal and external demand for evaluative evidence by improving visibility and utility and making clear its value proposition



improve uptake and utilization of evaluative evidence in decision-making through more strategic and systematic communication and advocacy



The Strategy has three broad objectives:

- To increase ownership and understanding of UNICEF’s evaluation function by both internal and external stakeholders and partners;
- To improve uptake and utilization of evaluative evidence in decision-making through more strategic and systematic communication and advocacy;
- To stimulate internal and external demand for evaluative evidence by improving visibility and utility and making clear its value proposition.

The objectives will be met through a series of systematic and **strategic communication** activities to improve the visibility of evaluative evidence and socialize around the findings and insights across the body of work. **Deliberative advocacy** – a process, based on demonstrated evidence to influence decision-makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences directly and indirectly – will be deployed to make the compelling case around the value proposition of the function and its utility for others in the organization. Advocacy will be focused and contained through a small number of carefully selected campaigns. Purposeful **knowledge management** is threaded throughout the Strategy to support the building of an institutional enabling environment where management provides leadership and exemplar behaviours, staff is incentivized and supported to generate and use evaluative evidence, the function is adequately resourced, and the organization allows space for reflection and is committed to learning.

Any individual strategy will not on its own bring about an enabling environment for uptake and use of evaluations. The design and facilitation of evaluations play a significant role in promoting uptake and impact; organizational political will to use the evidence is essential, and the Strategy can recommend the most fruitful pathways to creating ‘nodes’ of positive practice that will bring evidence of the value of evaluations within arm’s reach of most staff members.

The Strategy acknowledges the structural and procedural impediments to uptake and notes that the people charged with commissioning, managing, facilitating, and overseeing evaluations *cannot force others to take up the results*. Evaluation focal points working at the decentralized level often do not have access to sectoral policymakers and rely on colleagues to use the findings to advocate for policy/ programme change.

The Strategy is written for the professionals who make up UNICEF's evaluation function and others who could play a role in using evaluative evidence to achieve the organizational mission. The tools, guidance notes and instructions in this document are intended to both inspire and guide the way they work, and to support the more active socialization of evaluative evidence to improve supply-side outputs. The document has multiple purposes. First, it provides a framework for a more strategic and intentional approach to communicating the evaluation function and individual outputs; second, it presents practical tools to guide and systematize how staff communicates and engages across different contexts; and third, it acts as a communications document that sets out a clear vision for UNICEF's evaluation function and signals to readers how it will achieve the mission and what it needs from others.

The Strategy will be a living document that informs and frames the work of the Evaluation Office and all those involved in carrying out the evaluation function more broadly. These include evaluation specialists working at country, regional and global levels and monitoring practitioners working across the organization.



Deliberative advocacy will highlight the function's value proposition, while purposeful knowledge management will cultivate an institutional environment fostering leadership, evidence usage, adequate resourcing, and organizational learning.



Who is the audience?

The Strategy aims to inform, influence and engage with a range of different audiences, both internal and external. Within UNICEF, a small number of specific stakeholder groups are disproportionately important for achieving the Strategy objectives.



The first group is **senior management**, whose acknowledgement and validation of the importance of the function is essential for ongoing financial resources, and because members of this group act as influencers and champions in establishing and reinforcing a normative culture where evaluative evidence is at the core of UNICEF programming and decision-making. Second is the **communication and advocacy** cadre, whose members act as springboards, multipliers and amplifiers and are important sources of demand for evaluative evidence, reaching important audiences that the function could not access on its own. They are key interlocutors with global media and digital audiences and, once convinced of the value of evaluations as compelling stories that reveal impact, can be powerful allies.

For individual evaluations, the audience will depend on the topic, type and scale of the assignment and the nature of the findings and its recommendations. The teams whose work is being evaluated, **the evaluands**, will be a mixture of both internal and external actors; they will form a distinct group with high levels of interest in and incentives to engage with specific evaluations. They have the potential to be powerful consumers of and advocates for the lessons learned through evaluations and can help to build profile and reputation for the function more broadly.

Important **external audiences** include Member States, whose interests should be considered when choosing topics for annual advocacy campaigns. More general audiences will be reached through the tactics of making evaluations more accessible, interesting and repurposed around topics and themes that have currency and resonance at the time of publication.

Not all audiences are a priority. The Strategy supports making smart choices about whom to engage and recognizes that some stakeholders matter more than others in achieving objectives.

Framework for action

The Strategy presents a set of purposeful and intentional steps that will help to build visibility and access to the body of evaluative evidence and advocate for its greater recognition and use. It draws on the principles of the collective impact approach,⁴ which identifies five conditions for success⁵ and recognizes that collective and collaborative actions are required to bring about desired social change.

SUPPORTIVE

- Enhance capacity to facilitate and assure quality of strategic communication of the evaluation function
- Lead internal advocacy campaigns, identify external engagement opportunities for joining conversations

COLLABORATIVE

- Create clear positioning with and within UNICEF evidence and research functions
- Join conversations across global evaluation communities and UN divisions
- Engage UNICEF communications and advocacy specialist as amplifier and storyteller

SELECTIVE

- Prioritize audiences for engagement, advocacy and influencing
- Select evaluation products that resonate with thematic issues of interest to key audiences

FOUNDATIONAL

- Systematically communicate and engage throughout the evaluation cycle
- Build incentives and an environment that favours utility and use
- Develop communication treatments or plans for each evaluation product
- Maintain a bank of messages to support the value proposition

The Strategy framework sets out four strategic pillars that acknowledge the efforts that are needed at different levels across the evaluation function, the support that is needed to optimize these efforts, the need to be selective – to ‘do more with less’, and the power of collaboration with others who have greater profile, capacities, and audience.

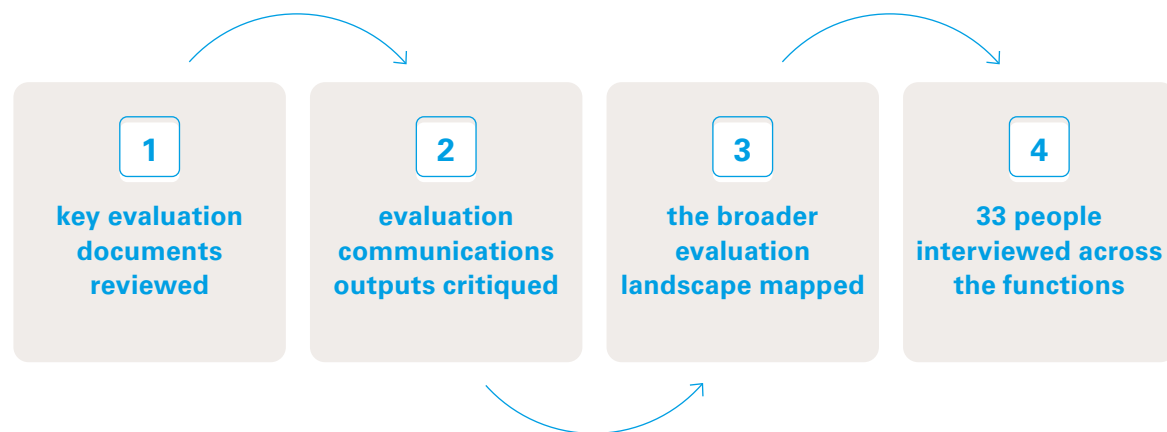
The pillars contain clusters of strategic approaches that together provides a framework for achieving the Strategy’s ambitious objectives. These are **foundational** (activities that run throughout all evaluation management processes and communication treatments that run across all studies); **selective** (prioritization of both audiences and evaluations to apply more profound repurposing, repackaging and facilitation to promote uptake and use); **collaborative** (joining conversations both internally and in external worlds of evaluation and across the United Nations system to encourage visibility and reputation and communicate the value-add of UNICEF evaluations); and **supportive** (dedicated capacity to facilitate and support uptake processes and procedures across the function and to lead on communication and advocacy). The strategic approaches are designed to be complementary and mutually reinforcing to deliver on the Strategy objectives.

4 Collective Impact Forum, ‘What is Collective Impact’, Collective Impact Forum, <<https://collectiveimpactforum.org/what-is-collective-impact/>>.

5 The five conditions for success are backbone support/leadership, a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities and continuous communication.

Uptake and use of evaluations: current state of play

A brief diagnostic exercise was conducted to understand current practices and challenges around the uptake of evaluations. First, key evaluation documents were reviewed to establish whether and how uptake is required and supported. Second, evaluation communications outputs were critiqued, including the website, intranet, newsletter, and digital channels such as Yammer and LinkedIn. Third, the broader evaluation landscape was mapped (32 organizations with evaluation functions) to identify and borrow good communication practices. Fourth, 33 people were interviewed across a range of functions both internally and externally, including 13 UNICEF evaluation staff, to understand how the evaluation process works in different regions, to gain perspective on factors that encourage and impede uptake, and to learn what success would look like.



Key bottlenecks and challenges

UNICEF is for most people a stressful working environment where time is short and people have competing priorities. In this context, evaluations – and evidence more broadly – compete for attention. Evaluations can – and do – have an impact, particularly where there is active facilitation and engagement around both the process and the findings and recommendations. They do not realize their full potential, however, primarily for reasons of utility, incentives and communication.



Challenge #1: Utility

Expectations of evaluations are high, especially for large studies that require significant investments of staff time and take a long time to deliver results. In these instances, evaluands' responses often convey disappointment that the findings either say nothing new or reflect an inadequate understanding of the reality of the work. Criticism is especially sharp for recommendations that are impractical to implement, are unreasonable, or are not supported by the analysis and data. There is sometimes data overload, an unnecessary focus on methods and interrogation of monitoring indicators, and a perceived 'default position' for choosing conventional evaluation approaches over more innovative evaluation methods and methodologies that could save money and time, for example. This may be because it is hard for people to understand what evaluations are and what value they bring, especially if institutional incentives promote production over use and, it is argued by some, quantity over quality (although, as noted earlier, quality is considered high). There is uneven investment across the regions to work on communications and advocacy strategies, and some are reluctant to invest without evidence of their outcomes.



Challenge #2: Incentives

There are no systematic incentives and rewards for evaluation managers to encourage uptake of studies, and there is low interest in doing so. Many admit that they are too busy with the rest of their portfolio and they – and the organization more broadly – are driven and rewarded by quantitative targets for production rather than overseeing evaluations that are useful and used. Evaluation teams and managers often see their job as finished once a report has been submitted. There are no key performance indicators to cover this strategic outcome, although including evidence use as an indicator of performance has been suggested. Those who prioritize uptake and are interested in use are frustrated by the lack of practical and easy-to-access tools to support this goal.



Challenge #3: Practical impediments

UNICEF evaluation reports tend to be long, dense and inaccessible to all but a narrow band of specialists or those that are among the ‘very interested’ client audiences. It is often very hard work to find the story or the implementation lessons that most practitioner users are looking for within reports. Often, government partners are not interested in or cannot engage with the findings in their given format and UNICEF staff members have to repurpose and repackage the findings themselves using time and often skills they lack. It helps if consulting firms are asked explicitly to package the report in a more light-touch and accessible way. Offices that require this approach report that findings are communicated in ways that are quicker and easier to access.

Evaluations are undervalued, and the function is not recognized. The evaluation ‘offer’ – the brand – is not clearly articulated, and there is a tendency for people to conflate the process of evaluation with the audit function. Current messaging around the evaluation function is not clear, compelling or particularly visible. The role of the Evaluation Office and the services it provides in supporting the uptake of evaluations beyond publishing the reports on a central website and hosting some webinars is not recognized, and evaluations are not systematically embedded into the organization’s planning and decision-making processes. The most effective advocates for evaluation are those who have recent, positive experiences of an evaluation, are supported by dedicated evaluation personnel, have been evaluators themselves, or are somehow incentivized by evidence generation and use. Not all offices have management that actively endorses and supports an evaluation culture: leadership is essential to creating an enabling environment for uptake.

Competition across the value chain of evidence obscures understanding.

There are a number of different evidence functions in UNICEF, and the comparative advantage of evaluation within them is often unclear. This ‘horizontal incoherence’ across the three formal evidence functions (evaluation, research, data/statistics) complicates issues around access and utilization by country offices that are practically responsible for programme effectiveness.⁶ The use of evidence to inform the design of programming is not yet consistent, and some offices are making more progress than others. To date, the synergies and potential offering of a ‘value chain of evidence’ that covers monitoring information, data, research and evaluations is not realized. Instead, these elements seem to compete for attention, resources and organizational bandwidth.

6 MOPAN Assessment Brief: Performance at a Glance: UNICEF, December 2021.

Communication channels are useful ‘shop windows’ but do not engage.

Communication channels are useful shop windows but struggle to engage meaningfully with audiences, and messaging around evaluations is not clear. Information about evaluations is currently largely supply driven – focused on telling the world about the activities, outputs and organizational arrangements of the UNICEF evaluation function – when what the world wants are answers to its questions, evidence of what difference evaluation has made, and stories that resonate with broader issues and concerns. This requires a shift in framing in how we tell the story of evaluation, to an approach that understands demand and rises up to meet it in a way that is welcomed and remembered. Engagement is challenging in an organization with competing priorities, where people are time-poor and struggle with information overload.

Capacity shortfalls hinder both evaluation supply and demand. There is inadequate communication capacity in the Evaluation Office to do what needs to be done at scale to enhance uptake and use. Organizations with reputation, high visibility, and a track record of getting evaluations on the agenda and discussed at important forums – both in their own organizations and externally – all have in common at least one senior person responsible for communication and advocacy. The threefold responsibilities of managing production, facilitating uptake within evaluation processes, and championing advocacy are not possible to accomplish without dedicated staff to do so. Investment is necessary in this space.



The UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025 points to evaluation’s role in examining new programming areas, supporting policymaking, and budgeting, and engaging in joint and system-wide evaluations.

Opportunities – Why now?

The Strategy is timely. There is growing interest in generating and using evidence to inform how actors operate at the humanitarian-development nexus, how well they perform, and whether they are learning lessons as they go to improve outcomes for those they serve.

As the **funding environment becomes more competitive**, organizations are required to do less with more. This makes the urgency of identifying challenges, finding innovative ways to overcome them and evidencing impact even greater. It provides concrete incentives for UNICEF to think creatively about working collaboratively with partners to deliver solutions on the ground and to advocate for more systematic use of evidence to improve efficiency and effectiveness of their work. Evaluations play a crucial role in an organization’s investment in learning: their findings contain the ingredients for more efficient and effective operations that can bring better results for children.

As **2030 draws closer**, the imperative to measure progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals – and UNICEF’s contributions to progress for children – is becoming urgent. The recent impact evaluation strategy and framework carves out a key role for evaluations to contribute to the high-level narrative of whether, and how, the organization has made a difference “[u]sing scientific evidence rather than [the organization’s own] ideas, assumptions or aspirations”.⁷

The organization recognizes the **evaluation function as uniquely placed** to assist in its pursuit of ambitious goals. The UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025 points to evaluation’s role in examining new programming areas, supporting policymaking, and budgeting, and engaging in joint and system-wide evaluations. Likewise, the 2023 revised evaluation policy commits to maximizing evaluation use. It recognizes that planning for meaningful use at the outset is essential to securing this outcome and that the production of actionable recommendations is the function’s responsibility. The policy acknowledges the importance of a broader organizational culture “in which stakeholders value learning and the application of lessons to

7 United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), *UNICEF Evaluation of Impact - Strategy and Action Framework 2022–2025*. UNICEF, New York, March 2023.

achieve better results in pursuit of the organizational mandate, understand what evaluation contributes, engage with evaluation across the programming cycle, know their roles and accountabilities and receive support towards this end.”⁸



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What works to promote evidence use?

The Global Commission on Evidence⁹ identifies three sets of conditions that need to be in place to support systemic evidence use.

- 1 First, structures and processes are needed on the evidence demand side that can incorporate evidence use into routine advisory and decision-making processes, build and sustain an evidence culture, and strengthen capacity for evidence use among policy and program staff, government science advisors, and those supporting expert panels and citizen- and stakeholder-engagement processes.
- 2 Second, mechanisms are needed at the interface between the evidence demand and supply sides to elicit and prioritize the evidence needs of decision-makers and their advisors, and to package evidence from multiple sources into inputs that align with the requirements of advisory and decision-making processes.
- 3 Third, evidence support units must be in place on the evidence supply side that understand decision-makers’ preferred communication formats, are timely and demand-driven, and focus on contextualizing the stock of existing evidence for a given decision in an equity-sensitive way.

All three conditions need to be mimicked in UNICEF to enable uptake and use of evaluative (and other forms of) evidence systematically in the organization’s own decision-making and policy and practice. The Strategy can make a meaningful contribution across all conditions and can work with other commitments of the new evaluation policy to establish an enabling environment for uptake and impact.

Acknowledge both sides of the evaluation use equation: More systematic, intentional and strategic communication of evaluations and the function more broadly (supply-side efforts) will achieve greater visibility and more active

8 Revised Evaluation Policy of UNICEF, 4 August 2023, E/ICEF/2023/27.

9 Global Commission on Evidence to Address Societal Challenges, *The Evidence Commission Report: A wake-up call and path forward for decision-makers, evidence intermediaries, and impact-oriented evidence producers*, McMaster Health Forum, Hamilton, ON, Canada, January 2022.

Principles and values

The design of the Strategy is based on a set of core values and principles, listed below, to ensure high standards in its delivery, strategic communication best practice, and compliance with UNICEF codes of conduct.



engagement, but it cannot guarantee uptake and use. Pump-priming and supporting the demand for evaluative evidence and working backwards from what people want to know (demand-side efforts) are essential to building effective and sustained interest, appetite and demand for the evaluation function.

Focus on the audience: Linked to the above, understanding the audience's needs and communication preferences – how and when they access information – is an essential starting point for effective engagement.

One size does not fit all: Audiences have different needs and interests that must be considered when tailoring and packaging evaluative evidence and designing services to reach and engage them.

Communicate from the outset: Thinking about and engaging with the intended users of evaluations, including the evaluands, from the outset is critical to the success of the Strategy. It not only builds ownership over the findings, but also helps to inform both evaluation processes (what do people want to know) and the shape and timing of dissemination efforts (how to frame the findings and recommendations, when to communicate the results, and in what form).

Respond to changing contexts: The Strategy is a living document that will flex in response to the evolving realities, needs and priorities of those it seeks to inform and influence. It will do this by remaining attentive to the current and future communications needs of its targeted internal and external audiences and deliver the:

- **Right message** (credible content, results and good stories) communicated in the
- **Right form** (approach has to be relevant, appropriate and accessible) to the
- **Right person** (identifying and tailoring for the target audience) using the
- **Right channel** (suitable and diverse range of tools and channels) being mindful of the
- **Right context** (take into account relevant external and internal trends) with the
- **Right support** (ensure required skills, knowledge and understandings).

Key assumptions and resourcing

A set of assumptions underpin both the design of the Strategy and the likelihood that it will deliver the declared outcomes.



The first is that the organization is committed to its declared policy and strategy ambitions¹⁰ around use of evaluative and other forms of evidence and will support the creation of an enabling environment for uptake through improved procedures, processes, and culture for evaluation use, including IT systems to support uptake monitoring.

Second, it is assumed that capacity and appetite for more strategic communication and advocacy of evaluations and more purposeful and intentional use of evaluative evidence are present, and if not, that there are leadership and capacity to fill gaps and support growth in areas that are lacking.

Third, the Strategy relies on an assumption that there will be predictable and adequate financing for evaluation that will increase in line with the policy target of 1 per cent of organizational spending within the Strategy period, and that investments in communications and advocacy to support uptake and impact will keep pace with these increases.

A senior-level communication specialist will be required to implement the Strategy. This position is essential to oversee and support the mainstreaming of strategic communication activities across the function; to lead advocacy initiatives in collaboration with other parts of UNICEF; to champion the more intensive socialization of evaluative evidence wherever there is opportunity; to assure the quality of communications and advocacy outputs and activities; and to support evaluation management in sensemaking and learning about what works to improve evaluation uptake and use across the organization.

The communication specialist will work closely with the director of the Evaluation Office. He or she will hold a small budget and/or be delegated the director's budget to manage key corporate evaluation products, organize advocacy events and secure visibility and reputation for the evaluation brand. Suggested functions are listed in Annex II.

10 Based on statements from revised evaluation policy, and UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025

Implementation

The Strategy will be implemented using six major tactics. These tactics have been designed within the overarching framework and in line with the stated strategic approaches. They will advance the creation of an enabling environment for uptake by working in parallel on improving the supply of evaluative evidence – making evaluations more visible, accessible and interesting – and strengthening the demand – improving incentives for uptake and creating a cohort of intermediaries and champions for use.

#1: Integrate strategic communications and engagement into all parts of the evaluation management cycle and provide clear 'plug and play' guidance for staff to use



#2: Unpack the 'black box' of evaluation reports, making knowledge visible, accessible, engaging and easy to understand



#3: Put utility, use and the audience at the centre of evaluations and make these priorities explicit from the start



#4: Lead one advocacy campaign and support one UNICEF advocacy issue each year to demonstrate the value-add of evaluations



#5: Tell more and better stories about what evaluations reveal about our world and the work of UNICEF in making it better for children



#6: Put learning at the heart of evaluation



TACTIC #1

Integrate strategic communications and engagement into all parts of the evaluation management cycle and provide clear 'plug and play' guidance for staff to use

The power to shift thinking and frame decisions often comes not so much from the results of an evaluation – i.e., its findings and recommendations – but from the process itself. Evaluations play an important political role in focusing stakeholders' attention, in bringing them around the table, and in encouraging them to take policy (or important programming) decisions. For this to happen, evaluations and their use need to be planned with this political process in mind. Opportunities to optimize engagement and uptake throughout the evaluation cycle should be created and seized in a systematic way, and support and guidance should be provided to enable staff to do this effectively, efficiently and consistently.

UNICEF'S commitment to uptake and impact should be made clear to all those undertaking evaluations on its behalf, both internally and externally, and should become normalized across the function.

A series of checklists will be used to guide the key stages of evaluation management to create the most potential to generate visibility, appetite for knowledge and ownership over evaluation findings. They should provide support for **communication processes**, such as evaluation terms of reference (TORs), audience mapping and stakeholder workshops; support for **communication products**, for example evaluation briefs, key message videos and postcards; and **communication events**, such as brown bag lunches and media events. This will help to build a consistent and strategic approach across the function and equip staff with the necessary skills and appetite to evolve and improve communication processes over time.

Applying this rigorous and systematic approach will ensure that no opportunities are overlooked and that each evaluation is communicated efficiently and effectively. Applied across all evaluations and evaluative products, it will increase the visibility of evaluative evidence and expose it to more, relevant audiences, thus improving visibility of the function at national, regional and global levels and creating opportunities for uptake.

ACTIVITY #1

Develop and roll out procedures for systematic communications and engagement throughout evaluation management with a focus on engagement

Agree an essential set of processes that hardwire strategic communication through all stages of evaluation management. Finalize a set of checklists and templates to guide and assure quality of the new processes, and pre-test with a small group of evaluation champions, preferably on evaluations that are at different stages of implementation. Once agreed, pull the practical resources together in a Communications Handbook for Evaluation to replace the [Dissemination Guide](#) (see *Annex I*).¹¹

Employ a senior communication specialist to guide and oversee the integration of strategic and purposeful communication and engagement in all evaluations. The communication specialist will lead the development of this strategic area and provide ongoing support to colleagues with evaluation responsibilities to make it part of the flow of work.

ACTIVITY #2

Make guidance accessible, easy to use and mandatory

Make the guidance user-friendly in layout and design and make it available and easily accessible to all UNICEF staff by creating a dedicated 'Communications Corner' on the evaluation intranet. This should be published on the [Tools, Guidance and Resources](#) page with an easy-to-find shortcut from the home page.

The new procedures will be used to guide and systematize the way the team for each evaluation commissions evaluation firms and consultants, conducts stakeholder mapping and identifies audiences, selects, and briefs advisory groups and committees, and conducts workshops to validate and socialize the findings.

Design and roll out 101 Evaluation Communications training sessions based on the new processes and find ways to mainstream them into people's flow of work, including induction procedures and operation manuals.

ACTIVITY #3

'Make the communication ask' of everyone involved

There are many different actors already involved in the evaluation process, but most of them are not used to their full potential to extend the reach and influence of each evaluation. Making the 'ask' of strategic actors involved – to play their part in optimizing uptake and impact – will improve ownership over the process and its results and will diversify and broaden the base for advocacy. Make practical but strategic demands on those involved – for example, the evaluation firms (identify and circle back to stakeholders consulted during the process of the evaluation to share findings, communicate on their organizational websites, etc.); members of the evaluation advisory group (to make introductions and convene meetings around the evaluation in their own organizations); and the evaluands (share learning with their community of practice).

11 [UNICEF Evaluation Office dissemination checklist \(2022\)](#): List of general products, target audiences and channels.



TACTIC #2

Unpack the 'black box' of evaluation reports, making knowledge visible, accessible, engaging and easy to understand

There are currently more than 2,500 UNICEF evaluations published on the organization's website. Every year, this number increases significantly. All evaluations are important, but not all can be communicated with the same intensity. This is a decision that needs to be taken for resource reasons – communication support costs money – but also because it is not strategic to promote and engage around every evaluation to the same level. The world is already noisy, and adding to it with equal volume for every evaluation will send the wrong message to audiences.

Tactic 2 builds on the principle that people are information rich and time short and emphasizes finding out and responding to what audiences want to know over what the organization wants to tell them. It commits to communicating each evaluation in a strategic and purposeful way, paying more attention to repackaging and repurposing some evaluations with particularly saliency, and actively marketing the top-line findings and insights to those most able to make use of them.

ACTIVITY #1

Develop a set of branded templates for the full menu of evaluation products and make these accessible to all staff

A refreshed UNICEF evaluation brand should be established to bring greater efficiency, visual quality, content consistency and communication-minded approaches to the evaluation function. The brand will be carried on all products and communication activities. It should reflect the multiple identities of the function as an independent and robust service, part of a family of evidence providers, and embedded at the core of UNICEF programmes and policies. The look and feel of the refreshed brand should inform the development of a set of strategic messages that will be used to raise the visibility and communicate the value of the function and should reinforce and underpin advocacy activities.

ACTIVITY #2

Develop key messages from each evaluation and use them to build a bank of messages on the value of evaluative evidence

Identify a set of key messages for each evaluation that identify primary- and secondary-level messages and contribute to a larger evaluation bank of messages.

The distillation of key messages should be done with due consideration for the rigor of the analysis and with appropriate communication of confidence levels in the research. Care should be taken when pulling out implications of the findings for other settings. Key messages should be framed with the audience in mind, for example by using accessible and simple language for non-specialist audiences. A checklist will be used to guide the systematic framing of messages. The key messages will form part of a clear narrative branding.

The formal process of developing key messages from each evaluation will be conducted when findings have been validated with key stakeholders at workshops, but the learning will take place continuously throughout the evaluation process, and it may be appropriate to share this with those involved – the evaluands – as well as key decision-makers, ahead of the final report.

The primary and secondary messages will be added to the bank of messages used to inform both stories (Tactic 5) and advocacy (Tactic 4) to communicate the value of the function.

ACTIVITY #3

Generate a set of tiered products and market them assertively

All evaluations will be required to conduct the basic engagement activities required as part of the process of managing the evaluation, and to produce a basic set of products, e.g., full report, separate executive summary, PowerPoint presentation, key messages, headlines. The intensity and ambition of the processes, and the different packaging of communication outputs, will vary with each evaluation according to the study's potential impact and relevance to current organizational priorities.

A simple communications plan will be developed for each evaluation with the support of the communication specialist and using guidance as required. This will take place during the inception phase of the evaluation and will involve choosing from a menu of options that reflects the salience, importance and scale of the evaluation (supply-side factors) and the appetite and demand for its findings (demand-side factors). The agreed plan will contain a selection of communications activities chosen from the menu of options that have been agreed in discussion between the evaluation manager and team and the communication specialist; this will be known as the communication treatment. The process will be formalized as part of each manager's evaluation management procedures.

For example, a global thematic evaluation is likely to have a large and diverse potential audience and contain detailed findings that will need communicating in different ways, whereas a small, technical evaluation is likely to require an altogether simpler communication plan that costs less, targets a smaller audience and involves fewer people.

High-profile evaluations and those with significant findings that speak to organizational priorities should be given special attention, with higher-investment outputs such as videos and animations that are attention-grabbing and easily shared. The ambition is to generate a broader range of content that is better suited to dynamic webpages, social media and other digital channels so that a wider

range of audiences gain access to reports and other products and are directed to insights, stories and products that cut across individual evaluations. This associated content, ideally including infographics, videos, data visualizations, short features, and briefs, will focus on learning, storytelling and engagement to advocate the relevance of the evaluation function. Guidance will be provided to help 'find the story' in evaluations and to tease out messages that have relevance and resonance for priority audiences.

Postcards and tailored evaluation briefs should be generated and sent to key individuals and priority audiences (Tactic 3) – e.g., newly appointed heads of office, Member States – pointing to findings and insights that directly speak to their current information needs.



TACTIC #3

Put utility, use and the audience at the centre of evaluations and make these priorities explicit from the start

UNICEF produces an enormous number of evaluations each year. Each one is expensive in both monetary and human resource terms. There is a tension felt across the organization between compliance and use. Evidence of evaluations that have had an impact is scant, and while this may be partially because impact is hard to track and attribute to a study, it is also likely to be low because insufficient time has been allocated to the socialization of the report due to lack of staff time. For audiences to see the value in UNICEF's evaluation function, it is necessary to (a) demonstrate that the function has a value beyond a theoretical one of accountability and learning and (b) demonstrate that value in clear and compelling ways. Utility is essential to this end.

The cost of an evaluation should be proportionate to the value that an evaluation is expected to generate. This means that it is important to be clear about the rationale, purpose and intended use of an evaluation before investing in one.¹²

12 Barr, Julian, et al., 'The Value of Evaluation: Tools for budgeting and valuing evaluations', discussion paper, United Kingdom Department for International Development, London, August 2016.

ACTIVITY #1

Do more with less

Commission fewer evaluations and spend more time socializing around the findings. Incentivize and reward uptake by making uptake and use a requirement of good evaluation management in key performance indicators. Use the monies saved from doing fewer evaluations to invest more in socializing around priority evaluations, commissioning work to identify the uptake, positive outcomes and impact of evaluations, and advocating internally around the value-add of the function.

ACTIVITY #2

Identify the most important audiences to engage and speak to them with information and evidence that resonate with their priorities

Not every audience can be a priority. Prioritize key audiences; identify their information needs and satisfy them creatively. Specifically, identify internal and external audiences that are most important to achieving the strategic objectives of the function (maximum three). Generate user profiles to identify what they know and care about and how best to package and deliver essential updates on evaluations to them. As a priority, use these profiles to create user journeys for both internal and external evaluation websites, and refresh the design and content to meet users' needs. Make evaluations easy to find for everyone else.

For external audiences in general, people are interested in what evaluations can reveal that they did not previously know, including the impact of UNICEF's work – both positive and negative – on the lives of children and any lessons learned. Audiences care about what happened as a result of evaluations, what adaptations were made to programming, what interventions were upscaled because they worked well, what policies were tweaked to avoid unintended consequences that were revealed by the evaluation, etc. Put bluntly, they are interested in the 'So what?' of evaluations. Most people neither understand nor care about the

organizational arrangements or internal procedures and protocols that lie behind how and why an evaluation is commissioned.

Evaluations have enormous potential to stimulate and trigger wide and deep learning when people are brought together to discuss and not simply hear the findings and the analysis on which they rest. Seek two-way communication that positions evaluative knowledge in real-world contexts rather than broadcasting frequent announcements. Practically, this requires reframing communication channels – e.g., Yammer, website stories, e-newsletters – to become conversational and focused on the people behind the evaluations as well as monitoring the narratives and conversations that are taking place among key audiences and finding ways to join them.

ACTIVITY #3

Enable more utilization-focused evaluations that have users and use written into their methodology

The most effective evaluation systems are those that are understood and valued by those being evaluated, invite and encourage feedback from outsiders, and are adaptive (in the same way that evaluations often require programmes to be adaptive). Where a system of evaluation is established in an organization, it brings the risk that evaluations will be seen as the solution to all problems when what is actually needed sometimes is a lighter-touch solution such as a piece of action research, an audit, or something else other than evaluation.¹³

There is rising demand for evaluation methods that build utility into their purpose and approach. Such methods save time by transposing findings to find practical utility for users and extracting practical implications and key messages for users. Choose, wherever possible, to use utilization-focused evaluation methods. Utilization-focused evaluation places a strong emphasis on the intended use of evaluation findings. It involves engaging stakeholders from the outset to determine evaluation questions, methods and reporting formats that are most relevant and

13 Dugan Fraser in conversation with Estelle Raimond, methods adviser at the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group, on *Powered by Evidence* podcast, Global Evaluation Initiative, <www.globalevaluationinitiative.org/podcast/critical-look-evaluations-value-proposition-has-evaluation-become-just-check-box-exercise>.

useful to decision-makers. This can be done through a stakeholder mapping exercise at the planning stage, with the help of the communication specialist, to identify what practitioner, evaluation and policy communities might be interested in the topic and engaging some of them to see what framing might be useful.



TACTIC #4

Lead one advocacy campaign and support one UNICEF advocacy issue each year to demonstrate the value-add of evaluations

Tactics 1, 2 and 3 focus on strategic communication: making communications more purposeful and audience-focused, and how to engage to maximize the potential of the information one has. The aim is to improve visibility, accessibility and utility of the evidence such that that its potential audience will find it useful and use it.

This tactic focuses on advocacy, which identifies a change goal at the outset – for example, what you want people to think and do – and works backwards from these desired outcomes with a set of tools and approaches that actively and assertively meet the goal. UNICEF defines advocacy as “the deliberate process, based on demonstrated evidence, to directly and indirectly influence decision makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences to support and implement actions that contribute to the fulfilment of children’s and women’s rights.”¹⁴



The Strategy will employ six major tactics aligned with stated strategic approaches to enhance the uptake of evaluative evidence by simultaneously improving the visibility, accessibility, and appeal of evaluations, while also bolstering incentives and fostering a cohort of intermediaries and champions for their utilization.

Raise the profile of evaluations and the evaluation function through one to two advocacy campaigns every year. One campaign should be developed and led by the Evaluation Office and based on a theme/issue that resonates with a relevant strategic or development priority.

ACTIVITY #1

Design and lead an annual campaign using advocacy ‘best bets’

One major campaign should be developed and led by the evaluation function each year. The topic/issue chosen should have resonance and relevance to both internal priorities and external storylines and news narratives. It should speak directly to priority audiences and be mindful of what they know and care about. Messaging should be framed to communicate the value-add of evaluation processes and evidence of the impact of evaluative evidence. While all evaluations are important, and some will have more resonance and relevance with different audiences, the issues that are ripe for broader advocacy will need to draw on the wider body of evidence to be compelling.

To identify advocacy best bets, source materials will include the *Study of Influential Evaluations* study (Tactic 5), the follow-up to management reports to see which evaluations have had the most influence on decision-making, the ongoing curation of four story typologies (learning stories, ‘So what?’ stories, positive impact stories, and stories of discovery as described in Tactic 5), and the bank of messages that will be updated with each published evaluation.

14 United Nations Children’s Fund, *Advocacy Toolkit: A guide to influencing decisions that improve children’s lives*, 1st ed., UNICEF, New York, 2010.

ACTIVITY #2

Explore opportunities to piggyback on bigger, louder campaigns and advocacy with evaluative evidence

The world is noisy, and competition is fierce for audience attention. Look for opportunities to join forces with others, either those making a similar case about the value proposition of evaluation and evidence or UNICEF colleagues whose campaigns on behalf of children would benefit from hard evidence. The growing message bank may be used to identify concrete examples of impact and storylines (Tactic 5) to prompt conversations about collaborative advocacy ideas.

Explore potential to collaborate with three groups in particular. First, join with evaluation champions across the United Nations family or the broader evaluation ecosystem to build an evaluation impact repository. This will contribute to UNICEF's shift in focus beyond what the organization can do alone, towards using its mandate to mobilize other actors to maximize collective impact.¹⁵ Agreeing a dozen indicators of use that are tracked across up to 10 organizations would produce a powerful demonstration of the different dimensions of uptake and impact for each organization to use internally. Develop light-touch processes including quarterly reporting against agreed indicators and biannual reflection meetings on emerging evidence. Review and revise the metrics and learning procedures after four reporting cycles and recruit more members if appropriate. Use the impact repository to inform storytelling and advocacy campaigns.

Second, explore common cause with Innocenti and other evidence and learning functions within UNICEF to identify an advocacy framing that would advance all positions. Use the recent MOPAN assessment¹⁶ that “the organisation's evidence system is fractured, and this complicates access and utilisation by country offices who are practically responsible for programme effectiveness” to identify common challenges and misconceptions. Identify common monitoring indicators that could

be used to build a common storyline about the impact and learning contributions of the three functions.

Third, identify and develop strong relationships with strategic media and information brokers, both inside UNICEF and externally, to help repurpose, repackage and amplify evaluative content to new audiences. Determine which audiences to reach and engage first, and work backwards to identify and select the communications actors who are connected to them. Map which of these can be reached directly and which can be accessed via the communities of practice to which the evaluation function belongs (UNICEF's media and communications divisions, the global evaluation community, sector-specific media specialists, etc.). Include both specialist media such as the World Bank's *What Have We Learned?* podcast as well as more generalist media across digital platforms that reach non-specialist audiences.

The function should lead, co-host, and strategically participate in both physical and virtual events that convene around topics beyond evaluation. Practical criteria should be collaboratively agreed and made widely known across the function to decide which activities to initiate, and support should be delegated to staff.

Establish clean processes that track, and trace external conversations being held by communities you care about – and that want to care about you. Deploy ‘horizon scanning’ tools such as X (formerly Twitter) lists of evaluation communities to spot trends and conversational patterns that hold opportunities for collaboration, and use impact/learning stories to thread into the organization's claims to be learning and improving.

15 UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025

16 MOPAN Assessment Report (Dec 2021): Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment. UNICEF 2020 Assessment cycle: [ETH-DonorRelations - MOPAN Assessment UNICEF.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

ACTIVITY #3

Reframe the narrative around evaluation

While there is mileage in finding stories to demonstrate the value of evaluations and the broader body of evaluative evidence, there are limitations. First, the stock of materials from which to draw high-level messages suitable for advocacy will soon run out and/or become repetitive; second, the narrative of 'prove and improve' is sound but not unique; and third, the audience is limited and self-selecting, *i.e.*, it is already largely convinced of the value of evidence and does not necessarily include all those in positions of power and influence.

An exercise to reframe evaluation should be conducted. This will create an alternative narrative to inform the function's future advocacy campaigns. The process should be done collaboratively to ensure that multiple perspectives, including those of potential users of evaluative evidence, are heard. The process should form part of the purposeful reflection approach (Tactic 6) and aim to frame evaluation as the solution everyone is looking for that is not optional but essential, and a powerful tool – the only tool – to uncover and explain the systemic changes that are critical to addressing the underlying causes of children's mortality, poverty, vulnerability, gender inequality and exclusion in all settings, including humanitarian crises and fragile settings.¹⁷

The reframing exercise¹⁸ should take inspiration from precedents such as pain being considered the 'fifth vital sign', which allowed and enabled the sale of powerful narcotic painkiller drug OxyContin;¹⁹ and the social model of disability, which reframes disability by taking the focus away from the person's disability and moving it towards the designer of the environment and the removal of barriers in the environment.²⁰



TACTIC #5

Tell more and better stories about what evaluations reveal about our world and the work of UNICEF in making it better for children

Evidence and facts are important, but stories are the vehicle by which they are carried to global audiences. Storytelling is the most powerful tool to elicit emotional responses, challenge societal norms and mobilize individuals to act. All evaluations tell a story, but these stories are often hidden in plain sight. More can be done to make explicit both the different ways in which the evaluation function has delivered on its declared value proposition and how evaluations and their findings map onto the topics and issues that important audiences care about and are actively debating.

Tactic 5 focuses on finding and telling compelling stories about where evaluations and evaluative evidence have made a difference and joining conversations where there are meaningful contributions to make, e.g., by providing evaluative evidence to support internal UNICEF public campaigns.

ACTIVITY #1

Identify themes and patterns across the most recent five years of evaluations

Look across the evaluation repository to identify patterns and themes that can relate and respond to external news agendas and other demands, e.g., United Nations days, and build up a central evaluation message bank in support of the function's value proposition. This bank of evidence should be constantly refreshed with key messages that are created for each new evaluation (Tactic 1). Patterns and emerging themes should be identified as part of the biannual review of communications (Tactic 6).

17 Goal declared in UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025

18 Straube, Sebastian, 'Using the Problem Reframing Method to Build Innovative Solutions', InfoQ, 10 March 2022, <www.infoq.com/articles/problem-reframing-method/>.

19 Helmore, Edward, 'Enduring Pain: How a 1996 opioid policy change had long-lasting effects', The Guardian, 30 March 2018, <www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/mar/30/enduring-pain-how-a-1996-opioid-policy-change-had-long-lasting-effects>.

20 Project PACE, 'Reframing Disability', University of Arkansas at Little Rock Disability Resource Center, <<https://ualr.edu/disability/reframing-disability/>>.

These story clusters should support and illustrate the function’s value proposition – to prove and improve UNICEF’s work on behalf of children – and should have an established and known audience. They could include different typologies that will have interest for different audiences, such as **positive impact stories** about the longer-term changes, benefits or values of UNICEF programmes and initiatives that are working for children;²¹ **learning stories** that include discoveries of what is not working and needs to be tweaked or programmes and initiatives that need to be closed down; **stories of discovery** where evaluations reveal ‘known unknowns’ – identifying evidence gaps that need filling for UNICEF to realize its strategic goals;²² and **‘So what?’ stories** that showcase how evaluations and the evaluative process have triggered shifts in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that benefit children. ‘So what?’ stories should draw on different typologies of use²³ to demonstrate the varied ways in which evaluations can inform and shape decisions and behaviours – for example, transparent use (increased understanding and transparent use of bodies of evidence by policymakers), embedded use (no direct action is taken as a result of the evidence, but use of evidence becomes embedded in processes, systems and working culture) and instrumental use (knowledge from robust evidence is used directly to inform policy or programmes).

Harvest examples of influential studies from the *Study of Influential Evaluations* 2020 report and repeat this exercise every two years to identify and generate case study examples of impact and learning. The report should at the same time incentivize teams to both maximize and monitor uptake and use across their evaluation portfolio. Draw on the review of major evaluations²⁴ two to five years after their conclusion to tell nuanced stories of the different ways in which evaluations ‘prove and improve’ the organization’s journey to achieving its mission.

Create a hierarchy of communications products that tell the story of UNICEF evaluations and their impact that meets the needs of priority audiences; some of these will already exist and will need updating and reformatting into a branded suite. The top-level ‘introduction to evaluation’ product should communicate clearly the value proposition of the function and demonstrate how and where it has made an impact. These digital products should be updated annually with recent examples.

Create a set of social media assets with infographics and animations around the established bank of messages that can be used in all materials and regularly updated. Identify and include children’s perspectives and voices in the message bank (and include these perspectives in future evaluations if they are currently missing).

ACTIVITY #2 Convince others that evaluations are a source of new and interesting stories for their platforms and channels

Develop strategic relationships with communications officers in country and regional offices, and with the Global Division of Communication and Advocacy, to identify what kinds of stories, packaged in what ways, would be useful and have potential to be amplified and broadcast by them to their much larger audiences. Use a timeline of UNICEF communications and advocacy events (e.g., updated six-monthly [planner for Global Communications and Advocacy](#)), campaigns and advocacy convenings to work out which ones evaluations can meaningfully contribute to. Identify the key authors, messengers, broadcasters and amplifiers who could and should be using evaluations as one of their main information sources. These include internal communications, advocacy and fundraising staff and – via human resources and procurement departments – the thousands of consultants deployed to design and deliver UNICEF policies and programming every year.

21 e.g., [civil registration and vital statistics systems in Botswana](#)

22 e.g., the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025

23 BCURE Value of Evidence Use Framework written about in Rinnert, David and Liz Brower, ‘How is Evidence Actually Used in Policy-Making? A new framework from a global DFID programme’, *From Power to Policy* blog, edited by Duncan Green, 1 November 2017, <<https://frompoverty.oxfam.org.uk/how-is-evidence-actually-used-in-policy-making-a-new-framework-from-a-global-dfid-programme/>>.

24 *Revised Evaluation Policy of UNICEF*, 4 August 2023, E/ICEF/2023/27.

Recognize that people are short on time and want a quick and easy introduction to the function and its headline achievements. Establish a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section that includes links to a visualized overview of evaluation coverage, key messages and short headlines on what impacts evaluations have had on a range of desirable outcomes. Use dashboards to present at-a-glance overviews of UNICEF evaluations that help audiences find what they're looking for, and stories that match and illustrate the main value propositions of the function.

Make evaluations one of the go-to places for them to look for and find stories. Provide examples of where studies and evaluative evidence have had an impact on policy and programming, and where they have offered insights that have prompted 'food for thought', innovation and adaptation. Map existing systems and activities for opportunities to tease in small steps for evaluation use. Provide training for in-country UNICEF communications staff in '101 Stories Hidden in Plain Sight: Evaluations as story sources' and tell the story of how evaluation champions have contributed to raising visibility of UNICEF impact through such stories.

ACTIVITY #3 Experiment with artificial intelligence (AI) to both find patterns across evaluations and tailor findings for different audiences

Experiment with large language models and other accessible AI to map out how the evidence and learning contained in UNICEF's evaluation repository are relevant to users' current information needs and issues. For example, look for findings and evidence that resonate with emerging news agendas and internal campaigning themes, and find analysis that is hidden in reports and that can be responsive to demands from, for example, country partners and colleagues designing new programmes.

Work with other interested parties inside UNICEF to experiment with new tools that look across large internal information sources, e.g., [Microsoft Copilot](#), to identify content that could be useful to colleagues, at speed and in response to emerging issues and programme design needs.



TACTIC #6

Put learning at the heart of evaluation

Crucial to the effective use of evaluations is an organizational culture that enables and rewards learning. This is neither easily built nor maintained. It requires leadership buy-in, a clear understanding of incentives and disincentives for learning, the creation of opportunities for reflection during which learning questions are discussed, rewards for learning achievements (versus kudos for evaluations that show positive results), the integration of evaluation use into job descriptions and performance appraisals, and vigorous deployment of evaluation utilization tools. Tactic 6 rests on the principle that learning at scale needs to be facilitated by hardwiring it into processes and procedures and maximizing incentives for it. An improved enabling environment for learning is essential for evaluative evidence to realize its full potential internally.

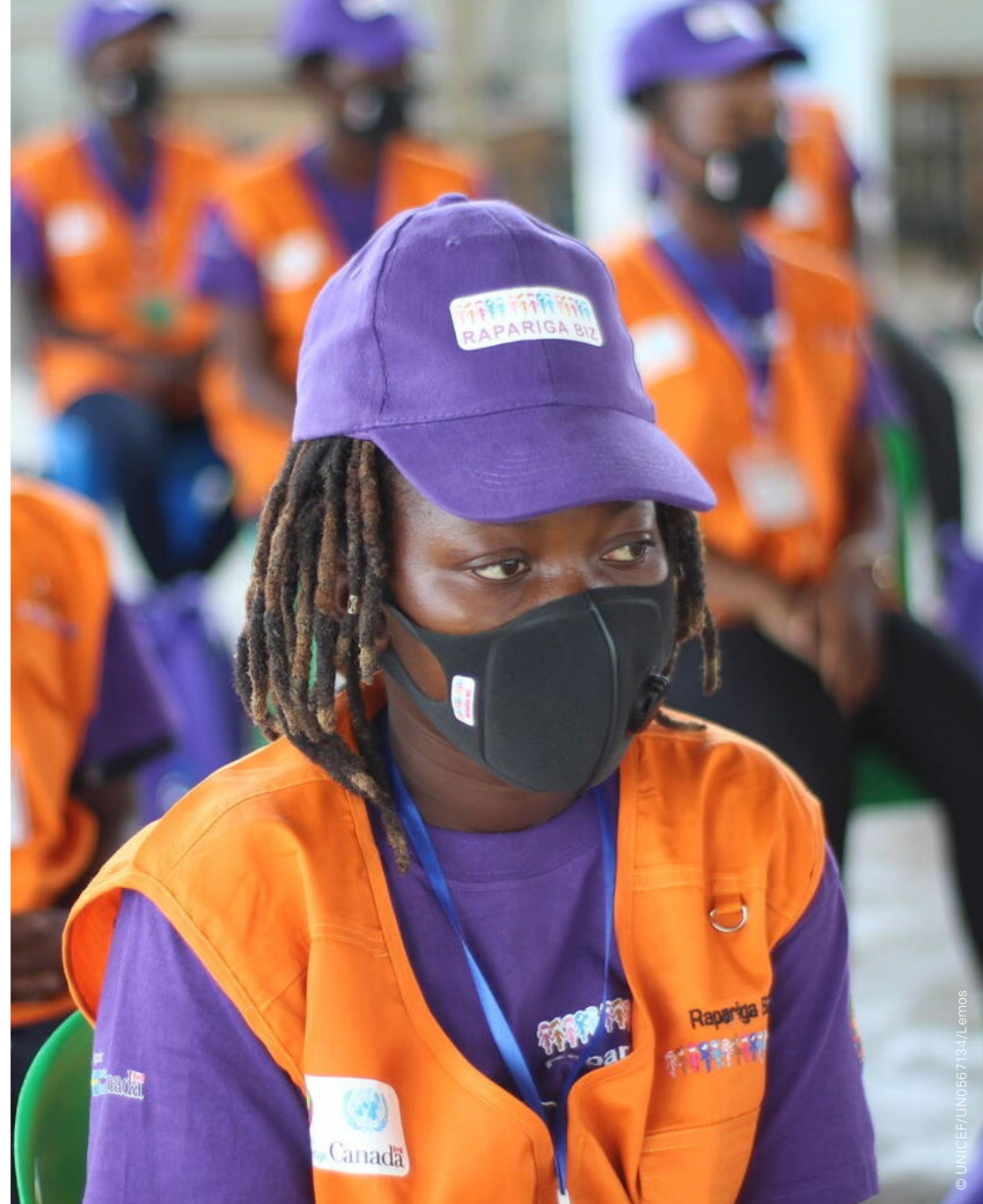
ACTIVITY #1 Walk the talk: build reflective learning processes into the flow of work and showcase the results

Update the bank of messages with every evaluation produced and routinely include discussions of evaluation findings in mid-year and annual staff meetings and showcasing through marketplace events, etc., to draw insights that read across the body of work to spot patterns and themes. Use these to refresh the bank of messages and generate compelling stories for others to amplify. This activity will increase visibility of evaluations and their findings across the evaluative function and will increase the likelihood that the body of work will be 'owned' by the cadre. This is an essential step towards them becoming advocates for the function who can speak in their own settings.

Every six months, compile for review the monitoring data that are collected on engagement and uptake (see section 9, 'How do we know if we've been successful?'), plus the results of any specially commissioned reports.²⁵ Work with knowledge management colleagues and facilitators from the Division of Analytics, Planning and Monitoring to create a set of learning questions that interrogate the data to find pathways to impact – what communication and advocacy tactics are working, with what results. Systematic reflection will identify lessons that can improve communication treatments for evaluations and grow the field of people interested in evidence uptake inside and outside the organization. The systematic review of uptake and use data will also identify potential stories for use in advocacy and identify the most useful communication channels to reach and engage priority target audiences.

ACTIVITY #2 Join forces with like-minded divisions and organizations to make a greater case for evidence and learning

Join forces with knowledge management and evidence champions internally and externally to carve out a distinct contribution as one key provider. Use the recently stated ambition of the knowledge management community to make UNICEF an “organization that systematically uses evidence and learns from experience to achieve its goals more effectively seen externally as a knowledge leader for children”²⁶ to forge stronger protocols for collaborative work with others.



25 For example, updates on the 2020 *Study on Influential Evaluations in UNICEF*

26 UNICEF Global Knowledge Management Strategy 2021-2022.

How the activities map onto the four strategic pillars

ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIC PILLARS	Foundational	Collaborative	Supportive	Selective
TACTIC #1: Integrate strategic communications and engagement into all parts of the evaluation management cycle and provide clear 'plug and play' guidance for staff				
Activity #1 Develop and roll out procedures	✓			
Activity #2 Make guidance accessible, easy to use and mandatory			✓	
Activity #3 'Make the communication ask' of everyone involved		✓		
TACTIC #2: Unpack the 'black box' of evaluation reports, making knowledge visible, accessible, engaging and easy to understand				
Activity #1 Develop a set of branded templates for the full menu of evaluation products and make these accessible to all staff			✓	
Activity #2 Develop key messages from each evaluation and use to build a bank of messages on the value of evaluative evidence	✓			
Activity #3 Generate a set of tiered products	✓			
TACTIC #3: Put utility, use and the audience at the centre of evaluations and make these priorities explicit from the start				
Activity #1 Do more with less				✓
Activity #2 Identify the most important audiences to engage and speak to them with information and evidence that resonate with their priorities		✓		✓
Activity #3 Enable more utilization-focused evaluations that have users and use written into their methodology			✓	
TACTIC #4: Lead one advocacy campaign and support one UNICEF advocacy issue with evaluative evidence every year				
Activity #1 Design and lead an annual campaign using advocacy 'best bets'				✓
Activity #2 Explore opportunities to piggyback on bigger, louder campaigns and advocacy with evaluative evidence		✓		
Activity 3 Reframe the narrative around evaluation	✓			

ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIC PILLARS	Foundational	Collaborative	Supportive	Selective
TACTIC #5: Tell more and better stories about what evaluations reveal about our world and the work of UNICEF in making it better for children				
Activity #1 Identify themes and patterns across the most recent five years of evaluations	✓			
Activity #2 Convince others that evaluations are a source of new and interesting stories for their platforms and channels		✓		
TACTIC #6: Put learning at the heart of evaluations and work with knowledge management champions to facilitate and upskill staff to do this better				
Activity #1 Walk the talk: build reflective learning processes into the flow of work and showcase the results	✓			
Activity #2 Join forces with like-minded divisions and organizations to make a greater case for evidence and learning		✓		

How the tactics map onto the strategy objectives

To increase ownership and understanding of UNICEF's evaluation function by both internal and external stakeholders and partners

To improve uptake and utilization of evaluative evidence in decision-making

To stimulate internal and external demand for evaluative evidence by making clear its value proposition/ improving visibility and utility

TACTIC #1: Integrate strategic communications and engagement into all parts of the evaluation management cycle and provide clear 'plug and play' guidance for staff to use



TACTIC #3: Put utility, use and the audience at the centre of evaluations and make these priorities explicit from the start



TACTIC #2: Unpack the 'black box' of evaluation reports, making knowledge visible, accessible, engaging and easy to understand



TACTIC #5: Tell more and better stories about what evaluations reveal about our world and the work of UNICEF in making it better for children



TACTIC #6: Put learning at the heart of evaluation

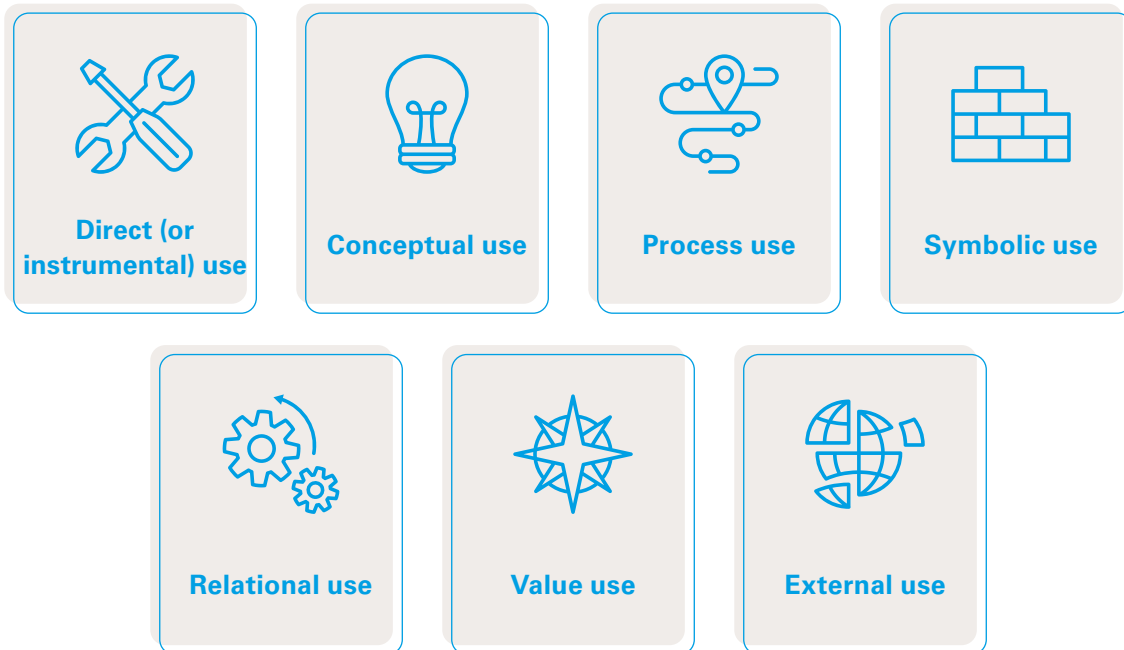


TACTIC #4: Lead one advocacy campaign and support one UNICEF advocacy issue each year to demonstrate the value-add of evaluations



How do we know if we've been successful?

There are a number of practical challenges in demonstrating whether and how evaluations have made a difference. Change takes time; there is rarely a causal link between the communication of evidence and a desired outcome; improvements in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour are often invisible and/or not acknowledged; and uptake by decision-makers and program implementers may vary. Factors such as organizational culture, competing priorities and power dynamics can influence the extent to which evaluation findings are considered and acted upon.



In UNICEF, the monitoring systems in place, such as the management response, look for evidence of uptake and impact from individual evaluations, but single evaluations are rarely enough to provoke change on their own.

Addressing these challenges requires a combination of improved evaluation design and methodologies, long-term monitoring systems, stronger data infrastructure and a supportive environment that values evidence-based decision-making. It also necessitates a shift in mindset towards recognizing evaluations as part of a learning process, with a focus on adaptive management and continuous improvement.

What success looks like will differ for different studies and across the body of evaluative evidence. It is therefore worth looking for evidence of impact using a range of different dimensions and reviewing the gathered information at regular sensemaking sessions. The emerging stories can feed back into advocacy activities that build a body of evidence of the value of evaluations. Useful categories for consideration are defined below.

Direct (or instrumental) use: evaluation leads to immediate and specific actions, such as programme continuation, expansion, revision, or termination²⁷

Conceptual use: sometimes called enlightenment, refers to more general learning that takes place as a result of the evaluation, with stakeholders having an improved understanding of a problem or its possible solutions

Process use: refers to use that arises not because of the findings of an evaluation, but as a result of participation in the evaluation process

Symbolic use: includes such actions as the use of evaluations to justify pre-existing positions or simply to signify the purported rationality of an agency

27 Mark, Melvin M., and Gary T. Henry, 'The Mechanisms and Outcomes of Evaluation Influence', *Evaluation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2004, pp. 35–57.

Relational use: includes efforts to modify aspects of ongoing relationships, structures and organizational processes

Value use: where use of the evaluation can shape what we believe in and what our aspirations and motivations are

External use: how use of an evaluation can lead to changes beyond the development programme being evaluated.

The consequences of evaluation use can include:

Individual change: i.e., within a particular person. This is when evaluation changes something within the individual, such as one's thoughts, attitudes, beliefs or actions.

Interpersonal change: i.e., between individuals. This refers to changes triggered by interactions between individuals, such as when the evaluation's findings are used to persuade others about the merit of a programme or policy.

Collective change: i.e., at a more macro, organizational unit level. This means changes in the decisions or practices of organizations or systems, such as when policy change happens as a result of an evaluation, or when an initiative is expanded, continued or terminated.

Create a dropdown list of impacts that are relevant; these could be clustered under two broad headings, learning (what evaluation findings and analysis have enabled UNICEF to know and do both practically and potentially) and impact (what evidence is there of the effects of UNICEF's programmes and initiatives on the lives of children – and how has this evidence been used in, e.g., advocacy, fundraising, or negotiating for better policies and practices in a virtual cycle of evaluation for good).





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