

## INFORMATION NOTE

Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

unicef   
for every child

UNICEF Executive Board  
Annual session 2022

### 1. Introduction

This information note is presented to the Executive Board pursuant to its decision 2018/15, in which UNICEF was requested to continue its engagement with the Board on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 and to provide regular updates on that work. At the request of the Bureau of the Executive Board, this information note also includes updates on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 76/4 on the review of the resident coordinator system, in the context of General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR).

In its first three years (2019–2021) of implementation, the reform has led to the repositioning of the United Nations development system (UNDS) with the reinvigorated resident coordinator system at its heart. The focus is now increasingly on reform consolidation and a visible shift to impact and scale of results. The reform has been mainstreamed into the policies and operations of UNICEF and other entities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG). Regular progress updates on the implementation of the reform are provided annually in UNICEF statutory reporting mechanisms, harmonized across agencies, which include the annual report of the Executive Director, its annex on the implementation of the QCPR, its data companion and scorecard; the report on the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, its Integrated Results and Resources Framework; and the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

The present information note provides an overview of UNICEF efforts on the repositioning process since the last update to the Executive Board at the annual session of 2021. It includes sections on UNICEF support to the resident coordinator system, system-wide support to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as delivering results in a repositioned UNDS.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Implementation of the new Management Accountability Framework
- UNICEF transferred \$890,000 in levy payments in the first quarter of 2022, and a total of \$17 million since 2019
- Six UNICEF staff are in a resident coordinator role
- UNICEF engaged in and co-chairing opportunity/issue-based coalitions across all regions
- 87 per cent of UNICEF offices engaged in joint programmes
- 2,467 individuals enrolled in the MAPS e-course
- Launch of UNICEF Assessment of Joint UN Interventions, 2021
- Launch of third UNICEF survey on UNDS reform

## 2. Support to the consolidation of the United Nations development system reform

### A. New Management Accountability Framework

UNICEF continued to support the enhanced resident coordinator system and coordination structures at headquarters, regional and country levels. The new Management Accountability Framework (MAF) played an important role in this context.

A foundational piece of the reform, the MAF of the United Nations development and resident coordinator systems provides a framework for consistent approaches across the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) in adherence with the General Assembly resolution on the repositioning of the UNDS.

In 2021, UNICEF actively participated in UNSDG negotiations on the new MAF, providing detailed feedback to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and taking part in regular UNSDG consultations. UNICEF notes with satisfaction that the new MAF clearly reflects improvements, such as recognition for mutual accountability at all levels as a guiding principle, for collective decision-making through the UNSDG, as well as on accountability of Principals to their respective governing bodies.

With the endorsement of the UNICEF Executive Director, the final version of the MAF was circulated on 12 October 2021 to all regional directors, deputy regional directors and heads of office, accompanied by a request to familiarize and fully adhere to the obligations under the Framework, and to strive to deliver on better development results.

Since then, UNICEF has worked jointly with regional offices to roll out region-specific MAF webinars with the objective of providing a comprehensive overview and analysis on key elements of the updated Framework, allowing countries to exchange experiences and ask questions of technical experts. The webinars focused on four areas: performance appraisal, strategic planning, communications and advocacy, and funding and resource mobilization. In addition, at the request of regional offices, UNICEF organized dedicated sessions on the MAF, and more broadly on UNDS reform, in a number of regional management team meetings.

### B. Communications strategy

In 2020, the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO) initiated a revision of previously issued United Nations country team (UNCT) communications guidance. The updated UNSDG Guidelines for communications and advocacy strategy for the Cooperation Framework, aligned with the new MAF, aim to support UNCTs and their partners in establishing a clearly formulated, well-planned joint country communications strategy that will be part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs). The strategy will be essential in shaping the narrative, achieving results and mobilizing key audiences to take action on the Sustainable Development Goals, including those pertaining to children's rights and well-being. Communication and advocacy serve not only to promote the results of fieldwork, but can also directly contribute to the achievement of those results.

Throughout 2021 and into early 2022, UNICEF actively engaged in the revision process of the Guidelines together with other United Nations agencies. UNICEF worked with all regional chiefs of communications and other relevant divisions to ensure that the draft versions included substantive inputs and perspectives from regional and country levels. Once finalized and circulated by DCO, UNICEF will ensure dissemination of the Guidelines for communications and advocacy strategy to its regional and country offices.

## C. Alignment of country programme documents with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks

To strengthen system-wide support to the Sustainable Development Goals, UNICEF worked with other United Nations entities, including DCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to improve common country analyses, and ensured that UNICEF country programme documents were directly derived from the UNSDCF.

The alignment of country programme documents and UNSDCFs, considered the central planning tool for UNCTs, is key to prioritizing the acceleration of results in individual outcomes under related Sustainable Development Goal targets. The design of the country programmes is in fact based on the agreed results areas of the UNSDCFs, and country programme documents clearly indicate how UNICEF contributes to the UNSDCF results areas and collective outcomes, effectively demonstrating the UNICEF value added and comparative advantage.

Working within UNCTs that have high-level UNSDCFs gives UNICEF the opportunity to elevate the level of results achieved for children within its goal framework through strengthened linkages between national development plans, strategies and budgets, and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. UNICEF is benefitting from the expertise of non-resident United Nations entities and leveraging other entities' existing interventions.

Although countries that have a UNDS programmatic presence, a resident coordinator and an established UNCT are expected to have a UNSDCF as the most important planning and implementation instrument for development activities, exceptional cases may arise where the necessary conditions to develop a full-fledged UNSDCF are not in place. In April 2022, the UNSDG Principals endorsed the "Guidance on UN country-level strategic planning for development in exceptional circumstances". The document outlines how the decision to proceed with an alternative unsigned option to a Cooperation Framework rests with the Chair of the UNSDG and the Principals of the UNSDG entities, following an escalation procedure defined by DCO. All alternative options are temporary, time-bound solutions, and the shift towards a Cooperation Framework will be made as soon as possible. In all circumstances, a joint United Nations planning and implementation framework for development is required.

## D. Reporting through UN INFO

UNICEF and DCO established a working group on UN INFO, the planning, monitoring and reporting system, to efficiently track the United Nations contribution towards Sustainable Development Goals at country level, as well as monitor and report on UNSDCFs through joint workplans. UNICEF informed country offices of its participation in UN INFO by including details in its planning and reporting guidance and procedures. Additionally, UNICEF is working towards enabling automated data transfer from its corporate systems to reduce the burden on country offices, and collaborating with pilot UNCTs to identify intersection points between UNSDCFs and country programme documents. UNICEF also co-convened, with UNDP, a United Nations Transparency Task Force aimed at establishing common technical standards for reporting to UN INFO, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, as well as the International Aid Transparency Initiative, of which UNICEF is a Governing Board member.

## E. Funding the resident coordinator system

In accordance with the agreed funding arrangements for the resident coordinator system, in 2021 UNICEF transferred \$6.4 million in coordination levy payments and \$8.3 million in UNSDG cost-sharing to the United Nations Secretariat. Additionally, UNICEF country offices provided a total of \$1.3 million in cash and in-kind contributions at the local level.

UNICEF transferred its UNSDG cost-sharing of \$8.3 million for 2022 to the United Nations Secretariat as early as the fourth quarter of 2021. Being one of the first UNSDG members to do so at such an early stage, UNICEF contributed to the ability of DCO to plan ahead and commit funding for development coordination.

In the first quarter of 2022, UNICEF transferred an additional \$890,000 in coordination levy payments, bringing the total amount of coordination levy transferred to \$17 million since 2019.

## F. Survey of UNICEF country offices

Following requests for an update on the reform implementation at country level, UNICEF carried out its second UNDS reform survey among its country representatives in June 2021 and plans to carry out its third survey in mid-2022. Last year's survey, developed in close consultation with UNDP and UNFPA, showed that UNDS reform processes and structures are in a clear consolidation phase, with UNICEF country representatives reporting important improvements in selected areas of the MAF, the new resident coordinator function and the coordination of UNCTs, as well as strategic planning tools.

The survey demonstrated the active engagement of UNICEF in driving coherence processes forward and in carving out opportunities to advance child-related Sustainable Development Goals. Based on survey findings, the picture of a stronger resident coordinator function emerged, with 57 per cent of respondents indicating an increase in the ability of resident coordinator offices to facilitate inter-agency work and promote collaboration between agencies. In addition, 50 per cent of the respondents indicated that UNICEF strategic engagement with resident coordinators improved overall. Similarly, 62 per cent agreed that the reform was strengthening collaboration within the UNCT. There appeared to be consensus that resident coordinator offices had adequate capacity to support in-country coordination, with 74 per cent of respondents supporting this statement.

## G. Inter-agency mobility

In 2022, five staff members out of 21 applicants were recommended by UNICEF to the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator talent pool, demonstrating a growing interest of UNICEF staff in these posts. As of April 2022, six UNICEF staff were in a resident coordinator role and three in a resident coordinator ad interim role, making UNICEF the fourth largest provider of resident coordinator staff among United Nations entities. UNICEF also revised its policy to encourage staff members to take advantage of inter-organization staff mobility opportunities. In 2021, 108 staff members made inter-agency moves in and out of UNICEF; 52 were released from UNICEF and 56 joined UNICEF from other United Nations entities.

### 3. System-wide support to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

#### A. Implementing the reform in the context of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and the 2020 QCPR

At its second regular session of 2021, the Executive Board endorsed the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, which was conceived as the first of two sequential plans in a strategic approach to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The focus of the Strategic Plan is on driving sustainable change to make a measurable difference in children’s lives throughout the Decade of Action and beyond. UNICEF developed its new Plan while responding to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and therefore included lessons learned from the crisis, with a strong focus on systems strengthening, proving UNICEF flexibility for action and its commitment to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The Strategic Plan outlines how UNICEF contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals through its five Goal Areas and a child-centred approach, giving priority to the most disadvantaged.

UNICEF took forward its commitment to the programmatic component of the UNDS reform through a series of strategic partnerships with relevant United Nations entities in support of the Sustainable Development Goals and efforts by national Governments. These partnerships focused on areas that can accelerate results and impact at a large scale, including through South-South and triangular cooperation; leverage existing capacities and build on ongoing work with the greatest potential; yield efficiency gains and savings; maximize the convening role of national partners; and help to build systems.

The outcome focus of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 affords UNICEF the flexibility to partner with other United Nations entities at the country level, as needed, to advance national priorities. Results are monitored at the local level and reported and aggregated globally through UN INFO.

UNICEF systematically ensured that QCPR mandates were integrated into the Strategic Plan. Further to discussions on cooperation, coordination and coherence held with counterparts across the United Nations system on the development of the Strategic Plan, UNICEF continued to consult extensively with other United Nations entities in response to elements of the QCPR, particularly the 2020 QCPR mandates. UNICEF worked with other agencies to integrate a range of common indicators set out in the QCPR monitoring and reporting framework. The annual report of the Executive Director will offer annual updates on Strategic Plan progress, including the indicators drawn from the QCPR and those shared with other United Nations entities.

#### B. Active engagement in the United Nations Sustainable Development Group

The UNSDG remains the most important inter-agency forum to maximize the impact of UNDS operational work on sustainable development, particularly at the country level. The Group provides an open space for capacity strengthening and knowledge exchange across the system on integrated approaches to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as for taking action on complex development challenges.

UNICEF is a member of the **Fiduciary Management Oversight Group** and actively contributes to consultations on policy issues related to inter-agency instruments for programmes, donor conditionalities, and provision of trainings to UNCTs on joint programmes and pooled funds. In 2021, UNICEF contributed to an update on the 1 per cent coordination levy guidance developed by the Group and provided technical and substantive support to the design of the funding compact common management feature survey, aimed at assessing the quality of pooled funds. UNICEF also

provided technical input on improvements required to enhance the relevance of future surveys and identified capacity-building needs across countries and United Nations entities.

UNICEF continues to play a lead role in the roll-out of operational aspects of UNDS reform by co-chairing the **UNSDG Business Innovations Group** and the **Task Team on Efficiency Impact Reporting**, as well as chairing, until September 2021, the Task Team on Common Premises.

UNICEF supported UNDS-reform efforts to maximize programmatic gains through efficient and high-quality back-office operations and a culture change in its corporate business operations. The harmonization of business practices across entities was driven principally through the Common Back Office initiative, renamed **Local Shared Services Centres**. The original target set for full roll-out by the end of 2022 was revised to the end of 2024. UNICEF was influential in driving the simplification of the methodology for implementation to speed up the roll-out process and is committed to ensuring that the Local Shared Services Centres will be successful, once established.

**Business operations strategies** were implemented in all UNICEF offices, reaching the 2021 target, with an estimated cost avoidance of \$72 million for a five-year period, and offices are currently undertaking a review of results and looking for potential additions to their strategies. UNICEF supported these activities by arranging trainings for focal points and sharing relevant analyses.

UNICEF established guidelines and mechanisms that contributed to achieving the United Nations target on **Common Premises**. By the end of 2021, UNICEF achieved 53 per cent of Common Premises, exceeding the United Nations target of 50 per cent and marking significant progress from the baseline of 39 per cent in 2018. UNICEF achieved this by taking the lead and bringing other United Nations agencies into its facilities, joining other United Nations agencies, or establishing offices in United Nations Houses. This was complemented by the establishment of a Capital Asset Fund mechanism to support construction and renovation initiatives. In line with the UNSDG road map on Common Premises, UNICEF aims to increase the proportion of Common Premises in high-cost locations by 2024, with an immediate target to achieve 55 per cent of Common Premises by the end of 2022.

Through the **UNSDG Task Force on Performance Appraisal**, UNICEF supported the development and roll-out of a new online tool created by DCO for UNCT members to provide feedback on the performance of resident coordinators. UNICEF recognized the dual reporting role of the resident coordinator in the job descriptions and performance indicators of its country representatives. UNICEF representatives were able to provide feedback on the resident coordinators' behavioural competencies. In return, the resident coordinators were able to provide feedback on the UNCT-related performance indicator for UNICEF representatives through UNICEF performance evaluation process. In 2021, 67 per cent of UNICEF country representatives were asked to provide feedback on the resident coordinators' performance appraisal, while 47 per cent of resident coordinators provided feedback to UNICEF country representatives, marking an improvement from 2020 figures. UNICEF aspires to reach a 100 per cent feedback rate in both cases.

In 2021, the Joint Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support for the 2030 Agenda (MAPS) secretariat transitioned into the **Integrated Policy and Practitioners' Network**, currently co-chaired by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF. The MAPS e-course aims to equip policy practitioners with a common understanding of the application of integrated policy approaches to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The e-course is hosted by UNICEF and open to United Nations staff and partners globally. As of April 2022, it drew 2,467 registered participants (up from 1,500 the previous year) from 163 countries and territories. Participants come from 38 United Nations entities and 38 Governments. A total of 493 completion certificates have been awarded, with many more completing individual modules. More than 80 per cent of respondents evaluated the course as useful in their work.

UNICEF continues to be an active member of the SDG:Learn initiative led by the United Nations Standards Coordinating Committee and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research to promote Sustainable Development Goals-related learning in the United Nations and with partners. UNICEF contributed to the design and promotion of the platform and used it to promote more than 20 UNICEF-developed, Sustainable Development Goals-related e-learning courses. UNICEF also supported the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs to build the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians on Yammer, managed by the United Nations Statistics Division, to support peer-to-peer learning among statisticians across the system.

## 4. Delivering results in the United Nations development system

UNICEF shifted its focus beyond what the organization could do alone, towards using its mandate to mobilize other actors in an effort to maximize collective impact, rally support around development opportunities and advance human security globally. UNICEF is leading the momentum for equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, driving equity-based agendas and leveraging financing to accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including from countries' domestic resources and those of the UNDS, international financial institutions and the private sector.

### A. Update on the regional review

UNICEF actively supports the transformation of the regional architecture of the United Nations, initiated by the Secretary-General under the regional review, which focuses on five key areas of transformation: creation of regional collaborative platforms (RCPs), establishment of knowledge management hubs, enhancement of transparency and results-based management, consolidation of existing capacities with regard to data and statistics, and regional efficiency initiatives through common back offices.

While regional differences require different approaches, UNICEF sees the need for global standards and criteria to guide each region in the roll-out of the regional repositioning. UNICEF looks forward to inclusive global processes to define these standards and criteria, which should address questions related to specific accountabilities, funding and clear lines of communication.

UNICEF sees clear value in RCPs as unified regional coordination mechanisms. RCPs should remain light and agile and should be adjusted if the context changes. The ultimate success of RCPs will be judged by concrete results. UNICEF supports enhanced collaboration and information-sharing across RCPs and expects DCO to ensure a seamless flow of relevant regional information from DCO to all UNSDG members at headquarters and regional office levels.

UNICEF has already taken on a lead role in a number of issue-based coalitions as an opportunity to mainstream children's rights across regions and to lend support to the overall acceleration of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The following section provides a short overview of the constructive approach of all UNICEF regional offices in the regional repositioning – and of issue-based coalitions in particular.

### B. UNICEF regional offices support to the regional repositioning

**UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO) and UNICEF South Asia (ROSA) Regional Offices** are represented in the Asia-Pacific regional coordination mechanism, which comprises 41 countries and territories. The Asia-Pacific RCP reviewed its achievements and identified changes needed to make joint work more impactful and effective and to fully focus on the operationalization of the issue-based coalitions in 2022. The structure was revised from five to four coalitions, with UNICEF participating in three of them (raising ambitions on climate actions; building resilience; and promoting human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment) and co-chairing the

coalition on inclusive economic growth and COVID-19 recovery, together with UNDP. This coalition was newly established at the end of 2021 as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic challenged the fulfilment of human rights, human development, and green and low carbon transitions, thereby exacerbating pre-existing and emerging inequalities that worsened the socioeconomic conditions of the most vulnerable populations and new poor across the Asia-Pacific region. UNICEF, in close collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is supporting a regional study, “Towards Effective, Inclusive Responses to COVID-19: Human Mobility and Urbanization in Cities of the Asia-Pacific”, which explores COVID-19 impacts at the local level. This issue-based coalitions support the operationalization of the United Nations framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19 and helped realize synergies among different regional United Nations entities, bringing the regional UNDS added value to resident coordinators and UNCTs.

In line with United Nations reform, countries in the **UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa (ESARO)** and the **UNICEF West and Central Africa (WCARO) Regional Offices** made steady progress, with all 21 and 24 countries, respectively, presenting updated business operation strategies and annual reviews with improved data quality. The sheer geographical scope of the Africa RCP required increased efforts to operationalize all aspects of the regional reform. UNICEF continued to participate in opportunity/issue-based coalitions under the Africa RCP. The recent arrangement to establish the eighth opportunity/issue-based coalition for subregional initiatives and issues reflected the intent of UNDS to further strengthen the added value of the Africa RCP to UNCTs. UNICEF participated in coalition 3 on education and skills, demographic dividends, gender and youth development participation, highlighting the need to mobilize political movement and advocacy to ensure that a generation of learners is not lost together with valuable gains made throughout the continent in the past decade. UNICEF continued its active participation in coalition 5 on water and climate, taking the lead in reviewing progress on Sustainable Development Goal targets 6.1 and 6.2, in close collaboration with participating agencies,<sup>1</sup> to address SDG data gaps in Africa, to better target communities where investments are most needed. UNICEF also participated in coalition 1 on data and statistical systems in its efforts to establish a regional data strategy. UNICEF engaged with the Knowledge Management Task Group and contributed to the Africa Knowledge Management Hub on COVID-19, which is a one-stop entry point for regional knowledge products, with several functionalities aimed at promoting South-South cooperation, exchanges and learning.

The **UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO)** engages in seven of the eight issue-based coalitions and co-chairs three of them. UNICEF actively contributed to the RCP knowledge platform in line with the shared value proposition of ECARO, where United Nations coherence is a clear element of the office’s engagements. In 2021, UNICEF also engaged in the United Nations Group on Digital Transformation for Europe and Central Asia. UNICEF leveraged the work of the Data and Statistics Working Group to reach the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and establish, in February 2020, the Task Force on Statistics on Children, Adolescents and Youth (eventually narrowing the scope to children), with the objectives of improving the availability, quality and comparability of statistics, and working towards recommendations for more consistent and harmonized definitions, methodologies and approaches across the countries participating in the work of the CES.

The **UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO)** engages in three issue-based coalitions, on climate change, the newly created financing for development, and equitable growth, and co-chairs two coalitions, on human mobility and crime and violence. UNICEF provided valuable communication packages to the coalition on human mobility in support of joint messages for migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on addressing xenophobia. The coalition

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=38082>.

coordinated the review of the Global Compact for Migration and the systematization of information and data related to the different movements and outflows in the region. With UNICEF support, the coalition on crime and violence prepared technical notes on the consequences of these issues during the COVID-19 pandemic and on cyber violence and its impact on specific populations such as women, children and human rights defenders. UNICEF was also active in the regional group on statistics in jointly strengthening regional capacities on data and statistics. Lastly, UNICEF participated in the partnerships and communications working group, co-leading its partnerships task force.

The **UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO)** continued to engage in five issue-based coalitions, on migration, the humanitarian-development nexus, food security, climate action and the environment, gender justice and equality, and quality social services and community resilience, and co-convened two coalitions, on adolescents and youth with UNFPA and on social protection with the International Labour Organization. UNICEF established the “learning to earning” agenda as a focus area of ongoing collaboration, policy and advocacy under the regional issue-based coalition for adolescents and youth. UNICEF built strong partnerships within this coalition that are contributing to a broader policy advocacy platform, with an explicit focus on vulnerable young people, and directed at Governments in the region. UNICEF played an important role in advancing the regional social protection agenda, organizing the regional social protection Ministerial Conference “The future of Social Protection in the Arab Region: Building a vision for a post-COVID-19 reality” in November 2021 and serving as co-convenor of the United Nations issue-based coalition on social protection. The key outcome was the region’s first declaration on social protection that highlighted four action areas: coverage and inclusion, shock responsiveness, financing and governance. UNCTs across the region have used the declaration to advance dialogue on national social protection reforms in these areas. UNICEF also contributes to MANARA, a one-stop-shop on data, knowledge products and expertise on sustainable development in the Arab region sourced from United Nations entities, Member States, the RCP and issue-based coalitions, and other partners. The platform includes the Arab SDG Gateway to access statistics and analyses on sustainable development in the region and is intended to be widely accessible to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### C. Multi-country offices and small island developing States

Under the multi-country office (MCO) review, UNICEF committed to take on a system-wide lead role on data collection and systems, in close consultation with and in support of DCO, specifically in the context of small island developing States, and increased investment in multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) to facilitate reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Through the UNSDG Task Team on Data and Reporting, UNICEF coordinated and led three meetings with multi-country offices (in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Islands) to determine the needs of small island developing States covered by multi-country offices. The meetings’ findings highlighted that, although data collection was relatively well supported by the system, the biggest needs revolved around analysis, planning and coordination.

UNICEF continued its efforts and investment around strengthening national capacities on data collection for evidence-based policymaking through enhanced support for MICS from headquarters, regional offices and multi-country offices in relevant countries, despite challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included support to the ongoing design of MICS in Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos Islands in the Caribbean, and Fiji, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu in the Pacific Islands.

In the Eastern Caribbean, UNICEF co-chairs the SDG Programme Team for the United Nations in Barbados, which has been instrumental in facilitating the development of 10 country implementation plans. In the Pacific, UNICEF co-chairs the UNSDCF task force to support the UNCT in the development process of the new UNSDCF (2023–2027). As the lead agency on outcome 4 on

basic services, UNICEF is coordinating the joint country action plans on this outcome across 14 countries.

In the Eastern Caribbean, UNICEF provided substantial inputs to the United Nations strategic planning process, including the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022–2026, which fully aligns with the multi-country cooperation document. In the Pacific, UNICEF played a key role in the Task Force on Common Country Analysis and provided technical input in the preparation of the UNSDCF road map, including harmonizing planning to ensure alignment with the UNICEF multi-country cooperation document process and with national priorities and strategies. UNICEF took on the role of managing the evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the Pacific Subregion, covering six outcome areas implemented by 29 agencies in 14 countries under the coordination of three resident coordinator offices.

#### **D. Joint programmes and Joint SDG Fund**

In 2021, the number of country offices delivering programmes jointly with United Nations entities increased to 87 per cent, exceeding the UNICEF Strategic Plan target of 74 per cent. Inter-agency pooled funds as a proportion of total UNICEF non-core resources increased for development interventions, and slightly declined for humanitarian interventions. Funds managed by UNICEF as an administrative agent on behalf of government donor partners steadily increased and, on average, UNICEF manages funds on behalf of 12 donor partners annually to deliver joint programmes.

In early 2022, UNICEF continued working on an assessment of joint United Nations interventions to maximize the benefits derived from United Nations inter-agency mechanisms for programme delivery. The process involved multiple surveys, focus group discussions and verification exercises with donor partners, United Nations entities, resident coordinator offices, DCO and UNICEF offices at headquarters, regional and country levels. The assessment exercise contributed to the identification of opportunities, challenges and recommendations linked to policy, programme, partnerships, resource mobilization and operational aspects.

It is expected that the UNICEF Assessment Report on Joint United Nations Interventions, 2021 will be made available by the end of May 2022. UNICEF will then focus on the proposed recommendations and actions identified in the assessment exercise. This will be done in consultation with partners and will take into consideration their respective accountabilities.

As member of the Joint Programme Advisory Board, UNICEF is actively engaged in the revision of the Joint Programme guidance note to ensure that it reflects a programme-driven approach, alignment with the UNSDCF and streamlining of operational aspects to address concerns around transaction cost and overburdening process at the country level. The MAF is also used as reference point to guide enhanced coordination between resident coordinator offices and UNCTs in all aspects of Joint Programme delivery.

UNICEF is a member of the operational steering committee of the Joint SDG Fund and, with the active engagement of its offices across the different regions, it delivers joint programmes on social protection and sustainable development financing, in partnership with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. For instance, the Fund helped UNICEF, as a member of UNCTs, bring catalytic change to social protection systems for children in more than 30 countries, making systems more universal, inclusive, gender-responsive and transformative. Under the sustainable development financing component, UNICEF scaled up its work on public finance in 43 countries in support of UNCT efforts, developing integrated national financing frameworks and COVID-19 recovery plans, directing more finance towards key Sustainable Development Goals for children, linking budget resources to better performance and child outcomes, and, in some countries, developing catalytic municipal SDG bonds as a new source of sustainable development finance at the local level. Active contributions are being made to the system-wide evaluation of the Fund.

Support is also being provided to the Fund’s repositioning exercise, which is expected to target five thematic areas approved by the Deputy Secretary-General (digital connectivity, energy, financing, food systems and leave no one behind), with a focus on social protection and support to the 2030 Agenda at the local level. UNICEF is actively supporting the development emergency modality under the guidance of the Secretary-General’s Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance to put in place a coordinated global response to the ongoing crises.

## E. Update on strategic United Nations partnerships

UNICEF worked closely with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of UNDS operations and to support Governments’ efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Through strategic partnerships, UNICEF harnessed its complementary strengths to advance progress for the world’s children. UNICEF is translating the UNDS reform into practice through, among other actions, the implementation of the following partnerships.

**COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership and ACT-Accelerator:** UNICEF commitment to the joint programmatic impact and collective results of the UNDS reform is exemplified by its strong engagement in the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership and the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A). Both mechanisms ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, tests, treatments and personal protective equipment, along with risk communication and community engagement, for low- and middle-income countries. With sufficient global supply of COVID-19 vaccines for the first time since the pandemic was declared, partners are increasingly focused on unblocking bottlenecks to roll-out and supporting countries to reach their vaccine coverage targets, while protecting essential health services such as routine immunization. Recognizing the urgency of turning vaccine doses into vaccinations so that people and communities are protected, in January 2021 Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership, an inter-agency initiative building on existing resources and partnerships at country, regional and global levels to accelerate vaccination coverage. The Partnership enhanced and elevated the COVID-19 vaccine delivery coordination structure to ensure closer alignment between allocations, country absorptive capacity, and targeting of financial support. A Global Lead Coordinator for COVID-19 Vaccine Country-Readiness and Delivery, housed within UNICEF, was appointed to lead an inter-agency team to pivot the global vaccine delivery effort to a higher gear, enhancing coordination of inter-agency efforts to forecast vaccine needs, and guiding the provision of financial and technical assistance to overcome bottlenecks in country-level implementation.

**Joint programme on mental health and psychosocial well-being and development of children and adolescents:** In the context of the UNICEF-WHO Strategic Collaboration Framework, mental health was identified as one of the four strategic priority areas. To operationalize and accelerate joint action at all levels, the two agencies established a joint programme in 2020. Since then, UNICEF and WHO regional offices have developed regional workplans on mental health and identified countries for targeted support. Five of the countries (Bhutan, Egypt, Guyana, Maldives and Mozambique) are developing tailored approaches for implementation of the joint programme and articulating country-specific priorities and activities. Through regional and country-level support on child and adolescent mental health, as well as drive for joint action, UNICEF and WHO are effectively supporting countries in their effort to achieve the 2030 Agenda. In a phased implementation over the course of 10 years, the joint programme aims to establish mutual commitments, a shared framework and coordinated strategy to transform laws, policies, services, and family and community environments for improved mental health, psychosocial well-being, and development trajectories for the next generation.

**Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS):** UNICEF coordinates its HIV response with UNAIDS and 10 other United Nations co-sponsors. UNICEF and WHO lead on the global AIDS

strategy strategic result area 3, which focuses on ending paediatric AIDS and eliminating vertical transmission of HIV. Despite remarkable progress achieved since 2000, coverage of HIV treatment among pregnant women for prevention of vertical transmission has reached a plateau globally, increasing by only 1 to 2 per cent each year in the past five years. UNICEF, UNAIDS and WHO are rolling out a new framework to advance the last mile regarding the elimination of mother-to-child transmission through a differentiated approach to testing, care, treatment and enhanced support to keep HIV-negative mothers negative and retain those living with HIV on treatment and in care. The three entities are also launching in 2022 the Global Alliance to End AIDS in Children, a global strategic initiative to address stalled progress around eliminating new infections in children as well as the challenges of advancing HIV treatment to children and adolescents. The focus of the Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026 is inequalities, a theme closely aligned with the UNICEF equity agenda and providing a critical opportunity to prioritize issues closest to its mandate. In addition, in 2022 UNICEF was appointed Chair of the Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations, the United Nations Economic and Social Council-mandated Standing Committee of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, which facilitates the input of cosponsors into the strategy, policies and operations of UNAIDS.

The **Spotlight Initiative** modelled a new way of working, drawing on the mandates and collaborative advantages of all relevant United Nations agencies, whose engagement in the Initiative at country level is led by the resident coordinator offices. Across Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific, UNICEF works closely with other United Nations entities to deliver quality programming, especially in prevention and service delivery. Together with UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women, UNICEF provided technical support in the design and implementation of Spotlight activities, which have been vital to service delivery in highly vulnerable contexts. In Uganda, for example, UNFPA and UNICEF successfully advocated for the integration of gender-based violence into the Child Helpline for greater impact and efficiency, in line with the principle of building the One Protection System. This integration is estimated to result in significant savings for the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

**UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage:** Throughout the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, UNFPA and UNICEF demonstrated the collective strength of the One UN approach through the Global Programme to End Child Marriage. To inform programming direction to eliminate child marriage, in 2021 UNFPA and UNICEF undertook a midterm review of phase II of the Global Programme. The entities convened an online event, “Brilliant minds, bold approaches, better results”, during which leading experts and innovators explored how to get back on track to meet the elimination goal, identifying solutions for scaled-up responses and new models for effective programming. The event provided an opportunity to take stock of the evolving programming ecosystem, with a focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, examining the factors for girls at risk of child marriage and married girls and identifying evidence-informed response strategies. Lessons from the review reinforced the need for a joint, multisectoral approach to ending child marriage, and will help accelerate the Global Programme through the end of phase II in 2023.

**Water, sanitation and hygiene for All (WASH):** UNICEF has strong partnerships to advance WASH within the UNDS, including serving as Global WASH Cluster Lead Agency, co-leading with WHO on the Hand Hygiene for All Initiative and serving as host of the Sanitation and Water for All partnership. UNICEF and WHO, through the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, serve as custodian agencies responsible for global reporting on Sustainable Development Goal targets 6.1 and 6.2. In 2022, UNICEF will launch a new Sanitation Game Plan to achieve Safely Managed Sanitation, based on the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, intended to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal target 6.2. The UNICEF Director of WASH serves as Vice-Chair of UN-Water and is currently supporting the organization of the UN 2023 Water Conference, co-hosted by the Governments of the Netherlands and Tajikistan. With the aim to fill a knowledge gap in inter-agency efforts and progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 6, the UNICEF Evaluation Office led a multi-agency synthesis of

evaluations in 2021 to identify impactful approaches implemented by the United Nations and development banks towards the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 6.

## F. Our Common Agenda

The *Our Common Agenda* report represents the Secretary-General’s vision for the future of global cooperation and a reinvigorated, inclusive, networked and effective multilateralism. It is anchored in a wider transformation that would move the UNDS reform towards a renewed United Nations Organization able to offer system-wide solutions to the challenges of the twenty-first century. Its primary aim is to rally support for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. But it also offers a long-term look ahead to the global challenges and opportunities that may impact succeeding generations.

The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and *Our Common Agenda* were both framed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis and protracted humanitarian crises, and are both clear in asserting that global, networked and concerted action is needed to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, embracing an intersectoral approach towards inequality and development.

In 2022, UNICEF agreed to co-lead on five proposals from *Our Common Agenda* that are critical to its mandate, related to: violence against women and girls; the Transforming Education Summit; the development of a Global Vaccination Plan; youth and decent jobs; and legal identity. In addition, UNICEF is playing a collaborator role on 13 additional proposals.

In those areas where UNICEF is co-leading, work has already begun to develop road maps and timelines for implementing the respective proposals. On legal identity, for example, UNICEF seeks to promote an integrated “One UN” approach to civil registration, vital statistics and identity management as recommended by the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda, with birth registration as the starting point. As the custodian of Sustainable Development Goal target 16.9, UNICEF supports Member States to develop a comprehensive, holistic, inclusive and country-owned approach to legal identity.

UNICEF is also working beyond the five proposals of co-leadership to advance the work of *Our Common Agenda*, as aligned with its Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. For instance, the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions leverages UNICEF long-standing field presence and expertise in system-building on social protection, in collaboration with United Nations partners, among others. UNICEF is leading in and contributing to critical working groups of the Global Accelerator, including on financing of social protection, contributing to ensure gender-transformative and inclusive systems and the scale-up of family friendly and care policies. UNICEF is also enhancing the most effective support in fragile and humanitarian contexts, including via the direct delivery of life-saving humanitarian cash transfers and building shock-responsive social protection systems.

## G. System-wide evaluation

UNICEF supported the system-wide evaluation efforts of the UNDS reform and recently contributed, as a key informant, to the system-wide evaluation scoping exercise of the Joint SDG Fund, which led to the development of the final terms of reference for this evaluation. UNICEF is engaging with the system-wide evaluation unit to ensure that critical issues of interest are addressed during the upcoming system-wide evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund. The purpose of the evaluation of the Fund is to measure progress of results and assess how the Fund has positioned itself to achieve its strategic objectives. The evaluation is intended to be forward-looking in terms of future strategic objectives of catalysing and influencing larger funding for supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Issues identified as needing

further strengthening include the Fund's capitalization and its catalytic role in attracting financial contributions, its alignment in supporting the UNDS reforms, and its being fit for purpose in terms of governance arrangements, including the roles of the resident coordinator and the UNCTs.

## 5. Conclusion

As this information note has shown, UNICEF has continued to implement all relevant mandates of the UNDS reform, stemming from General Assembly resolutions [72/279](#) (on the repositioning of the United Nations development system), [76/4](#) (on the review of the resident coordinator system) and [75/233](#) (on the latest QCPR). In particular, UNICEF has fully implemented the matrixed dual reporting mechanism for all representatives, is now deriving all new country programme documents from UNSDCFs, and is fulfilling its financial obligations, both in terms of paying the full annual UNSDG cost-share and implementing the 1 per cent coordination levy if donors do not deduct it on their own.

In 2022, UNICEF will continue playing a lead role in reform areas where the system needs to do more. This is particularly true for the ongoing efforts on system-wide efficiencies which UNICEF will continue driving through its role as co-chair of the Business Innovations Group, but also for system-wide efforts on reporting through UN INFO.

In addition, UNICEF foresees the need to further consolidate the reform in the regional repositioning for which it developed clear corporate positions, enabling its regional offices to engage constructively in the necessary region-specific discussions.

Internally, UNICEF will prepare the third round of its annual survey among UNICEF representatives on the reform. The findings, anticipated in late summer 2022, will continue to inform UNICEF constructive engagement with DCO and other agencies on the reform roll-out. If, and when, the UNSDG undertakes a fresh review of the MAF, the most important foundational guidance document of the reform, UNICEF will be ready to contribute based on factual evidence from its survey.

Ultimately, the reform focus of the system needs to shift to concrete results on the ground. The main aim of UNICEF will remain to provide optimal support to Governments in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Tangible results from continuously improved integrated programmatic action at country level, in ever closer cooperation with other agencies, continues to be the ultimate goal of UNICEF.