



Annual report for 2021 on the evaluation function in UNICEF

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Item 7: Annual report for 2021 on the evaluation function in UNICEF

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Introduction

- COVID-19 pandemic, protracted armed conflict, food insecurity, rising levels of poverty and climate change-induced natural disasters continued to pose significant threats to the realization of children's rights and the acceleration of progress against the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The evaluation function remained attuned to the accountability and learning needs of the organization, generating evidence to strengthen the organizational response and accelerate progress towards realizing the rights of all children everywhere.
- Improvements in evaluation submissions, coverage, quality expenditure and submission of management responses.



Operational context

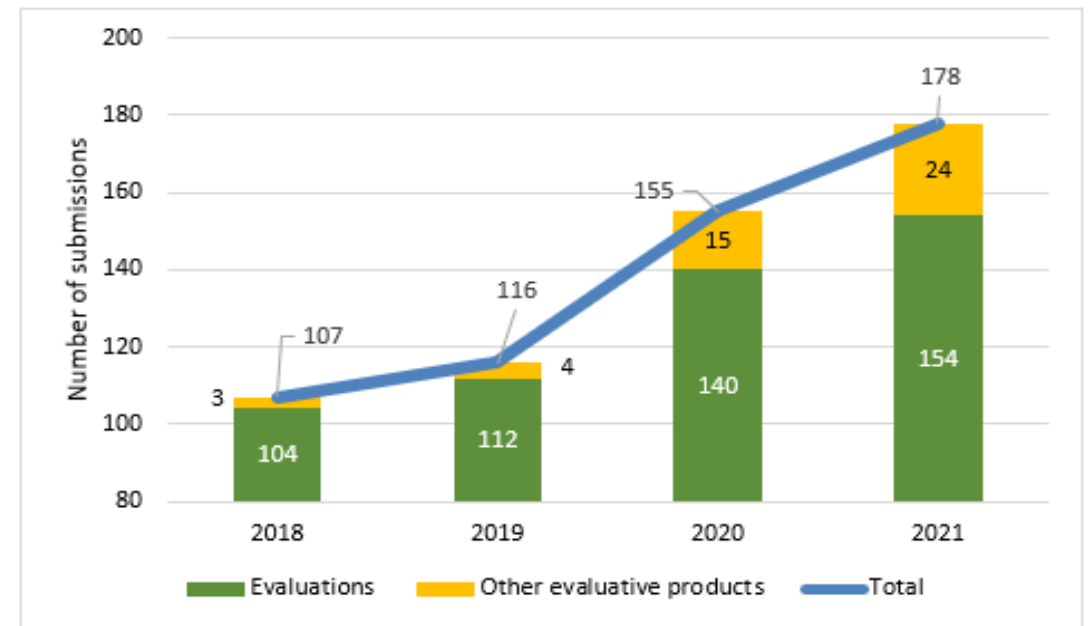
- The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated adaption of traditional evaluation approaches to meet unprecedented challenges.
- Several evaluations were put on hold to shift efforts to COVID-19-related evaluations, to generate lessons on the UNICEF response and better prepare for future health emergencies.
- While these adaptations have proved essential to meeting the learning and accountability needs of the organization, they cannot be a long-term substitute for more traditional and robust methods of harnessing evidence.



Evaluation submission

- There was an increase in the number of evaluations submitted.
- Broadening the suite of evaluative products was key to ensuring that managers have a range of tools to help them generate evidence to improve programming.
- With this increased flexibility, however, comes a need for greater clarity on how to be adaptive without sacrificing the independence, quality and credibility of evaluation reports.

Number of evaluation submissions, 2018–2021

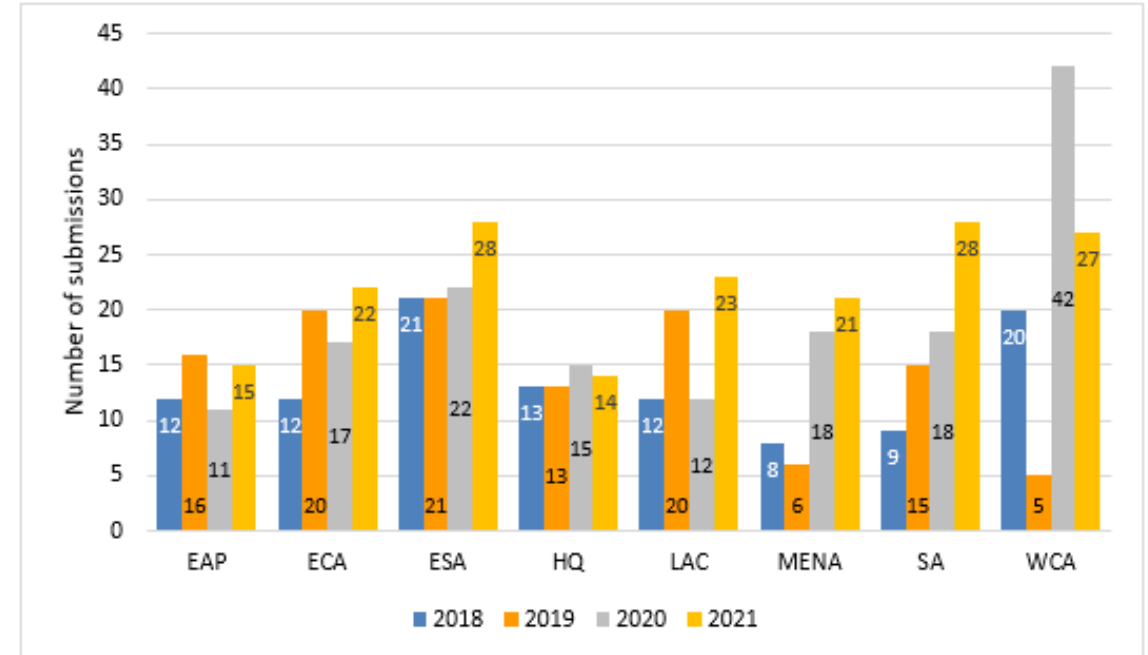


Source: Evidence Information Systems Integration (EISI).

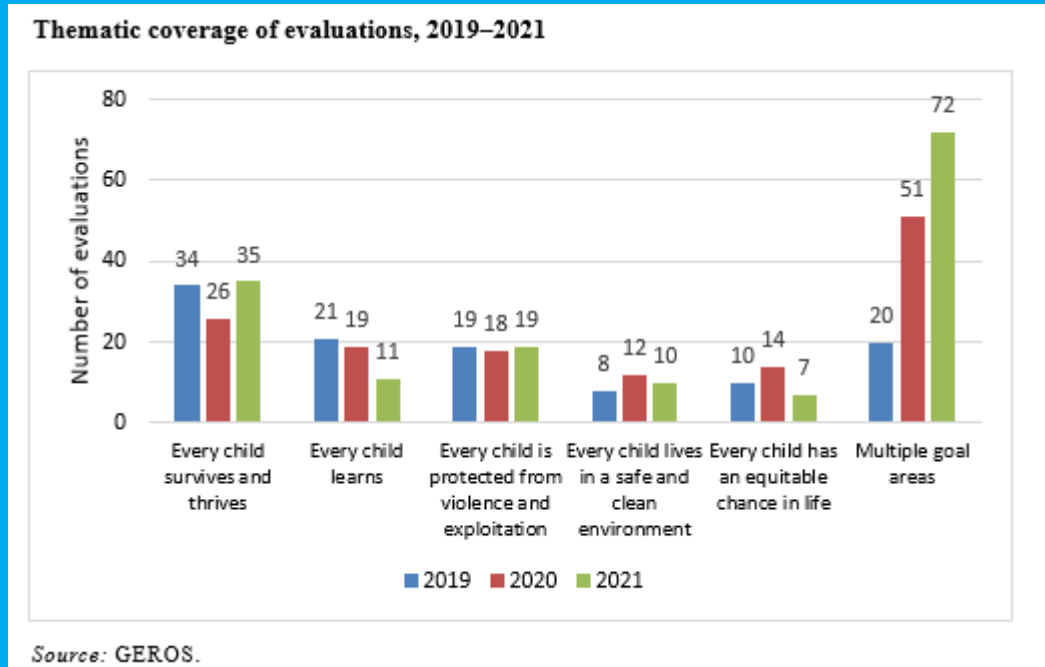
Evaluation coverage

- Increased output and the move to a more diversified set of evaluative products occurred at all levels of the function.
- Submissions by all regions except headquarters and the West and Central Africa region surpassed those of previous years.
- Negligible decline in overall geographical coverage from 2020 to 2021; five of the seven regions attained 100 per cent coverage.

Number of submissions by location, 2018–2021



Evaluation level and Goal Area coverage

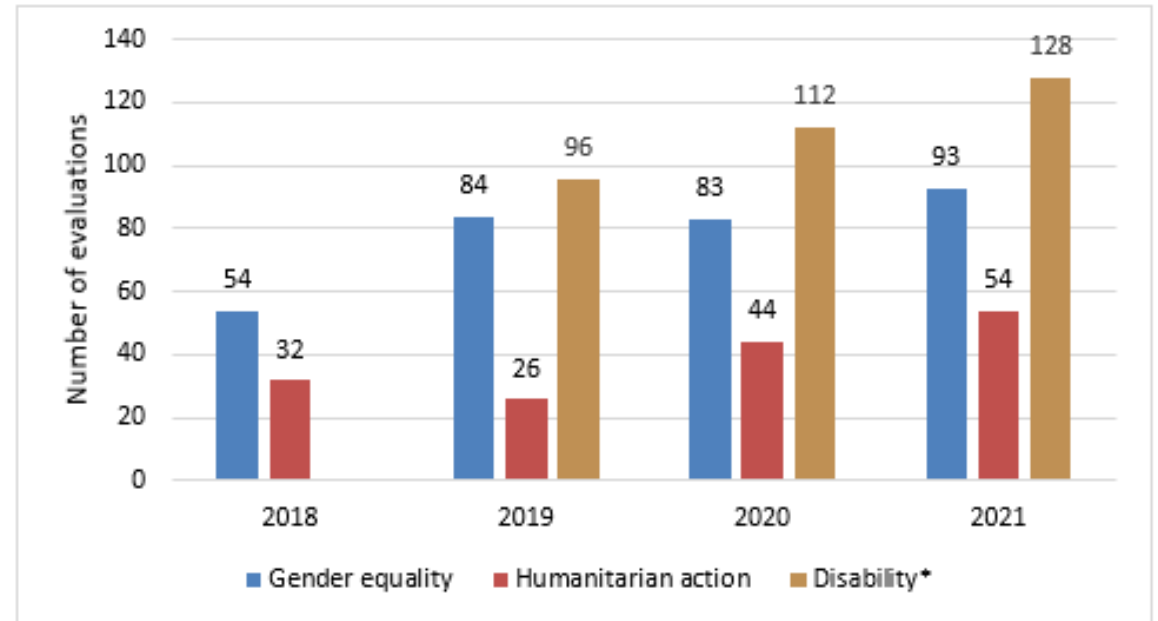


- There’s been a steep drop in the number of evaluations at the impact and outcome levels since 2018, when nearly half of all evaluations included impact-level results.
- Evaluations produced in 2021 represented a well-distributed mix of backward-looking, summative exercises and forward-looking, formative exercises, with more than half of evaluations being summative and formative.
- Since 2019, there has been a year-on-year increase in the number of evaluations covering multiple Goal Areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 as regional and country offices shift to more strategic evaluations.
- 10 evaluations were managed jointly with other United Nations agencies.

Disability, gender and humanitarian action

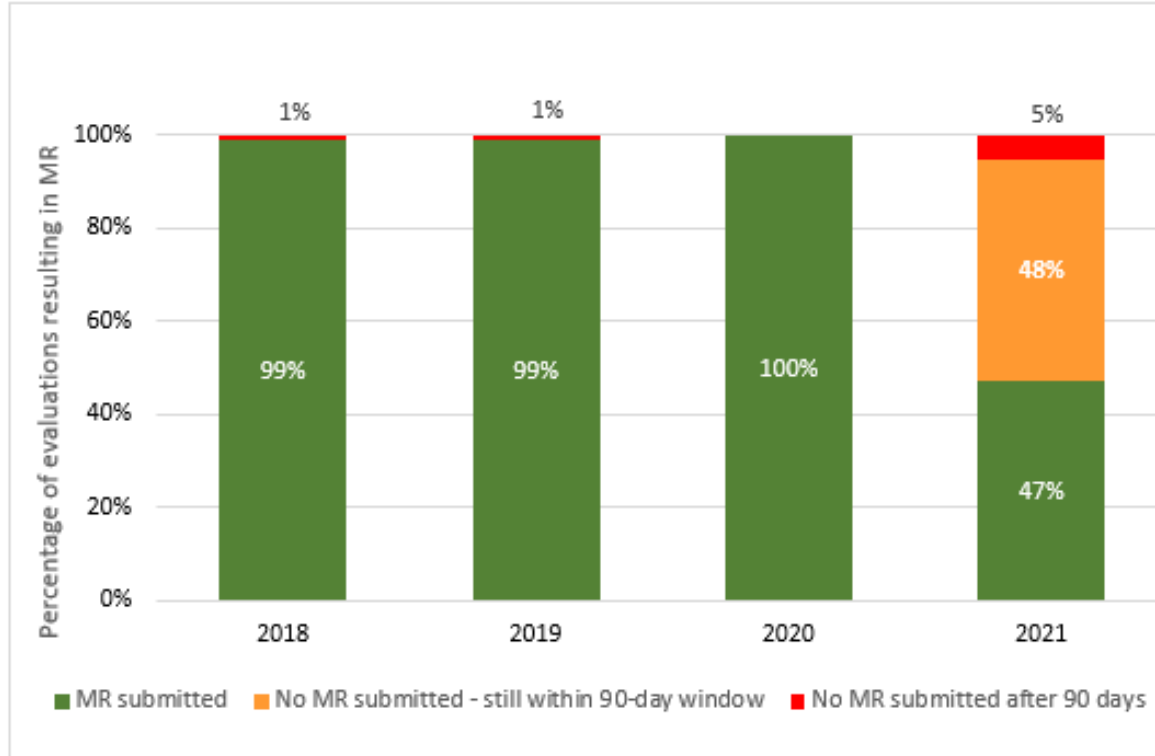
- Compared with 2020, there was an increase in the number of evaluations in 2021 covering disability, gender and humanitarian action.
- Performance on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women remains high; the overall performance of the 2021 evaluation portfolio “exceeds requirements”.
- Evaluation of humanitarian action remains a priority; 14 evaluations of humanitarian action were conducted in 2021, including Level 1 and Level 2 emergencies in Somalia and Mozambique.

Number of evaluations covering disability, gender equality and humanitarian action, 2018–2021



Management response submission

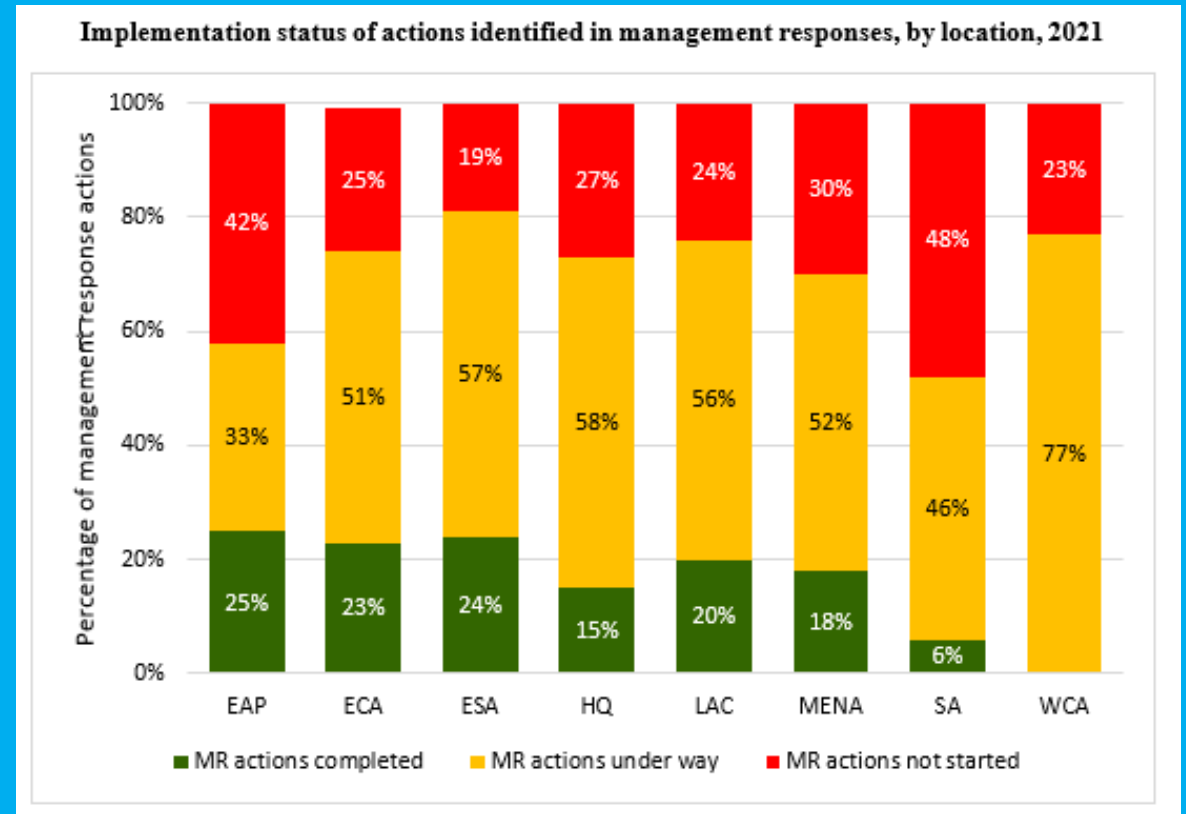
Timeliness of compliance with management response requirement, 2018–2021*



- Offices are submitting management responses on time.
- 99 per cent of evaluations conducted between 2018 and 2020 have a management response, MR have already been submitted for 73 evaluations done in 2021.
- Action is needed to improve the submission of MR at HQ as a disproportionate number of overdue management responses are at this level.

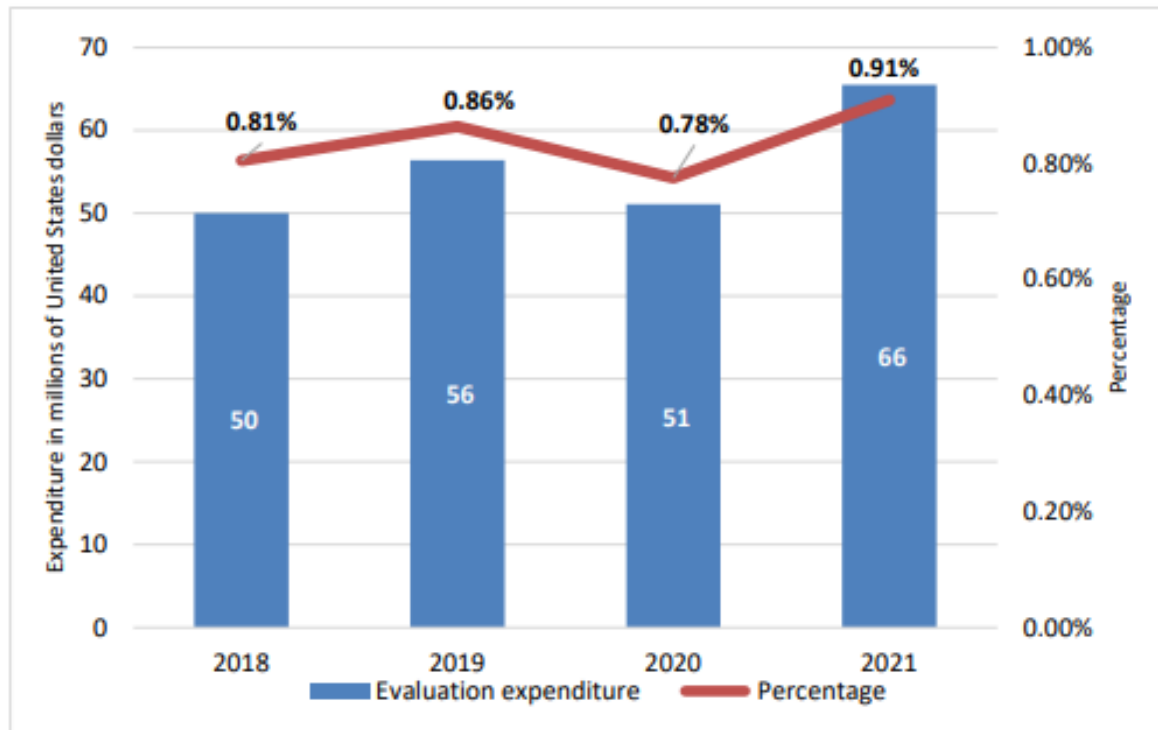
Management response implementation

- There has been a significant increase in the implementation of actions committed to in management responses.
- There is marginal variation in the pace of implementation of management response actions for evaluations completed between 2019 and 2021.
- Evaluation function is commissioning a review of current management responses and their implementation and exploring other ways of enhancing evaluation use beyond the management response.



Evaluation function resourcing

UNICEF expenditure on evaluation, in dollar terms and as a percentage of the total programme budget, 2018–2021



- UNICEF recorded an increase in overall programme spending, which translated into an increase in overall expenditure on evaluation, as all regions surpassed the 0.50 per cent mark, with significant increases in WCA and SAR.
- The Evaluation Pooled Fund has been vital to ensuring that the evaluation function is adequately resourced; this needs to be maintained to ensure the gains in coverage made at the decentralized level are to be sustainable.
- All regions have successfully recruited multi-country evaluation specialists who have been crucial in the delivery of evaluations, particularly in resource-limited settings.
- To implement coverage benchmarks of the policy, some offices with budgets greater than \$100 million are also ensuring that there is a dedicated evaluation specialist in place, since they are expected to conduct evaluations every year.

Conclusion

- The evaluation function adapted to unprecedented challenges by finding new ways of working, new evaluative products to help inform the ongoing response, and new evaluation partnerships to tackle the specific areas of evaluation associated with this unprecedented health emergency.
- Despite the constraints, the evaluation function continued to perform well on established performance indicators.
- The plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025 contains a greatly heightened emphasis on outcome- and impact-level evidence generation, expansion of the suite of evaluative exercises to help inform the work of the organization.
- More action is needed in the use of traditional evaluations versus less traditional types of evaluative exercises, organizational follow-through on evaluations.
- The evaluation function will be conducting an analysis to identify any “supply-side” areas that might require improvement, as well as a synthesis to identify those areas of the organization’s operations that have not taken meaningful action in implementing management response recommendations.

Thank you.

