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Management response to the evaluation report

Evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025

Summary

The present document provides the management response to the evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. The management response provides a summary of the actions that UNICEF will take to address the recommendations contained in the evaluation report.

Elements of a draft decision for consideration by the Executive Board are provided in section IV.

* E/ICEF/2023/1.

Note: The present document was processed in its entirety by UNICEF



I. Overview

1. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, was endorsed by the UNICEF Executive Board in decision 2021/14 at its second regular session of 2021. The Strategic Plan is holistic, outcome-oriented and medium-term in nature, designed to explain and connect every facet of the work of UNICEF, from its management results (enablers of organizational efficiency) to its five Goal Areas. The Strategic Plan is accompanied by theories of change, also presented to the Executive Board at its second regular session of 2021, which outline how UNICEF leverages the full range of resources and capacities at its disposal to advance child rights around the world and to contribute to the achievement of the child-focused targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

A. The context of Strategic Plan development

2. Within UNICEF, the Strategic Plan has a critical function in helping to align the organization's resources with common goals and strategies while empowering and mandating management to make strategic choices. It also plays a crucial role in strengthening accountability within UNICEF by providing the high-level framework against which all parts of the organization are held to account for performance and for the optimal use of time and resources.

3. The context within which the Strategic Plan was developed was quite unique and played a significant part in how the Plan has been framed. While progress on the Sustainable Development Goals was already off-track before the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020, the immense cross-sectoral and global impact of COVID-19 further stymied achievements for child rights. As COVID-19 will continue to have an impact around the world for years to come, a great deal of the Strategic Plan is devoted to ensuring a sustainable and inclusive recovery.

4. UNICEF developed the Strategic Plan in recognition of the lessons learned during the midterm review of the previous Strategic Plan, which covered the period 2018–2021. The midterm review of that Plan showed, among other lessons, how the strong performance of UNICEF on output-level targets have insufficiently translated into outcome-level results. The current Strategic Plan also responded to the critical lesson of the midterm review to give children and young people a more prominent voice in programme design, planning, monitoring and advocacy.

5. The development of the current Strategic Plan was heavily informed by the evaluation of its predecessor plan, which was the first evaluation of its kind for UNICEF. The evaluation found that the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 was highly relevant and strongly aligned with the UNICEF mission, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the evaluation observed that while the Plan was regarded as an important global framework, its use at the country office level to guide the country programming varied partly due to differing planning cycles.

6. The evaluation also recognized that the heavy burden of Strategic Plan reporting requirements was not balanced by practical benefits for policy advice and strategic decision-making. The evaluation recommended that UNICEF conceptualize the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 as a *holistic framework* underpinned by a longer-term 2022–2030 vision with a stronger focus on outcomes. Furthermore, the evaluation also observed that despite improvements, challenges remain in relation to siloed programming and resourcing, and recommended that UNICEF advance its multisectoral programming.

7. This was also identified by the Executive Board in decision 2021/3, in which the Board encouraged UNICEF “to make full use of the opportunities presented by the United Nations development system reform to foster integrated methods and actions” and requested UNICEF “to address internal siloed, non-coordinated approaches and to strengthen multisectoral and integrated programming approaches in the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025”.

8. The Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 was subsequently developed after consultations with many stakeholders, including Member States, and these consultations were also informed by the evaluation of the previous Plan. Guidance from the Executive Board also helped to set the purpose and direction of the current Plan. For example, in several decisions¹ the Executive Board welcomed the Strategic Plan’s alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, its focus on achieving outcome-level results, and its response to the lessons learned during the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021.

9. As detailed in the evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, the assessment engaged with many stakeholders from across UNICEF in a number of ways, including the evaluation reference group, the Global Evaluation Committee, selected interviews by the evaluation team, and/or participation in focus group discussions, consultative workshops and online surveys. UNICEF places a very high value on this exercise as a logical extension of the evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 ([E/ICEF/2021/5](#)) and is intent on working closely with the Evaluation Office and partners to ensure that there is full and continued uptake of the main findings and issues raised by both the evaluability assessment and the formative evaluation.

10. UNICEF is encouraged to see that the evaluation is firmly positive with regard to some of the most important breakthroughs represented by the new Strategic Plan. As the report notes, the Plan is highly ambitious, in keeping with the expectations of all stakeholders, not least Member States of the Executive Board, which have urged UNICEF to redouble its efforts to support the world in getting back on track to achieve the child-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, but also children and young people UNICEF consulted who voiced their aspirations to see a brighter and greener future.

11. For UNICEF, meeting that expectation and continuing to work towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals meant that business as usual was not an option. The current Strategic Plan is the most high-profile means through which UNICEF has signalled to the global community that it will not shirk the challenge of reimagining its work and global role in order to reach the children who continue to be left behind.

12. In addition to the need for the Strategic Plan to match and live up to the ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, its form and content was also determined by three other main system-wide considerations. First, the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) was one of the most ambitious to date and provided some very significant guidance for UNICEF as part of the broader United Nations system. Much of this guidance went beyond the Goal Areas and main sectors in which UNICEF worked, and required UNICEF to formalize, deepen or scale up its work in cross-cutting areas and strategies such as climate action, social cohesion and peace, and data. Many of these

¹ See UNICEF Executive Board decisions 2021/3, 2021/6 and 2021/14.

aforementioned areas are noted in the report with findings pertaining to readiness and/or capacity.

13. Likewise, the Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda* emerged at the same time as the Strategic Plan (on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations). The Secretary-General's report was launched in the same month as the Strategic Plans of UNICEF and several sister agencies, and a concerted effort was made to collectively align the tone and ambition of those Plans with Our Common Agenda in its call to create a global system that can respond to "current and future challenges".² Our Common Agenda presents an aspirational vision for the future of global cooperation and UNICEF, through its new Strategic Plan, ensured that it had established the conceptual and institutional bedrock on which progress can be made and accelerated to 2030 and beyond.

14. Lastly, UNICEF and other agencies that were developing their Strategic Plans at the same time (most notably the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women were requested to harmonize as far as possible the approaches to their respective Strategic Plans and, indeed, to identify synergies and areas of collaborative work across the United Nations system.

15. The requirements to match the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals, to operationalize the new mandates and accelerate the existing mandates in the 2020 QCPR, to live up to the tone and vision of Our Common Agenda, and to do so while proactively reaching out to sister agencies to harmonize approaches and identify programmatic synergies, were all critical in shaping the Strategic Plan during 2020/21. It is worth noting that responding to these above-mentioned requirements was only possible through an ambitious, outcome-oriented and long-term strategic planning vision and that it was recognized that this in turn would have implications for the immediate readiness of UNICEF to begin implementing at the same pace and scale across all areas of the Plan.

16. The current evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the new Strategic Plan is the latest in this series of iterative strategic engagements and, as can be expected given the links between these exercises, UNICEF agrees overall with the main findings identified by the evaluation in relation to its main lines of inquiry.

B. The vision of the Strategic Plan

17. The evaluation report is positive on the Strategic Plan itself, noting in particular that it has taken important strides to focus on outcomes for children, that the approaches and intent of the Plan and its strategic elements are straightforward, and that it represents a strength and a significant foundation for UNICEF to build on. It is clear that the main focus of the report is on the organization's readiness to start actually delivering on the promise and ambition of the Plan but that its ambition and scale, as demanded by stakeholders, is welcome and appropriate to challenges that children and young people face.

18. In reviewing and interpreting the evaluation report, it is critical to situate the findings within the context of a long-term Plan with a horizon towards 2030. In the Strategic Plan, UNICEF identified the major strategies and approaches for the organization and its stakeholders to pursue in order to realize that longer-term and outcome-oriented vision. In developing the Plan, UNICEF shifted the focus from "what can UNICEF do now?" to "what needs to be done for the world's children?". This shift in thinking has implications for readiness and capacity in the first years of

² See General Assembly resolution 75/1.

implementation and this should be borne in mind when reviewing the evaluation's findings.

19. It is a shift in thinking that implicitly recognizes a shared struggle in accelerating progress against the Sustainable Development Goals and the need to fundamentally change UNICEF approaches if it is to seize the opportunities provided by the 2030 Agenda and step up progress over the coming years. Similarly, decisions on the Strategic Plan's approaches were not made based solely on what UNICEF or its partners were already ready to do but rather by *what needed to be done* – even if that meant several years of significant cultural and institutional change to get in a position of full “readiness”.

20. Within this context, one can see that the findings of the report are entirely logical, to be expected, and to be welcomed; and that those findings support the view that the overall approaches in the Plan are still the optimal ones that need to be pursued and can be evaluated at the end of the planning cycle.

21. The report and this management response represent the culmination of several years of cooperation between the evaluation function and senior management in UNICEF on strategic planning. Beginning with the collaboration on the 2020 midterm review of the previous Strategic Plan, the Evaluation Office was a valued member of multiple governance and technical groups for developing and reviewing the high-level structure and results architecture of the Plan, including as a member of the Strategic Plan Coordination Committee, the Strategic Plan Steering Committee and even working teams such as the Strategic Plan Indicator Task Team.

22. The advice and participation of the Evaluation Office in the design of the Strategic Plan and its vision was and continues to be highly appreciated. Its role was most valued in ensuring the evaluability of the Plan, its theories of change and its Integrated Results and Resources Framework, as these important instruments were approved and adopted internally by UNICEF senior management, and ultimately by Member States through their endorsement of the Plan.

23. The current evaluative assessment began within weeks of the launch of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, examining the readiness and evaluability of the organization's efforts to operationalize the commitments that it made in response in part to the recently concluded evaluation of the previous Plan. UNICEF welcomes this level and frequency of activity and cooperation on strategic planning. Moving forward, it may also be effective to develop a fuller picture of the engagement, scope and timing of the different evaluative exercises to maximize their utility and align them more closely with critical internal planning cycles related to budgeting and prioritization.

24. While the findings and recommendations of the report are welcomed, at times they may seem to be a reiteration and validation of the Strategic Plan's own priorities, and this is most likely due to the relatively brief interval between this exercise and the previous evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (less than a year from one evaluation concluding to the other starting). Notwithstanding this issue, the report still represents a valuable accompaniment to the Strategic Plan in reiterating the necessity of investing in key strategies and updating the culture and vision demonstrated at all levels of UNICEF and across all operating contexts.

25. The current evaluative exercise has also been undertaken in the first year of the implementation of what is envisaged as an eight-year strategy (leading up to 2030), albeit with two consecutive implementation plans. As such, the observation that readiness for implementation across the full spectrum of its global engagement is uneven is to be expected. However, this is not seen as detracting unduly from the strategic value of the exercise, and this latest evaluation report is as welcome as its

predecessor in representing another timely reminder of the necessity for resolute and unwavering attention to Strategic Plan alignment in favour of implementation.

II. Responses to main findings

26. UNICEF welcomes the insights provided by the report and its accompanying suite of documents and would add additional context to each of the main findings to further clarify progress and expectations. The present section includes a brief response to the most salient findings from the full report.

27. On the first finding that **UNICEF can be optimistic about the prospects for a high-quality summative evaluation in 2025–2026, but that formative evaluation still faces some barriers, this is accepted**. The organization has spent much of the past year operationalizing the monitoring and reporting systems and approaches that it is now rolling out progressively and that will form the monitoring and reporting infrastructure for the remainder of the decade. The Strategic Plan document itself recognizes this to be the case, explicitly stating that *“the move to a more outcome-focused Plan with a longer-term planning horizon has necessitated a revised approach to results management”* and committing UNICEF to *“a renewed focus ... on quality, learning, feedback and use of monitoring information, with enhanced coherence, collaboration and coordination across development and humanitarian programming”*.

28. To that end, UNICEF has spent much of 2022 preparing a comprehensive new package of country programme management procedures, guidance and tools for its country offices, including a new monitoring and reporting modality known as core strategic indicators to bridge this gap. These were launched respectively in October and November 2022.

29. Related to this finding, the report makes observations on the need for this monitoring and reporting system to provide support to strategic decision-making. This is similarly recognized in the Strategic Plan itself where UNICEF states that *“UNICEF will undertake more-regular internal policy, budget and performance reviews to make it more responsive to risks and more agile in systematizing programmatic learning, particularly at the outcome level. These regular internal reviews will assess the extent to which outcome-level progress is indicated; the ongoing alignment of programmes and resources behind outcomes; the effectiveness of change strategies in catalysing change in varied operational settings; which children continue to be left behind and where; and trends in global, regional and country-level performance”*.

30. Action in this area is already under way and UNICEF is at an advanced stage in the development of a new mechanism known as Global Effectiveness Reviews, which will begin in 2023 to review the first year of Strategic Plan implementation and identify management actions needed to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. The new Global Effectiveness Reviews will close the current gap at the global level on rigorous internal reflection and decision-making and will build on the existing reviews that are already undertaken regularly at country and regional levels.

31. The Global Effectiveness Reviews respond to this and some other findings and conclusions of the report by providing senior management in UNICEF with a regular and evidence-based platform for the collective discussion of strategic alignment against the corporate ambition set in the Strategic Plan and effective programme delivery, to enable timely decision-making on agreed actions, including in relation to strategic resourcing and staffing. More indirectly, the Global Effectiveness Reviews will contribute to a change in culture and management within UNICEF, leading to a

more evidence-based, transparent, agile and strategic approach to collaboration across all levels of the organization.

32. The evaluation report also presents a **finding regarding the Integrated Results and Resources Framework**. It is highly encouraging that the report states that the Plan's strategic direction is clear and sufficient to guide programme alignment broadly. However, the report also states that the Framework has a large number of indicators, not all which are suited to managing the outcomes in the Strategic Plan. As noted in the Plan, *“UNICEF is now more focused on tracking the extent to which its efforts catalyse transformative and systemic change at the outcome level, in addition to monitoring and reporting on how efficiently and effectively it delivers on its own outputs”*. To that end, and while in keeping with the Member States' expressed wish for the results framework, it contains *“impact-, outcome- and output-level indicators, some derived from the Sustainable Development Goals [which]... represent only a subset of the indicators that UNICEF uses internally to track programmatic effectiveness”*.

33. Similarly, as noted in both the Integrated Results and Resources Framework and the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, across its work in the five interconnected Goal Areas established in the Plan, UNICEF is focusing on *“systemic changes that are critical to addressing the underlying causes of children's vulnerability, gender inequality and exclusion in all settings, including humanitarian crises and other fragile settings. The UNICEF sectoral and output-level contribution to these systemic changes is being tracked by a range of indicators across the results framework. However, in the development of the Strategic Plan, it was noted that there are strong grounds for developing additional cross-cutting outcome-level indicators”*.

34. In the Integrated Results and Resources Framework document, UNICEF recognizes this and goes a step further by committing the organization *“over the coming years [to] develop its capacity to track systemic cross-sectoral outcome-level changes”*. As is the case with most of the findings of this evaluative exercise, it is reassuring to find such congruity between the gaps identified in the report and in the Strategic Plan itself.

35. UNICEF nonetheless agrees that the number of indicators, though similar to that in the previous Strategic Plan, is larger than was envisaged. The indicators were identified and proposed by an Indicator Task Team that included the Evaluation Office itself but needed to incorporate the full range of globally agreed sectoral indicators (including those derived from the Sustainable Development Goals), indicators that were drawn from the QCPR framework (as required by Member States), common and complementary indicators (as requested by Member States)³ and indicators at output, as well as outcome, level, to ensure accountability⁴ and a link between output-level results and budget.

36. It is the range of requirements and interests to which the results framework is subject that has led to its current size. UNICEF management, however, was and remains amenable to removing some of these categories of indicators from the Strategic Plan in order to simplify it, but that would entail no longer meeting all stakeholder requirements for the content of the results framework and would necessitate a recalibration of Member States' expectations for the framework.

37. On the finding that the **monitoring, evaluation and learning processes and results-based management practices** that can support them are “insufficient but nascent”, UNICEF agrees that they are nascent and currently a work in progress but

³ UNICEF Executive Board decision 2021/13.

⁴ UNICEF Executive Board decision 2021/3.

is equally confident that they will be in place for the majority of the long-term period envisaged by the Strategic Plan.

38. The Strategic Plan itself is very clear on the need for this to advance, stating that *“UNICEF will accelerate work to connect and make data available in real time, bringing the power of data innovations and open data to enhance both knowledge-informed programming and integrated policy support. A renewed focus will be placed on quality, learning, feedback and use of monitoring information, with enhanced coherence, collaboration and coordination across development and humanitarian programming”*. Accelerating progress in this area has already been identified internally as a priority for 2022 and is why there has been significant investment in new tools, guidance and processes – mostly launched in late 2022.

39. In further recognition that evidence-informed decision-making is at the heart of the work of UNICEF to reach the most vulnerable children and responding to the call for a more coherent UNICEF evidence function, four headquarters divisions (Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring; Evaluation Office; the Information and Communication Technology Division/regional information and communication technology for development teams; and Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight) have come together to launch the UNICEF Evidence Helpdesk. This is a single entry point for any query on how to do evidence-related work, strengthening the capacity of UNICEF to deliver evidence on children for policy, advocacy and results. It is one of many ways for UNICEF colleagues across the organization, and particularly those in country offices, to directly request technical support from subject matter experts in the organization for generating, sharing and using evidence in programmatic and operational decision-making.

40. The evaluation also found that **UNICEF is only partially ready to implement the Strategic Plan – with significant variation in readiness among 19 strategic elements** it reviewed, and the five criteria used to assess them. While not in full agreement on the details and finding overall that the language and presentation of the evaluation report significantly understates UNICEF experience and capacity in many of the areas, it is generally accepted that more can be done to increase and accelerate readiness in many of the various areas reviewed by the evaluation.

41. Although these areas had already been identified in the Strategic Plan as those where UNICEF needed to work hard to leverage change, the spotlight cast on them by the report is a welcome reminder for the organization to maintain its focus and continue its efforts to accelerate progress and readiness as we enter the remaining eight years of this long-term 2030 strategy. The five criteria, though somewhat limited, nonetheless can stimulate and provide an interesting background for the ongoing internal discussions on prioritization and resourcing.

42. UNICEF agrees with the finding that of **the five dimensions that were assessed, it is regarding our “approaches” that the thinking and preparations are most advanced and satisfactory**. Indeed, most of the strength and subsequent focus of the Strategic Plan design was on identifying the correct approaches for the remainder of the decade, so it is both unsurprising and consistent with UNICEF management’s own analysis that this was noted in the evaluation.

43. It is also noted and agreed that it is with regard to “resources” that UNICEF has the greatest challenge. The organization is committed to improving its estimations of resource requirements of planned high-level results, particularly outcomes, and its ability to calculate and communicate corresponding financing and funding gaps. However, there are no internal changes to costing/budgeting/resource mobilization/resource allocation within UNICEF or the broader United Nations

system that can compensate for the non-fulfilment by Member States of their funding compact commitments.

44. On the **finding regarding the coherence of the various strategic elements and other foundational aspects**, the evaluation found that alignment can be achieved by clarifying accountabilities, notably through the revised Management and Accountability Framework. This is agreed and had already been factored into work on the Accountability Framework for 2022 and 2023 (as presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session of 2022).

45. UNICEF also notes the important **finding with regard to change management capacity**. Over recent years, UNICEF has taken organizational change management, particularly in relation to cultural and behavioural issues, very seriously, as evidenced by well-recognized steps that the organization has taken to improve its organizational culture.

46. During that time, there has been an increasing level of interest in change management, as evidenced by important investments being made by divisions and teams across business areas to strengthen business models and bring about a cultural change through ongoing organizational improvement initiatives. Although UNICEF is committed to reviewing the capacities and functions of offices and posts that are exclusively identified with corporate change management, it continues to be the organization's experience that successful change management requires an "all of organization" effort and is best secured through the mainstreaming of change management at all levels of management with the related absorption of costs into budgets.

47. Notwithstanding the change management initiatives that were upscaled and accelerated so emphatically in recent years, the organization accepts the related evaluation finding that **there are features of the new Strategic Plan that also require dedicated effort in order to align the organization's culture and structures with the vision and objectives** that will guide UNICEF from 2022 to 2030. Notably, the Strategic Plan pivots the organization sharply towards a more outcome-oriented focus, which will require a fundamental organizational change encompassing how UNICEF staff members approach programming, partnerships and results-based management. With this challenge in mind, the organization has already developed a corporate learning agenda specifically designed to guide the organization's efforts to learn how to change itself into the organization that its Strategic Plan and its stakeholders need it to become.

48. The evaluation also finds that although its importance is highlighted in the Strategic Plan, **intersectionality is not yet conceptualized, nor operationalized properly**, to allow the organization to address multidimensional child poverty and inequalities. This is accepted, because although UNICEF has been working on intersectionality for many years, the Strategic Plan is the first time that the organization has afforded it such attention and flagged it as an important factor in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

49. Lastly, a key finding of the evaluation is that **harnessing positive solutions for children through innovation** was rated as an organizational strength by staff, however, a culture of risk-taking and acceptance of failure was described as largely absent. This is noted and is consistently identified as a challenge for organizations such as UNICEF that actively seek out game-changing interventions and strategies but have to ensure prudent stewardship of resources and skilfully model, prototype and test innovations before taking them to scale or advocating with national partners for scaling up. Similarly, risk appetite is increasingly challenging to manage where

the majority of resources are non-core or “other” resources, and the risk appetite of UNICEF is itself subject to the appetite for risk of the donor.

50. UNICEF remains committed to reflecting the findings of evaluations and reviews in implementing its Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. That commitment to learning and improvement was embedded from the very beginning of the development of the Plan when UNICEF integrated the recommendations from the evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and moving forward it is also expressed in the envisioned Global Effectiveness Reviews.

51. UNICEF will closely work with the Evaluation Office to support stakeholder engagement throughout the remainder of this evaluative exercise, including communicating and socializing the main findings across the organization, implementing recommendations of the evaluation, and strengthening its knowledge. Institutional learning and evidence-based reflections will enable the organization to brave the multiple challenges and chart and refine its course towards securing the rights of every child.

III. Key evaluation recommendations and UNICEF management response

52. In responding to the recommendations, UNICEF management has worked with the extensive list of candidate actions identified by the evaluation report. In some cases, those actions have been edited to make them more specific or have been merged with other actions where there was a distinct overlap. In identifying the responsible sections, an effort was made to limit the number of sections and divisions to a maximum of three in order to retain a certain level of specificity, although in some cases almost all UNICEF major sections, divisions and offices will have a role to play, and senior leadership will play the most critical role of all in driving progress in responding to all of the findings. A particular effort was made to ensure that the section or division that would have prime responsibility for coordinating or monitoring broader corporate efforts would be the first one identified in that column, even if the majority of the actual implementation would be more diffuse.

53. Lastly, in identifying the expected completion date of management actions, it was decided that given the need for swift action to accelerate the readiness to scale up implementation for the remaining period between now and 2030, there should be a standard limit set (end of 2023) for many actions in order to prevent actions moving beyond the second year of this Strategic Plan cycle. This should not be interpreted to mean that actions on these areas will cease at the end of 2023, simply that that action has advanced to such an extent by that time that it can be deemed to have been “actioned”.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible section(s)</i>	<i>Expected completion date</i>	<i>Actions taken and implementation stage:</i> <i>Not started</i> <i>Under way</i> <i>Completed</i> <i>Cancelled</i>	<i>Supporting documents</i>
<p>Evaluation recommendation 1: Accelerate programmatic and organizational convergence towards outcomes for children.</p> <p>Management response: Fully agree</p> <p>UNICEF fully agrees with this recommendation. Indeed, it is this recommendation above all others that perhaps best captures and represents some of the major strategic and organizational shifts that are envisaged by the Strategic Plan itself. The concept of convergence as used extensively in the report and its annexes is highly consistent with the vision of the Strategic Plan itself in calling for a more long-term, holistic and multisectoral approach to how UNICEF plans and implements.</p> <p>When the Strategic Plan was endorsed by the Executive Board, UNICEF immediately prioritized codifying the new thinking in the Plan, as exemplified by its theories of change^a into a new and fundamentally different package of country programme management guidance, including country programme planning. This new guidance package was issued in October 2022 and responds to many of the issues raised by the evaluation report about programmatic convergence.</p> <p>At the same time as the new guidance was being developed to enhance the convergence envisaged in the evaluation report, the organization was also reviewing many of its systems – most notably its results monitoring and reporting system – in order to make it consistent with the guidance, the overall direction of the new Strategic Plan, and fit for purpose for the remainder of the decade.</p> <p>The cultural changes that are necessary to truly maximize the benefit of systems and guidance improvements are, of course, rather more challenging and take more time. However, just as in the Strategic Plan itself, the messaging has been and will continue to be consistently strong from UNICEF management on the need for more systems thinking, and more holistic and multisectoral approaches to lead the organization to sustainable outcome-level change.</p>				
1.1. Accelerate shifts towards a more holistic	Office of the Executive	June 2024	Under way	

^a See UNICEF/2021/EB/10.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible section(s)</i>	<i>Expected completion date</i>	<i>Actions taken and implementation stage:</i> <i>Not started</i> <i>Under way</i> <i>Completed</i> <i>Cancelled</i>	<i>Supporting documents</i>
<p>approach to UNICEF work that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address structural barriers, accountabilities and behaviour change • Establish internal space for joint and evidence-based strategic reflection on the interplay between Goal Areas, change strategies, cross-cutting programmes, and enablers • Drive convergent programming through support for multisectoral work planning and knowledge-sharing, and strengthen monitoring of outcome-level results. 	<p>Director</p> <p>Programme Group (PG)</p> <p>Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring (DAPM)</p> <p>Division of Human Resources (DHR)</p>			
<p>1.2. Identify and use incentives that are shown to be effective, including visibility and recognition of partners, to strengthen partnerships and achieve better external convergence, including with the rest of the United Nations system and through pooled resources for sustainable development and nexus approaches.</p>	<p>Public Partnerships Division (PPD)</p> <p>Private Fundraising and Partnerships (PFP)</p>	June 2023	Under way	<p>UNICEF Global Resource mobilization strategy</p> <p>PPD Advocacy Strategy</p> <p>Funding compact and structured funding dialogue</p> <p>Executive Board reports</p> <p>PPD Advocacy Strategy</p>
<p>1.3. Articulate a clear vision on <i>organizational and cultural convergence</i> within UNICEF to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate and demonstrate the organizational value of systems thinking, cooperativeness across silos, comprehensive approaches and informed risk-taking/management by senior management • Incentivize these behaviours at all levels, focusing firstly on senior managers • Prioritize investment in corresponding skills and approaches in recruitment, and 	<p>Office of the Executive Director (OED) (including Organizational Culture)</p> <p>DHR</p>	December 2024	Not started	

<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible section(s)</i>	<i>Expected completion date</i>	<i>Actions taken and implementation stage:</i> <i>Not started</i> <i>Under way</i> <i>Completed</i> <i>Cancelled</i>	<i>Supporting documents</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lateral or upward moves Incorporate related skills and competencies into leadership development, coaching and mentoring programmes; robust staff and programme performance reviews/ evaluations; and succession planning, and selection of senior managers. 				
1.4. Integrate concepts of convergence into any new or updated guidance, as needed.	DAPM PG	June 2023	Under way	
<p>Evaluation recommendation 2: Clarify accountabilities for delivery of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.</p> <p>Management response: Fully agree</p> <p>UNICEF fully agrees with this recommendation. Accountability in relation to the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 is different from previous Strategic Plans in two important ways which are worth noting with respect to this recommendation.</p> <p>Firstly, the Strategic Plan is an outcome-oriented plan with the focus placed on what needs to happen for outcomes for children, linked to Sustainable Development Goal targets, and to be realized by 2030. The theories of change are similarly envisioned and designed – the focus being on the changes needed to bring about outcome-level change. At the heart of those theories of change is a move towards outcome-based planning, where the focus is on what social, political and economic changes need to take place and how UNICEF and partners can leverage those changes. This represents a critical shift from an exclusively output-based planning approach, where the focus has been on what can be done by UNICEF within its budget and through directly attributable activities, to the changes that can be leveraged through UNICEF and its partners.</p> <p>This strategic shift from one Strategic Plan to another has far-reaching implications for accountability, as it is widely recognized that accountability for achieving outcome-level change goes far beyond just UNICEF. Discussions and decisions on strategy and prioritization, therefore, are necessarily unrestricted by determinations regarding accountability, which UNICEF has learned from experience tends to inexorably lead stakeholders back to output-level thinking and plans.</p> <p>Secondly, as has been restated in response to recommendation 1, the Strategic Plan was designed with a strong emphasis on breaking down programmatic and operational silos, thinking systemically and holistically, and leverage cross-cutting and multisectoral approaches to really accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and support game-changing interventions. This has critical implications not just for the content but also the design of the Strategic Plan, and for cultural change within UNICEF. Throughout the design process, UNICEF teams and sections were pressed to think outside the borders of their own sectors and areas of direct responsibility, and to instead focus on approaches through which progress could be accelerated by exploiting synergies (or convergences, to use the term favoured by the evaluation report) between traditional sectors and areas of expertise. The concept of mutual accountability was heavily favoured in the Strategic Plan’s design precisely to mitigate against the tendency for technical teams to think of different parts of the Plan as having different owners, with each exclusively accountable for one or two results or approaches.</p> <p>Notwithstanding these issues and the need to avoid some of the more reductive approaches to internal accountability, UNICEF is driving forward on efforts to raise the level and understanding of accountability in keeping with both the new Strategic Plan and the organizational changes currently under way across the organization. The updated UNICEF accountability system, presented to the Executive Board during the second regular session of 2022 (E/ICEF/2022/24), outlines how the organization assigns responsibility and enables accountability to strengthen UNICEF capacity to achieve results for children. It explains that while at the</p>				

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country level the country programme document (CPD) is the primary source of programmatic accountability for UNICEF, at the global level UNICEF programmatic accountability is defined through the Strategic Plan. The accountability system further clarifies how the Strategic Plan, CPDs and other documents that assign accountability throughout the organization interact with and complement each other, and how UNICEF operates in order to achieve its global, regional and country-level objectives.				
2.1. Articulate the interrelated accountabilities and the link to associated human and financial resources of the Strategic Plan and CPDs in UNICEF decentralized model with regard to both headquarters and field levels.	DAPM	December 2023	Under way	
2.2. Fully implement the matrix approach as intended, clarifying what is meant by matrix management in UNICEF, and reflect this approach in performance management.	DHR	June 2024	Under way	
<p>Evaluation recommendation 3: Reduce structural competition to support Strategic Plan performance.</p> <p>Management response: Fully agree</p> <p>UNICEF agrees with this recommendation and recognizes the importance of managing internal and external factors that can influence competitive behaviours. Consideration is always given to simplifying and “collapsing” units into fewer structures and UNICEF has done this a number of times in recent years, however UNICEF management has not found it to reduce what is referred to in the report as “structural competition”.</p> <p>UNICEF programmes are at the core of the organization’s identity and country programmes, including humanitarian action and increasingly programming in high-income countries, and are the cornerstone of the contribution of UNICEF to progress for children in the pursuit of the realization of child rights and the Sustainable Development Goals for every child. The Programme Division has recently been reconstituted as Programme Group as part of the organization’s overall organizational improvement efforts and to enhance the capacity of the Programme Division to better meet the needs of the programme function, minimize structural competition, enhance business innovation, strengthen partnerships, invest in staff and organizational culture, and spearhead UNICEF programme excellence globally.</p> <p>The recent change responds to many of the findings of the evaluation related to this recommendation by strengthening UNICEF technical authority, thought leadership and global technical leadership; simplifying work processes to free up human and financial resources, minimize competition and encourage agile work across teams; ensuring accountability for technical support to programmes in humanitarian, development and high-income contexts; and increasing efficiency of transactions. This new Programme Group is investing in change management processes, modernized systems and other continuous improvements while building on its strengths and comparative advantages, including strong technical expertise and multisectoral programming. Its creation is accelerating efforts to provide more agile teams, reduce hierarchy, increase delegation of authority, and facilitate flexible organizational structures with mechanisms that promote collaboration across groups and teams. It also helps UNICEF implement planned improvements that deal with some of the issues raised by the evaluation in relation to this and other recommendations, notably with the establishment of Global Technical Teams and Multi-Function Task Teams.</p> <p>The establishment of Global Technical Teams and Multi-Function Task Teams is a key step towards further enhancing UNICEF thought, strategic and technical leadership with respect to the strategic shifts and need for convergence that are being driven by the new Strategic Plan. The Global Technical Teams bring together UNICEF technical assets across all levels of the organization towards the fulfilment of shared objectives in support of global leadership, building on and</p>				

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formalizing good practices that exist in global networks. Multi-Functional Technical Teams are established in response to a time-bound multisectoral need that is identified and to perform specific tasks at either the country, regional or global level, depending on the issue and the task.				
3.1. Ensure that staff in country offices and at headquarters understand that the Strategic Plan is a framework based on which they should prioritize certain needs and issues in their programming with partners and on the operational context.	PG	June 2023	Under way	
3.2. Expand the remit of the change management initiative to include reducing internal competition for resources, as part of the ongoing work around the Resource Allocation Framework.	DAPM DFAM	June 2023	Not started	
<p>Evaluation recommendation 4: Provide additional clarity on the process of Strategic Plan prioritization at the country level.</p> <p>Management response: Fully agree</p> <p>UNICEF fully agrees with this recommendation. The country programme is the primary means of UNICEF of achieving its mandate to advance child rights and promote the development and well-being of children at scale, in support of national and global development priorities as well as humanitarian imperatives.</p> <p>Responding to the same issues identified in the evaluation, and following from the UNICEF Reimagining Business Models initiative to respond to the evolving requirements of country offices captured from a wide spectrum of contexts and partnerships, UNICEF issued its new country programme procedure and country programme planning guidance in October 2022, bringing together planning streams for development and humanitarian contexts; integrating humanitarian, development and peace nexus considerations in country planning; and reflecting all United Nations reform requirements, including guidance on derivation of CPDs from United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.</p> <p>The newly issued country programme planning guidance resonates with this recommendation and included many suggested specific actions. In collaboration with the regional offices, countries developing new country programmes have been provided with additional clarity and guidance on prioritizing and focusing on Strategic Plan elements in different contexts. This guidance governs the country programme planning process, setting out the planning, results management and organizational learning processes for achieving programme excellence and effectiveness.</p> <p>The new country programme planning process outlined in the recently released guidance also provides an opportunity for UNICEF staff to think strategically, reflect on lessons learned, articulate choices and trade-offs, work with Governments, consult other key stakeholders and partners, identify and innovate change strategies, and leverage partnerships and resources. One of the most emphasized messages across the new guidance package is the need to adapt to each country's specific context and the explicit recognition that not all change strategies, enablers, cross-cutting programmes and Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan apply to every country. The starting point to develop a new country programme is, through the evidence synthesis, the identification of the most critical child rights deprivations and related bottlenecks organized by the Strategic Plans Goal Areas and results.</p> <p>As noted in response to the key findings of the evaluation, UNICEF sees the ambitious nature of the Strategic Plan, including its scope, as being neatly attuned to the current global context and the universal aspirations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals. The level of ambition and scope of the Strategic Plan was very much determined by Member States' direction to remain loyal to the ambition levels of the Sustainable Development Goals, even through the setbacks presented by the pandemic. UNICEF can similarly not compromise on the universal protection of child rights across planning processes, and it remains imperative that the ambition of the organization matches its mandate, particularly at the present time, with crises of</p>				

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<p>unprecedented scale and severity. The transformative ambitions of the Strategic Plan were also a response to the extensive and unprecedented consultations conducted with young people in the design of the Plan.</p> <p>That level of ambition required the organization to embrace outcome-oriented planning more fully but also now means that the Plan's success relies very much on UNICEF leveraging resources and partnerships to achieve far greater results for children than would be possible for UNICEF acting on its own. As the recommendation suggests, this requires change management within the organization and equipping teams with the necessary skill sets, including the updated package of country planning guidance to help offices to better apply change strategies and cross-cutting approaches.</p> <p>Regarding connecting the Strategic Plan to middle- and high-income contexts, in fact, UNICEF now works and achieves many of its most important results in middle-income countries. UNICEF notices the limitations of gross domestic product measurement and by extension the notion of "graduation" to middle-income country status as some countries having moved in and out of middle- and high-income status, yet the contribution of UNICEF does not change abruptly and there are mitigation measures at the organization's disposal as countries transition across income categories.</p>				
4.1. Provide support to country offices on how to prioritize, including through the identification of lesser corporate priorities, and focus on elements of the Strategic Plan in different contexts.	DAPM	December 2023	Completed	
4.2. Initiate a candid discussion with offices in different contexts to see where they feel the Strategic Plan lacks relevance or detail to their settings. Middle- and high-income settings are the priority for this discussion.	DAPM	June 2023	Under way	
<p>Evaluation recommendation 5: Strengthen change management capability.</p> <p>Management response: Fully agree</p> <p>UNICEF has a long history of continuous organizational improvement. The organization's business model and related structures, processes, people and culture have evolved and adapted over the decades, enabling UNICEF to better deliver results for children in rapidly changing and oftentimes highly volatile environments. These past investments in organizational change with culture envisaged as a facilitating factor for continuous change and improvement have evolved the way UNICEF works, strengthened the organization's focus on results, helped improve partnerships, contributed towards making the organization more innovative, and increased transactional efficiencies.</p> <p>During the previous Strategic Plan, the need for change became more urgent, as recommendations from the three independent reviews commissioned in 2018 highlighted the critical need for radical cultural, structural, process and policy transformation. Recommendations from organizational repositioning and realignment exercises also called for improvements in the research, policy, planning and monitoring, and campaigning functions. The United Nations reform agenda further increased the need for UNICEF to systematically simplify, streamline and enhance transactional efficiencies and better align these efforts within broader system-wide reforms. Calls for change came from both external partners and from the organization's own field offices.</p> <p>In 2020, as the world was grappling with stagnating progress against the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals while facing a once-in-a generation global pandemic, the Office of the Executive Director took steps to strengthen organizational capacity for managing continuous change and maximizing opportunities presented by COVID-19. A two-year (2020–2021) organizational improvement approach and governance structure was created to frame and guide various change initiatives – ensuring coherence, complementarity and better sequencing and coordination of ongoing change efforts.</p>				

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<p>The design of the Strategic Plan was undertaken just as these change processes were beginning to get under way. During that period, UNICEF organizational improvement efforts were informed by, and in turn informed, the development of the new Strategic Plan. The Plan's change strategies and enablers were seen as directly linked to the four organizational improvement goals (programme acceleration; business innovation; partnership strengthening; people and culture) of the broader change management process. Likewise, the work on organizational improvement was conceived as part of the overarching vision for an agile, responsive, resilient and efficient organization that is well positioned to deliver results for children and directly reinforces the Plan's objectives.</p> <p>The changes required by the vision of the new Strategic Plan are far-reaching and will not be fully secured within the first year of the Plan's implementation. The challenges presented in the evaluation report are noted, and UNICEF is committed to an ongoing review of its organizational improvement efforts, including the resources, capacities and structures needed to accelerate progress.</p>				
5.1. Review organizational structure and staffing capacity for change management, including the placement and function of the Organizational Design and Improvement Lab, in order to better support continuous improvement.	OED	January 2023	Under way	
5.2. Engage in a much more detailed discussion of the development of change management to address underlying cultural issues proactively for better results for children and a better workplace and ensure stronger engagement from senior leaders to provide the necessary direction, and ensure that cultural aspects are modelled and developed with clear accountabilities and critical performance indicators for each level of the organization.	OED (Organizational Culture)	December 2023	Not started	
5.3. Ensure that changes are tested and piloted, and reinforced with an integrated approach to communication of change, involving senior leadership.	OED (Organizational Culture) DHR Organizational Design and Improvement Lab Internal communications	December 2023	Not started	
<p>Evaluation recommendation 6: Directly address the divergence between Strategic Plan financial resources and demand needs.</p> <p>Management response: Fully agree</p> <p>UNICEF fully agrees with the recommendation. Perhaps the most challenging shift required by an outcome-oriented plan is the difficult change presented by estimating the resource needs for outcome-level results. The resources required for these results cannot be calculated based on an aggregate of UNICEF delivered outputs over four years, but rather they must be based on an estimate of the cumulative resources required by the range of actors that need to work together to deliver the change, including national and international partners. This is something that the organization has not done systematically before but learning from the</p>				

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<p>experiences of other agencies, such as the United Nations Population Fund with its work on “Costing the Three Transformative Results”,^b UNICEF is committed to developing its capacity to estimate the full resource requirement for achieving the Strategic Plan outcomes over the coming years, including, where feasible, in collaboration with sister agencies.</p> <p>While the resources requirement of achieving the Strategic Plan’s outcomes has not yet been provisionally calculated, UNICEF traditional budgeting approaches have provided an estimate of the funding required to deliver on the output targets to which it has committed in the Plan. In order to meet that funding need, UNICEF has developed a new Resource Mobilization Strategy 2022–2025 for public and private sector engagement. The strategy provides an overall vision and direction for operationalizing the Strategic Plan’s “accelerated resource mobilization” enabler. The Strategy also sets out the priorities, strategies and targets for UNICEF public and private sector resource mobilization for the period 2022–2025 in a coordinated and focused manner to achieve the twin goals of raising income for UNICEF and for children, particularly quality flexible funding such as regular resources, as well as strengthening and growing influence with the organization’s public and private partners.</p>				
6.1. Develop and test new approaches to estimating the outcome-level resource needs for the Strategic Plan outcomes.	DAPM PPD PFP DFAM	June 2024	Not started	
<p>6.2. Further strengthen UNICEF positioning and partnerships within the United Nations system in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step up engagement/joint advocacy for Member States to meet their funding compact commitments for core and thematic resources • Strengthen UNICEF positioning and partnerships within the United Nations system, international financial institutions and the private sector to leverage resources that are less earmarked. 	PPD PFP	December 2023	Under way	<p>Structured funding dialogue joint inter-agency informal briefings of the Executive Board</p> <p>UNICEF Global Strategic Action Plan to Strengthen Partnerships with International Financial Institutions</p> <p>Global IF4C Global Vision</p>

^b United Nations Population Fund, “Costing the Three Transformative Results: the cost of the transformative results UNFPA is committed to achieving by 2030”, January 2020. Available at www.unfpa.org/featured-publication/costing-three-transformative-results.

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				and Strategy UNICEF Resource Mobilization Strategy 2022–2025 UNICEF Global Private Sector Resource Mobilization Strategy UNICEF Global Private Sector Influence Strategy
6.3. Review the current internal resource allocation mechanisms and regular resources allocation formula to ensure that the system as a whole is working correctly and is geared to achieve Strategic Plan outcomes, and drive for efficiency gains.	DAPM	June 2023	Under way	
6.4. Accelerate the implementation of the flexible funding strategy in order to widen the opportunity for regular resources and thematic funding during this Strategic Plan period from all public and private sector audiences. Building on the existing work of the PPD-PFP flexible funding team, there is a need to expand the work on regular resources and communicate its effectiveness in achieving results; to develop new fundraising resources for thematic funding; and to streamline global results reporting and specifically highlight thematic funding.	PPD PFP	December 2023	Under way	
<p>Evaluation recommendation 7: Ensure practical collaboration and a joined-up approach to data, research, evaluation and knowledge management.</p> <p>Management response: Fully agree</p> <p>UNICEF fully agrees with this recommendation. The Strategic Plan notes that this is a significant area for improvement over the coming years, stating that “<i>data, research, evaluation and knowledge management will be key to linking upstream and downstream work to ensure that the policies UNICEF promotes are in fact</i></p>				

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<p><i>changing lives on the ground and that UNICEF is providing critical information that can further inform policy and programme design</i>". Throughout the development of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, the evidence function was seen as central to advancing UNICEF thought leadership and as having the potential to very positively influence a range of critical policies and programming that impact on the well-being of children and the achievement of the Plan's outcomes. The Plan further commits UNICEF to "accelerating its investments in this strategy, with a reinvigorated commitment to make better use of evidence to inform policies and programme delivery, and a continued emphasis on evaluation, data collection and analysis – including through co-creation with partners".</p> <p>While investment has increased over recent years, it is an area where more predictable, less fragmented and quality financing is urgently needed. Within UNICEF, the streams of evidence generation work encompass an extensive range from foresight, insight, policy analysis, evaluation and research, to data collection and analytics, and programme learning. In addition to these evidence functions, knowledge management is key to ensuring that the evidence generation from 130 country offices, 7 regional offices and various headquarters divisions and offices is available and easily accessed by those for whom the evidence will help in their efforts to make a difference for children.</p> <p>The new knowledge management strategy is a key integral part of investing in thought leadership and maximizing the impact of the evidence function. UNICEF began rolling out a global knowledge management learning programme in 2022, with more than 700 staff participating in and more than 100 staff completing an intensive basics course. The organization has now also started the roll-out of an "advanced" knowledge management course across all regions.</p> <p>Research and other analytical work is also increasingly focused on filling urgent gaps in knowledge – gaps that might exist because a Strategic Plan issue is a new corporate focus (such as intersectionality), or because not enough attention has been paid to it globally in the past. UNICEF is also investing in increased foresight capacity, with predictive analytics, more real-time and timely data, capitalizing on the use of frontier data sources and rapid data collection techniques. UNICEF is investing in data science and data engineering skills, in finding ways to "democratize" the use of frontier data so it is not only used at central level but at country level, and in seamlessly joining new data sources to build on the strength and comprehensiveness of existing data and evidence.</p>				
7.1. Data, research, evaluation and knowledge management leads to the development of a clear and harmonized understanding of how different functions may be distinct yet complementary and use joint strategies and plans for evidence in the pursuit of more significant commonality.	DAPM Office of Research Evaluation Office	June 2023	Not started	
7.2. At the country level, test practical, joined-up approaches on evidence generation and knowledge management that would feed into evaluation, using some of the 1 per cent evaluation budget towards this.	DAPM Evaluation Office	December 2023	Not started	
7.3. Improve the capacities and extend the reach of knowledge management focal points in the Goal Areas and the evidence functions at all levels, in order to support the design of country programmes and the development of programme strategy reviews, and enable the investment of more time in drawing together relevant evidence from UNICEF internal and external sources.	DAPM Evaluation Office	December 2023	Not started	

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Evaluation recommendation 8: Capitalize on the full potential of intersectionality.				
Management response: Fully agree				
<p>UNICEF fully agrees with this recommendation. The Strategic Plan is clear on the importance of intersectional approaches for the achievement of the child-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals: “multiple, intersecting vulnerabilities continue to underpin the rights and development challenges facing children around the world, including a heightened risk of discrimination and neglect related to disability, racism, xenophobia, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity, urbanization, migration and displacement, natural disasters and armed conflicts”. Although UNICEF has been engaged on research and analysis on intersectionality for more than a decade, the Strategic Plan is the first corporate plan to explicitly commit UNICEF to working on intersectional analysis approaches across the full spectrum of its work. While not all of the factors listed in the Plan are manifest or combine in the same way in every country in which UNICEF operates, realizing the vision of leaving no child behind is clearly dependent on building a better understanding of the interplay between them.</p> <p>It is recognized that although a lot of work continues to take place on the many different kinds of discrimination to which children and young people are subjected to, and the role these reinforcing layers of discrimination can play in determining which children continue to be left behind, there is still a lot to be done in codifying the concept into the mainstream programmatic work of UNICEF.</p> <p>The prominence given to intersectionality in the new Strategic Plan is in itself an explicit recognition that understanding and programming for intersectionality is one of the keys to ensuring that no child is left behind. UNICEF will accelerate efforts to give full effect to its work on intersectionality, including by learning from the experiences of other United Nations agencies. The Strategic Plan is transparent in representing this as a significant change in how the organization develops policies and programmes, and that it will take time, stating that the organization “is shifting towards a transformative, intersectional approach to inequality and discrimination, to address their underlying drivers by transforming structures and norms”. The findings and recommendation of the evaluation report on the issue of intersectionality are a welcome reinforcement of the commitments made in the Plan itself.</p>				
8.1. Clearly articulate the UNICEF approach to intersectionality and its application in the development and use of situational data and analysis.	DAPM	December 2023	Not started	
8.2. Ensure the integration of intersectionality as a programming principle and approach into future planning, monitoring and reporting guidance.	DAPM	December 2024	Not started	
8.3. Establish clear accountabilities for intersectionality and joint implementation plans grounded in planning and results-based management systems.	DAPM	31 December 2023	Not started	
8.4. Expand the Global Technical Teams’ approach to the gender and disability cross-cutting areas (and possibly other cross-cutting areas).	PG	1 June 2023		GAP III
Evaluation recommendation 9: Address gaps and technical barriers to effective periodic programme and strategic reviews.				
Management response: Fully agree				

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<p>UNICEF fully agrees with this recommendation. Indeed, following from the evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and based on discussions with internal and external stakeholders throughout the process of designing the current Plan, UNICEF had already concluded that this was a major area of concern moving forward. UNICEF had begun planning for a more evidence-based, rigorous and critical internal and regular reflection on the organization’s performance and effectiveness on progress towards meeting the Strategic Plan outcomes and the child-related Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>It has also become evident in recent years that the current approach of annual corporate reporting and a heavy midterm review process running from the second to the third years of the Strategic Plan is not sufficient to meet organizational needs with regard to having reviews with the degree of regularity, focus and insight that is required to maximize the organization’s effectiveness and impact, make course corrections in good time, and become more than the sum of the organization’s many parts.</p> <p>This point has also been appreciated and recognized by Member States and explicitly noted in the final endorsed Strategic Plan document itself, as follows: “<i>the move to a more outcome-focused Plan with a longer-term planning horizon has necessitated a revised approach to results management. Moving forward, UNICEF will be more focused on tracking the extent to which its efforts catalyse transformative and systemic change at the outcome level, in addition to monitoring and reporting on how efficiently and effectively it delivers on its own outputs. ... UNICEF will undertake more-regular internal policy, budget and performance reviews to make it more responsive to risks and more agile in systematizing programmatic learning, particularly at the outcome level. These regular internal reviews will assess the extent to which outcome-level progress is indicated; the ongoing alignment of programmes and resources behind outcomes; the effectiveness of change strategies in catalysing change in varied operational settings; which children continue to be left behind and where; and trends in global, regional and country-level performance</i>”.</p> <p>Beginning in 2023, and equipped with the data and evidence from one year of implementation of the Strategic Plan, UNICEF will launch annual Global Effectiveness Reviews to regularly take stock of the organization’s performance in progressing towards the outcome-level change of the Strategic Plan and child-related Sustainable Development Goals. It will assess the extent to which outcome-level progress is indicated; the ongoing alignment of programmes and resources behind outcomes; the effectiveness of strategies in catalysing change in varied operational settings; which children continue to be left behind and where; and trends in global, regional and country-level performance, taking into account internal policy and budgetary considerations.</p> <p>These reviews will close the current gap at the global level on rigorous internal reflection and decision-making and will build on the existing reviews that are already undertaken regularly at country and regional levels as well as global analysis. They will provide UNICEF senior management with a regular and evidence-based platform for the collective discussion of strategic alignment against the corporate ambition set in the Strategic Plan and effective programme delivery, to enable timely decision-making on agreed actions, including in relation to strategic resourcing and staffing.</p> <p>More indirectly, the Global Effectiveness Reviews will contribute to a change in culture and management within UNICEF, leading to a more evidence-based, transparent, agile and strategic approach to collaboration across all levels of the organization.</p> <p>UNICEF senior management is also highly supportive of ongoing efforts to reduce the burden associated with data collection and aggregation. The introduction of the core standard indicators into UNICEF internal systems is expected to generate huge efficiency gains both for country offices and regional and global teams. UNICEF is also exploring opportunities to lighten the burden associated with corporate reporting for the cycle through greater harmonization of approaches and processes around the annual report of the Executive Director and the Global Annual Results Reports produced by sector.</p> <p>The longer-term context is, of course, that UNICEF and others should increasingly come to rely on national data and evidence-generation systems to assess progress towards outcomes, at regular intervals. In countries with less well-performing data systems, UNICEF engagement in Demographic and Household Surveys/Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys involves strong capacity-building dimensions for national statistics authorities and sectoral data systems. Whereas it is desirable to measure outcome-level progress frequently – as pointed out by the recommendation – this must be balanced against the imperatives of strengthening national data systems and avoiding the creation of parallel monitoring/statistical systems that undermine and weaken national systems.</p>				

Action	Responsible section(s)	Expected completion date	Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled	Supporting documents
<p>The Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the Strategic Plan also notes the need for a set of cross-sectoral and leading outcome-level indicators that would be more suitable to tracking progress at the “medium change” level of the Strategic Plan theory of change. Indeed, the Framework contains an explicit commitment that this will be taken up during the Strategic Plan’s implementation, noting that “<i>there are strong grounds for developing additional cross-cutting outcome-level indicators [that] would measure systemic change for future integration into UNICEF reporting on the situation of children and serve as “leading indicators” of the types of transformative change required for acceleration of progress ... over the coming years UNICEF will develop its capacity to track systemic cross-sectoral outcome-level changes, such as leveraging financing for children; supporting and advocating for child rights-based policies and legislation; shaping markets and promoting equitable access to essential supplies and services; brokering global partnerships for children; transforming the landscape of data on children; ... and influencing social behaviours and norms</i>”. This commitment is reiterated below among the management actions.</p>				
<p>9.1. Ensure that this monitoring, evaluation and learning process has sufficient resources at all levels by rebalancing efforts invested previously in strategic monitoring questions, results assessment modules and compliance reporting, and strengthening internal capacity for capturing outcomes during implementation, including UNICEF contributions to outcomes.</p>	DAPM	December 2023	Under way	
<p>9.2. Ensure that there are no fragmentations and contradictions in monitoring, evaluation and learning platforms and systems, that data are easily accessible and user-friendly, and that there is staff awareness of existing data.</p>	DAPM	December 2023	Under way	
<p>9.3. Ensure sufficient demand from decision makers for high-quality evidence that is stimulated; that utilization of evidence about Strategic Plan progress is incentivized, and that Strategic Plan evidence can be used for decision-making at Global Management Team or country office levels by being generated in the useable formats and mechanisms established at both levels and by assuring that accountabilities for evidence use are clear.</p>	DAPM	December 2023	Under way	
<p>9.4. Implement the commitment in the Integrated Results and Resources Framework to develop and roll out additional cross-cutting outcome-level indicators that would measure systemic and medium-term changes.</p>	DAPM	December 2024	Not started	
<p>Evaluation recommendation 10: Improve the flow of knowledge and access to technical capacity.</p> <p>Management response: Fully agree</p>				

Action	Responsible section(s)	Expected completion date	Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled	Supporting documents
<p>UNICEF fully agrees with this recommendation. Furthermore, senior management is confident that UNICEF is now well positioned to address this recommendation, by building on existing measures, such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Technical Teams and Multi-Functional Technical Teams offer an excellent platform to strengthen the ability of UNICEF to collectively address issues in a cross-cutting, holistic manner, drawing from expertise across the organization. Global Technical Teams allow for a more coherent approach to the implementation of global strategies and applying learning from the field, while still ensuring contextual appropriateness through the organization's decentralized model. Multi-Functional Technical Teams issue-based collaboration is expected to foster knowledge-sharing and make technical experts from across the organization available to address issues, wherever they occur. Importantly, both of these platforms utilize existing UNICEF capacity. • Investments of catalytic funds (7 per cent set aside). These investments are used to develop proof of concept, notably on emerging issues and cross-cutting approaches, paving the way to scaling up such approaches across the organization and among partners. Recent examples include the allocation of catalytic funds for the modelling of an integrated programming approach for adolescent girls, and for scaling innovation for impact in programming. • UNICEF/PG has invested its own strategic reserves (including savings realized from internal restructuring) to catalyse advances in mental health, peacebuilding and digital education programming, among others, in recent years. • Regarding management/operations-facing issues, there are also a number of organizational improvement initiatives, which, if implemented effectively, could potentially contribute to reducing inefficiencies and transaction burdens and thereby allow staff to focus their efforts on core programme work and collaboration, including integrated programming. 				
10.1. Work across UNICEF teams and offices to better meet the needs of country offices by strengthening technical expertise and skills in climate action, disability, the humanitarian-development nexus, resilience and gender, including by drawing on lessons learned and good practices in the organization (for example, learning from the experience of the Global Technical Teams).	PG	December 2024		
10.2. Build and strengthen partnerships with other organizations to bring in new expertise in UNICEF; for example, further secondments to UNICEF and access to specialized/technical support to country offices.	PG	December 2023		
10.3. Access additional technical capacity through approaches such as the use of the United Nations system-wide long-term agreement arrangements with suppliers; tapping into technical expertise from programme countries through South-South cooperation; and the establishment/widening use of academically sited technical assistance hubs and partnerships for technical advice.	PG	June 2023		
<p>Evaluation recommendation 11: Define and enact a systematic approach for responses to global shocks.</p> <p>Management response: Fully agree</p>				

<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible section(s)</i>	<i>Expected completion date</i>	<i>Actions taken and implementation stage:</i> <i>Not started</i> <i>Under way</i> <i>Completed</i> <i>Cancelled</i>	<i>Supporting documents</i>
<p>UNICEF fully agrees with this recommendation. As noted in the report, the recommendation draws on global lessons that have already been documented by previous reviews and analysis. This recommendation will add value and build further on the ongoing efforts by UNICEF headquarters divisions and regional, country and field offices in carrying out adaptive programming, systemically using of evidence in programming, using cutting-edge and innovative tools and methodologies such as trend forecasting and foresight analysis to inform programming, and managing systematic approaches more deliberately and strategically for readiness to major global shocks.</p>				
11.1. Expand the concept of emergency preparedness to include major/global shocks and develop multi-country/regional/global response scenarios.	EMOPs PG Supply Division	31 December 2023	Not started	
11.2. Affiliate with other agencies/private sector providers for horizon scanning risk assessments that are resolved at the subregional or national levels.	EMOPs PG	31 December 2023	Not started	
<p>Evaluation recommendation 12: Clarify the focus on climate action.</p> <p>Management response: Fully agree</p> <p>UNICEF fully agrees with this recommendation and will revisit the focus on climate change, particularly with regard to the level of ambition. It is also important to note that at present, UNICEF approaches climate, disaster risk reduction, environment and energy as an integrated package (known as “CEED”).</p> <p>During the consultations on the development of the current Strategic Plan, it became clear during the discussions with children and young people that the issue of climate was one of the most worrying and pressing issues for the world’s youth today and one where they are most keen to see the leadership of UNICEF and the United Nations system. It also represents a unique challenge to UNICEF and the broader United Nations in meeting their expectations; climate is not an historic and well-established area of UNICEF expertise or one which lends itself naturally to a significant upscaling of efforts. More pertinently, in the short term it is not an issue only affecting children and young people, but one affecting the whole planet, and the developing world in particular.</p> <p>As became clear during consultations, children and young people have expectations that UNICEF will serve as their voice within the United Nations and the broader international system. For many children and young people, UNICEF should be amplifying their concerns on the global stage on issues such as climate action, even if it is not an area of technical leadership for the organization.</p> <p>As recognized in the Strategic Plan, the organization’s work to address the impact of climate change is cross-sectoral; UNICEF is working to integrate climate action into its programming across all Goal Areas, its advocacy, its partnerships, supply and procurement, and its internal operations. More specifically, the programmatic work is focused on four areas: climate change adaptation, low carbon growth and climate change mitigation, disaster risk reduction, and environmental sustainability. Building on the findings of this and other evaluations and reviews and using the latest information on the roll-out of the Strategic Plan, UNICEF will accelerate its efforts over the coming year to further clarify and substantiate its role both programmatically and, more importantly, as a platform and amplifier of the voice of children as agents of change and justice.</p>				
12.1. Mainstream a greater focus on climate action in UNICEF work by moving beyond the current emphasis on disasters (and preparedness for and response to them) being exacerbated by climate change and recognizing that climate change affects	PG	31 December 2023	Not started	

<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible section(s)</i>	<i>Expected completion date</i>	<i>Actions taken and implementation stage:</i> <i>Not started</i> <i>Under way</i> <i>Completed</i> <i>Cancelled</i>	<i>Supporting documents</i>
the way that UNICEF delivers, as well as the development trajectory for children.				
12.2. Build on the comparative advantage of UNICEF by pursuing the Global Advocacy Priority around climate action through the lens of children and adolescents as critical agents of change, using the UNICEF voice and brand as a platform to push climate issues.	PG Division of Global Communication and Advocacy	31 December 2023	Not started	

IV. Draft decision

The Executive Board

Takes note of the evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, its summary ([E/ICEF/2023/3](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2023/4](#)).
