

# Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF

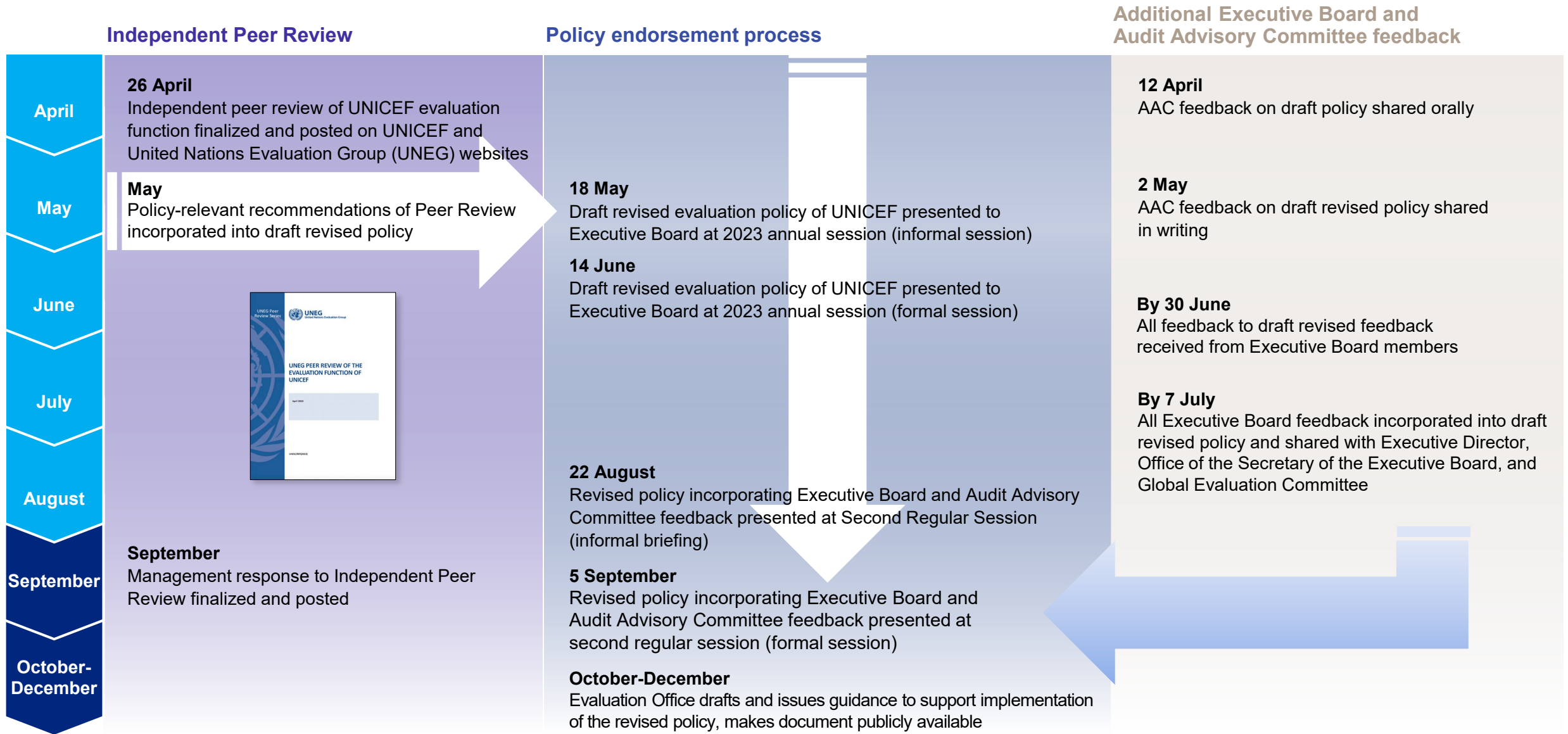
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UNICEF Executive Board – 2023 second regular  
session (5–7 September 2023)

Item 7: Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF

Reference documents: [E/ICEF/2023/27](#) and [E/ICEF/2023/27/Corr.1](#)

# Process overview



# Process leading to incremental but significant revision

### Overall approach

Focused and Methodical

- Pragmatic**: Identification of challenges, risks, opportunities that need to be strengthened through practical and realistic policy solutions, rather than "fixing what isn't broken" or enshrining in policy what is better addressed through other means
- Principled**: Firm grounding of all revisions in a mindset of proposing what we think needs to be done to achieve the end goal in mind, rather than what is popular with any individual stakeholder group
- Evidence-based**: Systematic and balanced analysis of multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative input, not on individual preferences or "faith-based" guesses to diagnose and address issues
- Results-oriented**: Clear outcome-level goal in view – to strengthen the function to help maximize organizational results – rather than merely worshipping or revising for the sake of revising
- Child-focused**: Improved organizational results, through evaluative evidence, to help realize the rights of every child everywhere, as per the Strategic Plan 2022-2025

**Draft revised policy represents an incremental revision embodying both significant continuity with and change from the 2018 policy.**

**All revisions put forward are based on a clear and explicit problem statement that a policy revision can help resolve.**

**The specific combination of continuity and change is geared toward a singular goal: strengthening the evaluation function so that it is ideally positioned to fulfil its organizational learning and accountability role, and thus help UNICEF and its partners (including the Executive Board) achieve the best results possible for children in the Decade of Action.**

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### Recap of policy review and revision process

Continuity

- GOVERNANCE**
  - Overall structure of the function
  - Almost all management and governance arrangements
  - Establishing more detailed policy positions
  - Grounding in established international norms and standards for evaluation
  - Central importance of independence and of arrangement to support this
- RESOURCING**
  - Necessity of adequate human and financial resources
  - Centrality of costed evaluation plans and IMEPs; close links with RBMP/Planning
- COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**
  - Criticality of close collaboration and partnership, both internally and externally
  - Reliance upon external expertise, especially for implementation and quality control
  - Stakeholder rights of inclusion; intent to build counterpart and civil capacities
  - Importance of partnership based on comparative advantages and common interests
- UTILITY & USE**
  - Designating certain activities as mandatory
  - Focus on utilization, not on just producing evaluation products
  - Diverse evaluation products/activities to benefit varied contexts & stakeholders
- CULTURE**
  - Importance of developing the evaluation culture as well as technical capacities
  - Attention to risks and risk mitigation

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### Overall approach

Extensive and Inclusive

**Evaluation/ Review/ Assessments**

- Desk review of other documents**: Discussions and decisions of the Executive Board, Annual Reports of the UNICEF Evaluation Function, Relevant Joint Inspection Unit reports
- Analysis of existing data**: Administrative, monitoring, external quality assurance
- Comparative analysis**: 5 United Nations organizations, 1 international financial institution, 2 governmental agencies
- Surveys**: UNICEF evaluation staff, UNICEF evaluation users, Executive Board members
- Internal consultations**: Global Evaluation Committee members and teams, Evaluation staff at all levels, Briefing/Q&A sessions with both groups
- Executive Board consultations**: Separate focus group discussions with each of 5 regional groups
- Audit Advisory Committee advice**: Feedback provided to Executive Director

**Identified good practice**: Examples culled from evaluation staff and users across the organization

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### Recap of policy review and revision process

Main areas of change to 2018 policy rooted in clearly articulated problem statements

**Problem statements**

- The evaluation function is not well understood throughout the organization due to the dry and overly technical language used in the current policy. It reads like standard operating procedures instead of being rooted in core principles that are important to the organization and its stakeholders. This misses an opportunity to raise awareness of the function and strengthen the evaluation culture.
  - Greater precision surrounding the purposes of evaluation
  - Explicit explanation of the key principles underlying the evaluation function and the specific provisions contained in the policy
- The standard definition of evaluation is not suitable for UNICEF's context, which now includes a broader range of evaluative exercises. Current coverage targets are inflexible and do not allow these exercises to contribute to the organization's evaluation commitment.
  - Contextualization of the core UNICEF definition within UNICEF
  - Refinement of coverage targets to reflect new realities
- Since 2018, more focus has been put on meeting quantitative key performance indicators, but it is unclear if evaluations are effectively contributing to organizational results.
  - Improved guidance on evaluation planning methods
  - Clearer, more expanded role of evaluation managers
  - Measures to enhance evaluation use
- The current policy lacks specific guidance on how the evaluation function can maintain independence for credibility while staying connected to management for relevance and utility, especially within the organization's decentralized structure.
  - Adjustment of senior management roles to the evolving context
  - Adaptation of evaluation function roles to the evolving context
- UNICEF's evidence functions are not fully leveraging their common interests and comparative strengths.
  - Demarcation between evaluation and other evidence functions and a commitment to coordination and collaboration
- External partnerships, particularly in relation to national evaluation capacity development, have been underemphasized in the policy.
  - More explicit commitment to partnering with governments, academia and private sector in addition to traditional partners
  - Stronger commitment to national evaluation capacity development
- Human resource investments in evaluation are vaguely defined in the policy, and financial investments are inconsistently applied across the organization over time.
  - Clearer expectation-setting around human resources targets
  - Clearer expectation-setting around financial resources

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Focused and methodical, extensive and inclusive process leading

Incremental but significant revision to core elements of 2018 evaluation policy of UNICEF

# Crucial inputs of Peer Review, Executive Board and Audit Advisory Committee

## Changes resulting from the Independent Peer Review

Recommendations	Sub-recommendations	Policy measures	Measures beyond policy
1	UNICEF management should ensure the sufficient and predictable funding of the evaluation function. The 1% target should be clarified including and how it is calculated and what is included.	Calculation of 1% agreed with OED/DFAM and addressed in para 78 and related footnote	Briefing Note with resourcing requests over OMP period submitted by EO in August 2023
2	The evaluation function should build on its added value by identifying, together with other knowledge functions in the organization, specific and focused ways to work more together.	Explicit commitment to cooperation with the other UNICEF evidence functions included within para 42	Addit \$9m mobilized for joined-up evidence production in the social policy area. Several potential initiatives proposed by EO
3	UNICEF should maintain and further strengthen the improvements that have been achieved in its evaluation Human Resources and leadership capacities.	Accountabilities for evaluation HR strengthened at all levels (paras 45-62). Decentralized evaluation roles, staffing requirements and competencies strengthened (paras 72-77)	Regular meetings now held between Evaluation Director and OED. Evaluation skills mapping underway with DHR. CPD opps arranged through two-way stretches, trainings etc.
4	UNICEF should use its unique mandate and visibility to work with and influence the external evaluation environment of UN agencies, academics, voluntary evaluation organizations and foundations to promote national evaluation capacities and mobilize evaluative action in support of UNICEF's mission.	Commitments to NECD have been strengthened in the Policy incl strengthening capacities for country-led evaluations and VNR's in support of SDG delivery and UN coherence (paras 66-70)	NECD investments substantially enhanced incl. dedicated trainings with govts.. UNICEF is now co-lead of the Global SDG Synthesis Coalition and a member of the Global Evaluation Initiative

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## Changes since Annual Session of the Executive Board

### Feedback received from Executive Board and Audit Advisory Committee in May-June 2023

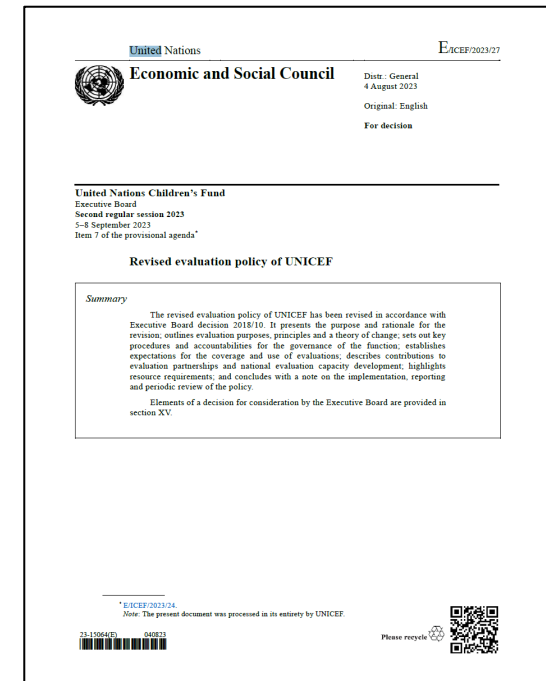


- Acknowledgement of the **extensive process and intensive consultations** that fed into the policy revision process
- Provision for an independent **midterm evaluation of independence-enhancing measures** in the policy
- **More explicit emphasis on several existing areas** of importance to the Executive Board (e.g., joint, inter-agency, country-led and system-wide evaluations; national evaluation capacity development; outcome- and impact-level measurement; gender, disability and climate)
- Clearer **identification of the range of exercises not covered by the policy** (i.e., monitoring, research, data analysis)
- **Clarification of where independence resides** (i.e., with the UNICEF evaluation function, not external consultants)
- **Reduction in the section on cooperation with other evidence functions**, while retaining evaluation function's own commitment to such cooperation
- More explicit identification of **evaluation function's central role in determining what type of exercise should be done in specific contexts, and at what level of effort and with what resources**, based on its independent perspective on all attendant factors
- Greater emphasis on the **relational aspect of the matrix management model** (i.e., between and among the Regional Director, Director of Evaluation, and Regional Evaluation Adviser) as a key element in ensuring its success, rather than on the mechanics of reporting lines
- Identification of the **Global Management Team as a key forum for discussing evaluation issues**
- Inclusion of the **formula for calculating progress toward the 1% target**
- Small number of **non-substantive copyediting and format changes** in order to enhance the document's logical flow in a few areas
- **Deletion of select non-substantive words and sentences** to bring word count back within range of the 8500-word limit

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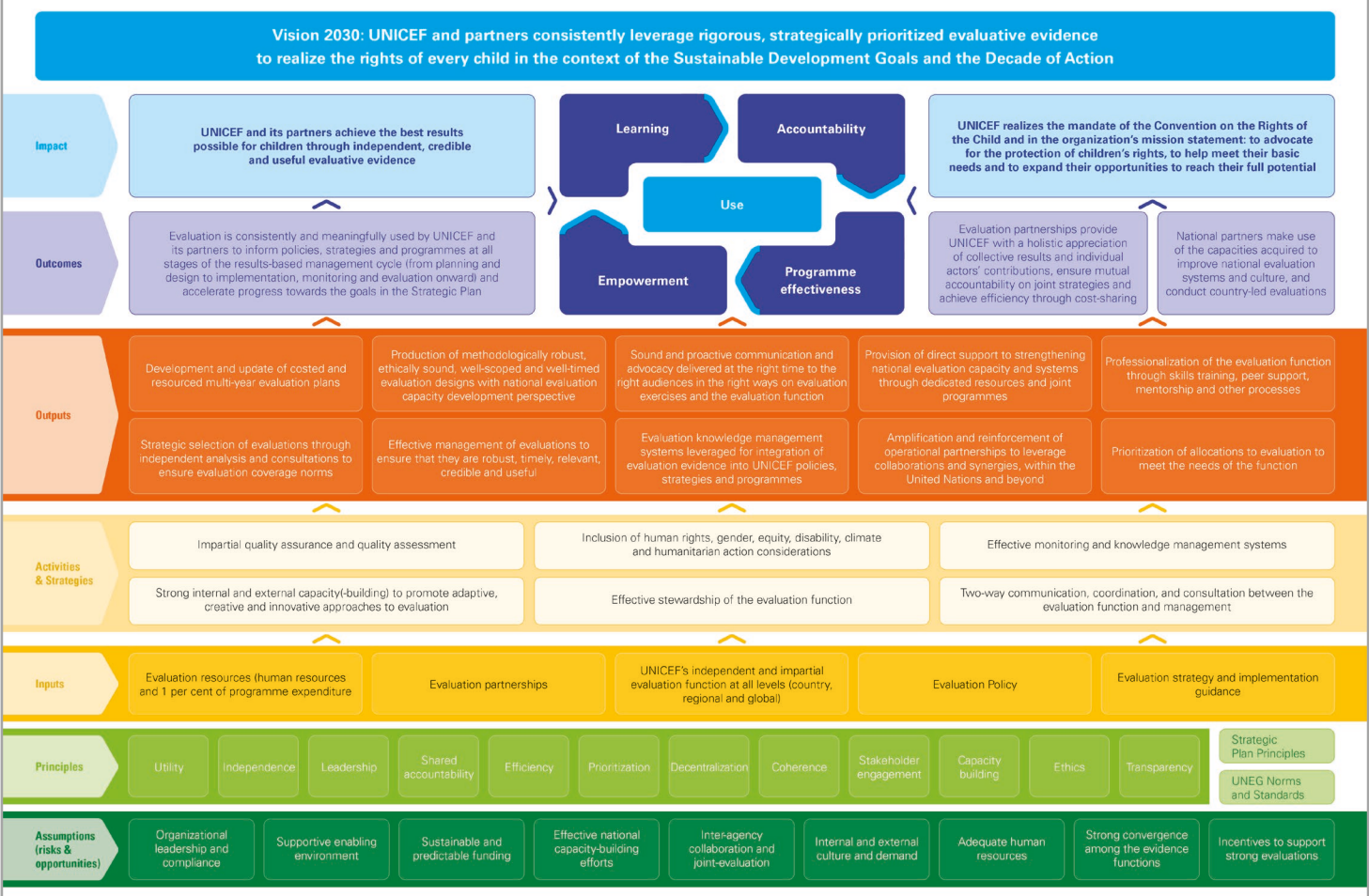
# Key policy improvements

- ✓ Sharpening of **roles and responsibilities for evaluation and its enabling environment**
- ✓ **Greater clarity on what is and is not evaluation** (and covered by the policy and eligible for evaluation resources)
- ✓ Numerous **independence-strengthening measures within the existing matrix management model**:
  - Significantly enhanced role for the evaluation function in evaluation-related decisions
  - Commitment to increasing frequency and depth of interaction among the Regional Director, Evaluation Director, and Regional Evaluation Adviser
  - Inclusion of evaluation function staff in key planning forums and other important decision-making processes
  - Provision for an independent midterm evaluation of these independence-enhancing measures
- ✓ Introduction of **joint evaluation planning** across the three levels of the organization for greater efficiency and complementarity of efforts and for reduced duplication of efforts, waste of resources and evaluation fatigue
- ✓ More explicit dedication to **cooperation with other evidence functions, with Governments and the private sector**
- ✓ More explicit commitment to **partnership with Governments, the private sector and civil society**
- ✓ Elevation of **joint, inter-agency, system-wide and country-led evaluations** as policy commitments
- ✓ Explicit attention to **embedding ethical thinking into day-to-day evaluation decision-making**
- ✓ **Increased emphasis on several existing strategic areas of heightened priority** (e.g., impact evaluation, national evaluation capacity development, evaluation innovations, and meaningful integration of the gender, disability and climate lenses)
- ✓ Dedication of attention and resources to fostering **consistently high and meaningful use of evaluations**, including over the long term
- ✓ Restatement of **commitment to adequate and predictable resourcing of the function** as a management responsibility
- ✓ Identification of the **formula for calculating progress towards the 1% evaluation expenditure target**
- ✓ Greater clarity on **human and financial resources targets**
- ✓ Greater flexibility for **very large country operations on the 1% target** (while also ensuring the evaluation function has a voice in informing the appropriate level of effort)
- ✓ Firm grounding of the function, as well as the policy revisions, in **normative “why” principles**
- ✓ **Significantly revised theory of change for the evaluation function**



# Looking ahead

## Revised Theory of Change for the UNICEF evaluation function



## Implications of theory of change for evaluation in UNICEF

- ToC will shape forthcoming guidance that helps guide implementation of the policy
- ToC will be used as a meaningful tool for implementing the policy and managing the function within the organization
- Future annual reports on the UNICEF evaluation function (AREFs) will be rooted in the ToC and thus be:
  - More analytical** in exploring the underlying factors affecting organizational performance in relation to KPIs
  - More holistic** in reporting on the actual maturity of the function and its enabling environment (including assumptions, risks and drivers) as well as on KPI performance



Thank you.