

Joint Statement
Executive Board of UNICEF
Annual report for 2023 on the evaluation function in UNICEF, Agenda Item 10
ANNUAL SESSION 2023
12 June 2024, New York

Mister President, dear colleagues,

I deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye the United Kingdom of *Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, the European Union as a donor and my own country, Germany.

We welcome the present evaluation report and congratulate UNICEF on entering the implementation phase of the revised evaluation policy.

We commend the evaluation function for the progress achieved in 2023. This includes the increase in human resources at the decentralized level, the strengthening of national evaluation capacities, the launch of the Impact Catalyst Fund, and the employment of innovative and creative approaches to engage young people in the evaluation process.

We commend the self-critical reflection on the shortcomings of integrating a gender lens into evaluations effectively. We welcome the planned capacity building as a measure to enhance gender expertise within the evaluation function and call for the swift implementation of these measures. Additionally, we encourage the evaluation function to engage with evaluation units of other UN agencies to share best practices, in particular with the evaluation function of UN Women, which holds the expertise and mandate to coordinate on matters of gender mainstreaming within the UNDS.

The annual report clearly highlights the value of evaluations in informing both programming and policy considerations through an evidence-based approach. This is exemplified by the two evaluations on social and behaviour change and UNICEF's advocacy strategies presented under the evaluation item. These evaluations provide valuable insights into enhancing effectiveness and impact in both areas. The formulation of practical recommendations and the proactive engagement with the results by Management are crucial to continue fostering a learning culture within UNICEF. We also note the considerable variation in the number and level of proposed actions in the management plans. With this in mind, UNICEF may benefit from additional guidance to ensure that clear, comprehensive, and sufficient actions are undertaken.

We express our concern over the inadequate update on the action plan regarding the recommendations of the Evaluability Assessment at this annual session 2024, as requested in decision 2023/3. Although an update was provided from a formal point of view, the format deviates significantly from the original action plan, making it extremely difficult to compare and assess the progress made. This approach unnecessarily complicates matters and significantly hampers the Executive Board's ability to effectively fulfil its oversight responsibilities. Therefore, we request UNICEF to implement the decision in accordance with decision 2023/3 by retaining the original tabular reporting format and to present a revised update at the second regular session 2024.

We note with appreciation the increase in demand-driven evaluations, but we share the evaluation function's concern regarding the sufficiency of resources to meet these demands both in quantitative and qualitative terms. We are alarmed that the 1%-target has once again

been missed by a significant margin. Therefore, we request once again that the evaluation function is provided with adequate and predictable funding – in line with the 1% target. That is the prerequisite for guaranteeing the operational independence of the evaluation function and to ensure that it can focus on its primary task of generating evidence. As one of UNICEF's three independent functions, the work of the evaluation function provides an indispensable basis for the Executive Board to effectively fulfil its supervisory role, as it allows for an impartial perspective on the work of UNICEF.

We welcome the applications of innovative methods in the field of evaluation presented in the evaluation report. However, when undertaking innovative methods, we call on UNICEF to ensure that all aspects of the evaluation function are taken into consideration to ensure a well-rounded evaluation function, which includes learning, in some cases, and ensures accountability, in line with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) standards and international evaluation criteria. Within the organizational structure, the evaluation function rightfully holds a special status. Ensuring a clear budgetary and functional distinction from the activities in the areas of monitoring, research, data and analysis is important in order not to weaken the mandate of the evaluation function.

In closing, we would like to reiterate Management's crucial role in ensuring the successful implementation of the revised evaluation policy. In this regard, we seek concrete insights into the following two key points. First, how does Management support the evaluation function in securing reliable, predictable, and sustainable funding, particularly at the decentralized level? Second, how does Management contribute to creating an evaluation-positive enabling environment that strengthens the independence of the evaluation function and the uptake and use of evaluation evidence?

Thank you.