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Management response to the evaluation report

Evaluation of UNICEF work in early childhood development and early childhood education, 2018–2023

Summary

The present document provides an overview of the UNICEF response to the evaluation of its early childhood development (ECD) and early childhood education (ECE) initiatives from 2018 to 2023. This management response to the evaluation summarizes targeted actions that UNICEF will undertake to address the recommendations for enhancing the impact of ECD interventions. Recommendations from the report propose actions needed to close critical gaps and accelerate progress towards equitable and sustainable outcomes for young children and their families worldwide.

The evaluation highlights the substantial contributions of UNICEF to advancing multisectoral ECD policies, strengthening front-line workforce systems, and fostering meaningful engagement with parents and caregivers. These achievements underscore the organization's effectiveness in advocating for investment in ECD as a key driver of both national and global development goals, reaffirming its vital role in laying the foundation for long-term human capital development. At the same time, the evaluation identifies persistent challenges, including a continued shortfall in financial investments for ECD and ECE, which remain inadequate to meet global needs. It also points to the lack of consistent data on child development outcomes and on parent and caregiver practices. The evaluation also notes the need for enhanced organizational investments and measures to track expenditures on ECD.

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

* E/ICEF/2026/1.

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



I. Overview

1. In 2024, UNICEF commissioned an independent evaluation to assess its effectiveness in designing and implementing early childhood development (ECD) and early childhood education (ECE) programmes – providing technical support, influencing national government policies, and leveraging investment in these areas.

2. The evaluation focused on three key objectives: (i) assessing the role of UNICEF in creating an enabling environment through policy reform and financing strategies; (ii) evaluating system-level capacities to implement and scale the integrated ECD approach; and (iii) measuring the effectiveness of UNICEF-supported programmes in promoting holistic development and school readiness for children aged 0–8 years. These objectives were examined across countries with varying contexts to ensure broad relevance and applicability.

3. The evaluation reviewed and analysed secondary data from all countries with UNICEF-supported ECD and ECE programmes. This included a range of strategic documents, including national policies, programme reports and research papers, and desk reviews in 15 purposively selected countries,¹ with six deep dives producing country-specific reports. The evaluation used a mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative secondary and primary data in a select number of countries. Primary data collection involved qualitative methods and engaged 868 participants across global, regional and country levels, including UNICEF staff, government and implementing partners, front-line workers and caregivers. Gender equity and disability inclusion were integrated throughout the process using disaggregated data and inclusive tools.

4. The key findings demonstrate that UNICEF strategies and contributions to enabling environments and system strengthening were highly effective in expanding the number of national ECD and ECE policies, as well as multisectoral and sectoral plans. These efforts contributed to increased access to a continuum of ECD services. However, UNICEF investment in ECD and ECE programming has not kept pace with the growing demand generated by its global leadership and strong comparative advantage in promoting an integrated ECD approach.

5. The findings also show that UNICEF excelled in supporting Governments to provide a continuum of services for children aged 0–8 years, a key outcome of the integrated ECD approach. However, overall, there was limited evidence available to assess the efficacy of UNICEF support in promoting ECD and school readiness.

6. To address equity gaps, the evaluation highlights four key pathways for improvement: (i) nurseries/preschools with early learning activities and parenting support programmes for children aged 0–2 years; (ii) home-based early childhood interventions and inclusive education for children with disabilities; (iii) cash transfer programmes for poorer children and children in emergencies; and (iv) alternative education pathways and parenting support programmes for adolescent mothers.

II. Findings and analysis

A. Enabling environment for an integrated ECD approach

7. The evaluation finds that UNICEF-supported policies and practices were well aligned with national goals and objectives, as well as with the Nurturing Care

¹ This report covers a total of 15 countries, divided into two categories: six deep-dive countries, each with a separate report – Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia, Pakistan and Serbia, and nine desk-review countries, examined through in-depth literature reviews – Burkina Faso, Georgia, Iraq, Mali, Nepal, Nicaragua, Timor-Leste, Tunisia and Ukraine.

Framework for Early Childhood Development.² UNICEF played a significant role in ensuring the relevance and coherence of national ECD policies and plans, leveraging its global comparative advantage and leadership in this field. Between 2018 and 2023 – including the challenging period of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic – UNICEF expanded its ECD and ECE initiatives, effectively engaging families and reaching more than 220 million children, with approximately 150 million supported in emergency contexts.

8. The evaluation also highlights emerging policy coherence across key sectors involved in ECD and ECE. The evaluation notes that while national ECD plans often embraced a multisectoral approach, ECE policies remained more sector-specific. Additionally, education policies focused on ages 3–8, and health policies on ages 0–2. However, broader national policies – such as development; child protection; water, sanitation and hygiene; and social protection – generally overlooked the unique needs of young children, treating them as part of the wider 0–18 age group without specific attention to ECD.

9. The findings also indicate that UNICEF employed a diverse set of strategies – including partnerships, advocacy, social behaviour change, and community engagement – to expand access to early stimulation and learning opportunities. These approaches were adapted to available resources, sectoral goals, and country-specific contexts, contributing to policy reforms and the increased adoption of multisectoral ECD policies and plans. While UNICEF played a pivotal role in designing and implementing integrated ECD packages, it was less effective in evaluating the extent to which its efforts improved service quality or strengthened family resilience to shocks.

10. The evaluation also finds that UNICEF has supported ministries and local governments in increasing budget allocations for ECD and ECE through public financing mechanisms and public-private partnerships. Notable examples include expanded pre-primary education budgets in Namibia, Serbia and Timor-Leste. Notwithstanding, and despite these efforts, UNICEF strategies have not consistently led to large-scale increases in public investment for ECD. Public financing for ECD and ECE remains a significant challenge, even with UNICEF advocacy and progress in strengthening government capacity for budget planning and allocation. To date, only a limited number of countries have achieved substantial gains in public investment for ECD and ECE.

B. System strengthening for an integrated ECD approach

11. The findings show that UNICEF has played a key role in expanding access to a continuum of ECD services for children and parents by engaging multiple sectors. While children aged 3–5 years benefited from the most comprehensive services, support for children aged 0–2 years remained limited due to insufficient public financing. Despite these gaps, UNICEF effectively expanded early learning opportunities and reached 1.5 million parents and caregivers with parenting programmes across 106 countries between 2022 and 2023.

12. The evaluation also underscores the valuable contributions of UNICEF to ECD through strategic partnerships and capacity-building efforts, even in the face of limited population-level data on children’s developmental progress and caregiving practices. Nonetheless, disparities in access and outcomes remain, and the absence of

² Launched in 2018 by the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the World Bank Group – in collaboration with the ECD Action Network and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health – the Nurturing Care Framework translates evidence on early childhood development into practical actions.

comprehensive data continues to hinder a full assessment of impact. Moreover, the effectiveness of UNICEF varies across countries, with persistent challenges in reaching marginalized populations and maintaining service quality and sustainability.

13. The evaluation also finds that UNICEF is moderately effective in advancing ECD policies and reforms through long-term partnerships and evidence-based approaches. UNICEF is well regarded by government partners for its flexibility, advocacy and data-driven support. UNICEF efforts have contributed to a more sustainable enabling environment through strategies such as evidence generation and the adoption of multisectoral ECD policies and plans. However, global investments in ECD and ECE remain insufficient relative to the UNICEF comparative advantage. The evaluation notes that UNICEF has not met its organizational benchmark of allocating 10 per cent of resources to ECD and ECE programming³ during the period under consideration, and underscores the need for more sustained and targeted investment to address these challenges and achieve global development goals.

C. Programme results from an integrated ECD approach

14. The evaluation demonstrates that UNICEF has contributed to strengthening data collection and utilization for programme planning and improvement in ECD. While some countries have developed robust systems for tracking key indicators, others continue to face challenges due to limited infrastructure and inconsistent practices. Significant gaps persist in outcome-level data on children’s development, caregiver practices and front-line worker capacities, which limits the ability to effectively monitor progress and assess impact.

15. The evaluation also reveals that at the global level, the most significant role of UNICEF at this stage of programme development was in enhancing the foundational systems and supportive environments for ECD. Despite these efforts, there was limited evidence directly linking UNICEF efforts to measurable outcomes for caregivers, parents, front-line workers, or children themselves. Through this evaluation, an evidence-based contribution analysis was used to retrospectively construct the UNICEF integrated theory of change for ECD. This process helped to illuminate potential sector-specific outcomes and impacts, as well as the broader effects of a coordinated, integrated ECD approach.

16. The findings also confirm that UNICEF has successfully implemented multisectoral strategies to reach young children excluded from formal early learning, with a focus on health, education and social policy interventions. These efforts targeted four key groups: children aged 0–2 years, children with disabilities, marginalized and vulnerable populations, and children raised by adolescent mothers. Despite persistent challenges, UNICEF introduced promising interventions – such as nurseries with parenting support, home-based inclusive education, and cash transfer programmes for disadvantaged children – to expand access to early learning among underserved populations.

III. Responses to key findings

17. UNICEF agrees with the proposed recommendations of the evaluation, particularly the need to strengthen and scale its global advocacy and communications on public financing for ECD. UNICEF will equip its four Centres of Excellence with the expertise needed to support Governments on public financing for ECD and elevate

³ UNICEF, “Global Annual Results Report 2019: Goal Area 2 – Every child learns”, UNICEF, New York, June 2020, available at <https://www.unicef.org/media/71801/file/Global-annual-results-report-2019-goal-area-2.pdf>; see p. 5, which notes that UNICEF management committed to “increase ECE spending to 10 per cent of education expenditures”.

ECD in global policy dialogues and national development agendas through the next two years, while generating compelling evidence – such as investment cases and cost-benefit analyses – to influence decision makers. Strategic partnerships with financial institutions, philanthropic organizations and civil society can help to unlock blended financing and amplify advocacy efforts. Furthermore, under its Future Focus Initiative of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2026–2029, UNICEF will empower its Centres of Excellence with tools, training and peer learning opportunities to ensure that localized advocacy is both effective and sustainable.

18. UNICEF also agrees with the evaluation’s recommendation that expanding budget allocations for ECD will enable the organization to scale up high-impact interventions that support children’s cognitive, emotional and physical development during the most critical years of life. To this end, in the next two years, UNICEF will ensure organizational budgets for ECD leadership roles in two locations under the new structures and will also explore engagement with new partners.

19. UNICEF also concurs with the evaluation’s recommendation to update the global guidance and methodological note for the forthcoming Strategic Plan, recognizing the need to clarify internal governance structures, define resource allocation requirements, and establish a shared measurement framework for the integrated ECD approach. In alignment with this recommendation, UNICEF has initiated key actions, including elevating ECD as a strategic organizational priority within its Strategic Plan. UNICEF is currently working to provide a detailed set of indicators and methodological guidance for the ECD targets in the Strategic Plan, which will be finalized after completing the transition to the Centres of Excellence in 2026. UNICEF is also developing a proposal for an ECD-designated budget tag or similar mechanism to enable systematic tracking of collective investment in young children across the organization. These efforts aim to enhance coherence, accountability and impact in delivering integrated ECD outcomes globally.

20. UNICEF acknowledges the four pathways outlined in the overview, paragraph 6, as important to advancing equity. Building on these recommendations, UNICEF will develop a clear and differentiated approach for ECD financing and governance, based on country contexts.

IV. Key recommendations of the evaluation and UNICEF management response

| <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>Recommendation 1: Strengthen UNICEF advocacy and communications and global guidance on the unique needs of young children of different ages across the early childhood period of development, and for the most marginalized child groups.</p> <p>UNICEF should consider the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update the UNICEF programme guidance for ECD and methodological notes to include sector-specific guidance for young children, as well as guidance on the integrated services required to ensure transition between each developmental stage, especially at year 3 and year 6. 2. Strengthen advocacy with Governments to explicitly identify and plan for the needs of the most marginalized child groups within national policies and plans (especially for children with disabilities, children in emergencies, and during the first 1,000 days). <p>Management response: Agree</p> | | | | |
| <p>1.1. Aligned with the UNICEF Vision for Early Childhood Development 2030, the organization will revise its global programme guidance for ECD to provide clearer direction on integrating services across health, nutrition, protection and early learning.</p> <p>In addition, UNICEF will develop more sector-specific, practical and concise briefs to support implementation both within and across these key sectors and systems.</p> | <p>ECD global and technical teams located in headquarters (HQ) and Centres of Excellence</p> | <p>December 2026</p> | <p>Under way</p> | <p>UNICEF Vision for Early Childhood Development 2030, available at https://www.unicef.org/reports/early-childhood-development-unicef-vision-every-child</p> |
| <p>1.2. Utilizing a systematic approach, UNICEF will strengthen advocacy and implementation of programmes that promote child development among marginalized groups.</p> | <p>Global Programme Division (ECD in collaboration with Health, Nutrition, Education, Disability, Social Behaviour Change,</p> | <p>December 2027</p> | <p>Not started</p> | |

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Responsible section(s)</i> | <i>Expected completion date</i> | <i>Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled</i> | <i>Supporting documents</i> |
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| <p>For children with disabilities, UNICEF will finalize a systems-based early childhood intervention approach and conceptual framework, working through the health and education sectors to support these children and their families.</p> <p>In the areas of ECD in emergencies and the first 1,000 days of life, UNICEF will identify key platforms for integration of messages on early stimulation and responsive care (e.g. infant and young child feeding, primary healthcare, parenting and education platforms, etc.).</p> <p>Similarly, UNICEF will collaborate with partners and networks to finalize guidance on sector-specific actions related to the Nurturing Care Framework.</p> <p>In addition, UNICEF will advance advocacy efforts with partners (e.g. Theirworld, the Early Childhood Peace Consortium, the Early Childhood Development Action Network and the Moving Minds Alliance, among others) to engage national Governments through organization of and participation in high-level forums and convenings (such as an upcoming Global Caregiving Forum 2026; an upcoming ECD Financing Summit 2027, etc).</p> | Child Protection and Social Protection) | | | |

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Responsible section(s)</i> | <i>Expected completion date</i> | <i>Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled</i> | <i>Supporting documents</i> |
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| <p>Recommendation 2: Strengthen and scale UNICEF global advocacy and communications on public financing for ECD.</p> <p>In particular, UNICEF should consider the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustain and scale the dissemination of effective advocacy messages regarding the return on investment through ECD utilizing existing UNICEF advocacy resources (such as the Early Moments Matter campaign, UNICEF global resource guide on public finance for children in ECD, ECD investment cases and ECE Accelerator Toolkit). 2. Facilitate regional exchanges between countries where successful examples of ECD investment emerge to compel government investment. 3. Strengthen the UNICEF programme guidance for ECD and methodological notes on how to leverage partnerships with local governments, business and the private sector to ensure that innovative financing models are implemented and sustainable. 4. Continue to prioritize contextualizing the ECE Accelerator Toolkit, ensuring that it offers targeted guidance for countries facing distinct challenges. This includes expediting the refinement of the Toolkit to support the integration of inclusive practices into national and subnational education plans, fostering diverse and sustainable financing strategies, and promoting cross-country learning by leveraging UNICEF structures of regional offices and country offices to share best practices and solutions to common challenges. <p>Management response: Agree</p> | | | | |
| <p>2.1. Through its four Centres of Excellence, UNICEF will present and disseminate key messages from advocacy resources (such as the Early Moments Matter campaign, UNICEF global resource guide on public finance for ECD programmes, ECD investment cases, and ECE Accelerator Toolkit) in global, regional and national forums.</p> | <p>ECD global and technical teams located in Centres of Excellence</p> | <p>December 2027</p> | <p>Under way</p> | |
| <p>2.2. UNICEF will co-convene webinars and meetings across regions and with partners to share illustrative examples (e.g. on integrated ECD, nurturing care, childcare, parenting support, etc.) across regions.</p> | <p>ECD global and technical teams located in Centres of Excellence</p> | <p>December 2027</p> | <p>Under way</p> | |

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Responsible section(s)</i> | <i>Expected completion date</i> | <i>Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled</i> | <i>Supporting documents</i> |
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| <p>2.3. UNICEF will update existing global guidance on innovative financing and explore the creation and dissemination of a repository of resources on innovative financing.</p> <p>Additionally, UNICEF will: (i) equip the Centres of Excellence with expertise to guide Governments in resource reallocation and innovative financing for ECD, and (ii) prioritize technical assistance for the development and implementation of national ECD financing strategies.</p> | <p>ECD global and technical teams located in Centres of Excellence</p> | <p>December 2027</p> | <p>Not started</p> | <p>UNICEF Technical Brief: “Innovative finance for early childhood development” (internal document, 2022)</p> |
| <p>2.4. UNICEF will update the ECE Accelerator Toolkit with the adapted subsector analysis tool for inclusion and updated cost and financing simulation tool to foster diverse and sustainable financing strategies.</p> | <p>ECE global and technical teams located in Centres of Excellence</p> | <p>December 2027</p> | <p>Under way</p> | <p>ECE Accelerator Analysis and Planning Toolkit (see https://www.ece-accelerator.org/)</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 3: Strengthen the UNICEF programme guidance for ECD and methodological notes on the range of integration approaches for ECD in countries at different stages of programme development and with varying degrees of resources.</p> <p>In particular, UNICEF should consider the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update the UNICEF programme guidance for ECD and methodological notes by clarifying key terms and concepts to ensure that UNICEF and government partners have a common understanding on early learning for children aged 0–2 years, the determinants of school readiness, and the efficacy of the integrated ECD approach. 2. Update UNICEF programme guidance for ECD and methodological notes to include the typology of integration approaches identified through this evaluation. Conduct additional global research on the integration approaches to expand on the examples from the desk review country profiles and inform global guidance. | | | | |

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Responsible section(s)</i> | <i>Expected completion date</i> | <i>Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled</i> | <i>Supporting documents</i> |
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| <p>3. Ensure that the UNICEF programme guidance for ECD and methodological notes support UNICEF programme managers in building government awareness and capacity in the selection of entry points for scaling holistic services within and across sectors through a variety of integration approaches that promote a continuum of ECD services for children aged 0–8 years.</p> <p>Management response: Agree</p> | | | | |
| <p>3.1. As part of the guidance proposed in recommendation 4, UNICEF will further clarify key terms and concepts, including early learning, to ensure shared understanding across stakeholders.</p> | <p>ECD and ECE global and technical teams located in Centres of Excellence</p> | <p>December 2027</p> | <p>Under way</p> | |
| <p>3.2. UNICEF will provide guidance on differentiated approaches to multisectoral ECD programming as part of its Future Focus Initiative. These approaches will focus on integrating pathways identified in the evaluation into advocacy and programme design.</p> <p>UNICEF will also develop an annex to the ECD programme guidance for sector-specific actions.</p> <p>UNICEF will also create a virtual site for online resources and programming examples (e.g. compendium of noteworthy parenting practices, online parenting toolkit, etc.).</p> | <p>ECD global and technical teams located in HQ and Centres of Excellence</p> | <p>December 2026</p> | <p>Under way</p> | |
| <p>3.3 UNICEF will organize learning and briefing sessions with partners to support the implementation of ECD programmes in countries.</p> | <p>ECD global and technical teams located in Centres of Excellence</p> | <p>December 2027</p> | <p>Not started</p> | |

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Responsible section(s)</i> | <i>Expected completion date</i> | <i>Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled</i> | <i>Supporting documents</i> |
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| Furthermore, UNICEF will engage with leading research consortiums (e.g. University of Pennsylvania, Oxford University, University of Witwatersrand, Yale University) and develop guidance documents and advocacy messages on emerging areas of intersection (e.g. climate action, artificial intelligence and ECD, etc.). | | | | |
| <p>Recommendation 4: Update the UNICEF programme guidance for ECD and methodological notes for the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2026–2029 to clarify internal governance structures and processes, resource allocation requirements and a shared measurement framework for the integrated ECD approach.</p> <p>In particular, UNICEF should consider the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clarify internal roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of sector-specific activities for the early years, as well as for cross-cutting activities in the early years as they relate to the integrated ECD approach. 2. Clarify the theory of change and measurement framework in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2026–2029 on the integrated ECD approach so that there are clearly identified indicators for sector-specific and collective outcomes and impacts for the early years. Consider responsive caregiving and the ECD index as shared results. 3. As the global steward for Sustainable Development Goal 4.2.1, substantially scale the implementation of the ECD module from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), as well as other studies on front-line worker capacities and parent/caregiver practices to ensure sufficient data to measure progress and impact on key ECD measures. 4. Clarify internal global budgeting procedures so that UNICEF investment in the early years (aged 0–8 years) is clear and trackable for all Goal Areas,^a such as through the use of tags that denote all investments for ECD. 5. Build an organizational budget for the early years from each Goal Area and for the integrated ECD approach. <p>Management response: Agree</p> | | | | |
| 4.1. UNICEF will develop key documents, such as a clear programme offer to countries, programme | ECD global and technical teams located in HQ and | December 2026 | Not started | |

^a The evaluation uses the term “Goal Areas” in alignment with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, under which it was conducted. However, responses to the recommendations are framed using the terminology of the new Strategic Plan (2026–2029), which refers to “Impact Results” rather than “Goal Areas”.

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Responsible section(s)</i> | <i>Expected completion date</i> | <i>Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled</i> | <i>Supporting documents</i> |
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| technical notes on the new Strategic Plan, and a “ways of working” document that outlines the cross-cutting ECD programme offer, sector-specific actions, and roles and responsibilities within the Centres of Excellence. | Centres of Excellence with support from country offices | | | |
| <p>4.2. Following the designation of ECD as one of the five high-level results in its new Strategic Plan, UNICEF will strengthen and finalize a clearly articulated, “integrated” theory of change and a comprehensive set of indicators that capture both sector-specific and cross-sectoral outcomes and impacts for the early years. Additionally, responsive caregiving – as a component of nurturing care – and disability inclusion have been explicitly integrated into the sublevel results.</p> <p>Engaging with a global community of experts, UNICEF will elaborate and validate a survey-based measure of responsive caregiving.</p> <p>These elements will contribute to shared outcomes across sectors, fostering a more cohesive and measurable approach to integrated ECD programming.</p> | ECD global team located in HQ, Centres of Excellence and Data and Analytics Section | December 2026 | Under way | Nurturing Care Framework (see https://nurturing-care.org/) |
| 4.3. As the custodian agency for Sustainable Development Goal 4.2.1, | Data and Analytics Section (Office of | December 2027 | Under way | |

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Responsible section(s)</i> | <i>Expected completion date</i> | <i>Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled</i> | <i>Supporting documents</i> |
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| <p>UNICEF is committed to strengthening the evidence base for ECD. UNICEF will continue scaling the implementation of the ECD module within the MICS and other national data collection efforts, ensuring broader coverage and more consistent data collection across countries.</p> <p>In parallel, UNICEF will hold consultations with countries on front-line worker capacities and parent/caregiver practices to deepen the organization's understanding of service delivery and caregiving environments.</p> | <p>Strategy and Evidence, in the new Future Focus Initiative structure from 2026) for the ECD Index 2030 (ECDI2030) module, and the ECD global and technical teams located in Centres of Excellence for the work on front-line worker capacities and parent/caregiver practices</p> | | | |
| <p>4.4. UNICEF will establish a phased approach to mechanisms, such as a designated tag or other budget trackers for ECD to track UNICEF programme expenditures on ECD, ensure greater visibility of investments, generate measurable financial data, and strengthen resource mobilization and advocacy efforts for young children.</p> <p>Recognizing the critical importance of tracking investments in the early years, the ECD team, in collaboration with all sectors, has already developed a comprehensive analysis that can serve as the basis for the proposed tracking mechanism.</p> | <p>Data and Analytics Section and Planning Unit of Global Programme Division</p> | <p>December 2026</p> | <p>Under way</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>4.5. UNICEF will prioritize resource mobilization for ECD. UNICEF will invest in global leadership roles in ECD, co-located in the Nairobi and Amman Centres of Excellence, for ensuring strategic leadership and technical excellence of ECD programming in country offices.</p> <p>Additionally, UNICEF will explicitly highlight the early years in sectoral proposals and existing funding mechanisms and will also explore the establishment of new partnerships.</p> | Global Programme Division | December 2027 | Not started | |

V. Draft decision

The Executive Board

Takes note of the Evaluation of UNICEF work in early childhood development and early childhood education, 2018–2023, its summary ([E/ICEF/2026/3](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2026/4](#)).
