



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2025

Original: English

For decision

United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

First regular session 2026

10–13 February 2026

Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

Update on UNICEF efforts to address racism and racial discrimination

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Executive Board decision 2025/21, which in paragraph 9 notes that the Executive Board “*decides* to include an agenda item on addressing racism and racial discrimination, for decision, at the first regular session of 2026, and requests UNICEF to submit a separate report detailing all actions taken in this regard, including on metrics to measure progress, to ensure that the issue receives sufficient visibility”. In paragraph 7 of that same decision, the Executive Board “*requests* UNICEF to inform the Executive Board of the measures taken to ensure that actions to address racism and racial discrimination are duly considered in its approaches when implementing the recommendations in the Joint Inspection Unit note” (JIU/NOTE/2022/1/Rev.1).

The present report provides an update on the ongoing efforts of UNICEF to address racism and racial discrimination.

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

* [E/ICEF/2026/1](#).



I. Overview

1. The present report provides an update on efforts by UNICEF to address racism and racial discrimination within the organization and builds on the last update provided to the Executive Board, (E/ICEF/2025/18/Rev.1), which was presented at the annual session of 2025 and also discussed at the second regular session of 2025. UNICEF continues to adopt a comprehensive approach to address all forms of discrimination and has regularly updated the Executive Board on organizational culture and diversity, the last time being at the annual session of 2025 (E/ICEF/2025/17), which reflected on the progress achieved since June 2024.

2. Considering that a timeline for the implementation of the entity-specific recommendations from the Joint Inspection Unit note on the review of measures and mechanisms for addressing racism and racial discrimination in United Nations system organizations: managing for achieving organizational effectiveness (JIU/NOTE/2022/1/Rev.1) was presented at the Executive Board first regular session of 2025 (E/ICEF/2025/8) and included in the update provided at the annual and second regular sessions of 2025 (E/ICEF/2025/18/Rev.1), the present report is an opportunity to provide further updates on the initiatives implemented and existing challenges on the issues of racism and racial discrimination.

II. Background and progress on anti-racism and anti-discrimination initiatives

3. UNICEF efforts to address racism and discrimination within the organization started in 2020 with the commissioning by the Executive Director of an internal Task Team on Anti-Racism and Discrimination (Task Team) between June 2020 and May 2021 to analyse and propose actions addressing these issues. This led to the engagement of staff across UNICEF in a process of internal reflection and recognition of the challenges and gaps in addressing racism and discrimination within the organization at the systemic, policy and practices levels.

4. In addition to gathering insights on the experiences of staff from different backgrounds, contexts and identities, the work of the Task Team also provided an opportunity for learning and discussions about racism and discrimination across the organization. A Global Month of Dialogue launched in November 2020 provided safe spaces for discussing topics covering various forms of discrimination, helping to foster a culture of dialogue to promote awareness, understanding, and actions to address racism and discrimination which continues to date.

5. UNICEF has also maintained an open channel of collaboration with other United Nations organizations, which are facing similar challenges irrespective of their different mandates, size and presence in humanitarian and development contexts.

6. The Task Team submitted a report, titled Recommendations for action on anti-racism and discrimination, to the Executive Director in May 2021. The report contained a total of 87 recommendations for action, distributed among eight categories: 7 per cent related to awareness-raising; 15 per cent to capacity-building; 15 per cent to accountability and protection; 10 per cent to external communications, fundraising and brand; 30 per cent to recruitment and career development; 7 per cent to data and monitoring; 13 per cent to programme, supply and procurement; and 3 per cent to actions to be discussed at the United Nations system level. In September 2021, UNICEF finalized a response to the recommendations, which entailed consultations with different divisions and offices to assess the feasibility of proposals from a business and legal perspective, and the possible resource implications.

7. In line with the recommendations of the Task Team and the response by UNICEF, a comprehensive approach to awareness-raising on anti-racism has been adopted within the organization. This requires a continuous learning journey that is anchored in UNICEF core values and utilizes a behavioural science approach to addressing racism and discrimination. As such, addressing racism and racial discrimination has been integrated into tools utilized to create awareness and promote dialogue and behaviour change towards a more inclusive UNICEF workplace. These include the “Becoming an Inclusive Champion” e-module that focuses on understanding and addressing biases, which is also replicated in virtual or in person sessions with teams across UNICEF. The Managing People with Purpose programme for managers and supervisors includes specific sessions on role of leaders in promoting psychological safety and inclusion. Linked to the core values of UNICEF, the Spectrum of Behaviours is a tool that helps to have dialogues in acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, including discriminatory behaviours.

8. In this vein, UNICEF continues to promote brave spaces for dialogue on “becoming an inclusive champion” as a comprehensive approach to addressing biases, discrimination and microaggressions through sessions facilitated by internal experts and external local experts. By the third quarter of 2025, more than 7,000 personnel had been reached through these sessions. Plans are in place to increase awareness of anti-racism and discrimination, including training of relevant teams that deal with cases of workplace harassment and abuse, such as the Ethics Office, the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, and the Division of People and Culture. The Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes has also been addressing these issues in its work and reporting.

9. When it comes to internal justice systems, the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations collects data on reports of racist behaviour together with other grounds of discrimination and regularly reports on this in its annual report to the Executive Board.

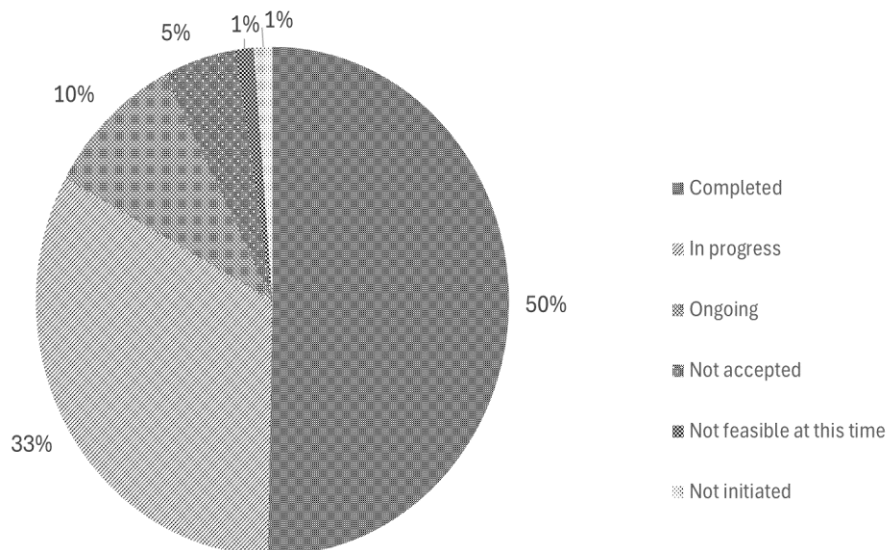
10. An analysis of the separation data on employees who separated from UNICEF between 2022 and 2024 was recently completed. An exit form is provided to employees separating from UNICEF to complete on a voluntary basis. The form includes questions on perceived impact of one’s race/ethnicity and nationality on career progression at the organization. Findings from the analysis indicate that some 9 per cent and 7 per cent of respondents, respectively, felt that their nationality and race/ethnicity had an impact on their career progression. Further findings from the analysis will be included in the Update on organizational culture and diversity that will be presented to the Executive Board at its annual session of 2026. In addition, in terms of recruitment and career development, the organization is reforming recruitment systems to improve fair career progression for all, in line with article 101 of the United Nations Charter, as the paramount consideration remains to meet the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.

11. In 2025 and going into 2026, UNICEF has been undergoing a change process – the Future Focus Initiative – through which many posts have been abolished and new ones are being established through multiple levels of programme and budget reviews. UNICEF has been monitoring the diversity data of abolished posts and has collected data from staff on abolished posts to better understand the impact and effects on individuals.

12. Similarly, the Pulse Check survey on workplace culture conducted in November 2025 includes voluntary self-identification on race and ethnicity, among other identities. These data will provide insights on staff experiences based on race and ethnicity and inform future initiatives towards a more inclusive organization.

13. As at 1 November 2025, 50 per cent of the recommendations made by the internal Task Team on Anti-Racism and Discrimination had been completed, 33 per cent were in progress, 10 per cent were ongoing, 1 per cent had not been initiated, 5 per cent were not accepted and 1 per cent were not feasible at the time.

Status of the implementation of recommendations by the internal Task Team on Anti-Racism and Discrimination, as at 1 November 2025



14. At the inter-agency level, UNICEF continues to engage to continue joint learning and collaboration on anti-racism work. In 2025, a working group was established under the Human Resources Network (established by [CEB/2022/3](#)) for this purpose. UNICEF is also active in an informal group of experts from across the United Nations system on promoting anti-discrimination and dignity for all within the context of funding cuts. These engagements are important for inter-agency sharing of lessons and collaboration.

III. Update on the Joint Inspection Unit note on the Review of measures and mechanisms for addressing racism and racial discrimination in United Nations system organizations: managing for achieving organizational effectiveness

15. The Joint Inspection Unit note titled Review of measures and mechanisms for addressing racism and racial discrimination in United Nations system organizations: managing for achieving organizational effectiveness ([JIU/NOTE/2022/1/Rev.1](#)) proposed six recommendations, namely:

(a) **Recommendation 1:** The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should collaborate, in the framework of the CEB, to establish a common set of categories for voluntary self-identification by personnel by June 2024, for the purposes of monitoring, analysing, evaluating and reporting on progress and success in achieving the goals of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion in addressing racism and racial discrimination.

(b) **Recommendation 2:** The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should direct their respective training and learning units to develop and

implement a high-impact and integrated curriculum to improve awareness, learning and performance that responds to the needs of personnel of various functions, categories and levels in order to address all forms and configurations of racism and racial discrimination in the workplace.

(c) **Recommendation 3:** The executive heads of United Nations system organizations who have not done so should provide sufficient resources to support the achievement of defined results for the implementation of action plans for addressing racism and racial discrimination.

(d) **Recommendation 4:** The executive heads of United Nations system organizations, as members of the CEB, should jointly develop and provide resources to a high-level, inter-agency standing mechanism intended to unite organizations, leverage their existing capacities and comparative added value to collaborate and work together to respond to both immediate and longer-term needs for addressing racism and racial discrimination across the United Nations system, and address the transformative changes needed to enhance the continued relevance and value of the various efforts at both the organizational and the system-wide levels.

(e) **Recommendation 5:** The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should establish, by 2024, an accountability framework that sets out the expected results, outcomes and key performance indicators for addressing racism and racial discrimination, and report periodically to their legislative organs and/or governing bodies on progress made in achieving the predefined results.

(f) **Recommendation 6:** The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should strengthen the equal distribution of opportunities in human resources management for all personnel.

16. Recommendations 2, 3 and 5 were accepted and implemented, and recommendation 6 was accepted and remains in progress. Recommendations 1 and 4 are outside the sole remit of UNICEF. Additional information on the latest progress is provided below.

17. UNICEF continues to implement recommendation 2, aligned with recommendations from the Task Team under capacity-building, and taking a comprehensive approach to learning about non-discrimination and inclusive behaviours. The learning curriculum and e-module that were developed continue to inform sessions with staff across all of UNICEF, and capacity-building plans are under way for relevant departments dealing with cases of discrimination on managing racial discrimination cases in 2026.

18. Recommendation 3 was implemented in 2022 with the establishment of a dedicated team working on organizational culture.

19. Recommendation 5 was considered already implemented since 2021, given the recommendations for action by the Task Team. UNICEF has shared its action plan with other United Nations organizations.

20. Recommendation 6 was accepted and remains in progress and new developments have been made as reported in paragraphs 10 to 12 above. This is further strengthened under the new UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2026–2029 and as UNICEF develops the new People and Culture Strategy 2026–2029. The integration of culture into the human resources function, which is reflected at all levels, including in revised job descriptions of staff in the Division of People and Culture, further strengthens this work from data collection to implementation of initiatives for a more diverse and inclusive organization.

21. Recommendation 1 is outside the sole remit of the organization, and UNICEF has recommended that discussion on the matter take place in the High-level

Committee on Management of the CEB, associated with the Human Resources Network. This will allow better coordination on proposals and alignment among organizations. In light of different emerging priorities and the current funding crisis across the development sector, a delay is expected in crafting this standard categorization, which is now expected in 2026. UNICEF is adapting the categorization used by the United Nations Secretariat in monitoring recruitments.

22. Similarly, recommendation 4 is outside the sole remit of the organization. UNICEF welcomes the call for more inter-agency coordination around anti-racism work and proposes that, in line with an intersectional approach to address all forms of discrimination, the existing networks in the High-level Committee on Management is adopted as the “high-level, inter-agency standing mechanism intended to unite organizations”, instead of creating a parallel structure, especially given funding constraints. Similarly, a delay is expected on this initiative, which is expected to be concluded in 2026.

IV. Draft decision

The Executive Board

Takes note of the update provided on UNICEF efforts to address racism and racial discrimination ([E/ICEF/2026/6](#)).
