Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

UNICEF Executive Board
Informal briefing – 27 January 2021
Item 8 – Reference document: E/ICEF/2021/5
Purpose and focus: evaluation logic framework

First corporate evaluation of a UNICEF Strategic Plan

Primary purpose:
- Assess SP as a tool for guiding UNICEF and for managing its activities
- Facilitate learning
- Provide actionable recommendations, overall strategy, planning process for upcoming strategic planning cycle

Evidence-based approach:
- In-depth desk reviews: 62 countries
- 210+ internal and external documents reviewed
- 100+ internal and external stakeholder interviews
- In-depth country office analyses: Afghanistan, Argentina, India, Kazakhstan, Mali, Nicaragua, Somalia, South Africa, the Syrian Arab Republic and Viet Nam
- Highly consultative

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Why?
Priority question 1
To what extent is the Strategic Plan aligned with UNICEF mission and the UN reform and contributes to the SDGs?

Context - Priority question 2
To what extent is the Strategic Plan fit for purpose in a rapidly changing world?

How? - Priority question 3
What are the lessons from the operationalization of the Strategic Plan?

With whom? - Priority question 4
To what extent has the Strategic Plan contributed to fostering partnerships and new ways of working?

What results?
Priority question 5
To what extent does the Strategic Plan enable UNICEF country offices to support national priorities to achieve child-focused SDGs?
Recommendation 1

Conceptualize the strategic plan as a holistic framework, reflecting the voices of children, with a limited number of priorities pitched at the outcome level along with clear paths for collaboration with other United Nations agencies.

Current Strategic Plan used and regarded as a **guiding document and framework**, with holistic structure: common narrative and accountability, with flexibility to adapt the complexities of country office work.

More needs to be done to create a **collective vision** in support of children: systematically incorporate **voices of all children**.

New Strategic Plan as a holistic framework with common organizational focus: **shared vision**, systematically incorporating **voices of children**.
Recommendation 2

Develop a longer-term 2022–2030 strategy for children, with a strong focus on outcomes, allowing for flexibility to address emerging threats to children, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies.

- **Short timeframe** constrains country office planning: particularly long-term humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus.

  High-level outcome to country office-level indicators vertical logic needs improvement: **heavy reporting burden** not balanced by practical evidence benefits/incentives for critical policy advice and decision-making.

- **Long-term viable strategic plan with deliberate strategic policy advice, focus on outcome-level indicators, and vertical logic framework.**
Recommendation 3

Place equal emphasis on measuring change strategies and enablers alongside programme results.

Change strategies associated with agile programmatic work.

Missing country-specific relevant, systematically collected lessons learned and change strategy data.

Equal attention to change strategies through country-specific, systematically collected data and reporting for monitoring, evaluation and key management information.
Recommendation 4

Strengthen outcome-level reporting and appropriate funding sources for a multisectoral approach.

Strategic Plan Goal Area clusters set good basis to design multisectoral strategies: SDGs require multisectoral approach.

Barriers to integrating multisectoral approach: reporting structures, siloed government partnership structures, funding restrictions, resource requirements for learning and implementation.

An organization-wide multidimensional approach is critically needed to achieve SDGs. Barriers to be addressed: implementing multisectoral funding and programme design arrangements; establishing outcome-level monitoring indicators; integrating a multisectoral approach into country office structures; and creating incentives for government partners to embrace multisectoral approach.
Recommendation 5

Reflect the organization’s dual development and humanitarian mandate in the long-term strategy, overcome bottlenecks of duality in programming, reporting, resource mobilization and staff capacity and integrate peacebuilding processes.

Humanitarian action as cross-cutting priority in current Strategic Plan perceived as positive.

Bottlenecks for humanitarian and development nexus work: separate overarching systems, siloed resourcing and capacity, separate monitoring and reporting systems, lack of political and socioeconomic context elements integrated into risk-informed programming.

Provisions to avoid dualities, tackle bottlenecks including political and socioeconomic considerations into risk informed programming, monitoring and reporting, resource and staff mobilization and long-term funding.
Recommendation 6

Address the skewed distribution of resources, particularly in non-humanitarian contexts, to ensure that no one is left behind.

Resource allocation **highly concentrated** in a small number of countries with large humanitarian-targeted allocations.

Various tools for funding negotiation are available, but insufficient evidence-based, **targeted messaging** to address varied country office needs and country contexts.

Significant coordination with other United Nations agencies for joint advocacy efforts and tailored advocacy narratives conveying the diversity of country office specific funding needs.
Recommendation 7

Ensure provisions to support the United Nations development system agenda while strengthening the UNICEF mission, comparative and collaborative advantages.

Important progress relevant to UNDS reform includes UNSDCF, Management Accountability Framework, Funding Compact progress, joint SDG fund engagement, joint programming and evaluation efforts.

Greater efforts and resources to support UNDS reform needed: flexible strategic framework guiding country-specific contexts, national priorities, long-term vision and multisectoral approaches.

UNICEF to continue cross-agency partnering for functional and effective coordination, acknowledging management and coordination costs and promoting core mission to be the voice for the rights of all children, leaving no one behind.
Thank you!