Evaluation of UNICEF work for children in urban settings

UNICEF Executive Board
Informal briefing – 27 January 2021
Item 8 – Reference document: E/ICEF/2021/3
Background

Purpose

To inform the next UNICEF strategic planning process

Context

More than half of the world’s children now live in cities

By 2030, 1 in 4 people globally will be living in slums

By 2050, 2.5 billion more people will live in urban areas, with 90% of this growth in Africa and Asia

COVID-19 had severe and disproportionate impacts on urban population and children

Objectives

Assess the relevance of UNICEF approaches in urban settings to delivering results for children

Better understand the results achieved

Identify good practices and lessons learned on approaches to working in urban settings

Supplementary chapter added on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on UNICEF work in urban settings
Methodology and scope

Evaluation approach:
- Theory-based, formative - comparative case study approach

Evaluation scope:
- All regions - drawing on evidence from global data, mapping of **over 72 UNICEF country offices, 5 case studies plus 3 COVID-19 case studies**
  - Case studies: **Belize, Brazil, the Philippines, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic**
  - COVID-19 chapter: **Brazil, India, Spain**
Overview of existing urban approaches

**Integrated** approach, **sectoral** approach, **Child-friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI)**

- Only 5 of 72 country offices use **integrated approach**
- 3 in 4 country offices use **sectoral approach**
- Over 45 working on **CFCI** (2019) – 1 in 3 are programme countries

**Integrated approach** has most consistent results for children:

- Two models: **certification-based** and **partnership-based**
- **Certification-based** model can best achieve results at scale
Recommendation 1

A. Update urban strategic note and issue an organizational procedure for: scope of work, partnerships, addressing structural barriers and defining roles at all levels;

B. In the new Strategic Plan, prioritize increasing work in urban settings with specific results;

C. Country offices to develop plans and investment proposals to implement the redefined UNICEF urban agenda.

Broader guidance and unified urban framework: ‘how’ UNICEF should work for children in urban settings, and ‘what’ urban programming in different contexts should look like.

Urban-specific strategies and targets for all goal areas; to be included in the new Strategic Plan.

Urban approaches to be integrated into country programme cycle, not as a “side project”.
Recommendation 2.1

In low- and middle-income countries with slums and informal settlements, prioritize:

a. A whole-of-organization approach to advocacy, partnerships and fundraising;
b. Urban programmatic work in country programme documents and workplans;
c. Global and regional strategic partnerships to support actions for children in slums.

UNICEF is not tackling two major trends in urban contexts:

(i) exclusionary growth and privatization excluding urban poor and new migrants from formally planned city spaces;
(ii) widespread informality and slums.

UNICEF urban planning is not focusing on child-responsive urban planning, such as safe public places.
Recommendation 2.1 (cont.)

d. Build coalitions and strengthen local capacity for analysis of *intra-urban data* on the situation of children in urban settings;

e. Jointly with UN agencies, strengthen *advocacy* for child-responsive urban *planning*, participatory slum upgrading, safe public spaces for children, child-friendly transportation, urban waste and environmental degradation.

Evidence of inconsistent attention to slums and informal areas, with limited *intra-urban data* analysis and research.

Gaps in UNICEF partnerships with the *private sector*. 
Recommendation 2.2

In high-income countries, refocus CFCI on child-rights advocacy and child participation:

a. Streamline CFCI accountability as strategic engagement in high-income country urban areas only;

b. Engage partners, government (state or national) or think tanks, to take over CFCI recognition/certification, based on a robust monitoring and evaluation system, thus addressing reputational risks of UNICEF recognition/certification.

Reputation risks for UNICEF CFCI certification process:

- CFCI recognition process is weak and a potential threat to UNICEF’s brand.
- CFCI planned results are not necessarily attuned to reduction of disparity.
- CFCI lacks strong results-based management.
- Actual performance of cities does not impact the CFCI recognitions process.
Recommendation 3

Address the humanitarian-development nexus in cities and towns by:

a. Enhancing preparedness capacity within urban areas from a multi-hazard perspective and link it to climate resilience and environmental degradation;

b. Developing additional guidance on applying the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action in urban settings, including in slums and informal settlements.

COVID highlighted ‘hidden’ vulnerabilities and priorities that must shape UNICEF work:

- Responses built on existing urban programmes enabled rapid response in urban settings by leveraging existing data, platforms and relationships.
- Investment in preparedness paid off.
- Cities and states that faced recent emergencies generally better prepared.
Recommendation 4

Expand capacity in staffing and architecture at all levels to support the urban agenda - regional offices and country offices to:

a. Articulate context-relevant urban focus, programme and partnership priorities;
b. Designate urban focal points to support urban programming in country offices.

Only two specialists in headquarters; one regional office with one urban specialist but no funds to recruit.

In regions with fastest urbanization rates and most pressing urban inequities and crises (MENA, SAR, WCA), no focal points or budgets.

Work in urban settings coordinated by other specialists (social policy, C4D or WASH).
Thank you!