
INFORMATION NOTE

Update on the UN80 Initiative and UNICEF implementation

UNICEF Executive Board
Second regular session 2026

Introduction

The UN80 Initiative, launched by the Secretary-General in March 2025, represents a significant effort to reposition the United Nations system to deliver more effectively and efficiently in an increasingly complex global environment. Reform of the UN system is a constant feature of its evolution, and the UN80 Initiative reflects the latest and one of the most far-reaching iterations of that ongoing ambition.

This information note is presented to the Executive Board in response to paragraphs 5 and 6 of Executive Board decision 2026/15 and in line with decision 2026/1. It reports on UNICEF engagement across the UN80 workstreams, provides analysis on impact at the country, regional and global levels and identifies emerging risks and resource implications. More broadly, UNICEF's engagement in United Nations system reform is reported regularly to the Executive Board, including through the annual information note on the repositioning of the United Nations development system presented at the June session.

UNICEF approaches the UN80 process with a constructive posture, grounded in operational realities, and focused on outcomes for children. The measure of success for UN80 is whether the UN system that emerges is better placed to reach children, especially those in the most fragile and underserved contexts. UNICEF looks forward to continuing to engage with the Executive Board as reform implementation advances and welcomes the Board's guidance and oversight throughout this process.

A. UNICEF engagement in the UN80 Initiative

Overall approach and principles

UNICEF has engaged in the UN80 Initiative from the outset in a spirit that is solution-oriented, evidence-based and grounded in the realities of field delivery. Reform engagement is not treated as a parallel exercise to programming; it is understood as integral to UNICEF's responsibility to help ensure that the UN system is best positioned to deliver for children over the coming decade.

UNICEF's engagement is guided by a clear set of principles. Country-level delivery and mandate integrity are central considerations. Reform proposals are assessed against the question of whether they strengthen the UN system's capacity to reach more children especially in the most challenging contexts. Where proposals raise concerns in relation to that objective, UNICEF aims to raise them directly and constructively within the relevant workstream processes.

UNICEF acknowledges that engagement in the UN80 process has placed additional demands on stretched resources. Contributing meaningfully to multiple workstreams, while simultaneously managing internal changes under the Future Focus Initiative and sustaining programme delivery, amidst growing resource constraints, requires careful prioritization. UNICEF is committed to continued engagement commensurate with the strategic significance of each workstream for children.

Section B below provides an update on UNICEF's engagement across relevant UN80 workstreams. The collective assessment of impact on results for children is addressed in Section C.

B. Progress across relevant UN80 work packages

Work package 2 – New Humanitarian Compact

UNICEF is actively involved in Work Package 2, which aims to build a more integrated, efficient and principled humanitarian system. Three focus areas define UNICEF's engagement: integrated supply chains in complex environments, humanitarian diplomacy, and nutrition in emergencies.

On integrated supply chains, UNICEF co-chairs the Integrated Approach to UN Supply Chains in Complex Environments Steering Group, together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Department of Operational Support (UNDOS), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP). Implementation is advancing across three pillars — coordinated procurement, optimized global logistics, and harmonized in-country logistics — with active implementation of harmonized in-country logistics in five starter contexts: Afghanistan, Gaza, Haiti, Somalia and Sudan. Early implementation in Haiti has identified priority areas for integration including transport, storage, customs and engineering. In Somalia, the interagency supply chain working group is advancing integration across warehousing and transport.

Early results point to the value of this type of coordinated action. Joint negotiations led by UNICEF and WFP with major maritime carriers secured the temporary suspension of emergency surcharges on humanitarian shipments, avoiding an estimated US\$2 million in additional transport costs across UN cargo movements. By leveraging existing agreements, long-standing partnerships, and the UN system's combined shipping volumes, UNICEF and WFP helped secure an outcome that benefited the wider UN system. This demonstrates UNICEF's role in driving coordinated market engagement that delivers system-wide efficiencies and helps protect scarce humanitarian resources. Specifically these negotiations supported the continued delivery of therapeutic food, vaccines and basic supplies. The ongoing Ebola response has demonstrated how the integrated approach could facilitate more complementary coordination across procurement, logistics, information management, and customs facilitation. Another type of coordinated action demonstrates the value of localisation working not only with NGOs, but also with decentralized authorities, local organizations, communities and frontline health and social workers. In the Ebola response, this includes government-led coordination at local level through an integrated Incident Management Support Team (IMST) where UNICEF plays a key role in community engagement that aims to equip trusted local actors and community health workers to share accurate information, connect families to services and address misinformation.

On humanitarian diplomacy, UNICEF supports principled, access-focused diplomacy under Emergency Relief Coordinator leadership through its engagement in the Quint, alongside OCHA, WFP, IOM and UNHCR, with a current focus on Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Gaza, Sudan, South Sudan and Haiti.

On nutrition in emergencies, UNICEF and WFP are advancing a unified approach to the treatment of acute malnutrition, consolidating severe and moderate acute malnutrition treatment under a clearer framework built around a single product where appropriate, a single coordination mechanism managed by UNICEF, and integrated national logistics systems. Meaningful progress has been made at the policy and protocol level. Translating these agreements into consistent field implementation remains the top priority going forward.

In addition, the DataQuint - OCHA, IOM, UNHCR, WFP, and UNICEF - has made strong progress toward a shared humanitarian data model to improve interoperability and strengthen evidence-based humanitarian decision-making. The geospatial workstream has reached major technical milestones with a roadmap to deliver a shared global administrative boundary dataset by end-2026. The DataQuint has increased access to core data available to all humanitarian actors on the Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX). Going forward, the DataQuint looks to engage across

humanitarian partners, including UN agencies, to develop an enhanced humanitarian data model to support decision makers at all levels. The DataQuint are also advancing solutions related to geodata to support enhanced preparedness as well as response planning and monitoring for the use of all humanitarian actors.

On humanitarian identity management, UNICEF is working with OCHA, IOM, UNHCR and WFP to strengthen interoperability and improve the identification and coordination of cash assistance across agencies. The partnership has agreed a joint workplan to be delivered ahead of the General Assembly in September 2026, with a focus on reducing duplicate registrations, strengthening identity assurance, and enabling more secure and efficient data sharing. Key deliverables include testing facial recognition technologies to identify overlapping records across agency systems, developing a joint identity assurance framework and a Standard Registration Form, extending the global data-sharing agreement between UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF to include IOM, producing practical guidance for COs, and scaling assistance deduplication technologies already piloted in Ukraine, Palestine and Syria. All deliverables will be underpinned by robust personal data protection, privacy, safeguarding, and governance measures consistent with applicable international standards and agency policies. Together, these efforts will help improve the quality of beneficiary data, strengthen accountability, and support more coordinated humanitarian assistance.

Work package 5 – Country configuration

UNICEF supports a modular, context-sensitive approach to configuration that is evidence-based, prioritizes targeted support to vulnerable people by those best placed to deliver it, guided by globally agreed parameters, and differentiated according to country typology — including income level, fragility and the nature of UNICEF's operational mandate in each context.

Country team configuration carries direct implications for UNICEF's operational presence, mandate delivery and results for children, and is among the most consequential elements of UN80 for the organization. Configuration changes that reduce agency presence, particularly in fragile and least-developed country settings, carry direct programmatic consequences for the people the UN aims to serve. In-country presence remains important where UNICEF holds operational mandates, specialized technical expertise, and normative responsibilities. UNICEF's view is that configuration decisions should always be assessed against their effect on the system's capacity to deliver effectively, efficiently and timely for children in each context, as they represent a third of humanity but constitute half of the world's extreme poor. Configuration decisions should be guided by nationally owned priorities and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) outcomes.

UNICEF is engaged in the country configuration workstream, including in the assessments now underway for the first cohort of countries identified for this exercise. UNICEF is contributing to the methodology and analytical framework guiding how configuration will be rolled out, working to ensure the process safeguards children's rights and priorities throughout, and supporting country teams as they navigate this exercise alongside continued engagement at the global level.

UNICEF supports efforts to strengthen alignment between Country Programme Documents (CPDs) and Cooperation Frameworks (CFs), including through earlier, more structured engagement around the Common Country Analysis and the development of the UNSDCF theory of change. CPDs and UNSDCFs serve complementary and distinct purposes. UNICEF supports maintaining the current sequencing modality whereby CPDs translate the collective CF framework into UNICEF-specific commitments endorsed by national governments and are submitted to the Executive Board for approval. This approach has consistently proven to be both efficient and effective, providing a clear and coherent basis for the design, review, and approval of country programmes with clear outcomes, accountability, and resources. Both instruments are essential to accountability for children. In the rare cases where this sequencing is not (yet) possible, solutions need to be found to ensure delivery for vulnerable people continues.

Work package 6 – Regional reset

UNICEF supports the objective of a leaner, more agile and strategically coherent regional architecture, and welcomes the UN80 vision to enhance regional coordination mechanisms. Recent discussions on the Regional Platform for Integration (RPI) concept have usefully sharpened what success would look like in practice: the value of a reformed regional layer is measured by whether country teams can access specialized expertise more effectively, sub-regional and cross-border challenges are addressed with greater coherence, and support is more responsive to country demand — with success ultimately judged by improved outcomes at country level, not by coordination alone.

UNICEF is engaged in discussions on Work package 8 the Expertise-on-Demand (EOD) mechanism within the UN80 workstreams. Six countries — Mali, Jordan, Barbados, Malawi, Tajikistan and Indonesia — have been selected as initial pilots, supported through the Joint Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Fund. As a member of the Fund's Operational Steering Committee, UNICEF contributes to the governance of the mechanism and to the review of individual pilot proposals, and stands ready to provide support where there is alignment with its mandate.

As discussions on the Regional Reset advance, UNICEF looks forward to further clarity on governance arrangements, financing modalities, and how country-driven approaches and Member State ownership will remain central to the design. Governance and leadership arrangements in particular remain subject to ongoing consultation, and UNICEF encourages early resolution of how collective system accountability will sit alongside individual agency governance and oversight. Regional pooled funding mechanisms would benefit from being designed to complement, rather than substitute for, existing agency resource mobilization, and the regional architecture more broadly should seek to leverage and build on the considerable technical capacities, networks and expertise that agencies already bring — rather than creating parallel structures. UNICEF underscores the importance of ensuring sufficient qualified expertise is available to meet anticipated country-level demand, to avoid a gap between ambition and delivery. Any adjustments to the regional architecture would be most effective if evidence-based, carefully sequenced, and designed to reinforce results on the ground — including by drawing on relevant, ongoing system-wide evaluation work.

Work package 14 – Shared services and common back offices

UNICEF is both a provider and a recipient of shared services across the UN system, and approaches common services as a genuine, two-way investment. Through its Global Shared Services Centre, UNICEF offers payroll, payment, HR administration and global learning services to other UN entities, including current provision to UN-Women (learning services) and the International Telecommunication Union (HR services), and remains open to expanding these offers where demand exists.

UNICEF co-leads three High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) efficiency streams — the UN corporate treasury and cashier service, centralized payroll, and common insurance services — and is engaged in the Business Innovation Group (BIG)-led governance of a universal services roadmap. Globally, UNICEF already participates in four out of five of the priority services identified by BIG in April 2026 as where greatest scale, standardization, and efficiency can be achieved; and is engaged in dialogue to scale all five across the entity.

At the country level, UNICEF participates in all active Common Back Offices (CBOs), including new CBOs being established in Pakistan, jointly with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and Senegal. Since 2019, country-level Business Operations Strategy (BOS) implementation has generated cumulative savings of over USD 100 million. By 2025, 53 per cent of UNICEF offices were operating in common premises, significantly above the UN system average of 32 per cent. Cost savings realized by UNICEF are channeled back into programme delivery — and UNICEF recommends this remains the norm.

Scaling common services across the system requires sustained commitment and practical solutions to existing barriers, including differences in enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, standard operating procedures, banking arrangements and regulatory requirements. Consideration of burden-sharing arrangements is also important, as agencies that host or lead service provision often carry costs and responsibilities that are not always fully reflected in existing frameworks. Common services arrangements work best when they do not create additional transaction costs for country offices or slow operational response in fragile and humanitarian contexts.

UNICEF continues to report efficiency gains achieved through entity-specific initiatives and collaboration with other United Nations agencies – bilaterally and under the broader United Nations efficiency agenda (including the business operations strategy, common back office, common premises and global shared services). As co-chair of the United Nations Efficiency Impact Reporting Task Team under the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Business Innovation Group, UNICEF strengthened leadership to harmonize efficiency methodologies and promote shared accountability across entities.

Work package 16 – UN System Data Commons

UNICEF co-leads Work Package 16 alongside the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The core design principle of the Data Commons is federated rather than centralized. The initiative builds on existing agency systems, promotes interoperability and aims to keep the architecture as lightweight and practical as possible. Twenty-eight UN entities have committed to sharing their official public data. Technical sprints held in New York and Florence in April 2026 brought together 78 engineers from UNICEF, DESA, Google and partner agencies to advance implementation.

A key design innovation is the integration of agentic AI to automate data ingestion, schema alignment and onboarding, lowering technical barriers for agencies at different levels of data maturity. For UNICEF, the initiative is particularly relevant given the extent to which UNICEF programming depends on official statistics, national household surveys, and administrative data systems led by governments and national statistical offices. The objective is to make existing data more interoperable and reusable, rather than to create parallel or centralized structures.

An important early milestone was reached when the Data Commons was featured at UN Open Source Week as one of two use cases for the TechOver Hackathon, where ten teams developed innovative solutions over the period 19–22 June 2026. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2026 will serve as a broader accountability moment for progress on data interoperability across the system.

Governance arrangements for the Data Commons will need to remain transparent, inclusive and aligned with existing intergovernmental mechanisms, and programme countries should have a clear voice in shaping the initiative's evolution, particularly where discussions relate to national data systems and the use of country-level data.

Work package 18 – Funding mechanisms

UNICEF's engagement on funding mechanisms reflects a consistent position: core, earmarked, thematic and pooled funding each play distinct and complementary roles in the funding architecture, and the objective of reform should be to improve quality across all modalities — greater predictability, flexibility, multi-year commitments and lower transaction costs — rather than to shift resources from one modality to another. This position is underscored by a concerning trend in UNICEF's own resource base: core resources from Member States as a share of their overall contributions to UNICEF have fluctuated and declined, moving from 12 per cent in 2023 to 14 per cent in 2024 before falling to 11 per cent in 2025 — the lowest level on record. These trends reinforce UNICEF's view that funding reform must prioritize the quality, predictability and flexibility

of contributions across all modalities, and that the erosion of core funding carries direct consequences for the organization's ability to deliver for children in the most underserved contexts.

In the reinvigorated Funding Compact, endorsed in December 2024, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to increase the share of core resources to 30 per cent and to enhance the flexibility of non-core funding, including by scaling up contributions to single-agency thematic funds. Progress towards these commitments, however, continues to fall short. The target for core funding has not been met since the Funding Compact was introduced in 2019, and the share of thematic funding within non-core resources has declined in recent years. These trends are of concern, as predictable and flexible funding is essential to UNICEF's ability to deliver results for children at scale. UNICEF, for its part, continues to meet its own commitments under the Funding Compact.

UNICEF was actively engaged in the development of the four papers currently underway under Work Package 18 — on core resources, earmarking, the Funding Compact and pooled funding. We contributed extensively to all papers and ensured they were forward looking, constructive and grounded in operational experience at the country level. A key contribution has been to underscore that pooled funding operates differently across humanitarian and development settings. Humanitarian pooled funds typically function under more centralized, crisis-driven decision-making suited to rapid life-saving response by a more limited set of UN agencies, while development pooled funding needs to remain anchored in national ownership and Cooperation Framework priorities, with government-led decision-making at its core, and engagement across the UN. Governance models designed for one context require careful adaptation before being applied to the other, and UNICEF will continue to advocate for this distinction to be reflected in the design of any new or reformed pooled funding mechanisms.

UNICEF supports well-designed pooled funding where it complements other modalities, serves clearly defined joint outcomes and is governed transparently. This includes supporting rationalization of the existing pooled fund architecture — consolidating, scaling or closing funds as appropriate — rather than creating additional mechanisms. Strong governance arrangements, clear results frameworks and transparent reporting are essential for pooled funding to remain attractive to donors and programme countries alike. Ultimately, the value of pooled funding should be measured by the results and impact it enables for children, rather than primarily by cost efficiency.

UNICEF's view is that financing for coordination should not come at the expense of programme delivery. Reform implementation costs should be transparently costed, with clarity and agreement on who bears them, over what timeline, and with adequate safeguards for programme continuity.

Other workstreams

UNICEF is following additional workstreams with relevance for its mandate. On the future of UNAIDS (Work Package 25), UNICEF is participating in the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) Working Group on transition and remains committed to preserving the gains made in ending AIDS in children and adolescents. On Work Package 9 on the Human Rights Group, UNICEF will engage with and contribute to the newly established Principal-Level UN Human Rights Group, (formed under the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) leadership), and will support system-wide approaches to elevating attention to international human rights, including child rights, across the UN's three pillars. On potential changes to mandates related to violence against children and children and armed conflict, UNICEF will respond constructively to Member State guidance, while ensuring that any additional responsibilities are carefully assessed against existing mandate, capacities and accountability arrangements. On potential UN entity mergers more broadly, UNICEF's priority is to protect programme continuity in any scenario, and the organization will engage constructively should decisions be taken that affect current arrangements.

Multi-country and Area Offices

UNICEF's experience with multi-country arrangements predates UN80. The Pacific Multi-Country Office (MCO) and Gulf Area Office, among others, have long demonstrated the value of integrated sub-regional configurations, and a business model review drawing on these experiences set UNICEF on a path towards expanding this approach. UNICEF is now merging 16 existing country offices into more integrated sub-regional configurations: the Caribbean MCO (Belize, Jamaica, Eastern Caribbean Area and Guyana-Suriname); the Sri Lanka-Maldives MCO; the Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho and Namibia (BNLE) MCO; the Madagascar-Comoros MCO; and the proposed office covering Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Romania. The first four are expected to launch on 1 January 2027, and the latter on 1 January 2028. Together with the Area Office for Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe, the Pacific MCO and the Gulf Area Office, this will bring UNICEF's total to eight arrangements covering 45 countries and territories. A consistent finding from UNICEF's internal review is that programmatic impact must drive configuration decisions — each new MCO or Area Office is designed around shared child rights challenges, regional development priorities and opportunities for stronger policy influence, rather than cost reduction as a primary rationale.

National ownership and programmatic continuity remain central to UNICEF's MCO and Area Office model. Countries within MCOs or Area Offices retain their own country priorities, ensuring UNICEF's accountability to national authorities and the Executive Board. Country-level representation is maintained across all configurations, and the experience of established MCOs and Area Offices has consistently demonstrated that local presence remains strategically essential. Building on this evidence base, UNICEF is contributing to the UN80 workstream on country configuration, bringing practical experience on what effective, child-centred multi-country arrangements look like in practice. UNICEF will continue to keep the Executive Board and Member States informed as these arrangements advance.

C. Impact on children

Assessing the impact of UN80 reforms on results for children remains challenging at this stage of the process. Structural and governance changes are progressing across workstreams, but the translation of those changes into measurable outcomes at the country level is still emerging. In a number of areas, the decisions and operational changes required to determine impact have not yet been fully taken or implemented.

Where early evidence is available, it points to tangible benefits in specific areas. The integrated supply chain approach under Work Package 2 is identifying practical ways for agencies to complement one another and build on collective capabilities and expertise, with the aim of working more efficiently and delivering more assistance to more children in need. The approach is already showing practical results in the five starter contexts, and coordinated action during the Red Sea and Gulf shipping disruptions and the Ebola response helped preserve continuity of essential supplies for children in crisis settings. Efficiency gains under Work Package 14, including cumulative Business Operations Strategy (BOS) savings of over USD 100 million since 2019, have helped ensure that more resources are directed to programming for children at the country level. UNICEF's view is that these efficiency gains should be explicitly tracked through to programming outcomes rather than treated as an end in themselves — savings that reduce transaction costs matter for children only insofar as they translate into more assistance delivered on the ground. The efforts under Work Packages 2 and 16 are grounded in the recognition that data is fundamental for achieving results for children. As a strategic asset in all contexts, data enables evidence-informed decision-making, informs equitable programming, strengthens service delivery, optimizes resource allocation, and contributes to global public goods.

Looking across workstreams, the reform is demonstrating stronger impact in operational and efficiency domains than in areas more directly tied to programme outcomes for children. This is consistent with experience from previous reform cycles, where structural improvements have

tended to precede measurable shifts in development outcomes. The transition from improved system functioning to demonstrably better results for children remains an ongoing process, and one that UNICEF considers the ultimate test of reform success.

Governance and leadership arrangements for the Regional Reset remain subject to consultation; the first cohort of countries for UNCT configuration is still being finalized; and Expertise on Demand is not expected to be operational until September 2026. Configuration changes should always be evaluated for direct programmatic consequences for the most vulnerable people. As these processes move from design into implementation, UNICEF will track the emerging impact: continuity of essential supplies for children during future disruptions, building on lessons from the Red Sea, Gulf and Ebola responses; the quality and turnaround of technical support once Expertise on Demand is operational; and early lessons from the first cohort of configuration and Regional Reset pilot countries.

D. Risks, safeguards and resource implications

As UN80 reform advances, UNICEF has identified several areas that merit attention and on which it will continue to engage constructively with Member States and UN system partners. A first relates to mandate and normative integrity. As the UN system pursues greater coherence and integration, there is a risk that child-specific mandates, expertise and accountability become less distinct within broader frameworks. Equally, configuration changes that reduce presence in fragile, least-developed and high-need settings carry direct programmatic consequences for children. UNICEF's view is that greater coherence should strengthen rather than dilute the focus on children's rights and that any configuration decisions affecting UNICEF's presence should be grounded in evidence, guided by globally agreed parameters, and undertaken in full and transparent consultation with host governments.

A second area relates to funding quality and the cumulative demands of reform engagement. Shifts in the funding architecture that reduce the availability of core, flexible or predictable resources — or that increase transaction costs at country level — could constrain rather than enhance effective and efficient delivery. At the same time, meaningful participation across multiple UN80 workstreams places significant demands on UNICEF's staff and management capacity, with direct opportunity costs for programme delivery. UNICEF will continue to advocate for a balanced funding architecture and, as acknowledged in paragraph 2 of decision 2026/15, will be transparent with the Executive Board about the resource implications of this level of engagement as the process advances.

A third consideration, underpinning the above, is the importance of pace and sequencing in reform implementation. Implementation that moves faster than field systems can safely absorb risks disrupting existing delivery mechanisms, particularly in fragile and humanitarian contexts. UNICEF supports an approach that is evidence-based, carefully sequenced and subject to ongoing review, and will keep the Executive Board informed of progress and emerging lessons as implementation advances.

E. Looking ahead

The second half of 2026 represents a critical period for the UN80 Initiative, with a number of key milestones ahead. These include the launch of a common service request management platform to operationalize the integrated supply chain approach, scheduled for September 2026, and the UNGA in September 2026 as a moment for assessing system-wide progress. UNICEF's priority as reform advances is to help ensure that momentum generated at the design and governance stage translates into measurable results at the country level. Greater coherence and efficiency are most meaningful when they deliver better outcomes for children on the ground, and UNICEF encourages that progress be assessed against operational benchmarks, not only structural and process milestones. UNICEF will continue to engage constructively with Member States, the Secretary-

General and UN system partners to help refine and operationalize reform proposals, with the aim of ensuring they are both ambitious and implementable.

UNICEF reaffirms its commitment to regular and transparent engagement with the Executive Board throughout this process. The Board's oversight role is central to ensuring that reform strengthens rather than diminishes UNICEF's capacity to deliver for every child, and UNICEF looks forward to continued dialogue with Board members as implementation advances. The Executive Board can count on UNICEF to raise concerns candidly, report progress honestly, and remain focused throughout on what reform ultimately needs to deliver — better outcomes for children.