UNICEF FUTURE FOCUS INITIATIVE (FFI)
INFORMATION NOTE

10 August 2026

INTRODUCTION

This Information Note is presented to the UNICEF Executive Board (EB) in accordance with its decisions 2025/8, paragraphs 4 and 5, and 2025/23, paragraph 11 for regular informal briefings on the Future Focus Initiative (FFI), and decision 2026/10, paragraph 4 to submit an information note on the FFI in advance of the informal briefing to the Executive Board ahead of the second regular session of 2026. This information note includes, in line with the EB decision, an update on changes to the organization's staffing structure, an updated organizational chart, as well as information on how UNICEF is engaging with staff and the Global Staff Association during this organizational change process, the financial implications of the Initiative, the management of risks related to the Initiative, lessons learned and any further steps to be taken in the implementation of the Initiative.

1. CONTEXT

UNICEF is operating amidst fast-paced change. Geopolitical instability, economic pressures, the rapid expansion of new technologies, and sharp declines in funding are reshaping the global development and humanitarian landscape.

Responding to these challenges, UNICEF launched, in early 2025, the Future Focus Initiative (FFI) to identify the strategic, structural and operational adjustments needed to deliver the 2026–2029 UNICEF Strategic Plan (SP). The SP and its accompanying Integrated Budget (IB) were approved by the Executive Board at its Second Regular Session in September 2025. The FFI aims at repositioning UNICEF to realize the bold targets of the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan, and maintain its ability to deliver for children, especially the most vulnerable. This is ever more important as children around the world continue to confront grave threats to their survival and development, as well as horrific acts of violence that undermine their fundamental rights. Through the FFI, UNICEF is determined to increase the share of resources going to children, while ensuring that systems, structures, and ways of working are affordable, agile, and enable achieving results at scale.

Considering the global ODA significant reduction, UNICEF adopted a conservative funding scenario planning for the quadrennium 2026–2029 that projects a 20% decline in overall income, including a substantial reduction in RR income from public sector. This situation required adjustments across UNICEF's financial outlay, structure, workforce and ways of working while ensuring coherence and complementarity of the Secretary General's reform agenda.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE FFI

The FFI aimed to strategically reposition UNICEF to enable it to deliver on the ambitious targets of the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan in a constrained financial environment.

To this effect, the FFI was developed anchored in seven underpinning principles:

- **Results for children:** Safeguard RR allocations to country programmes.
- **Agility**: Enhance UNICEF's ability to be more structurally, functionally and operationally agile and adaptive
- **Affordability:** Right-size UNICEF's organizational structure to the projected financial scenario
- **Future-focused:** Reposition UNICEF to be future-ready in line with the ambitions of the SDGs, the 2026-2029 UNICEF Strategic Plan, as well as the UN80 and Humanitarian Reset
- **Coherence:** Ensure UNICEF structures and ways of working are complementary and mutually reinforcing
- **Engagement:** Encourage participation and engagement by all staff at all levels
- **Staff Welfare**: Ensure support for staff welfare and wellbeing.

3. ELEMENTS OF THE FFI

The Future Focus Initiative (FFI) entailed a comprehensive reconfiguration of how UNICEF is structured, staffed, and financed. Its core elements centered on **cutting core budget expenditures** by reducing HQ and Regional Office core budgets by 25% and Country Office non-programme allocations by 10–15%; **relocating** about 70% of HQ based staff to lower-cost duty stations and co-locating with existing UNICEF or other UN agency offices (for example WFP in Rome); **consolidating** Regional Offices and select HQ Divisions (ROSA & EAPRO, ECARO & MENARO, DAPM & GoRAF); **transforming the delivery of technical assistance (TA)** by consolidating programmatic TA capacity in HQ and ROs and placing them close to the field (Centres of Excellence in Panama, Amman, Nairobi, and Bangkok); **increasing** the number of Multi-Country Offices (MCOs); and **expanding the use of AI and digital tools** to streamline internal processes.

A workstream and a task force were established for each of the above six elements to collect ideas from all levels of the organization and flesh out the programmatic, budgetary and staffing implications of each element.

1. **Establishment of four CoEs** in Amman, Bangkok, Nairobi, and Panama will facilitate the provision of high-level technical assistance to Regional and Country Offices as well as partners, drawing on a diverse network of expertise to deliver evidence-based, context-specific solutions.
2. **Relocations:** around 70% of HQ-based staff will relocate from New York and Geneva to less costly locations closer to countries, generating significant savings.
3. **Digital Impact:** digital capabilities will be unified under a single framework that brings together technology, innovation, and AI to increase efficiency, resulting in one agile and scalable digital network.
4. **Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Shared Services**: CSCs will continue to be used and established where UNICEF has or will have co-locating offices or divisions, with other agencies, streamlining support functions and providing offices with support through a catalogue of services.

5. **Consolidation of HQ and Regional Offices:**
    - ECARO and MENARO merge into one regional office in Amman.
    - ROSA and EAPRO merge into one regional office in Bangkok.
    - DAPM and GoRAF merge to form the Office of Strategy and Evidence (OSE) in Florence.
    - The Office of Innovation is integrated into the new Global Programme Division (GPD) as of July 2026.

6. **Country Office typologies and Multi-Country Offices (MCOs):**

Country Office capacities will be reviewed according to updated typologies, and shared services will be expanded to reduce administrative costs and improve efficiency.

Country Typologies and Multi-Country Offices are strategic reforms designed to improve our programme effectiveness and sustainability in a rapidly changing operating environment. They will:

- Enhance results for children through more differentiated and context-responsive programming.
- Align UNICEF's presence and capacities with evolving country needs and financing realities.
- Leverage expertise at scale through shared capacities and cross-country collaboration.
- Increase efficiency and agility by streamlining operations and reducing duplication.
- Strengthen policy support, partnerships, and resource mobilization across countries.

Together, these reforms will enable UNICEF to deliver greater impact for children while safeguarding the primacy of national priorities and Country Programmes, in line with the objectives of the UNICEF 2026-2029 Strategic Plan.

The Multi-Country Offices to be established are the following:

- Caribbean MCO (Belize, Jamaica, Eastern Caribbean Area, Guyana-Suriname)
- Sri Lanka-Maldives MCO
- BNLE MCO (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia)
- Madagascar-Comoros MCO
- Europe MCO (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania)

Multi-Country Offices will generate efficiencies through shared management, technical expertise, and support functions across participating countries. This approach will reduce duplication and overhead costs while allowing the sharing of technical expertise and enabling a larger proportion of resources to be invested in programmes.

This structural transformation, under the framework of the FFI, was accompanied by a set of enabling measures designed to safeguard delivery, manage risk, and support staff through the transition: strengthening of oversight; simplification and streamlining of work processes leveraging technology including AI; coordination and staff consultation; and staff support measures.

Additionally, the six workstreams were accompanied by change adaptation pillars on communications and capacity building. The communications pillar was designed to ensure that staff and leadership across offices understand the key elements and rationale for reform through clear communications, consultations, and feedback mechanisms. Capacity building efforts were developed to support staff with knowledge, training, tools and mindset to effectively perform within the new organizational structure.

4. PROGRESS ACROSS THE SIX WORKSTREAMS

The Future Focus Initiative continues to advance across all six of its workstreams. With most major milestones already delivered, it will come to closure by the end of 2026. The major milestones are listed in Annex 1: Key Milestones.

- **Centers of Excellence**: all four global CoEs went live in January 2026 and are now fully functional.
- **Relocation to lower-cost duty stations**: assessments and support to confirm receiving offices' readiness and operational capacity are complete, and tracking and monitoring systems are in place, covering about 950 planned relocations in total. The phased relocation of staff continues as planned: 85% by end September 2026, and over 90% by end March 2027.
- **Digital Impact**: the REACH (formerly called the TA Hub), a platform that connects country offices with technical experts through a single coordinated system, was officially launched in June 2026. It is now in use across the Centres of Excellence, Regional and Country Offices. Additional components which will strengthen the functionality of this platform will continue to be developed.
- **Common Service Centers (CSCs), Shared Services & Remote Support**: progress continues across CSC locations as the CSC model is operationalized globally, with Finance, Contracting, and HR services now transitioned to Nairobi, Amman, Panama, and Bangkok CSCs. In Rome, UNICEF will use the services provided by the World Food Programme-CSC.

  UNICEF is both a provider and a recipient of shared services across the UN system and approaches common services as a 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 and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and remains open to expanding these offers to other agencies.

  UNICEF co-leads four 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 participates in four out of five of the priority services (non-staff contracting, fleet leasing, fleet management, asset disposal and accommodation) identified by BIG in April 2026 as where greatest scale, standardization, and efficiency can be achieved.

  UNICEF is actively engaged in Common Back Offices (CBOs), co-leading new initiatives in Pakistan and Senegal with UNOPS, and a planned CBO in Jordan that is currently on hold. It also participates in operational CBOs in Vietnam, Brazil, Tanzania, and Kenya, and supports the upcoming proposal in the Philippines.

  For more information, please refer to the information note on the repositioning of the United Nations development system (annual session June 2026) and the information note on the UN80 Initiative (second regular session September 2026).
- **Consolidation of HQ and Regional Offices:** DAPM and GoRAF divisions have consolidated into the Office of Strategy & Evidence (OSE)–Innocenti in Florence since January 2026. The Asia Pacific Regional Office in Bangkok was activated in July 2026. The consolidation, in Amman, of the regional offices in ECA and MENA will be completed by 31 December 2026.

- **Multi-country Offices**: five new Multi-Country Offices are being formed by merging 16 offices: the Caribbean MCO (Eastern Caribbean Area, Guyana-Suriname, Belize, Jamaica), the Sri Lanka–Maldives MCO, the BNLE MCO (Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini), the Madagascar–Comoros MCO, and the Europe MCO (Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece).

5. THE IMPACT OF CHANGE ON BUDGET AND STAFF

Core resources cost reductions:

As of May 2026, the change initiatives projected approximately **US$640 million** in core budget cost reductions for the 2026-2029 quadrennium, of which 86% comes from post savings and 14% from non-post savings. These core budget cost reductions supported UNICEF to meet the target set at the start of the FFI based on the estimated decline of income for the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan quadrennium as per planning assumptions (a 20% decline in overall income, including a substantial reduction in RR income from public sector).

For detailed information please refer to Annex 2 : Projected Cost Reductions.

Reductions in staffing structure:

The changes and cuts done under the FFI have resulted in a net reduction of Fixed Term positions of 15%.

The impact across international professional (IP), National Officer (NO) and General Services (GS) posts is as follows:

- At **D+ level**[1]: 12% net reduction
- At **P5/NOE**: 20%/100%[2] net reduction
- At **P4/NOD**: 18%/1% net reduction
- At **P3/NOC**: 22%/7% net reduction
- At **P2/NOB**: 30%/10% net reduction
- At **P1/NOA**: 29% net increase[3] /17% net reduction
- **GS** posts: 15% net reduction

[1] Includes heads of office at HQ, regional and country levels.
[2] Concerns two NOE posts.
[3] P1 posts increased from seven to nine.

There have been no significant changes in the staff gender distribution because of the FFI and related structural changes.

UNICEF is developing a strategy to promote the hiring of young professionals including a Young Talent Programme to attract and develop early-career staff.

Relocation of Posts:

The relocation of staff from New York and Geneva to other duty stations had a negative impact on many staff and their families, particularly General Service staff. To the extent possible, the organization adjusted the relocation timetable by considering school calendars and medical conditions. It also assisted the transition to early retirement and leave without pay.

6. High-level UNICEF Organizational Structure

UNICEF's high-level organizational structure for 2026-2029 was updated following the above structural changes. Please refer to Annex 3.

7. STAFF SUPPORT MEASURES

Within the framework of the Future Focus Initiative, UNICEF availed an integrated package of staff support as of March 2025, grounded in transparency and the fair application of UNICEF policy. Support measures included:

- Prioritization of staff on abolished Fixed Term posts followed by Temporary Appointments and UNVs before consultants and external applicants as per UN staff rules and regulations;
- Fixed Term Staff on abolished posts who applied for Temporary Appointments and met the relevant criteria were eligible for Temporary Assignment with retention of FT entitlements;
- Postponement of the mobility exercise;
- Special Leave without Pay for up to one year after separation date (allowing colleagues to retain their internal status for applications);

Many of the above measures expired 31 December 2025, however staff on abolished posts continue to be supported, as stipulated in UNICEF Policies and Procedures, through adjusted measures such as 6-month notice of abolishment for staff on fixed-term appointments, and priority in fixed-term recruitments where deemed suitable, in line with the UNICEF Procedure on Staff Selection.

Two rounds of a **Voluntary Separation Scheme (VSS),** received 195 total applications as of February 2026, resulting in 178 eligible applicants.

The **Global Ring-fenced Recruitment Exercise (GRRE)** ran from August 2025 to April 2026 and was launched as part of UNICEF's commitment to ensuring the organization was equipped with the talent needed to deliver on its mandate now and into the future. It resulted in the advertisement of 833 positions and the issuance of 745 offers within months. Candidate assessments were conducted fairly and objectively by diverse, qualified selection panels, whose members acted in their professional capacity in support of this organizational priority. The Exercise prioritized colleagues on abolished-post status, those on Special Leave Without Pay following the abolishment of their post since 1 January 2025, and those on secondment or loan formally notified of the termination of their interagency assignment, by giving them precedence at the Concise Review stage, while opening the subsequent Comprehensive Review stage to all UNICEF personnel, and subsequently to external candidates if no eligible internal candidates could be identified. This is aligned with the staff rules and regulations.

A dedicated SharePoint site served as the central information hub for all staff, complemented by restricted-access pages for applicants on abolished posts, selection panel members, and People and Culture professionals.

Extensive **career transition and learning support measures** were also delivered, engaging over 7,000 staff in clinics and workshops, delivering 2,500+ hours of multilingual coaching, and scaling peer support through staff-to-staff coaching and global mentoring (500+ participants), alongside strong uptake of self-directed reskilling. The Staff Support Unit managed 2,800+ inquiries in coordination with Staff Associations and wellbeing partners, while P&C Business Partners implemented FFI decisions and provided Senior Leadership Support services helping staff navigate restructuring while preserving organizational resilience.

Wellbeing and psychosocial support were also strengthened (through Conversations of Care, Listening Hours, and Mental Health First Aid training), managers were equipped through the "Managing Change with Purpose" initiative (reaching 24% of staff), and a culture perspective was embedded - with a Culture Pathway for a Future-Focused UNICEF being developed and tailored culture support delivered to 9,000+ staff. Together, rapid-response mechanisms were combined with long-term capability building to help staff navigate restructuring while organizational resilience was preserved.

8. STAFF ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

The Future Focus Initiative (FFI) was supported through a combination of internal communications, leadership engagement, digital communications and opportunities for staff engagement. Communications activities included Global Townhalls, Global Conversations, uMessages, periodic information bulletins and a sustained stream of supporting content on ICON, helping communicate key decisions, implementation milestones, organizational updates and leadership messages throughout the initiative.

Bi-monthly meetings were held between the Global Staff Association, Regional Staff Associations and Employee Resource Group and the Deputy Executive Director Management, the Director of People & Culture, and the Director of Change Management. In addition, periodic global townhalls and global conversations were convened, creating further opportunities for staff engagement and dialogue across the organization.

UNICEF's fourth Pulse Check was also conducted between March 16th and April 10th, 2026, registering 11,715 participants, which corresponds to a response rate of 68%. It was the first global employee engagement survey since the 2025 funding crisis, capturing feedback from a workforce navigating post abolishment's, relocations, and declining resources.

Information was also made available on the FFI SharePoint platform, sets of comprehensive Q&As, and the e-FFI AI bot, a dedicated AI assistant that answers staff questions on the Future Focus Initiative. Drawing exclusively on official FFI documentation approved by the Office of the Executive Director, it ensured all staff have immediate access to accurate, source-verified information.

9. COHERENCE AND COMPLEMENTARITY WITH UN80 AND UNDS REFORM

The Future Focus Initiative is UNICEF's internal transformation agenda. It is aligned with, but distinct from, the UN80 Initiative and the repositioning of the United Nations Development System. UNICEF's engagement in those agendas is reported separately to the Executive Board. For more information, please refer to the information note on the repositioning of the United Nations Development System (Annual Session June 2026) and the information note on the UN80 Initiative (Second Regular Session September 2026).

10. AFTER-ACTION REVIEW AND EVALUATION

As part of UNICEF's commitment to learning from the Future Focus Initiative (FFI), an After-Action Review (AAR) has been initiated to reflect on the design, implementation and organizational experience of the initiative, and to identify lessons that can inform future organizational change efforts.

The FFI AAR covers the period of the FFI's launch in March 2025, through June 2026. Its objective is to support organizational learning from the design and early implementation of FFI. To this end, it assesses implementation coherence across the six workstreams, looking at sequencing, interdependencies, and recalibrations, as well as the alignment of timelines, pace, and scope with human capacity and delivery realities. It also documents how FFI's design, communication, and early implementation unfold and are experienced across different teams and offices. Finally, it will identify key lessons, good practices, friction points, and trade-offs related to governance, sequencing, communication, and implementation.

The FFI AAR will also be informed by the human resources review conducted by the Division of People and Culture to strengthen the organization's future workforce strategy, enhance leadership effectiveness and enable people-centered decision making.

The FFI AAR is commissioned by the Executive Director and conducted by an independent external team managed by the United Nations System Staff College - an arrangement that safeguards access and scope validation while preserving the analytical independence of the review's conclusions.

ANNEX 1: KEY MILESTONES

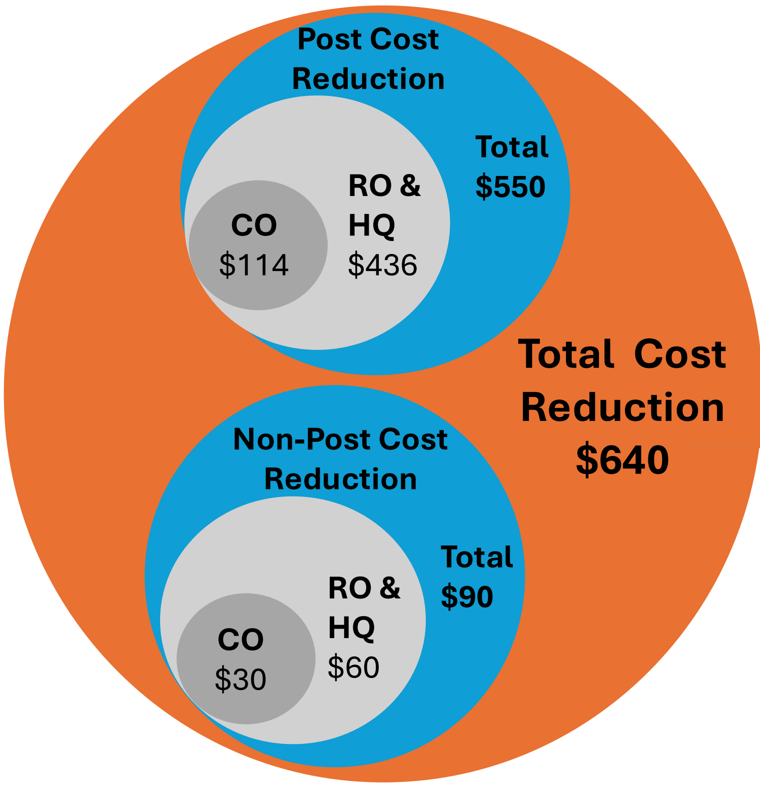
Date	Key Milestone
March 2025	FFI launched
May 2025	FFI Change Proposals approved by the Executive Director, starting with a Design Phase and following with an Implementation Phase
August 2025	Global Ring-Fenced Recruitment Exercise (GRRE) launched
September 2025	2026–2029 Strategic Plan and Integrated Budget approved by the Executive Board
January 2026	• Four Centres of Excellence (CoEs) established • Consolidation of Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring (DAPM) and Global Office for Research and Foresight (GORAF) to the Office of Strategy and Evidence–Innocenti (OSE) located in Florence
April 2026	Division of People and Culture After-Action Review
June 2026	The opening of the UNICEF office in Rome, co-located with WFP.
July 2026	• Launch of the FFI After-Action Review • Consolidation of EAPRO and ROSA into APRO located in Bangkok, activated on July 1, 2026.
October 2026	Completion of FFI After-Action Review
December 2026	Consolidation of ECARO and MENARO into ECAMENARO located in Amman completed.

ANNEX 2 – PROJECTED COST REDUCTIONS

Projected Cost Reductions over the 2026-2029 Quadrennium

(in US$ Million)

unicef | for every child
Future Focus Initiative



Total Cost Reduction
The total costs reduction in core resources achieved by COs, ROs and HQ divisions combined is approximately **$640 million** for the quadrennium.

The amount is inclusive of **$49 million** cost reduction achieved through HQ offices/divisions relocation.

HQ & RO Cost Reduction
Cost reductions from HQ and ROs total **$496 million** and from **COs** total **$144 million.**

Post & non-post Cost Reduction
The cost reductions are mainly achieved through reduction in positions, reducing the cost by **$550 million** and supplemented by reductions against non-post costs totaling **$90 million**.

ANNEX 3 – HIGH-LEVEL UNICEF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE