Progress update on UNICEF experience in high-income countries and in countries transitioning from upper-middle-income to high-income status within the framework of the UNICEF universal agenda for child rights

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to UNICEF Executive Board decision 2016/11, in which the Board requested that UNICEF assess its engagement in high-income countries, taking into account lessons learned and including an analysis of financial sustainability. The report, which is an update to the review undertaken in 2016 (E/ICEF/2016/P/L.39), reflects work implemented under the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including lessons learned, progress and challenges.

While UNICEF continues to focus on low-income countries and children most in need, the paper recounts experiences gathered in high-income and upper-middle income countries during the above-mentioned period. The work is undertaken within the framework of the universal agenda and the commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals – and within the context of global crises affecting vulnerable children everywhere.

* E/ICEF/2021/23.

Note: The present document was processed in its entirety by UNICEF.
I. Overview

1. This report presents the lessons learned from an assessment of the recent engagement of UNICEF in high-income countries and in countries transitioning from upper-middle-income to high-income status. It looks at the ways to uphold the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, while at the same time ensuring the financial sustainability of those efforts and of fundraising for UNICEF activities globally.

2. The report begins with an introduction that sets out the principle of the universality of child rights followed by UNICEF, provides specific reasons for programming in high-income countries, explains the UNICEF system for allocating financial resources and reviews the role of UNICEF in high-income countries of various typologies, both with and without National Committees for UNICEF.

3. The subsequent section looks at the results and lessons learned from the ways in which UNICEF has been contributing to achieving results for children in high-income countries, the emerging agenda for children and the next steps for programming in these contexts.

4. The final section of the report provides more detail about the financial sustainability of UNICEF programming in high-income countries and in countries transitioning to high-income-country status. It refers to the funds being raised and invested in the categories of countries included. It stresses that UNICEF also plays an important role in leveraging finance for children from other stakeholders, including Governments, regional institutions and the private sector.

II. Introduction

5. In 2016, UNICEF submitted a report to the Executive Board that reviewed the organization’s experience in high-income countries and in countries transitioning from upper-middle-income to high-income status. In its decision 2016/11, the Executive Board called for an assessment of the engagement of UNICEF in high-income countries, taking into account lessons learned and including an analysis of financial sustainability.

6. The present report is submitted pursuant to decision 2016/11, and reflects work implemented during the implementation period of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, lessons learned, progress and challenges. In the spirit of decision 2016/11, the report looks at the ways in which to uphold the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in high-income-country contexts, while at the same time ensuring the financial sustainability of those efforts and of fundraising in high-income countries for UNICEF activities globally.

A. Typologies of UNICEF country presence

7. In order to provide an update on UNICEF engagement in high-income countries, the present report refers to the same typology of countries used in the 2016 report:¹

   (a) High-income countries with a National Committee for UNICEF;

   (b) High-income countries with a UNICEF country office and a UNICEF country programme;

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¹ The present report employs the World Bank country classification by income level, which is based on gross national income per capita in current United States dollars using the Atlas method exchange rate (see https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/77933-what-is-the-world-bank-atlas-method).
High-income countries that are part of a UNICEF multi-country programme;

(d) High-income countries that do not have a National Committee for UNICEF or a UNICEF country programme;

(e) Upper-middle-income countries that may transition to high-income status in the coming years.

8. The National Committees for UNICEF are longstanding partners and part of the wider UNICEF organization. Under the oversight of their boards, they serve as the face and voice of UNICEF in their countries. UNICEF works closely with the National Committees as they support delivering on the UNICEF Strategic Plan and the UNICEF universal mandate, including through resource mobilization and advocacy for children’s rights domestically and globally. UNICEF will continue to optimize opportunities to deliver together with National Committees on results for children, including by providing technical support, when needed, to maximize the impact of their programming.

B. Why UNICEF works in high-income countries

9. The Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly recognizes the universality of children’s rights. This recognition was echoed by the General Assembly in its resolution 75/233 (quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system), which recognizes that those whose needs are reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development include all children (para. 13). In keeping with this core principle, UNICEF has been preparing its Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 with a focus on the ways in which the organization as a whole will support the most disadvantaged children everywhere around the world and will measure progress in addressing the challenges they face. UNICEF programming efforts in high-income countries reflect the need to recognize, enable, implement, monitor and accelerate actions towards the fulfilment of child rights and the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries.

10. To that end, the organization has further developed its programming in high-income countries for the following reasons:

(a) Many of the challenges children are facing in the world today are global in nature and affect them in countries in all income brackets: pandemics, migration, climate change, violence, mental health and disabilities;

(b) High-income countries face many inequalities within themselves, and some children in these countries, including refugee and migrant children, children living in poverty, children with disabilities, children from minority ethnic groups and children in the justice and care systems, are often particularly vulnerable to discrimination. To meet its commitment to leave no child behind, especially in light of the Goal Area dedicated to child poverty in the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, UNICEF has a role to play in such contexts;

(c) The prevalence of humanitarian crises in high-income countries means that UNICEF must prepare itself to support national responses in every environment to meet its core commitments for children;

(d) All countries in the world have something to learn from others, particularly in terms of programme innovations and solutions.

11. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is illustrative of all these challenges. Despite efforts to prevent the virus’ spread, including the recent introduction of vaccines, such secondary impacts as school closures and reductions
in social services have put children at risk everywhere, including in high-income countries.

12. Meanwhile, UNICEF work in supporting all countries to meet their child-rights obligations and to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals promotes dialogue on child-related issues, policies and programmes in high-income countries themselves. In turn, this increases the willingness to invest in and/or finance the child-rights agenda, both within the high-income countries (internal investment of government and private sector funds) and in other countries (official development assistance (ODA) and private sector funds).

C. Core functions of UNICEF in high-income countries

13. Since the UNICEF Executive Board adopted its decision 2016/11, UNICEF has reflected intensively on the core tasks necessary for its effective engagement in high-income countries, namely, to promote and accelerate results for the most vulnerable children in these countries and to achieve financial sustainability for domestic interventions and increase contributions to programmes in the poorest countries. These two pillars are relevant and complementary functions in high-income countries. Capacities for each differ based on the context and operational modalities, and both must be sustained in order to build synergies and contribute to achieving the best results possible. As a point of principle, UNICEF work in all high-income countries should be self-funded, drawing on minimal resources from the organization.

14. In its decision 2016/11, the Executive Board welcomed the important contribution of UNICEF and National Committees for UNICEF and encouraged the continued use of the most appropriate engagement approach to contribute to results in favour of the most disadvantaged children, such as working with National Committees.

15. Accordingly, in 32 high-income countries, National Committees have successfully led fundraising and advocacy initiatives. UNICEF and the National Committees have learned from each other, progressively strengthening their alignment around UNICEF programming policies and standards.

16. In high-income countries with a UNICEF country office and a UNICEF country programme (category (b)), operations are financed with resources generated locally.

III. Results achieved through programming in high-income countries

17. Analysis of programming practice in high-income countries with either a UNICEF country programme or a National Committee, as well as in upper-middle-income countries with a country office, has led to better understanding of the role and contribution of UNICEF towards achieving results for children and realizing the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the most effective strategies and actions.

18. UNICEF employs four main programming strategies in high-income countries. To generate knowledge, UNICEF monitors the situation of children on the basis of information already existing in those contexts and conducts and commissions research and analysis into the drivers of the situation of children and potential policy responses. To advocate and influence for system change, UNICEF promotes implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and conducts evidence-based advocacy to influence public- and private-sector policies, laws and financing for child rights. UNICEF also supports behaviour change and social transformation by providing technical assistance/guidance, partnerships and capacity-building;
engaging children, including adolescents and young people, as agents to improve child outcomes. Finally, UNICEF provides technical assistance for strengthening systems for children and facilitates learning and good practices for policies and programming to address inequalities. These strategies are not mutually exclusive; rather they are often implemented together to optimize results. This section highlights some of the broad range of actions in high-income countries that fall under one or more of the strategies.

D. Evidence generation and knowledge management

19. UNICEF programming in high-income countries and upper-middle-income countries has generated knowledge and evidence that have led to effective advocacy efforts and resources to focus on the most vulnerable children. For example:

(a) UNICEF Innocenti Report Cards document child well-being in industrialized countries on the basis of comprehensive and systematic analysis of multiple child-related indicators. The report cards have led to policy commitments and changes in some of the countries with the highest income, such as the recently adopted Act on Promotion of Development and Support for Children and Young People in Japan;

(b) In Italy, UNICEF and the Italian Committee for UNICEF analysed the situation of refugee and migrant children and shared the data generated with the Ombudsman for Children as well as other child-rights organizations. This led to policy revision and enhanced action to support child migrants;

(c) In Oman, UNICEF has generated evidence on the benefits of multisectoral programming, particularly for early childhood development (ECD). This led to increased government expenditure to bring such services to scale;

(d) The Canadian UNICEF Committee led the development of the Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being to measure the state of children across 125 indicators. More than half the indicators are reported by children themselves. The results inform actions to be taken by local child services;

(e) The UNICEF 2019 flagship impact evaluations on the Child Support Grant in Thailand played a catalytic role in expanding the scheme’s coverage by lifting the age threshold from children under the age of 3 years to children under the age of 6 years, almost tripling the income threshold of the eligibility criteria. Over 1 million children now benefit from the expanded Grant and, when fully implemented in 2024, the scheme will reach almost 1.8 million children.

20. Informed by evidence, UNICEF has a role to play in accompanying reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child by all countries that have ratified the Convention and improving the situation of children on the basis of the concluding observations and recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. For example:

(a) In its capacity as a civil society organization, the Spanish Committee for UNICEF developed a complementary report for the review by the Committee on the Rights of the Child of the implementation of the Convention in Spain. Many of the recommendations of the Spanish Committee for UNICEF were incorporated directly into the concluding observations. This contributed to the creation of the Office of the High Commissioner on Child Poverty under the President and the inclusion of innovative child-rights impact assessment reports in the 2019 and 2020 General State Budgets;

(b) In Chile, UNICEF is supporting and strengthening the Undersecretary for Children under the Ministry of Social Development and Family and the Office of the
Ombudsperson for Children, both established in 2018. UNICEF documented the first year of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children to identify challenges encountered and lessons learned.

21. Ensuring that action for and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals are child-sensitive and child-inclusive is an important role for UNICEF in high-income countries and countries potentially transitioning to high-income status. For example:

(a) In Oman, at the Government’s request, UNICEF generated disaggregated national data on children and facilitated child participation in the Sustainable Development Goal Voluntary National Review process;

(b) In Saudi Arabia, UNICEF conducted an in-depth situation analysis of the challenges facing children in health, protection and education; this informed the efforts of the Government and partners towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Vision 2030;

(c) In Malaysia, an upper-middle-income country, the national Malaysia Plan, which is closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, reflected children as a priority.

E. Advocacy for systems change

22. The predominant strategy of UNICEF for achieving results for children in high-income countries and upper-middle-income countries is evidence-based advocacy. For example:

(a) The European Commission, in partnership with UNICEF, is piloting its European Child Guarantee to help vulnerable children within the European Union to access health care, education, childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition. UNICEF will examine the drivers of child poverty and support countries in the European Union to develop action plans for social services and to explore innovative interventions;

(b) The Icelandic National Committee for UNICEF leveraged its existing partnership with the Government to launch a child protection campaign in response to COVID-19. Following a situation analysis across the cities and schools participating in both the Child-Friendly Cities and the Rights Respecting Schools initiatives and with partner non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Icelandic National Committee for UNICEF developed recommendations for the Government on ways in which to keep children safe, leading to increased budgetary allocations to the national helpline and an awareness-raising campaign targeting victims of violence and abuse;

(c) UNICEF Malaysia delivered a presentation on child poverty and child-sensitive social protection at the kick-off conference in July 2019 for the Twelfth Malaysia Plan, articulating the rationale for expanding the provision of child benefits and provided a range of costed policy options for consideration. In parallel, UNICEF Malaysia submitted a strategy paper on urban child poverty to the Ministry of Economic Affairs. These engagements added to wider calls for social policy reforms that resulted in an increased value of benefits paid to low-income families with children under the 1Malaysia People’s Aid programme;

(d) In South Africa, locating child rights at the centre of the country’s policies and political agenda, UNICEF built support for child-sensitive policies through a multisectoral alliance, which included the Government, civil society organizations, the media and the private sector, to mainstream children’s issues into all areas of public policymaking. Examples include UNICEF advocacy for (i) working with
multiple partners for the Office of the Rights of the Child to be re-established in the Office of the President; (ii) support for regular poverty measurements by Statistics South Africa and sector departments; and (iii) working with civil society actors and a wider cross-section of affected stakeholders on budgeting for children.

23. Furthermore, in its advocacy work in high-income countries, UNICEF leverages partnerships, including with the private sector. For example:

(a) In Croatia, UNICEF promotes business practices that respect and contribute to child rights through the Advisory Board for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility, the national platform on child rights and business;

(b) In the Gulf States, UNICEF and the Islamic Development Bank launched the Global Muslim Philanthropy Fund for Children, a pooled funding mechanism;

(c) In Uruguay, UNICEF trained the Work and Social Security Office on the relevance of breastfeeding and the requirements for breastfeeding rooms in businesses, as well as on how to guide companies and evaluate compliance;

(d) The Japan Committee for UNICEF advocated with the Government and civil society to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Primarily calling for legal reforms, the work resulted in the engagement of business, particularly travel/tourism and Internet communication technology industries, to introduce voluntary countermeasures, including blocking images of child abuse online.

24. UNICEF advocacy is strengthened through the promotion of safe and rights-respecting child participation and the engagement of young people. For example:

(a) UNICEF led consultations with more than 10,000 children in Europe towards the European Union Strategy on the Rights of the Child (adopted in March 2021). This was the first-ever European Union high-level policy for which children were consulted, and the European Union has committed to engaging children in the monitoring of its implementation;

(b) The Spanish Committee for UNICEF has promoted local child and the engagement of young people as part of the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative since 2004. This has led to the establishment of participatory bodies in 277 cities and communities in which children’s opinions are listened to in decision-making processes. The Spanish Committee for UNICEF is now working with the Ministry of Social Affairs to establish a participatory body for children at the national level;

(c) The Korean Committee for UNICEF launched Child Voice with partners to seek the opinions of children aged 10 to 18 years on the national child-rights situation. Recommendations were incorporated into the Government’s 2019 Policies for Children towards Building an Inclusive Society and were reflected in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child;

(d) To facilitate adolescent participation, UNICEF supported a digital rap contest in Argentina, which raised awareness about the responsible use of communication technologies and sparked a conversation through traditional and social media, with more than 400 videos received and 7.8 million accounts reached. In this context, 4,870 adolescents followed a UNICEF-supported online course on the responsible and safe use of the Internet and social media. UNICEF-supported mobilization around climate change also generated online spaces in which thousands of adolescents were able to express their concerns and propose solutions.
F. Social and behaviour change

25. UNICEF engages everywhere on strategies to influence social and behaviour change. Such change can be brought about through campaign approaches. For example:

(a) The “Cook Today, It’s Forever” campaign prepared evidence-based messages to reach families across Uruguay on the ways in which parents and caregivers could prepare healthy home-cooked snacks for children using locally available food. Studies indicate that this programme has increased healthful choices in food selection and may contribute to a reduction in obesity;

(b) The Belgian Committee for UNICEF convened the Belgian Paediatric Task Force, the National Commission for the Rights of the Child, the Ombudsmen for Children and the King Baudouin Foundation to launch an information platform providing clear and scientifically substantiated information on COVID-19 and children (on health, education, child participation and other topics) for teachers, professionals and parents as well as children and young people. The information platform was designed to raise sustained awareness on the rights and well-being of children at all levels both during and after the pandemic;

(c) In Croatia, the “Every Child Needs a Family” campaign helped to raise public awareness of the importance of a supportive and positive family environment for children and addressed the persistent high number of children in institutions, while also raising the profile of UNICEF international work and leveraging additional funding.

26. Changes in institutional practices, including within businesses, can also be enabled through UNICEF and the National Committees. For example:

(a) The United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF produced several statements on infant feeding in neonatal units and supported baby-friendly assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF is working with National Health Service maternity and health visiting services to ensure that, over the next five years, all maternity units will work to become accredited under the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative and that every baby born in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will be born under the Initiative’s standards;

(b) The Dutch Committee for UNICEF worked with partners to gather evidence and advocate for more stringent regulations on the marketing of unhealthful foods to children. This resulted in extensive media coverage and commitments from some retailers to improve their marketing practices;

(c) In Romania, UNICEF modelled a Minimum Package of Services for children, engaging vulnerable households with a team of local professionals: a social worker, a community nurse and a school counsellor. With the model showing a positive impact on child poverty, child health and nutrition, birth registration, early education and school dropout as well as the prevention of domestic violence, UNICEF worked with partners on a bill to apply the Minimum Package of Services throughout the country. In October 2020, after a year of intense advocacy, the Parliament unanimously approved the amendment of the Law of Social Assistance no. 292/2011 to scale up the programme, which will help to address major gaps in social-service delivery.

27. Actions can also lead to changes in attitudes among the general public, parents and caregivers. For example:

(a) The French Committee for UNICEF developed a communication campaign with a network of partners across France, alerted children and young people...
to the risks of domestic violence and promoted the national helpline. This led to a significant increase in calls to the helpline, particularly among children;

(b) In 2019, UNICEF Chile supported the Government to strengthen the role of families by developing the “Positive and Respectful Parenting Route” and a nurturing-care approach for young children. UNICEF also developed a locally adopted instrument to review the quality of parenting programmes by assessing their compliance with global standards.

G. Technical assistance for systems strengthening

28. Where a policy gap is identified in high-income countries or upper-middle-income countries, UNICEF engages in technical assistance for systems strengthening. In close collaboration with Governments and at their request, UNICEF provides policy advice relevant to the promotion of children’s rights. For example:

(a) The “One UNICEF” approach in Germany, taken as part of the UNICEF response to the migration crisis between 2015 and 2018, supported the Government to protect children and women from violence. UNICEF and the German Committee for UNICEF, working in tandem, helped to develop standards and strengthen the capacity of refugee reception centres;

(b) In response to the influx of unaccompanied migrant children in Italy since 2014, UNICEF, working with the Italian Committee for UNICEF, developed a support network for caregivers and training for social workers. The system is improving conditions for unaccompanied and separated children;

(c) In Malaysia, the capacity of local child-rights NGOs has been strengthened as part of a broader strategy to improve social cohesion.

29. UNICEF provides technical advice on emergency preparedness for response to sudden-onset emergencies and technical assistance for the design of emergency response programmes, working closely with National Committees when appropriate. For example, the Dutch Committee for UNICEF is piloting a more predictable, transparent and systematic decision-making process for UNICEF and National Committees to respond together to large-scale rapid-onset emergencies in countries and territories covered by National Committees. Building on lessons learned from the Hurricane Irma response in Sint Maarten in 2017 and following an official government request, the National Committee started a project to strengthen the resilience of local education and child protection systems, including disaster preparedness. The project is funded by the World Bank Sint Maarten Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience Trust Fund.

30. Furthermore, there was an overwhelming response by UNICEF and the National Committees to the COVID-19 pandemic that affected children in all countries including high-income countries. For example:

(a) The Australian Committee for UNICEF worked with a national research alliance to track and analyse evidence on the situation of children and young people in the country against key UNICEF frameworks, such as the Innocenti Report Card on multidimensional child well-being, and articulated clear advocacy requests and policy recommendations for the Government’s consideration. This resulted in monthly publications focusing on six areas of child well-being that are informing policy responses to COVID-19 in Australia;

(b) The Finnish Committee for UNICEF established an online repository of best practices in child-friendly responses to COVID-19 in cities and communities. Topics included early childhood education, child protection and child-friendly communication. The platform is open for submissions and accessible to all
municipalities in Finland and has been promoted by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare;

(c) In 2020, UNICEF Romania developed a 10-point evidence-based advocacy agenda to “build back better” from the pandemic. This led to the establishment of a working group, under the leadership of the Vice-Prime Minister, tasked with developing a plan to meet the education, social protection and health needs of vulnerable children. It also guided UNICEF feedback and technical inputs to the National Recovery Plan, and influenced the overall allocation of 80 billion euros to Romania by the European Union for the period 2021–2027, which included investments in health, education and increased social inclusion;

(d) During the first nine months of the pandemic, UNICEF Panama contributed to providing distance learning to more than 390,000 children (50 per cent of students nationally) at all educational levels.

IV. Lessons learned from programming in high-income countries

31. Recent global crises, including climate-related disasters, mass population displacements and public-health crises, have demonstrated that UNICEF must be prepared to support the responses of Governments and partners in all high-income countries. Responding to global migration challenges has also highlighted the importance of transborder analysis and comprehensive approaches to migration that include countries of origin, transit, asylum and settlement.

32. The convening and brokering role of UNICEF, between the United Nations, Governments, NGOs, the private sector and child-rights organizations, is emerging as an important function in high-income countries. National Committees can lead in this area in the countries in which they operate, working closely with UNICEF. This includes, for example, convening discussions on private-public partnerships around health, education and other basic services.

33. Advocacy and social and behaviour change are particularly important programming strategies in all high-income countries. These need to be underpinned by evidence, technical policies and guidance to enable progress in the realization of child rights. In addition to the relevant technical expertise, capacities and skills in research, leveraging partnerships and communication are also critical for effective work in high-income countries by UNICEF.

34. The UNICEF response to sudden onset-emergencies in high-income countries, including in countries with a National Committee presence, must be informed by the Core Commitment for Children in Humanitarian Action and UNICEF emergency preparedness and response procedures and be based on a documented request by a host Government.

35. Defining what success looks like in high-income countries and adapting global results and monitoring frameworks will further enhance the quality of programming, building on analysis emerging at the country level. Furthermore, strengthening benchmarks and systems to track enhanced financing and resource mobilization leveraged as a result of programming, as well as a more systematic tracking of the costs of technical support, will critically contribute to securing the overall sustainability of the work.

36. As the contexts of high-income countries vary greatly and change over time, programming strategies should be informed by and adapted on the basis of context-specific analysis. An ongoing learning process, facilitated through the UNICEF global knowledge management framework, must enable permanent dialogue across high-
income countries in all categories, as well as countries with different economic profiles, in order to further enhance the quality of programming. UNICEF has already shared a series of case studies from high-income and upper-middle-income countries globally. Increased innovation and digitalization will further strengthen such efforts to institutionalize information and documentation sharing.

V. Emerging agenda for UNICEF in high-income countries

37. Subject to analyses of local and regional contexts, efforts and programming responses are likely to focus on the global priorities of UNICEF: child-rights monitoring and accountability mechanisms; social policy (financing, social protection and local governance); child protection; inclusive education; nutrition; mental health; ECD; and migration. Other cross-cutting commitments, including gender equality, fighting racism and discrimination, addressing climate change, adolescent development and participation, child rights and business, and reaching marginalized children, including those with disabilities, remain central.

38. Child rights and Sustainable Development Goal monitoring and accountability mechanisms UNICEF reinforces capacities for child-rights monitoring at the national level by (a) strengthening data management systems to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; (b) supporting the establishment of or strengthening independent human rights institutions; and (c) empowering child-rights stakeholders in their own monitoring roles. UNICEF also helps all Member States to collect, analyse and use Sustainable Development Goal indicators, building on its direct role as part of the monitoring framework for the Sustainable Development Goals.

39. Social policy UNICEF addresses child poverty through four main pillars: (a) identifying best practices to routinely measure and monitor child poverty (including child poverty score cards for high-income countries), and policies and programmes to address child poverty; (b) enhancing the inclusivity of social protection systems; (c) identifying gaps and optimal financing approaches for social services as part of advocating for Governments to finance child rights; and (d) strengthening governance systems at the subnational and local levels to enable the development of equitable and child-sensitive policies, plans and budgets. For example, the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative is intended to support municipal governments to realize the rights of the child at the local level.

40. Child protection Gaps often remain in high-income countries, with quality child-protection systems failing to reach all the children who need them. Enhanced fiscal space, well-developed technical capacities and strong public engagement on child-rights issues provide significant opportunities to strengthen child-protection systems and scale up prevention programmes. High-income countries are also at the forefront of addressing new and emerging issues in child protection, such as online exploitation and bullying.

41. Education Accelerated by COVID-19, education systems in high-income countries increasingly rely on digital learning. This means every child and young person should be connected to digital solutions that offer personalized, quality learning. Parents and caregivers need assistance to guide home learning and provide children with psychosocial support. The work of UNICEF will help to maintain and promote quality, inclusive education and learning for all children. UNICEF also has a role to play in closing the digital divide in high-income countries.

42. Nutrition High-income countries are facing an increasing burden of overweight children, childhood obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases as well as low rates of breastfeeding. UNICEF advocates for Governments to adopt policies and
regulations that protect breastfeeding; improve the availability and affordability of nutritious foods; reduce marketing’s harmful impact; and help families and children to choose more healthful options. UNICEF also advocates with businesses to make positive changes to workplace practices and core business policies.

43. **Health** In high-income countries, there is great demand for services to treat non-communicable diseases and address mental health. Health systems require strengthening to ensure equitable access to services for marginalized groups, especially in these two areas. Global pandemics, such as COVID-19, affect children, highlighting the burgeoning role of UNICEF in national preparedness and response efforts, including challenging misinformation (given, for example, the low uptakes of immunization in many high-income countries).

44. **Early childhood development** Many parents and caregivers lack access to high-quality ECD services or face poor mental health as they attempt to balance family life and work. Leveraging partnerships with Governments, the private sector, civil society and families can help UNICEF to enhance access to quality integrated services and family-friendly policies in the workplace, such as paid parental leave, breastfeeding support, accessible affordable and quality childcare, and child benefits, which help to provide an enabling environment for parents and caregivers.

45. **Migration** In high-income countries, UNICEF strengthens capacities, particularly to enable service providers to respond to the special needs of migrant children and their families. This could include improving reception/arrival standards, providing access to multisectoral services for those on the move, facilitating inclusion and integration after arrival, advising on alternatives to detention for children and advising on voluntary return processes.

46. **Climate change** Disadvantaged communities and children in high-income countries bear the brunt of climate and environmental impacts within their countries. Children in the countries with the least resources to adapt will be affected the most, and thus UNICEF must intensify its traditional role in high-income countries to advocate for more development assistance to them. Furthermore, children are active agents of climate and environmental change, and UNICEF must champion their efforts.

47. **Emergency preparedness and response** UNICEF will continue to refine its standard approach to sudden-onset emergencies, including pandemics, natural disasters and earthquakes. This will include the further development of and investment in preparedness and response systems and building partnerships with national actors.

48. **Child rights and business** Business activity has a significant effect on outcomes for children. Workers and their families are affected by the terms and conditions of work as well as conditions in the supply chain. Adults and children alike are exposed to marketing and advertising practices and the taxes companies pay directly influence the ability of public services to provide for the most marginalized children and families. The private sector also has an increasing role in providing essential basic services.

### VI. Analysis of financial sustainability

49. The analysis below refers to funds being raised and invested in the typologies of high-income-countries included in the 2016 paper. Importantly, UNICEF also plays a role in leveraging finance for children from other stakeholders, including Governments, regional institutions and the private sector.
50. UNICEF allocates financial resources to programme countries based on the modified system for allocation of general resources, as set out in the annex to its decision 1997/18, which was adopted by the Executive Board in 1997 (and subsequently modified to increase the minimum allocation (decisions 2008/15 and 2013/20). Under this system, at least 60 per cent of UNICEF regular resources are allocated to least developed countries and at least 50 per cent to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The Executive Board makes formal decisions on indicative regular resource budgets to country programmes by approving country programme documents (CPDs).

51. According to Executive Board decision 2008/15, allocations of UNICEF regular resources for country programme cooperation, except for countries included in multi-country programmes, will continue until a country achieves “high income” status (based on World Bank current data and definitions) and maintains such status for two consecutive years after achieving it. In its decision 2016/11, the Executive Board reiterated its invitation to UNICEF and countries having transitioned to high-income status to develop CPDs or multi-country programme documents for consideration and decision by the Executive Board, when a continued country programme presence was jointly identified by the Government and UNICEF as the most appropriate engagement approach, taking into account (a) the importance of responding to the country context; and (b) the importance of ensuring that programme investments in countries having transitioned to high-income status led to net increases in programme resources available for least developed countries, low-income countries and middle-income countries. This transition process is also supported by the United Nations country team through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

A. High-income countries with a National Committee for UNICEF

52. Regular-resources revenue from National Committees for UNICEF in high-income countries increased from $491 million (46 per cent of total regular-resources revenue) in 2015 to $683 million (48 per cent) in 2020. Other-resources revenue increased from $645 million (17 per cent of total other-resources revenue) in 2015 to $688 million (11 per cent) in 2020.

53. The investments made in advocacy activities in these countries increased from $42 million in 2016 (in 30 National Committees for UNICEF) to $53 million (in 29 National Committees for UNICEF) in 2020. These investments were funded by non-competing resources (non-ODA, accessible for local NGOs) totalling $20 million and $22 million in 2016 and 2020, respectively, and also by funds raised by the National Committees, totalling $22 million and $31 million in 2016 and 2020, respectively (2 per cent of total funds raised for both years). The investments in advocacy activities for this period have been assessed as proportionate to the investments in other priorities, particularly given the significant increase in resources available for programmes in low-income and middle-income countries.

54. While in recent years National Committees have not invested more than 2 per cent of total funds raised in advocacy activities (well below the 5 per cent permitted by UNICEF), this investment is important as it provides sustainable and necessary funding for maintaining a core staff team and for advocacy activities that are not necessarily attractive to external funders.

55. Analysis of a sample of eight National Committees accounting for more than half of the non-competing resources of $22 million raised in 2020 showed that 45 per cent was received from public sources (mainly Governments) and 55 per cent from private sources. For example, the Government of Belgium covers 80 per cent of the cost of the Belgian Committee for UNICEF’s externally audited domestic
interventions in education and mental health for a selection of projects approved upfront. The Dutch Committee for UNICEF secured some $5 million from the World Bank Trust Fund financed by the Government of the Netherlands for Sint Maarten, an overseas Dutch territory, with $450,000 included as income in 2020. More broadly, National Committees within the European Union can apply to the European Commission’s centralized budget lines dedicated to child-rights education, participation, youth education and engagement and non-discrimination against vulnerable children. National Committees secured $1.1 million through this instrument in 2020.

56. Foundations with domestic remits are another important source of non-competing resources. The Danish Committee for UNICEF received $50,000 of funding from the Bikuben Foundations for COVID-19-related activities in Greenland. The Italian Committee for UNICEF led a consortium of 30 partners to secure $2 million from an Italian network of banking foundations.

57. In addition, some National Committees have successfully raised non-competing resources from companies. For example, the Australian Committee for UNICEF raised funds for the domestic bushfire response from several companies that were only open to supporting domestic causes. The Danish Committee for UNICEF received funding for its programme activities in Greenland from the Extreme E electric off-road motor racing series.

B. High-income countries with a UNICEF country office and a UNICEF country programme

58. In 2020, five high-income countries had UNICEF country offices and country programmes: Chile, Croatia, Oman, Panama and Uruguay.\(^2\) (Three countries that were in this category in 2016 have since transitioned back to upper-middle-income status: Argentina, Equatorial Guinea and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.)

59. UNICEF maintained a programming presence in these five high-income countries as they transitioned from upper-middle-income to high-income status and has continued to do so for two or more years after their transition. All five countries received institutional budget allotments totalling some $6 million in 2020 to support a small core staff. Two of the five – Chile and Uruguay – received and will continue to receive programme budget allocations from regular resources in the year of transition and throughout the two years following their transition. The programme budget for Panama, funded by regular resources, was approved by the Executive Board for the first two years of the country programme submitted in early 2021 and will be further assessed based on the continuing review of UNICEF experience in high-income countries and in countries transitioning from upper-middle-income to high-income status. The programme budgets for Croatia and Oman are funded entirely from other resources.

60. Total revenue from these five high-income countries totalled $73 million from 2016 to 2020. Of this, regular resources revenue amounted to $31 million, of which $6 million was from Governments and $25 million from the private sector. Of that $25 million, $23 million was raised in Chile and Uruguay, which means that programme investments in these countries have led to net increases in global programme resources.

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\(^2\) Romania received a regular resources allocation in 2020 before being classified as a high-income country that year and is therefore not included in the present analysis. A country programme document for Greece will be presented to the Executive Board in 2022.
C. High-income countries that are part of a UNICEF multi-country programme

61. UNICEF has two multi-country programmes, which include 26 countries and territories, of which 8 are considered to be high-income, according to the World Bank classification for 2020: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago, together with the two British Overseas Territories of the British Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands (covered by the Eastern Caribbean multi-country programme); plus Palau and Nauru (covered by the Pacific Islands multi-country programme).

62. Multi-country programmes receive regular resources for programmes as approved by the Executive Board – a total of $28.6 million was allocated for the Eastern Caribbean multi-country programme for the 2017 to 2021 programme and $49.9 million was allocated for the Pacific Islands multi-country programme for the 2018 to 2021 programme. These resources are focused on the low- and middle-income countries within the multi-country programme rather than the high-income countries. However, data, policy dialogue, advocacy and partnership work is carried out across all the countries and territories. In addition, each multi-country programme receives an institutional budget allotment (together totalling some $4 million in 2020). Fundraising in small-island high-income countries has proven difficult. However, in 2020, the Governments of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago contributed some $211,000 to UNICEF regular resources.

63. The sub-regional programme in the Gulf region does not receive regular resources through the Board-approved regular-resources allocation system. It received an institutional budget allotment of some $3 million in 2020. UNICEF fundraising in the Gulf is focussed on Governments, foundations, high-net-worth donors and corporations. Funds raised in the Gulf region have averaged more than $100 million annually since 2016 but have also varied significantly from year to year given the unpredictable timing of receipts from foundations and high-net-worth donors and corporations. In 2015, $135.4 million was raised, comprising $2.2 million of regular resources and $133.2 of other resources. In 2020, $88.8 million was raised in the Gulf region for UNICEF programmes globally, comprising $1.4 million of regular resources and $87.4 million of other resources.

D. High-income countries that do not have a National Committee for UNICEF or a UNICEF country programme

64. The remaining high-income countries have either never had a UNICEF country programme or a National Committee presence (including, for example, Malta and Monaco) or ceased programme operations following their transition from upper-middle-income to high-income status. UNICEF seeks financial support from the Governments of all these countries. The organization also engages with the countries in a limited amount of policy, partnership and horizontal cooperation activities and publishes global studies and analyses, such as *The State of the World’s Children*, that include data on all countries, regardless of their income status or UNICEF programme presence. These activities are funded within the UNICEF global programme, approved by the Executive Board as part of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. In the case of the Eastern Caribbean, there are also some small-island States, including Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten, where, at the request of the Government and dependent on the availability of non-competing funds, the Dutch Committee for UNICEF is providing technical assistance, with support from the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and Caribbean. In others, UNICEF continues to seek opportunities in close collaboration with Governments to formalize engagement with the private sector for both fundraising and advocacy purposes.
E. Upper-middle-income countries that may transition to high-income status in the coming years

65. In 2020, 60 countries\(^1\) had upper-middle-income status. Many of these countries are likely to transition to high-income status between now and 2030. Several of them rely heavily on minerals and other exports and currently have limited potential to increase public- or private-sector fundraising, given their vulnerability to exchange rates and export prices and proportionately small middle-class populations. Nine\(^4\) of the sixty are included in UNICEF multi-country programmes. Thirteen have structured private-sector fundraising programmes and one has a National Committee for UNICEF.

66. Total revenue from the 13 countries with structured private-sector fundraising programmes increased from $104 million in 2016 to $115 million in 2020, despite the significant impact of adverse exchange rate movements in Latin America and Caribbean. Between 2016 and 2020, total revenue from these 13 countries totalled $534 million. Of this, regular resources revenue was $159 million, of which $24 million was from Governments and $135 million from the private sector.

67. Turkey is the only country in the world with both a UNICEF country office and a National Committee. UNICEF began working in Turkey in 1951 and, exceptionally, also established a National Committee in 1956. The Turkish National Committee for UNICEF conducts fundraising and public advocacy, while the country office engages with the Government to monitor the situation of children, and in programmatic areas such as child survival, ECD, education and child protection. Between 2016 and 2020, the Turkish National Committee for UNICEF raised regular-resources revenue of approximately $2 million annually which, like other National Committee regular-resources revenue, were channelled through the UNICEF regular-resources allocation system to low- and middle-income countries.

68. UNICEF provides support to countries with low- or middle-income status to explore opportunities to raise resources for UNICEF, particularly from the private sector. This support is prioritized based on whether the country has the potential to fundraise cost-effectively at scale or has difficulty securing other resources to fund its country programme. Once fundraising activities have been initiated and shown some success, UNICEF looks to develop and invest in structured private-sector fundraising programmes in each of these countries.

VII. Conclusions

69. Irrespective of income status, inequalities for children remain across all countries. UNICEF, together with the National Committees where they are present, has also demonstrated its capacity to achieve results for children across the diverse typologies of high-income, not just in its better-known priorities in low-income countries. It is evident that there are immense opportunities for UNICEF and the

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\(^1\) While there were 60 upper-middle-income countries in 2020, UNICEF allocated regular resources to 46 of them (those with a country programme, not a multi-country programme): Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Georgia, Guatemala, Guyana, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Libya, Maldives, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Namibia, North Macedonia, Paraguay, Peru, Romania, Serbia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

\(^4\) Dominica, Fiji, Grenada, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Samoa, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Tonga.
National Committees to strengthen their collaboration while respecting their different structures, mandates and accountabilities.

70. The universality of the child-rights approach has been made clear by the experience of programming in high-income countries. While programme design defers to context, giving rise to a rich array of programmes specific to each country, the grounding in child rights of these programmes means that they have relevance in other country contexts. Due credit must be given to the efforts made to document and analyse these innovative programmes and lessons learned, which demonstrate the commonality of strategies across high-income countries. This documentation effectively offers global goods for sharing, consideration and application in UNICEF offices everywhere.

71. UNICEF will continue to learn from practice and facilitate knowledge sharing across all high-income countries for programmes and fundraising activities. As a result, programming quality will be enhanced, and non-ODA resources increased to ensure additional programming capacities. Enhanced fundraising capability and leveraging opportunities will be realized and tracked in high-income countries.

72. Results for children, particularly in low-income countries, remain the priority. In practice, in high-income countries, this means ensuring that fundraising efforts do not determine programmes in low-income countries and that domestic programmes do not undermine fundraising. Rather than demonstrating tension between the dual roles of fundraising and programming in high-income countries, documented experience from these countries shows that these dual roles have the potential for tremendous synergy. A programme presence in high-income countries can help to promote UNICEF in a fundraising capacity.

73. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals set the benchmarks for UNICEF to deliver results for children, wherever they come from and wherever they live. While UNICEF continues to focus attention on the low-income countries in most need, the organization will continue to strengthen programming responses and fundraising activities in all high-income countries. This will build on incremental learning arising from results achieved and fundraising targets met since 2016. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and global crises affecting vulnerable children everywhere, the imperative of UNICEF to enhance its efforts in high-income countries has never been greater. UNICEF will continue to strive towards its goals in high-income countries through enhanced partnerships with its National Committees, focused multi-country programmes, self-financed country programmes and a modest global and regional programme.