Formative evaluation of UNICEF work to link humanitarian and development programming

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Evaluation purpose, scope and approach

- Purpose: to assess progress in linking humanitarian and development (LHD) programming; provide insights and recommendations for practical improvements.
- Approach: mixed methods, collecting, synthesizing and triangulating qualitative and quantitative evidence from internal and external sources.

Overall findings

- UNICEF has made progress in advancing the nexus in programming. Particular milestones include the 2019 Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming and the 2020 revised Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action.
- Many country offices improved programme planning and created the basis for better outcomes for vulnerable children and their families.
- Several areas need strengthening, however.
Definition and coherence

- Framing of linking’ humanitarian and development programming neglects peacebuilding dimension, reinforcing notion that these are two discrete ways to programme.
- LHD not prominently integrated into the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021.
- Procedure has had traction, particularly in development of country programme documents.

Key Recommendations

- Ensure ‘nexus’ new approach and language are fully and prominently integrated in the new Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.
- Integrate a clear statement of UNICEF role and contribution to the peace dimension of the nexus and the centrality of humanitarian principles into the next Strategic Plan, all programme policies, procedures and guidance, including in revision of the Procedure.
Partnerships

• Clear and consistent policy commitments to: (i) LHD programming in coordination processes, (ii) better supporting local humanitarian action, (iii) strengthening national and local systems and capacities for humanitarian responses linked to development.

• Effective use of leadership or co-leadership of multiple sectors to promote inter-agency LHD strategies; advancing nexus through joint programming with other United Nations agencies.

• Efforts to build local civil society capacities or transform local partnerships in line with nexus commitments were mixed.

Key Recommendations

• Review and strengthen how UNICEF approaches its civil society partnerships, in line with its localization commitments.

• Training and support to ensure UNICEF staff in leadership, senior programme and coordination roles can confidently manage across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programming.
Planning and programming

- UNICEF making progress developing strong guidance in the areas of: (i) risk-informed programming; (ii) emergency preparedness; (iii) accountability to affected populations; (iv) gender and disability responsiveness; (v) linking humanitarian cash transfers and social protection; (vi) conflict sensitivity; (vii) peacebuilding and social cohesion.

- However, guidance - particularly on accountability to affected populations (AAP), conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and social cohesion - are not consistently translating into effective action at country level.

Key Recommendations

- Improve peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity in next Strategic Plan and revised LHD procedure; further invest in staff capacities to strengthen the approach to peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.

- Strengthen application of guidance on risk-informed programming; ensure AAP, gender- and disability-responsiveness are more systematically embedded in programming.
Internal systems and structures

• ‘Siloed’ reporting, financing and staffing systems not supporting nexus approaches; this is rooted in the bifurcated assistance architecture that UNICEF has internalized in its structures.

• Lack of funding for linking activities and nexus approaches has been a significant constraint to undertaking nexus activities.

Key Recommendations

• Harmonize and combine work planning processes using stronger context and risk analysis, including conflict analysis.

• Develop an improved set of specific indicators to track the prevalence of nexus approaches; develop a nexus marker.

• Take a leadership role in advocacy to advance global humanitarian financing commitments; increase levels of quality funding.
COVID-19 and the nexus

• UNICEF adapted its ways of working to respond to COVID-19, which created real opportunities for better linking programming for public health emergencies and development programming in its planning and reporting systems.

Key Recommendations

• Maximize learning and opportunities for LHD programming provided by the COVID-19 response, including through more integrated planning and reporting systems.
• Build on the momentum of COVID-19 response to further support shock-responsive social protection, and strengthen local and national capacities for disaster risk management.
Thank you.