The next steps of our journey will depend on our willingness to adapt to the changing world around us to infuse equity throughout our programmes and the post-2015 targets and to find new ways to realize the rights – and brighten the futures – of the most disadvantaged children around the world.

Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF
Significant progress has been made in the last decade, yet huge gaps remain

Fifteen years of concerted effort towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have yielded tremendous progress in tackling some of the world’s greatest development challenges. Declines in child mortality since 1990 have allowed an estimated 100 million more children to see their fifth birthday. Some 721 million fewer people live in extreme poverty today than in 1990. More than 2.5 billion people have gained access to improved sources of drinking water in the past 25 years. Upwards of 90 per cent of children in low- and middle-income countries are now enrolling in primary school.

Despite the gains, millions of children are yet to be reached with the essentials of life, and many children continue to be trapped in a vicious cycle of inequity. There are still 960 million people in the world practising open defecation.
In 2015 alone, an estimated 5.9 million children will die before age 5. The most recent data show that an estimated 4.3 million children, including adolescents, are living with HIV. Almost 700 million people still lack an improved drinking water source, and 2.4 billion people still lack access to improved sanitation.

Furthermore, one in four children under 5 continues to suffer from stunting, involving some 161 million children. Additionally, about 58 million boys and girls are still missing out on their right to primary education, one in five children of lower secondary school age are out of school, and significant equity gaps exist in learning outcomes. If current rates of child marriage hold, the total number of women married as children will grow from 700 million today to 950 million in 2030. Children are over-represented among the poor in developing countries, and poverty among children is also a rising concern in high-income countries.

Thus, overall, for millions of children, the burden of disadvantage involves the lack of opportunities throughout childhood and missed chances in adolescence, creating conditions for long-term inequality.

The evidence, nonetheless, suggests that eliminating these deprivations among children is more than a moral obligation for society; it makes economic sense.

Better child health has immediate benefits, such as lowering treatment costs and increased school attendance. It is also associated with lower fertility rates. In the long term, these benefits translate into a more productive labour force, higher life expectancy coupled with increased wages and savings – ultimately fuelling greater investments in the economy and a cycle of growth. A 2014 study in *The Lancet* estimates that increasing health expenditure in 74 high-income countries by US$5 per person through 2035 could yield up to nine times that value in economic benefits.

Education has long been considered a key investment in individual productivity and earnings. The evidence shows that, on average, one more year of education brings a 10 per cent increase in an individual’s earnings. Additionally, if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills, some 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty. The social and economic rates of return for primary and secondary education are estimated to be more than 20 per cent.

Thus, investments for children, particularly the most disadvantaged, are investments not just in tackling inequality and poverty, but investments that contribute substantially to economic development.

**Investing in children is both an obligation and an opportunity**

Indisputable evidence shows that investments in children generate significant economic and social returns for society at large. These benefits take many forms: from improving labour productivity and lowering crime rates to breaking inter-generational cycles of deprivation.
Why partner with UNICEF?

UNICEF delivers results for children that change their lives, focusing on the most excluded

• Focusing first and most intently on the children left furthest behind lies at the heart of the mission and work of UNICEF. Whether children come from the poorest homes or the most marginalized ethnic groups, UNICEF has long been committed to putting the rights of children at the top of global and national agendas. This commitment is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and embedded in UNICEF’s mission statement: “In everything it does, the most disadvantaged children and the countries in greatest need have priority.”

• UNICEF promotes the rights and well-being of every child, everywhere. Together with partners, UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, making a special effort to reach the most vulnerable and excluded children. In 157 of the 190 countries, UNICEF, in cooperation with governments and other partners, executes country programmes that focus on the most disadvantaged children, including those living in fragile contexts, those with disabilities, those who are affected by rapid urbanization and those affected by environmental degradation.

• UNICEF’s comparative advantages give it a distinctive position to support the realization of the rights of children, especially the most disadvantaged children. These advantages include an international normative mandate based on the widely ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child; proven capacity in multiple sectors; a mandate that covers the development-humanitarian continuum; a strong field presence and a capacity to engage concurrently at multiple levels – global, regional, country and local – to address barriers to child well-being. In addition, UNICEF is one of a few international organizations that has the capacity to address all the key dimensions of child well-being – including health care,
nutrition, access to safe water and sanitation, education and protection – in both development and humanitarian situations. UNICEF has the capacity and reach to support the direct provision of essential services for children, strengthen the capacity of partners engaged directly in the provision of services and provide evidence-based policy advice to governments with the capacity to expand service delivery.

UNICEF works on strategic and innovative activities and partnerships that leverage funding and can be scaled up for the benefit of entire societies

- UNICEF’s networking, convening and advocacy roles and its unique partnerships support the development of innovative and real-time solutions to the challenges that interfere with realizing rights for children and achieving equity in a diverse range of national contexts.

- UNICEF is committed to and uses innovative approaches to better the lives of children. Fundamentally, UNICEF innovation work has a focus on providing access to information, opportunity and choice to the world’s most vulnerable populations. Furthermore, globally UNICEF leads in collecting data, monitoring and reporting on the situation of children. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) implemented by 108 countries form the basis of monitoring the achievement of the MDGs and setting the baseline for the Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

UNICEF’s comparative advantages give it a distinctive position to support the realization of the rights of children ... These advantages include an international normative mandate based on the widely ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child; proven capacity in multiple sectors; a mandate that covers the development-humanitarian continuum; a strong field presence and a capacity – global, regional, country and local – to address barriers to child well-being.
UNICEF’s Strategic Plan 2014–2017 describes the key areas of the organization’s work and expected results – globally as well as in some 157 countries where UNICEF has programmes on the ground. The Strategic Plan focuses on seven outcomes: health; HIV/AIDS; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); education; nutrition; child protection; and social inclusion. Humanitarian action, gender equality and human rights cut across all seven outcomes. Annex 1 provides a summary of some of the results that UNICEF expects to achieve through the Strategic Plan.

ANNEX 1: Planned outcomes of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2014–2017

**Health**

UNICEF focuses on supporting global efforts to reduce under-five mortality through improved and equitable use of high-impact maternal, newborn and child health interventions from pregnancy to adolescence and promotion of healthy behaviours.

Key programme areas are immunization, polio eradication, maternal and newborn health, child health, health systems strengthening and health in humanitarian situations.

In all programme areas, UNICEF continues to partner with governments, other UN agencies, other international organizations, civil society and the private sector to achieve equitable results in health, especially for the most disadvantaged children. Over the course of the Strategic Plan, UNICEF seeks to mobilize US$4.1 billion for work on children’s health, of which US$2.5 billion has been raised, thus leaving a funding gap of US$1.6 billion.

**WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)**

UNICEF focuses on supporting global efforts to eliminate open defecation and increase use of safe drinking water through improved and equitable access to safe drinking water sources, sanitation and healthy environments and improved hygiene practices.

Key programme areas include water supply, sanitation, hygiene, WASH in Schools and early childhood development centres and WASH in humanitarian situations.

Over the course of the Strategic Plan, UNICEF seeks to mobilize US$2.2 billion for work on children and WASH, of which US$1 billion has been raised, thus leaving a funding gap of US$1.2 billion.

**HIV and AIDS**

Emphasis is placed on supporting global efforts to prevent new HIV infections and increase treatment during the first two decades of a child’s life through improved and equitable use of proven HIV prevention and treatment interventions by pregnant women, children and adolescents.

Key programme areas include prevention of mother-to-child transmission and infant male circumcision, care and treatment of young children affected by HIV/AIDS, adolescents and HIV/AIDS, protection and support for children and families and HIV/AIDS in humanitarian situations. Over the course of the Strategic Plan, UNICEF seeks to mobilize US$740 million for work on children and HIV/AIDS, of which US$258 million has been raised.

**Nutrition**

Emphasis is placed on supporting global efforts to reduce undernutrition, with particular focus on stunting, through improved and equitable use of nutritional support and improved nutrition and care practices.

Key programme areas include infant and young child feeding, micronutrients, nutrition and HIV, community-based management of acute malnutrition and nutrition in humanitarian situations.

UNICEF supports a focus on early childhood given the crucial impact of nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life in preventing childhood stunting. Over the course of the Strategic Plan, UNICEF seeks to mobilize US$1.5 billion for work on children and nutrition, of which US$672 million has been raised, thus leaving a funding gap of over US$800 million.
Humanitarian action

In humanitarian action, UNICEF strives to save lives and protect rights as defined in the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and in line with internationally accepted standards. The focus is on systematically reducing vulnerability to disasters and conflicts for effective prevention of and response to crises, improving links between development programmes and humanitarian response and on promoting rapid recovery and building community resilience to shocks that affect children. Apart from the institutional architecture for overseeing the various types of response, humanitarian-related programmes are mainstreamed in the above seven outcome areas. UNICEF’s funding gap for strengthening the global architecture for humanitarian action is US$177.6 million.

Gender equality

In gender equality, UNICEF continues to identify and leverage positive cross-sectoral synergies and linkages, such as the linkages between improved girls’ education and an end to child marriage and lower maternal mortality rates. Focus is also placed on increasing access to services and opportunities by women and girls and their inclusion and participation in all facets of life, advocacy and technical support on gender-equitable policies, budgeting and resource allocations, and on collecting and using sex-disaggregated and other gender-related data. UNICEF promotes gender-sensitive interventions as a core programmatic priority and, to the extent possible, all relevant policies and programmes mainstream gender equality. UNICEF seeks US$326 million for targeted and institutional strengthening programmes.
4 Transforming children’s lives: How UNICEF delivers results

UNICEF is uniquely positioned to deliver results for children. Given its comparative strengths, the evolving nature of the development context and the enormous challenges children face, UNICEF is constantly striving to implement management practices and operational excellence based on clear principles, accountability and transparency in order to achieve results for children, especially the most disadvantaged. These are outlined below.

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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tr>
<td>Generating evidence for policy, programming and monitoring the situation of children</td>
<td>UNICEF places emphasis on evidence-based decision making. Considerable effort goes into generating both primary and secondary data on the well-being of children for use by the entire development community, as well as for improving the design and implementation of UNICEF-assisted programmes.</td>
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<td>Investing in and scaling up innovations</td>
<td>To seize the opportunities provided by new emerging technological and substantive transformations, UNICEF is committed to and uses innovative approaches to better the lives of children. Award-winning innovations are being developed and used in an array of countries in areas such as youth engagement, birth registration, transparency and accountability and using real-time information for better programming and policy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Results</td>
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<td>Partnership building</td>
<td>UNICEF prioritizes the forging of new approaches to collaboration and partnership building, including jointly designing initiatives and managing for results. This includes devising new collaboration modalities and recognizing the vital contributions of non-state actors in delivering results for children, including with:</td>
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<td>• <strong>The private sector</strong>: The tremendous power of the private sector to do good, optimize opportunities for children and contribute to the creation of a socially and economically just world is undisputed. UNICEF has already begun to realize the full potential of the private sector by adopting the ‘Children’s Rights and Business Principles’ and through its Integrated Corporate Engagement Strategy. UNICEF is also creating spaces in which private companies are supported, guided and encouraged to innovate for children, as well as expanding its engagement with multi-stakeholder platforms.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Civil society</strong>: UNICEF is engaging the full range of civil society strategically and comprehensively to achieve meaningful, enduring results for children. In particular, UNICEF is tapping into the incredible potential offered by all levels of civil society, especially community-based organizations (CBOs), who are distinctively placed to reach the most vulnerable populations, have unparalleled knowledge of and access to marginalized communities and offer a potential path for sustainable programming.</td>
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<td>Enhancing capacity of national institutions</td>
<td>Realizing child rights also depends on enhancing the capacity of institutions at both the national and local levels to formulate and deliver policies and collect and analyse evidence on progress in fulfilling children’s rights. These efforts focus on all branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial) and a wide range of partners.</td>
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<td>Improving the effectiveness of programmes in pursuit of greater impact</td>
<td>To deliver sustainable results for children, UNICEF is focused on development solutions with emphasis on building systems, in addition to directly providing services where public systems are non-existent, especially in humanitarian situations. UNICEF achieves this by investing in rigorous analysis of the situation of women and children that identifies the most critical actions and goals for a given country context, as well as targets and relevant actors for achieving those goals.</td>
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<td>Accountability and transparency</td>
<td>UNICEF is committed to making information about its programmes and operations available to the public. It joined the International Aid Transparency Initiative in 2012 and is making information available on one or more of its public-access websites and/or websites of the United Nations System. Additionally, UNICEF has also adopted the International Public Sector Accounting Standards to enhance the quality of its financial reporting by ensuring improved accountability, governance and transparency.</td>
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<td>Investing in human resource development</td>
<td>To meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and deliver against the Strategic Plan, UNICEF is continuously improving both its mode of engagement, as well as the core skills of its workforce. This includes a focus on a client-engagement model, in which staff are responsive to the demands of the organization’s clients (children and partners).</td>
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<td>Strengthening advocacy and communication</td>
<td>UNICEF communication and advocacy is strengthened by greater investment in approaches that are contextual and evidence-based and that drive the organization’s core principles and reinforce programming across all sectors. These include the use of data and applied research/operational knowledge, building stronger relationships with development actors and greater utilization of digital media to reach children and partners.</td>
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On 21 March 2015, a local community leader praises the hard work of members of the Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) in the Local Government Area of Dambatta, Kano State, Nigeria. As women, members of FOMWAN have greater access to households and, therefore, have been instrumental in ensuring more children are reached with vaccinations. Nigeria is one of just three countries worldwide where polio remains endemic.

Strategic Plan 2014-2017


UNICEF Results Reports
(the annual Report on Regular Resources, the Annual Results Reports etc.)
- Website; open from <www.unicef.org/publicpartnerships/66662_66837.html>.

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