

**Midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017:
Lessons learned**

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Introduction

1. This paper reviews the lessons learned during the first two years of implementation of the current Strategic Plan, 2014–2017.¹ It complements the report on the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 and annual report of the Executive Director, 2015: performance and results, including a report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (E/ICEF/2016/6).

2. The lessons presented in this paper cover the following:

(a) The role of the Strategic Plan in guiding the work of the organization globally and at the country level;

(b) What works in achieving results for children in the outcome areas and cross-cutting priorities of the plan; and,

(c) What works in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the systems, tools and processes used to implement the plan.

3. The lessons learned are based on evidence gathered from a range of sources, including: (a) independent evaluations of the work of UNICEF; (b) research and studies by UNICEF and partner organizations on programmatic and operational issues; (c) annual reports and other periodic reporting by UNICEF country offices, regional offices and headquarters divisions; and (d) interviews with key informants at headquarters and in regional offices. Some of the key source documents are referenced in the endnotes to this paper. Drawn from the experiences gained in 2014 and 2015, the identification of lessons learned is intended to inform the organization's work in the remaining period of the current plan, as well as the preparation for the strategic plan 2018–2021.

4. This paper is organized into six sections. Section 1 presents a summary of some overarching lessons in the implementation of the Strategic Plan. On the basis of the evaluability assessment of the Strategic Plan, section 2 discusses the role of the plan in shaping the work of UNICEF. Section 3 focuses on lessons specific to the outcome areas and cross-cutting areas of the plan. Lessons from the implementation strategies of the plan are reviewed in section 4. Section 5 discusses lessons related to organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The final section (section 6) outlines how UNICEF is responding and will respond to these lessons.

I. Executive Summary: Some overarching lessons

5. As noted in the independent evaluability assessment of the Strategic Plan², the plan serves in practice as an overarching framework rather than as a blueprint. While it provides a strong guide to UNICEF work at country level, it explicitly incorporates a great deal of flexibility that allows UNICEF to respond appropriately to different country contexts and to lessons learned over time, as well as to drive change through regional and global level action. With the emphasis on universality in the Sustainable Development Goals, context-specific programming will become even more important in the years ahead, which must be reflected in the next strategic plan.

6. The lessons learned review confirmed the strategic value of equity-focused programming and advocacy. Attention to equity continued to enhance the organization's effectiveness on the ground, including through better targeting of interventions for the most disadvantaged children. It

will be important to build on this experience. Equity measurement should become more integral to the Strategic Plan results framework. At country level, a key priority is system strengthening that builds demand for data from decision makers and also builds capacity for the collection, analysis and effective communication of disaggregated data.

7. It is important to note that, while drafting the Strategic Plan, it was difficult to anticipate and plan for the number, scale and complexity of humanitarian crises affecting children in 2014, 2015 and 2016. As UNICEF has adapted its response to these crises in real time, the importance of continuous risk-informed programming has become particularly clear. In rapidly changing contexts, risk assessments must be continually updated to respond to new realities and the results of these assessments fed into programming in an iterative manner. Furthermore, emergency preparedness and strengthening the resilience of communities and delivery systems should be core to the work of UNICEF in various country contexts. The Ebola epidemic in West Africa drew attention to the particular importance of incorporating epidemic preparedness and response capacity into the United Nations development system's health systems strengthening efforts, including those of UNICEF. Furthermore, there is a growing recognition that conflict, fragility, climate change, rapid urbanization and extreme poverty threaten children's opportunities for a fair chance in life and make it more difficult to sustain progress. Strengthening resilient development in disadvantaged communities can contribute to overcoming these barriers.

8. Lessons from the field reinforce the longstanding UNICEF view that the voices of children and their families are a strong driving force for strengthening accountability in local governance. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, UNICEF should focus more strongly on actively supporting initiatives that enable citizens, communities and civil society organizations (CSOs) to share their feedback on actions by Governments towards achievement of the global goals. There are also clear cross-cutting lessons related to demand-side interventions. Integrating sound communication for development (C4D) approaches has proven to be vital in increasing the impact of programme interventions. In both development and humanitarian contexts, and across all sectors of UNICEF work, strengthening C4D should be understood as an essential component of programme delivery.

9. The review confirmed the increasing success of UNICEF in catalysing and promoting innovations. The key lesson to emerge in this area is that innovation work needs to be further integrated with other elements of the UNICEF programme and operations in varying country contexts, to ensure that they are responding to priority needs, to make clear evidence-based decisions on when to scale up or replicate innovations, and to ensure that effective innovations are incorporated into the mainstream of UNICEF programming.

10. UNICEF will continue to intensify the application of results-based management (RBM) principles in its work, while strengthening systems for tracking performance at the national level. Such RBM approaches will need to be flexible in order to capture the various dimensions of results for children, including in cross-sectoral programming contexts and in the areas of evidence generation and policy influence.

11. UNICEF has long recognized the importance of partnerships, particularly among the United Nations development system in support of Governments, but also with other development stakeholders, civil society groups and the private sector. Within the United Nations development system, UNICEF continues to draw on lessons from the implementation of the standard operating procedures, including the fact that "one size does not fit all" and that, within the overarching

objective of greater harmonization, the focus on results should be the key driver of United Nations reform.

12. A final cross-cutting lesson to emerge from the review concerns funding. While increases in funding have brought greater opportunities to support the most disadvantaged children, the increasing imbalance between core and non-core resources means that UNICEF is not as effective and efficient as possible in responding to child rights priorities. In order to fully realize its mandate, UNICEF requires flexible resources that enable the organization to respond effectively in a rapidly changing world.

II. Role of the Strategic Plan in shaping UNICEF action and results

13. An evaluability assessment of the Strategic Plan was conducted in 2015, which provided evidence on its robustness, the degree to which the indicators are measurable and the extent to which systems are in place to verify performance.³ The assessment concluded that the current Strategic Plan is widely viewed as the most coherent and technically sound that UNICEF has developed to date. More specifically, the plan was found to be coherent and adequately aligned with the organizational mandate, relevant international agreements and the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. The assessment noted that the plan serves in practice as an overarching framework rather than as a blueprint, providing a guide to the work of UNICEF in countries. Recognizing the variability of country situations and the range of factors outside of the organization's control, the plan was found to provide an appropriate degree of flexibility in determining programme priorities and implementation strategies according to context-specific needs. The assessment concluded that "Country offices, with the strong support of regional offices, have already utilized a number of opportunities in the country programme cycle to reflect on the Strategic Plan and make adjustments in their programmes. Although not outlined in the Strategic Plan, regional offices have facilitated the uptake of strategic plan elements in country programmes by interpreting the global Strategic Plan in terms of regionally-specific priorities."

15. With respect to results-based management, the evaluability assessment determined that the Strategic Plan had a generally strong theory of change and results framework. However, the evaluability assessment also highlighted several challenges, including the need for clearer causality links ("if/then" statements), in particular between results at the outcome and impact level, gaps in some indicators and equity measurement.

16. The review of lessons learned conducted to develop this paper corroborated the overall conclusions of the evaluability assessment in terms of both the relevance and the flexibility of the Strategic Plan. Importantly, the review also showed that UNICEF is making considerable investments in learning as the plan is implemented – through formal research, data and evaluation exercises as well as through consultations and reflections. Importantly, key lessons are leading to adjustments when necessary and feasible.

17. In contrast to the overall strength of the Strategic Plan and its accompanying documents like the Revised Supplementary Programme Note on the Theory of Change and the Revised results framework, the review also concluded that the function and logic of the plan's 'implementation strategies' are less clear, as further outlined in section 4 below. The shortcomings of the implementation-strategies section of the plan do not pose any significant constraint to UNICEF action or results, but they raise questions that should be addressed as UNICEF develops its strategy for 2018–2021.

III. Lessons learned on the outcome areas and cross-cutting priorities of the Strategic Plan

18. As described in the report on the midterm review of the Strategic Plan and annual report of the Executive Director, 2015 (E/ICEF/2016/6) and the Revised results framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2016/6/Add.2), UNICEF continues to adapt to a rapidly changing programming environment. Lessons have been learned and new evidence has emerged in each outcome area of the Strategic Plan, which have in turn catalysed changes in how UNICEF contributes to results.

A. Health

19. There is clear evidence of the effectiveness of high-impact, low-cost interventions for maternal, newborn and child health. Such interventions have been instrumental in the decline in under-five mortality rates since 1990 of more than 50 per cent in all regions. However, in many countries significant gaps remain in service coverage, quality and resilience of health systems and communities. Improvements in health systems and services have not been sustained consistently and capacity gaps persist. To address this, UNICEF and partners have developed a new approach to health systems strengthening (HSS), including attention to community engagement, strengthening national child health policy and financing and multisectoral engagement. This new HSS approach prioritizes generating demand for disaggregated data (and its collection, analysis and use); strengthening procurement, supply and distribution; contributing to social protection systems that support the demand for health services and healthy behaviours; and moving towards universal health coverage. It also supports engagement with the private sector and improving the quality of health care.

20. Findings from the evaluation of a programme for integrated HSS (which focused on the provision of high-impact interventions in six countries in sub-Saharan Africa) offer concrete evidence of the success factors in building national capacity and enabling these services to be taken to scale.⁴ The evaluation showed the overall effectiveness of decentralized, locally based systems, with community health workers delivering immunization and in-community treatment of malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea and severe acute malnutrition (SAM) at an affordable cost and with increasing coverage. At the community level, there needs to be specific attention to demand creation, social mobilization, community dialogue and ensuring that supplies are available. Including integrated community-based approaches to case management within HSS is now a priority approach for UNICEF, particularly in Africa, where the organization works closely with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, other global programme partners and national Governments.

21. Important lessons were learned from the outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa for UNICEF and for the broader United Nations development system. Promoting healthy behaviours and risk reduction requires approaches tailored to the norms and dynamics of each community, recognizing the possibility of enormous cultural and behavioural variations, even in small countries. It is difficult to launch such approaches in response to an emergency if there has not been prior investment in a cadre of trained health workers, social mobilization and C4D work. The supply function is also critical in health emergencies, to ensure the availability of rapid diagnostic tests and the development of vaccines specific to each virus. A sustainable response must be based on national resources and capacity, supported and strengthened by international resources. Finally, the response to the Ebola crisis showed that some elements of the UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action should not be rigidly applied in certain circumstances, such as the

provision of child-friendly spaces when public health mandates require that children be kept at home.

B. HIV and AIDS

22. The prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV represents a major success for the global HIV community, with a more than 50 per cent decline in vertical transmission over the past 15 years. The key to success has been a massive roll out of services, delivered as ‘one pill once a day’ within primary facilities, and decentralized services delivered at the point of health care. Simpler antiretroviral therapy (ART) regimens, advances in effective HIV-testing approaches, and provision of ART to pregnant women living with HIV (including close linkages with nutrition programmes) have proven to be very effective.

23. The importance of simpler regimens delivered at the point of health care is a lesson that has yet to be fully integrated in programmes supporting children living with HIV. Such programmes have achieved slower progress than expected in expanding HIV testing and treatment coverage for children, including adolescents. There is a need for simpler diagnostic technologies that can be used at lower levels of care, as well as age-specific co-formulations of ART. The goal is to have more effective decentralized paediatric HIV diagnostics and simple treatment options delivered at the point of health care, which has proven so successful in PMTCT.

24. In contrast to the continued success of PMTCT programming, progress has been slower in addressing HIV in the second decade of life. This challenge was already highlighted in the theory of change for the Strategic Plan, but the experiences of 2014 and 2015 demonstrate that even more effort is required. Epidemiological evidence shows that new HIV infections continue to occur mainly in adolescent populations, especially among adolescent girls, and that HIV-related deaths continue to rise among adolescents. This points to the importance of increasing comprehensive knowledge about HIV and AIDS among adolescents through dialogue and engagement with adolescents themselves. The ‘All In’ initiative has mobilized commitment and action to address HIV among adolescents; continued advocacy to address gender-related issues and avoid stigmatization of key populations is needed.

25. In the 1990s, very little development assistance was available to support HIV responses and the epidemic spread around the world. From about 2000 onwards, both international and domestic investments rapidly increased, which supported a rapid scale up of prevention and treatment efforts, benefiting children as well as the population at large. Today, with the global HIV epidemic retreating but not defeated, there is a risk that current decreases in HIV-related funding might put recent gains at significant risk. UNICEF is working with partners to urgently develop a comprehensive strategy to address this challenging situation.

C. Water, sanitation and hygiene

26. Two years into the implementation of the Strategic Plan, four key lessons have emerged that are now informing the work of UNICEF work in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

27. First, there is a clear need for expanded private sector engagement and increased investment in WASH. Significant progress has been made in improving access to improved sources of drinking water, but more than 650 million people have not yet been reached, the majority of whom live in poor, isolated or otherwise marginalized communities. Experience indicates that reaching significant numbers of the most-excluded populations will require fundamental policy changes as well as increased budgets. It will also require developing new approaches to WASH in urban areas

with large populations. This in turn requires expanded engagement with the private sector in order to widen delivery options and to leverage resources. UNICEF has introduced initiatives to bring together financial institutions, donors, Governments, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to explore how private sector and domestic financial resources can be mobilized to ensure access to sustainable management of WASH services.

28. Second, experience has underscored the importance of community mobilization for progress in eliminating open defecation and promoting hand-washing. Currently, sanitation coverage remains low in many low- and middle-income countries and nearly 1 billion people worldwide still practice open defecation. Lessons from countries such as Mali, Nepal and Zambia show that a focus on behaviour change related to sanitation – embodying a shift from supply-driven facility-oriented programmes to a demand-driven approach – has achieved tangible results in reducing open defecation. Through the Community Approaches to Total Sanitation (CATS) strategy, social mobilization in India and other countries has raised community awareness and changed individual behaviours. A global evaluation in 2014 confirmed that CATS programmes have been effective and efficient in reducing open defecation;⁵ the evaluation also identified factors that promote and constrain CATS programme success. Tailored approaches involving local markets and the private sector are required to sustain changes in sanitation and to enable further scaling up.

29. Third, and encouragingly, lessons continue to emerge demonstrating how WASH interventions can increase programme effectiveness in other sectors such as nutrition and education. Evidence shows that WASH interventions, particularly when combined with nutrition interventions, can have a significant impact on stunting. Furthermore, strong evidence has emerged across regions showing that the provision of sanitation facilities, hygiene information and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) supplies in schools have a positive impact on girls' well-being and school attendance. This provides concrete indications of how UNICEF can further strengthen intersectoral synergies for maximum programme effectiveness.

30. Finally, the past two years have clearly demonstrated the centrality of WASH interventions to strengthening disaster preparedness and resilience. Since the start of the Strategic Plan, there has been progress in improving the coordination of humanitarian response in WASH, including in the Central African Republic, Pakistan, South Sudan, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. However, further efforts are required by UNICEF and its partners to better link development and humanitarian WASH interventions and strengthen capacities in this regard. Strengthening country systems to integrate climate change and risk management into WASH, collaborating with agencies to improve water security and building capacity of communities in climate change and risk-informed programming have been shown to be crucial for sustainable water supply in countries such as Bangladesh, Jordan and Lebanon.

D. Nutrition

31. This review identified the three main nutrition-related lessons that emerged in 2014 and 2015.

32. Despite ongoing progress in reducing severe acute malnutrition (SAM), there is still a substantial caseload of nearly 14 million children with SAM requiring treatment. The first key nutrition lesson from the first two years of the Strategic Plan is that sustainable and effective SAM interventions should be community-based and integrated within existing health systems.

33. Second, recent evidence clearly indicates that breastfeeding is even more beneficial to children than was previously understood. Globally, breastfeeding rates can be greatly improved in

the short to medium term through continued use of knowledge and behaviour change strategies in combination with regulating the marketing of breastmilk substitutes.

34. Third, there has been improved knowledge about the form and timing of nutrition interventions such as micronutrients and food fortification. Continuously improved technical and programming knowledge has provided a basis for strengthened delivery strategies for vitamin A.

35. The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) initiative has been a major catalyst and support to nutrition efforts globally. As the movement for action on child nutrition continues to grow, UNICEF will have to continue to invest in SUN, as well as in efforts to strengthen nutrition responses in humanitarian action, including through the enhancement of relevant cluster and/or sector coordination.

36. Additional resources are needed to expand coverage of high-impact nutrition interventions. Recent innovative mechanisms to mobilize commitment, action and financing have shown promise. The emerging UNITLIFE initiative, for example, is intended to fund maternal and child nutrition programmes in sub-Saharan Africa through a micro-levy on extractive industries. These and other promising initiatives are among the key responses that can result in accelerated progress in reducing SAM and addressing other nutrition needs.

E. Education

37. Although high levels of school enrolment have been achieved in virtually all countries, in many countries there are still significant numbers of children who never enter primary school. The lessons learned review has shown that UNICEF and its partners are effectively identifying many of those key barriers to primary school enrolment and developing evidence-based responses. Chief among the barriers to achieving full enrolment are the high formal and informal costs of education; language and other barriers faced by ethnic minorities; barriers faced by children with disabilities; and interruption of schooling experienced by children affected by conflict. In response, social protection schemes have proven effective in several countries in addressing the real cost of education to families. For ethnic minorities, bilingual education has proven successful. Increasing coverage of early childhood development (ECD) services in turn leads to increased enrolment in primary education. There is now clear evidence that social norms can be influenced to decrease gender inequality in enrolment and these lessons must be applied more systematically for children with disabilities.

38. For children in chronic conflict situations, both supply- and demand-side interventions are essential but challenging. Greater efforts are needed in capacity-building to raise the quality of schooling in fragile settings, as are further comprehensive strategies, supported by C4D, to promote school attendance for children in conflict situations as well as displaced and refugee children. It is worth highlighting the particular achievements of UNICEF work in the Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme in terms of generating lessons learned over the course of 2014 and 2015. The programme has been a strong platform for research, providing key insights into the factors underpinning fragility and conflict as well as potential pathways for peace. Action research in 14 conflict-affected countries has contributed to the understanding of how social services can contribute to peacebuilding and the transition to stability. The pilot experience and research evidence demonstrate that the education sector is able to contribute to conflict prevention and reduction, and that it does so most effectively when interventions are designed by and involve multiple sectors.

39. Alongside the issues related to education access, there is growing awareness of the importance of focusing on how to achieve and sustain learning outcomes, especially for the most disadvantaged children. A key first step in this effort is to introduce, validate and institutionalize methods and tools to measure such learning outcomes. UNICEF is working with partners to develop new approaches to the measurement of learning, particularly early learning. Learning assessment modules have newly been incorporated into multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS), and UNICEF has worked with partners to successfully advocate for the inclusion of learning metrics in the Sustainable Development Goals.

40. Achieving equity in both educational access and learning outcomes for children requires attention to key disparities, particularly poverty, and those related to location (urban/rural, conflict situations and fragile settings), ethnicity and language, disability and labour participation. A major evaluation of UNICEF upstream work in education found that technical assistance for policy-related work makes a key contribution to scaling up of services, especially for the most deprived children.⁶ The evaluation also noted that further improvements are needed in monitoring, reporting and assessing the impact of upstream interventions. In addition to action on domestic policies and budgets, international support for education remains crucial, but official development assistance funding for education has declined since 2012.

F. Child protection

41. Experience across all regions, combined with the findings from recent global evaluations on child protection in emergencies⁷ and violence against children,⁸ confirm the importance of a combined approach that addresses the specific protection needs of children while making critical investments in strengthening national child protection systems. This includes service delivery mechanisms, workforce capacity and coordination and referral mechanisms at the national and community levels, all supported by strengthened laws, policies and guidelines. A trained social welfare workforce that is in contact with families and communities is vital. A key lesson is the importance of effective referral pathways between the child protection system (including the social welfare and justice systems) and the social protection, education and health systems. Such an integrated approach has proven essential to achieving results, as illustrated by the experience of birth registration.

42. UNICEF has also learned about and leveraged the power of data and other evidence to inform and strengthen communications campaigns and advocacy at the national and international levels. The UNICEF publication entitled *Hidden in Plain Sight*,⁹ the largest-ever compilation of data on the subject of violence against children, helped to support advocacy for a global target on violence in the Sustainable Development Goals. The #ENDviolence against children initiative drew on evidence and human interest stories to reach new audiences and to bolster action in more than 70 countries. The enormous potential of social media and other communication and real-time monitoring tools has special relevance in protection in relation to their impact on social norms.

43. While the overall theory of change in the Strategic Plan remains valid, further work is being done to identify specific interventions that have proven effective in contexts where child protection is a concern. The 2015 evaluation report entitled *Protecting Children from Violence: A comprehensive evaluation of UNICEF's strategies and programme performance* highlighted that child protection systems need to be more sensitive to addressing violence against children (including children with disabilities), and that UNICEF needs to deepen its work on creating effective interventions to address harmful social norms and practices. The evaluation also emphasized that addressing violence against children needs to be a multisectoral priority.

G. Social inclusion

44. In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in global attention to social protection and social welfare as key means of addressing child and household poverty in all country contexts.

45. Within social protection, there has been rich learning around cash transfers, including through a multi-country, multi-year research programme jointly managed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UNICEF.¹⁰ Direct cash transfers, particularly when offered without conditions, are now widely recognized as particularly effective in both development and humanitarian settings. Accumulated evidence suggests that few interventions can match the impact of small, predictable monetary disbursements on multidimensional poverty reduction. Impact evaluations of government-run cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate better development outcomes in health, nutrition and education, and improvements in household resilience to shocks.

46. There is also increasing recognition of the effectiveness of cash transfers as an emergency intervention for families and as a means of support for their transition to recovery. UNICEF experiences with refugees in Jordan and in response to the 2015 earthquake in Nepal have demonstrated that administering emergency cash transfers within existing government systems facilitates rapid scale up. Using existing systems in emergencies also contributes to strengthening those systems for the future. Lessons have also been learned about the limitations of cash transfers in humanitarian contexts. Most importantly, a functioning market needs to be in place so that cash can be readily used to purchase goods, thus avoiding the delays and inefficiencies often associated with in-kind assistance.

47. Social inclusion is by its nature intersectoral. A key area of success has been work undertaken in cooperation with the WASH, child protection, nutrition and other sectors to develop budget briefs and investment cases for advocacy with Governments. Such work promotes increased allocations for children and helps to ensure that children are protected during budget contractions.

H. Gender equality

48. The Strategic Plan establishes gender equality as an integral normative principle and as a core element of the organization's refocus on equity. Based on lessons learned in the previous UNICEF Medium-Term Strategic Plan, the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017 was developed to support achievement of the Strategic Plan by focusing on a combination of targeted gender priorities, gender mainstreaming across all of the outcome areas, and institutional strengthening for gender analysis and response.

49. The identification of four cross-sectoral targeted priorities has been particularly successful, providing country offices with a coherent framework for advancing work on gender and adolescent girls. Important progress is also being made in institutional strengthening. Gender expertise at the headquarters and regional levels has been strengthened.

50. UNICEF has learned that mainstreaming gender-equality efforts can be more challenging than moving forward targeted gender priorities. Further attention is needed to effectively mainstream gender priorities in sectoral service delivery, investments for adolescent girls at scale, and strengthening local and national systems to meet girls' specific needs for services, products and opportunities.

I. Humanitarian action

51. As mentioned above, while developing the Strategic Plan, it was difficult to anticipate the number, scale and complexity of the humanitarian crises that affected children in 2014, 2015 and 2016. The flexibility of the plan, however, allowed for course corrections in response to changing conditions and an increased emphasis on continuous, risk-based programming.

52. To respond to the unprecedented demand for humanitarian response in 2014 and 2015, UNICEF implemented a series of initiatives to strengthen its capacity for humanitarian programming, particularly through the development of simplified standard operating procedures (SSOPs) with clear performance benchmarks to guide management oversight. The procedures have been shown to promote a timely, effective and efficient humanitarian response through improved rapid response mechanisms, adapted administrative procedures and strengthened monitoring and reporting systems. Based on its experience with the SSOPs, UNICEF has been actively involved in the development of inter-agency triggers and guidance for the response to Level 3 emergencies. UNICEF has also strengthened its emergency response teams. There are now more flexible procedures for the deployment of trained staff from across the organization, improving surge capacity for the emergency response.

53. Humanitarian cluster coordination continues to be an important UNICEF contribution to an effective emergency response. Lessons from recent evaluations point to the need for clear management and accountability arrangements for cluster coordination and for clarification of these responsibilities with Governments and other partners. Furthermore, the capacities for decentralization of cluster coordination from national to subnational levels remain a challenge, for example, in the Central African Republic and Nepal.

54. UNICEF contributes to all seven Strategic Plan outcome areas in humanitarian as well as development contexts. Some of the outcome-specific lessons for humanitarian settings have been noted above, including for health, WASH, education, child protection and social inclusion.

J. Integrating humanitarian and development action to strengthen resilience

55. The Strategic Plan notes the importance of reducing vulnerability to disasters and conflicts through risk-informed programming that helps to build resilience.¹¹ A key element of this is emergency preparedness, the importance of which was recently underscored by a three-country UNICEF/WFP (World Food Programme) research initiative that demonstrated that an investment in preparedness of \$1 yields savings of \$2.1 on average in the cost of humanitarian response, and can save over a week in terms of response time. This research initiative has now been expanded to include the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and will also analyse carbon savings derived from preparedness.

56. While UNICEF has advanced the evidence base on the integration of humanitarian and development action, more needs to be done to fully incorporate elements of longer-term risk assessment, preparedness and capacity-building into humanitarian responses, and to build elements of emergency preparedness and wider mitigation and prevention measures into development programmes. The review of lessons learned identifies key building blocks in this process, including: (a) programming designed to target multiple, interrelated risks; (b) cross-sectoral programming aimed to reduce risks and preserve assets, such as disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, peacebuilding and national and local systems strengthening; (c) flexible programming that maximizes the use of entry points, including emergency cash transfers and social protection (as noted in the Nepal example, above); (d) support for social mobilization, behaviour change

communication and community engagement; and (e) flexible management systems for human resources, supplies and contracts and funding.

IV. Lessons learned on the implementation strategies

A. Capacity development

57. Capacity development at the individual, community and government levels forms a core element of all UNICEF-supported programmes, especially in contexts of poor quality and inequitable access to essential services. Over 2014 and 2015, 100 per cent of country offices reported use of ‘capacity development’ as an implementation strategy, one of only two strategies with such a wide level of utilization.

58. UNICEF-supported capacity development initiatives cut across the outcome areas and other implementation strategies. For example, UNICEF launched a corporate initiative in 2015 to support government capacity to roll out C4D interventions in both development and humanitarian contexts. For 20 years, UNICEF has been working with national statistics offices to strengthen their capacity to implement and use the results of increasingly complex household survey programmes. The UNICEF Supply Division increasingly invests in capacity development of countries to efficiently conduct their own procurement and to strengthen supply chains.

B. Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy

59. The Strategic Plan lays out evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy as a key pillar of the work of UNICEF. Country office annual reports show that, along with capacity development, this is the most widely utilized implementation strategy – incorporated into all UNICEF country programmes. Experience in all country contexts confirms that high-quality data and research are in demand everywhere and that they can be powerful tools to inform advocacy and shape the understanding of children’s issues. Evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue can be effective at advancing results for children by informing the development and implementation of investment decisions, standards, guidelines and policies at the national and international levels.

Evidence generation

60. UNICEF is directly involved in generating new evidence about children and in supporting countries to do so. Such evidence can play a key role in strengthening policies, investments and programmes in individual countries as well as serving as a ‘global public good’ that can be used in many settings by many actors.

61. The potential for data collection, analysis and use at country level to contribute to results was repeatedly highlighted by Member States and other actors as the Sustainable Development Goals were developed.

62. Since 1995, UNICEF leadership in and support to the MICS programme has made significant contributions in the provision of reliable data. As MICS has evolved, it has increasingly allowed for data to be disaggregated, which is essential for equity-focused decision-making. In 2014 and 2015, MICS has been further improved to support measurement of access to social protection, household water quality, prevalence of childhood disability and learning outcomes.¹² At the same time, a key lesson to emerge in the Strategic Plan period has been the importance of increasing coordination among international data-related initiatives so as to more effectively support countries. UNICEF has responded by establishing a formal partnership with the other two large international

household survey programmes (the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study and the United States Agency for International Development Demographic and Health Surveys) as well as by joining the World Health Organization convened Health Data Collaborative.

63. Increasing support by UNICEF to countries to strengthen sector-by-sector administrative data collection and use has been widely welcomed at country level. Depending on the sector and the country context, country programmes may be strengthening traditional paper-based systems, introducing real-time monitoring (which is usually facilitated by mobile phones or tablets), or some combination of the two. As reflected in the formative evaluation of MoRES (the Monitoring Results for Equity System) and other country experiences, some of the initial UNICEF work in real-time monitoring was not adequately integrated into overall sector data systems. In addition, not all initial efforts paid adequate attention to the demand for (and use of) data, whether by front-line teachers, social workers and nurses, or by higher-level managers and cabinet ministers.¹³ These lessons have, in turn, influenced further efforts, as reflected in a data for children strategy now under development.

64. The Strategic Plan results framework included targets for peer-reviewed publications in all seven outcome areas. Evidently, UNICEF is conducting and publishing far more research than had been realized when the Plan was developed. Many examples of strategic research results and their impacts are included in the description of outcome area lessons learned described earlier in this paper. These include, for example, the effectiveness of cash transfers and the value of breastfeeding. Research has also played a key role in helping UNICEF to understand and begin to increase its influence in areas outside its traditional programmes, including, for example, characterizing child poverty in rich countries and documenting the risk that climate change poses to disadvantaged children.

65. The review of research-related lessons across the organization has also highlighted some constraints, including limitations in the understanding of research methods, the application of quality standards, including those for ethical review, and the capacity to manage research. Policies, procedures and training materials have been developed to address these constraints. Global standards for quality assurance and ethical review, introduced in 2015, are increasingly being applied. In April 2016 for the first time, the Executive Director issued the UNICEF Policy on Research. The policy applies to all UNICEF research, whether commissioned or undertaken by UNICEF alone, or carried out in partnership with others.

66. The past two years have demonstrated the value of building communication strategies into knowledge-generation activities from the start. An increasing number of countries have active research and evidence committees to oversee the implementation of Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plans and to promote the dissemination and use of evidence generated. There is scope for further enhancing research and knowledge-management activities across the organization, to ensure that evidence generated is strategic and that promising practices are documented and disseminated to help to improve programming.

Policy dialogue and advocacy

67. There is increasing clarity and coherence in the organization's global- and country-level policy dialogue and advocacy strategies, including in humanitarian contexts. Based on lessons learned in the past, UNICEF is effectively basing policy dialogue and advocacy work on robust data and other evidence. UNICEF is also learning about the importance of fully integrating its approach to policy dialogue and advocacy with its broader approach to communication.

68. A key development under the Strategic Plan has been an expansion of the scope of communication work to focus more strongly on public advocacy. This area is gaining significance in middle-income countries, where there is increasing access to communication through mobile technology and other digital platforms. The Global Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy is progressively being rolled out in country offices, with coordination done at the regional level. As of early 2016, 69 countries have adapted the strategy to their particular contexts. Forty countries are in the process of applying the monitoring and measurement framework linked to national systems for communication research and media monitoring.

69. At the same time as increasing its investments in public advocacy, policy dialogue with Member States continues to be a particularly effective way for UNICEF to contribute to enabling environments at the country, regional and global level. For example, in 2014 and 2015, UNICEF contributed to the social protection agenda through policy engagement with the African Union and to data for children through a policy partnership with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. At the global level, UNICEF worked closely with the Group of Friends to influence attention to children within the monitoring framework for the Sustainable Development Goals.

70. Given the organization's universal mandate, increasing attention is also being paid to advocacy in high-income countries, where a recent review has demonstrated that the National Committees for UNICEF have been effectively contributing to policy results for children, both domestically and internationally. National Committee advocacy takes particular advantage of the UNICEF Office of Research *Innocenti Report Card* series, with its consistent attention to child rights in rich countries.

71. There are ongoing challenges to framing and measuring the results of policy dialogue and advocacy: long time frames, the complexity and unpredictability of policy processes, and the involvement of multiple actors and stakeholders. To address these challenges, UNICEF is developing relevant theories of change that address measurement of the organization's policy and advocacy work, including regional initiatives, and their contributions to results.

C. Partnerships

72. As UNICEF conducts virtually all of its work in partnership with others, and as the concept of partnership includes relationships ranging from United Nations country team support to Governments to sub-contracting private entities for service implementation, it is particularly challenging to distill and generalize lessons learned in this area.

73. UNICEF partnerships with other members of the United Nations Development system at global and country levels are particularly important. UNICEF continues to draw on lessons learned from the implementation of the standard operating procedures, including the fact that "one size does not fit all" and that, within the overarching objective of greater harmonization, the focus on results should be the key driver of those efforts.

74. Building on the experience of initiatives such as A Promise Renewed, UNICEF is increasingly working through broader partnership platforms such as the No Lost Generation initiative, which is a joint strategic framework for action by Governments, public and private donors, United Nations agencies, NGOs, CSOs and academic networks. Since its launch in 2013, the initiative has galvanized international concern around the plight of children affected by the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and neighbouring countries, helping to attract funding to sectors that are traditionally underfunded in humanitarian crises and enabling the delivery of important results

for children. It has also contributed to a dialogue among humanitarian and development partners about investing in education and child protection services that bridge immediate response plans and longer-term development efforts.

75. UNICEF works in both formal and informal partnership with a large number of CSOs. At an international level, partnerships with NGOs are particularly important in advancing common advocacy agendas, as was the case in efforts made to promote attention to the rights of children in the Sustainable Development Goals. UNICEF has increasingly and effectively widened its international CSO partnerships beyond development NGOs, to work with faith-based organizations, sporting groups and youth groups. Partnerships with faith-based organizations have been particularly important to influence social norms.

76. Social media and other elements of an increasingly interconnected world have spawned a new generation of transnational social movements. UNICEF recognizes the importance of moving beyond traditional partnership models to effectively engage with and leverage such movements.

77. At country and community levels, UNICEF has dramatically improved its management of implementation partnerships through use of the harmonized approach to cash transfers. In addition to its interactions with community-based organizations (CBOs) as potential implementation partners, UNICEF can also support CBOs to achieve results for children by fostering CBO networks and by facilitating the involvement of CBOs in relevant public policy processes.

78. UNICEF also continues to deepen and innovate in its private sector partnerships. The integrated corporate engagement (ICE) approach is now being used to influence corporate policies and actions that affect children both in a positive and a negative manner. The approach builds on and complements ongoing UNICEF work in promoting the Children's Rights and Business Principles framework, which is intended to strengthen commitments by businesses to respecting and supporting the realization of child rights.¹⁴

D. South-South and horizontal cooperation

79. Support to South-South and horizontal cooperation is an increasingly used implementation strategy for UNICEF, and is closely linked to partnerships and to knowledge exchange.

80. UNICEF plays a useful, if modest, role in support to 'traditional' government-to-government South-South cooperation, for example by identifying areas of mutual benefit for countries, supporting study tours and inter-governmental meetings. In many cases, UNICEF programmes are taking a wider approach, internationally linking not just relevant ministries but also academics, NGOs, civil society, private stakeholders and other actors.

81. UNICEF is also experimenting with information and communications technology (ICT)-enabled horizontal cooperation, and is learning that ICT tools and platforms are not very effective in isolation, but that they can be powerful and cost-efficient when used as a part of a multipronged approach.

E. Innovation

82. Beginning in the latter period of the previous medium-term strategic plan and accelerating in 2014 and 2015, UNICEF has increasingly focused on fostering, identifying and supporting the scale up of innovations for children as an implementation strategy.

83. Innovations happen in all aspects of UNICEF work – from how a C4D initiative is designed and implemented to the invention of new hardware and software. Tools such as U-Report, EduTrac, mTrac and digital community mapping have gained traction and are achieving widespread use in many countries, and are proving to be helpful contributions to real-time and participatory monitoring of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Innovation is also contributing to better results in humanitarian settings, helping vulnerable populations to make their voices heard and providing rapid, locally-based information on needs and on the progress of programmes. Such innovations build on the extensive experience of UNICEF in product innovation in the area of supply, with well-established procedures for scoping new products and for their subsequent development, review and governance.

84. The lessons learned review has highlighted the increasing contribution that innovation is making to UNICEF results as well as the need for dedicated, knowledgeable staff to guide the design and implementation of innovation initiatives. Regional-level support has proven important for advocacy, strategic direction and promoting exchange of experience between countries and sectors. Innovation work is also helping UNICEF to identify and work with a broad range of non-traditional partners, often at relatively little cost, but facilitation of such partnerships also requires dedicated staff attention.

85. It has also become clear that innovation initiatives need to be continually monitored and reviewed to determine implementation status, results achieved and any need for course corrections. Specific attention must be paid to robust, independent assessment prior to making decisions on if or how to promote scale up or replication of innovations, and to facilitate the incorporation of effective innovations into the mainstream of UNICEF programming.

F. Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages

86. The Strategic Plan highlights the importance of integration and cross-sectoral interventions as an implementation strategy to promote child well-being. The lessons learned in relation to two of these areas – ECD and children with disabilities – are especially noteworthy.

Early childhood development

87. The Sustainable Development Goals recognize ECD as a key priority for achieving sustainable development, poverty eradication, equality and women’s empowerment. The Strategic Plan highlights ECD as a priority area of cross-sectoral engagement; it is identified as a priority in all regions and there are multiple approaches to programming for ECD. Results have been demonstrated in child development, positive (more protective) parent-child interactions and better emotional health of the parents.

88. UNICEF has learned that effectively delivering ECD services requires application of a strong combination of sectoral strategies and intersectoral coordination. Similarly, delivery platforms, such as the community, clinic, school or media, need to be supported to deliver ECD services. This often works well when community, city or district-level leaders have responsibility for ECD.

89. Increased attention needs to be paid to ECD in humanitarian action. There is clear evidence on the detrimental long-term impacts on young children living in fragile contexts, a negative outcome that can potentially be averted through ECD interventions. Since the start of the Strategic Plan, the Early Childhood Development Kit for use in emergencies has reached almost 4 million children, contributing to children’s emotional well-being and cognitive and social development.

Children with disabilities

90. The Strategic Plan mainstreams disability across all the outcome areas. Support to children with disabilities includes efforts to protect their rights and to address stigma and discrimination. It calls for contributing to national programmes to increase the coverage of appropriate and inclusive services and to remove physical and social barriers to the participation of children with disabilities. The plan also supports quality data on the type and prevalence of child disability. Currently, more than 100 UNICEF country offices are programming for the rights and inclusion of children with disabilities.

91. Challenges have arisen, however, in reaching a critical mass and ensuring the quality of UNICEF programming. Information on progress towards achieving results for children with disabilities is constrained by the lack of specific results indicators in the Strategic Plan results framework, as well as by country-level data limitations. UNICEF is working to address these gaps through sector strategies, including for health, education and WASH. In addition, UNICEF in 2015 developed and launched flexible new data-collection tools to assess and measure how disabilities affect children.

G. Service delivery

92. Over the past several years, important lessons have been learned about service delivery at the community level. A major formative evaluation in South Asia of the Let Us Learn initiative emphasized the centrality of community engagement and participation to ensure the success of service-delivery interventions in education. The evaluation also stressed the need to plan strategically, taking into account the local context; to consider the effectiveness, scalability and sustainability of interventions from an early point; and to assess partners' capacity to deliver and scale up the interventions. Similar lessons have been learned in other sectors, for example in health service delivery, as described earlier in this paper.

V. Lessons learned on organizational efficiency and effectiveness

93. UNICEF implemented significant reforms in 2014 and 2015 to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. A major achievement was the opening of the Global Shared Services Centre in Budapest in September 2015 to provide global finance, human resources, administrative and information technology functions. Details of these reforms are included in the report on the midterm review of the UNICEF integrated budget 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2016/AB/L.2).

94. A reorganization of functions across headquarters divisions, concurrent with the establishment of the Field Results Group in 2014, brought the Programme Division and the Office of Emergency Programmes under one pillar. This has contributed to the achievement of the key goal of better aligning and integrating humanitarian and development work. Similarly, a reconfigured Division of Data, Policy and Research and the Public Partnerships Division were brought under one pillar, strengthening global strategy and the management of partnerships. A key lesson here is that there are significant efficiencies to be gained by functional streamlining. UNICEF will build on these experiences to continue to seek greater efficiencies in its operations.

A. Results-based management

95. Results-based management (RBM) has been strengthened in the current Strategic Plan. This approach had been a focus of corporate efficiency and effectiveness initiatives in previous years, and progress in this regard was noted in a 2013 review by the Organisation for Economic Co-

operation and Development of UNICEF development effectiveness,¹⁵ which also noted the potential for further improvements. A series of initiatives undertaken since 2014 has strengthened the frameworks, tools and procedures to support RBM across UNICEF operations.

96. The current Strategic Plan introduced the theory of change as a core part of strategic planning and programming. The theory of change developed for the plan at the global level emphasized the identification of strategic assumptions and established a set of overall narratives of how results were intended to be achieved. Country offices were encouraged to develop theories of change for programme outcomes based on their specific contexts.

97. A Strategic Plan scorecard was introduced as part of the midterm review and will now be produced annually to monitor corporate performance by UNICEF.

98. In 2014, UNICEF established the Field Results Group to strengthen organizational systems for RBM. Among other areas, the Field Results Group has worked on addressing a key lesson learned during the first two years of Strategic Plan implementation on the need for more automated and integrated tools to support country-level programme management. The development of eTools, a common mobile platform, builds on a selection of individual digital tools that were developed by country offices. The tools are currently being expanded to support field monitoring, workplan management and transactional functions.

99. A global formative evaluation on the application of MoRES was completed in 2014, including case studies from countries where MoRES had been implemented.¹⁶ The evaluation found that MoRES has been widely supported by Governments and other partners, and that different elements of MoRES have been productively employed in different settings. The system has helped countries to obtain low-cost information for identifying local needs and inequities, gaps in access to services and the delivery of programme inputs. This information facilitates microplanning and social accountability at the community level.

100. Several key lessons have been learned in 2014 and 2015 about risk-informed programming, including the importance of linking operational risk management (i.e. the identification of external and internal operational risks, determination of the acceptable level of risk to be borne and development of procedures to manage and mitigate them) to strengthen national and community capacity to identify and prepare for risks of natural disasters, climate change and conflicts. At the global level, steps are under way to review the various risk frameworks that are being used in both humanitarian and development contexts and to determine how they can best be harmonized.

101. While the majority of UNICEF evaluations are carried out at the country level, global thematic and meta-evaluations (including inter-agency evaluations) have proven particularly useful in providing evidence on priority issues and emerging areas. In particular, global meta-evaluations on themes such as cash transfers have usefully informed organizational learning by offering an understanding of the findings of multiple evaluations on a particular topic and informing corporate perspectives. More systematically linking evaluation and research on related topics in knowledge-generation strategies and knowledge products could enhance the value gained from evaluations.

B. Supply

102. UNICEF supply work has fostered competitive supply markets that are sustainable but also fairly priced; this has contributed to substantial procurement savings of an estimated \$200 million per year between 2012 and 2014.

103. Recognizing that timely availability of funds is critical to timely availability of commodities, UNICEF has learned that it must invest significant attention to expanding and innovating in financing for commodities. UNICEF has therefore convened banks and other financial institutions, partners and government officials to explore non-traditional development financing solutions. A key result has been the expansion of the UNICEF revolving fund to support immunization, the Vaccine Independence Initiative (VII). The throughput and efficiency of VII operations were increased during 2014, and the UNICEF Executive Board approved a tenfold expansion of the VII capital base ceiling and a broadening of the list of essential supplies for children that could be pre-financed by the mechanism. By applying lessons about vaccine financing to other sectors, industry consultations with nutrition suppliers were successfully expanded to include commercial financing institutions, an approach that will now be replicated by UNICEF in other commodity groups and across regions.

104. As countries transition from low- to middle-income status, they often lose both donor financing for essential commodities for children and concessionary pricing that is offered to the lowest-income countries from some suppliers. UNICEF special contracting terms and its support to partner-led advocacy efforts helped in the scale-up of production of more cost-effective vaccines and resulted in significant price decreases. UNICEF advocacy efforts also contributed to the endorsement of a strategy for coordinated efforts to overcome current vaccine demand and supply impediments faced by middle-income countries.

105. Product innovation is necessary to bring about fit-for-purpose and acceptable essential commodities to address the needs of children. Some 20 supply-related innovation projects, in various stages of development, are active each year. Because pneumonia is the largest cause of under-five mortality and is commonly misdiagnosed, the focus among the innovation products has been on the development of new pneumonia diagnostics that are context-relevant and affordable. The first generation of these devices are about to go into field trials.

C. Human resources

106. A wide range of human resources reforms have continued to enable UNICEF to deliver on the Strategic Plan in the evolving context of development and humanitarian action. These are described in the report on the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 and annual report of the Executive Director, 2015 (E/ICEF/2016/6).

D. Information and communications technology

107. With the rapid expansion of the digital landscape, ICT has gained significantly in importance during the Strategic Plan period, not just as a critical support function but also as a resource for leveraging technology in programme areas.

108. The UNICEF Division of Information Technology Solutions and Services has been learning to work more closely with programme, policy and partnership divisions to support an agile, iterative approach to ICT-enabled projects. It has become clear that UNICEF needs common methods for defining ICT project scope, identifying and managing risks, clarifying accountabilities and planning and managing implementation – all based on industry standards. UNICEF is responding to these lessons with guidance and tools, which will need to be monitored and evaluated in the years ahead.

109. A new corporate strategy currently under development will reflect and support the transformation of the ICT function in UNICEF. The strategy is expected to raise the innovation

profile of ICT and reinforce the ICT role in development and humanitarian efforts, in line with high-level recognition of just how transformative digital platforms can be.

E. United Nations coherence and Delivering as One

110. UNICEF continues to contribute significantly to the work of the United Nations system through its global engagement in strategic processes (e.g., that for development of the Sustainable Development Goals), critical system-wide issues such as reducing inequalities, and through active participation in joint programming at the country level. The organization's commitment to United Nations coherence is particularly evident in the extensive staff time that goes into joint programming processes at the country level.

111. Experience with joint programming has informed how agencies work together towards agreed common results under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and other joint frameworks. The results group modality has proven an effective way to organize coordinated efforts by the United Nations system, with UNICEF playing a significant role. In 2015, UNICEF offices participated in 762 results groups in 123 countries, with UNICEF leading or co-leading one third of these groups. More than half of the results groups have harmonized planning, monitoring, reporting and clear agency accountability through joint workplans. Flexible approaches, a focus on results and a commitment to working together are identified as key ingredients of success.

112. UNICEF has also gained increasing experience in implementing joint programmes, collaborating in 2015 with 26 agencies to implement a total of 199 joint programmes in 79 countries, using a variety of funding modalities. Key lessons point to the importance of several factors in achieving better results from joint programmes through respecting agencies' comparative advantages and mandates, and harmonizing and streamlining management systems.

113. Within the framework of the QCPR recommendations, the standard operating procedures for Delivering as One, launched at the beginning of the Strategic Plan period, have proven to be a potent approach for advancing United Nations coherence according to the country context. Delivering as One approaches have been progressively adapted to the situation and needs of specific countries, with strong UNICEF engagement. UNICEF has been closely involved in the implementation, testing and adaptation of models for Delivering as One, including through joint planning frameworks, joint programming and joint funding on selected issues. Positive experience has also been gained with United Nations country teams in the use of common budgetary frameworks and joint resource mobilization strategies as a complement to agency-specific fundraising.

114. In the area of Operating as One, UNICEF has gained significant experience in achieving operational efficiencies through common services and shared contracting involving the majority of United Nations country teams. UNICEF actively participates in arrangements for common services in nearly all countries, and in an increasing number of common long-term agreements and common approaches in procurement.

VI. UNICEF responses to the key lessons learned

115. As outlined in this paper and as summarized in the report on the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 and annual report of the Executive Director, 2015 (E/ICEF/2016/6), UNICEF has already gained extensive lessons over the first two years of Strategic Plan implementation.

116. Most of these lessons are being used immediately to either reinforce ongoing work as appropriate, or to inform changes in UNICEF approaches and actions. While this has been particularly visible in the area of humanitarian action, UNICEF is also systematically responding to both new evidence about what works and to operational lessons across all areas of the work of the organization.

117. In several areas, lessons learned have catalysed decisions to develop new strategies or frameworks. This paper notes that recent lessons have spurred the development of new approaches to HSS, data for children, ICT for development and climate change. While not documented in detail in this paper, frameworks are also being updated in other areas of work, including WASH, HIV and working with children in urban settings. The lessons learned have also catalyzed new initiatives, such as the ‘All In’ initiative to increase the focus on and results for adolescents affected by HIV.

118. Some lessons have led to specific proposals that are contained in the Revised results framework of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2016/6/Add.2) that will be considered at the annual session of the Executive Board in June 2016, including:

- (a) Identification of indicators that allow more complete measurement of relevant change processes;
- (b) Rigorously applying sound RBM principles to the structure and wording of indicators, and in their monitoring;
- (c) Strengthening the equity focus of indicators through further use of disaggregated data.

119. Also in response to lessons learned, the midterm review of the Strategic Plan emphasizes the ongoing soundness of the plan overall while noting a number of areas where UNICEF needs to either do more work or to work differently, including in relation to cross-sectoral work, urbanization, climate change, adolescents, ECD, and refugee and other migrant children.

120. Most importantly, as UNICEF works with stakeholders to develop a strategy for 2018 to 2021, it should take into account not only the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but also key lessons learned about the value of flexibility, context-specificity and the need to adjust strategies over time, as circumstances and evidence evolve.

ENDNOTES

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