

Evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 response to the global COVID-19 pandemic

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Item 9: Evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3
response to the global COVID-19
pandemic

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Evaluation purpose, scope and approach



Objective and purpose: Provide an **assessment** of how UNICEF responded to the first-ever global Level 3 corporate emergency activation procedure and **generate recommendations** for better responding to future public health emergencies (PHEs)



Scope: **Global Analysis**, supported by a number of **country-level case studies**, covering the period **January 2020–March 2022**



Approach: **Mixed methods; synthesis** of evaluative evidence, combined with **remote primary data collection**

- Evaluation of UNICEF work in public health emergencies
- Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (“ACT-A”)

Overarching Findings

Overall, UNICEF was well positioned to meet the demands of COVID-19, although the level of preparedness planning varied across countries

- ✓ Enabling factors included: a) prior emergency response experience; b) mature decentralization structure; c) health emergencies staff member embedded within the World Health Organization (WHO); and d) familiarity with remote/flexible working arrangements
- ✓ UNICEF fully mobilized prior to the formal activation of the corporate emergency procedures on 16 April 2020
- ✓ It took UNICEF a few months to reach a cohesive narrative (beyond health) on its role and contribution to the pandemic
- ✓ Other UN agencies perceived that UNICEF's main focus was vaccine delivery, and "quiet" on other areas of the global response

Overarching Findings

- ✓ UNICEF made considerable investments in **studies/analyses** that contributed to enhance the **global evidence base** on the pandemic
- ✓ Yet, **disaggregation** by population groups was inconsistent, and analyses were not always converted into a more **targeted programmatic response**
- ✓ UNICEF demonstrated **strong adaptive capacity** on the ground, although the **volume of guidance** issued by UNICEF headquarters and regional offices was considered overwhelming
- ✓ **UNICEF results** in 2020–2021 included:
 - Expansion in **Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)**; **Social Protection/cash assistance**; **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)**; **education and malnutrition treatment**
 - Nearly 1 billion doses of vaccines delivered to countries in 2021
 - **Successful advocacy campaigns** in areas of vaccine provision, schools re-opening and release of children in detention

Overarching Findings

- ✓ Gender, equity and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) were corporately prioritized in strategic documents but saw uneven implementation
- ✓ Some delays in supplies delivery (particularly, PPE) generated reputational risk
- ✓ UNICEF played a critical strategic and operational role in global response efforts including the: a) Global Health Response Plan (“GHRP”); b) Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (“ACT-A”), (including COVAX); and c) United Nations framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 (“UN SERF”)
- ✓ Territorial concerns affected some global-level partnerships in the area of vaccine delivery
- ✓ At country level, partnerships with Government and other UN agencies were strong and UNICEF expanded its cooperation with the private sector and civil society, by also leveraging new technologies

Overarching Recommendations

1. Develop a clear corporate narrative for the role of UNICEF in public health emergencies (PHEs)
2. Refresh the corporate narrative on the priority of COVID-19
3. Consider undertaking a functional review of the public health emergency capacity across UNICEF
4. Build preparedness for public health emergency response across UNICEF
5. Revisit the global ethos of partnership in vaccines in particular
6. Reassess supply chain and procurement requirements and procedures for PHEs
7. Intensify the focus on equity and gender in emergency response
8. Define and establish the corporate-level Knowledge Management and learning system for PHEs



Thank you