

Annual Session 2023
Joint Statement Executive Board of UNICEF
Agenda Item 9
Annual report 2022 on the evaluation function in UNICEF
14 June 2023

Madam/Mister President

I make this statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Montenegro, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and my own country, Germany.

We thank UNICEF for the presentation of the Annual report on the Evaluation Function and the related management response.

We greatly appreciate that the UNICEF Evaluation Office used this annual report to further identify open questions in order to guide the development of the revised evaluation policy, such as the independence of evaluation staff at country and regional level or the composition of the 1% target for funding.

We welcome the positive developments indicated in the annual report, such as the increased number of evaluations and the geographical coverage. We appreciate UNICEF's ongoing efforts to further improve its work by sharpening its evaluation criteria.

UNICEF's intentions to conduct more outcome and impact evaluations are very welcome. We call upon UNICEF to ensure that these types of evaluations will be given adequate attention in the revision of the evaluation policy.

We commend UNICEF for the further increased consideration of cross-cutting issues in evaluations such as gender equality, humanitarian action environment and climate and encourage UNICEF to strengthen these efforts. In particular, the efforts to mainstream the issue of disability needs to be positively highlighted.

While we note with satisfaction that the number of evaluations covering gender increased in 2022, the Annual Report on the Evaluation Function also notes that the quality of the integration of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the scope of the analysis has declined, as did the overall performance of UNICEF under the UN-SWAP on Gender Equality. We urge UNICEF to increase efforts regarding these matter in its evaluations.

We are concerned about the frequent delays in management responses, the often vaguely defined response actions, and delays or non-compliance with actions on management responses. UNICEF management must respond adequately to evaluation findings and recommendations.

Regarding resources for the evaluation function, we welcome the recruitment of additional staff but are concerned about the continuing failure to achieve the 1% target. This funding target for UNICEF's evaluation work was undershot even more significantly in 2022 than in previous years, at a mere 0.59%. Even though UNICEF management has underlined its commitment to achieving the 1% target at multiple occasions, the actions taken so far do not seem to have the desired impact. We therefore urge UNICEF to continue working on improvements.

Equally concerning is the fact that only 4 of the 13 evaluations planned in the 2022-2025 Global Evaluation Plan for completion in 2022 were delivered on time. All the remaining evaluations will be completed in 2023, but the delays will affect the evaluations planned for 2023. We call on UNICEF to ensure better planning to avoid such delays in the future.

We commend the efforts to expand the range of evaluation products to contribute more to "catalysing transformational and systemic change at the outcome level", including meta-syntheses, evidence and gap maps, and the use of artificial intelligence. We would like to underline though that while these tools can provide relevant results, it is important to keep use and usability in mind.

Finally, no matter the methodology, evaluations must target the most relevant questions for operational and strategic decision making. We ask UNICEF to recommit to efforts in filling gaps in evidence on important operational priorities and answer questions that concretely improve the work on the ground.

Concluding, please allow us a couple of questions:

- According to the annual report, only 70% of the expenditure reported under evaluations was spent directly on evaluations. What are the reasons and – especially in view of achieving the 1% target – how does UNICEF intend to rectify this fact?
- The drop in gender equality and women empowerment in UNICEF's evaluations is worrying. What are the reasons for this decline and how does UNICEF intend to improve this situation?

We once again thank UNICEF and the evaluation office for this annual report, whose results will greatly benefit not only the function but also the updated evaluation policy.

Thank you