

# Evaluation of UNICEF social protection responses towards universal child benefits

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Item 8: Evaluation of UNICEF social protection responses  
towards universal child benefits: Summary (E/ICEF/2024/3)

# Context, purpose and objectives

- Child benefits are recognized as vital for **children's rights, poverty reduction, and social cohesion**.
  - Despite progress, some Governments need help with institutionalizing these benefits.
- The UNICEF Evaluation Office evaluated UNICEF's work in **broadening child benefits**, aiming to understand the efficacy of various strategies.
- The overarching **purpose of the evaluation** was twofold:
  - 1) to contribute to the **global evidence base** on relevant and effective actions that support the progressive expansion of child benefits; and
  - 2) to provide **organizational direction to UNICEF** on how best to shape interventions in this area of work.

The evaluation objectives are to:

- Evaluate the **processes and factors** influencing the establishment and expansion of child benefits and how these can inform UNICEF's approach.
- Assess the **relevance and effectiveness** of UNICEF country offices' interventions in aiding Governments towards achieving universal child benefits (UCBs).

The evaluation was conducted between **November 2022 and July 2023**, focusing on the period between **2018 and 2022**.

# Key findings: Evidence and fiscal space

*How effectively has UNICEF strengthened the capacity of Governments and their partners, at the individual and organizational levels, to support UCBs?*

UNICEF has **effectively aided Governments in establishing and expanding child benefits** in varied contexts.

- Achievements include **integrating policy advocacy, evidence mobilization, capacity-building and comprehensive partnership development**.
- Success is **notably enhanced** when these strategies align with **favourable external factors**.

*How effectively has UNICEF been able to mobilize government resources or to enable Governments to mobilize resources to support progressive expansion towards UCBs?*

- UNICEF country offices **actively collaborate with Governments to increase domestic funding** for child benefits as part of the **Public Finance for Children (PF4C) programme framework**.
- To enhance the effectiveness of these actions, UNICEF HQ and regional offices developed **global frameworks, guidance and resources** during the period 2018–2021.

# Key findings: Expansion of child benefits and partnerships

*How effectively has UNICEF strengthened the capacity of Governments and their partners, at the individual and organizational levels, to support UCBs (with a view to long-term sustainability)?*

- Strengthened **technical, operational, institutional and human capacities** in Governments.
- **Decreased exclusion errors** and **increased governmental support** for child benefits.
- **Improved government officials' design and delivery capabilities.**
- UNICEF role may pose a **reputational risk** when working with States characterized by fragility and conflict, as the organization may be **compromising its neutrality.**

*How effectively has UNICEF developed, sustained or leveraged partnerships to support the progressive realization of UCBs?*

- UNICEF partnerships have led to the **establishment of integrated and harmonized rights-based social protection systems** and the **building of integrated administrative systems** and a **global evidence base.**
- Governments, international financial institutions and civil society view UNICEF as a **trusted partner** for advancing child-sensitive social protection.

# Key recommendations

1

EVIDENCE AND  
ADVOCACY

- Continue to **generate evidence and produce fiscal space analyses**, with an increased emphasis on collaboration with **national research organizations and partners**.
- Strategically **balance, sequence and integrate evidence, advocacy, capacity development and partnership-building activities** in joint activities and approaches to social protection.

2

FISCAL SPACE  
MOBILIZATION

- Leverage the growing expertise of UNICEF in public finance through **internal capacity-building initiatives**.
- Continue to support Governments and civil society organizations on child-sensitive budgeting and fiscal space expansion through **technical assistance**.

3

GOVERNMENT  
CAPACITY  
SUPPORT

- Expand efforts to **support government capacity-building to design, implement, evaluate and institutionalize** child benefit programmes, strategies and systems.
- Ensure that **capacity-building efforts** strengthen national and local capacities.

4

PARTNERSHIPS

- Work towards **unified messaging and joint programming approaches** for building partnerships with other United Nations agencies, development partners, international financial institutions and civil society organizations to improve child benefit programmes and service delivery.

A photograph of a man in a white shirt holding a young child in a green and red dress. They are both smiling. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a woman in the distance. The entire image has a blue color cast.

Thank you.