

Joint Statement
Executive Board of UNICEF
First Regular Session 2024
Agenda Item 8: Evaluation of UNICEF social protection responses
towards universal child benefits

Mr. President, dear colleagues,

I'm delivering this joint statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Republic of Moldova, Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and my own country, Germany.

We welcome the present evaluation report on social protection responses towards universal child benefits and congratulate UNICEF for effectively advancing the child-sensitive social protection agenda in partner countries through advising governments on mobilizing resources, strengthening capacities of governments, and leveraging partnerships with various stakeholders at national and international level.

The management response to the evaluation shows that UNICEF pro-actively addresses gaps and is very committed to advancing knowledge products and training needs in untapped areas as well as cognizant of the importance of proven as well as new partnerships in order to achieve common goals.

In line with the recommendations, we underscore the importance of UNICEF's efforts to advocate for adaptive and shock-responsive social protection vis-à-vis governments and partner organizations. Today, a growing number of children and their families live in fragile contexts and are vulnerable to shocks without any access to social protection. Therefore, we support UNICEF in promoting shock-responsive and gender-responsive social protection systems to strengthen the resilience of children and their families in such fragile and crisis contexts.

We recognize the recommendations around evidence generation and sub-national engagement as an important element of engaging on universal child benefits in fragile contexts. We further note the four deep-dive cases are geographically and contextually different, yet they all share similarities that allow for patterns to emerge. It would be useful to understand how UNICEF's dual mandate, and the long-term vs. immediate needs, plays into understanding the evidence in places that do not share this similarity, in particular within fragile and crisis contexts.

We encourage UNICEF to pursue joint action and to interlink social protection with other measures, such as accessible childcare services and women's economic

empowerment. This gives women the opportunity to enter the labor market and enables them to benefit from social protection programmes. We also encourage UNICEF to use and advocate for open-source management information systems for the expansion of child benefit programs where appropriate while using data such as poverty analyses to ensure its programmes reach those that are most vulnerable.

We furthermore deem it important that the child-benefit agenda remains embedded in a broader social protection agenda. While it is important that UNICEF sensitizes and advocates for the interests of children and young people, governments must take a holistic look at their social protection systems and must take challenging decisions when it comes to prioritization.

In closing, we would like to express our high appreciation for UNICEF as a strong partner to further advance the social protection agenda. Together, we will continue to strive for social protection of 4 billion people not yet covered today and thus for the children amongst them.

Thank you.