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### United Nations Children's Fund

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### Plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025

#### *Summary*

The plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025 is aimed at contributing to the deepening of organizational accountability and learning in support of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution [75/233](#) (QCPR)).

The plan builds upon the analysis of lessons learned from the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021; the actions taken to respond to the recommendations of the 2017 assessments of the evaluation function in UNICEF, including the commitment contained in the 2018 revised evaluation policy of UNICEF; the evaluation commitments articulated in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the 2020 QCPR; costed evaluation plans approved by the Executive Board of UNICEF as part of country programmes of cooperation; and extensive consultation within the organization and with key United Nations partners.

The plan presents an approach to evaluating various aspects of the work of UNICEF. The institutional effectiveness portfolio will include evaluations of the Strategic Plan, the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025, the UNICEF approach to risk-informed programming, innovations, human resources management and the UNICEF approach to communications and advocacy, among other areas of work. This portfolio will also include an evaluability assessment and early formative evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, scheduled for the first half of 2022. The plan also includes evaluations relevant to each of the Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan, with humanitarian action, gender, disability and other sources of vulnerability and exclusion mainstreamed throughout. In addition, the dedicated humanitarian action portfolio includes evaluations of all Level 3 emergencies, as well as such cross-cutting issues as accountability to affected populations, localization and preparedness. Furthermore, the plan covers joint evaluations with sister United Nations agencies and other partners.

\* Reissued for technical reasons on 11 January 2022.

\*\* [E/ICEF/2022/1](#).



The plan strategically targets those areas that have been identified as most crucial for organizational learning and accountability, a focus that will help to position UNICEF and its partners for maximum success as it proceeds through the Decade of Action. These strategic corporate evaluations will be aimed at harnessing and complementing the growing body of evidence that is being generated at the decentralized level, where there has been a notable increase in coverage and submission of evaluations in the recent past.

The elements of a decision for consideration by the Executive Board are set out in section XII.

## I. Introduction

1. The plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025 presents the priorities for corporate evaluations to be conducted by the Evaluation Office. The plan is aligned with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Moreover, it reflects the urgency of the Decade of Action. Children’s rights are under threat to an extent not seen in generations. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic struck at a moment when most of the Sustainable Development Goals were already off track, threatening and in some cases reversing progress for children. In this unprecedented moment of crisis and opportunity, it is more urgent than ever that the evaluation function help UNICEF and partners to learn and adapt in order to regain ground and accelerate progress towards realizing the rights of all children everywhere.
2. To ensure optimal learning and accountability, the plan takes into consideration the full breadth of the organization’s work. The Evaluation Office’s institutional effectiveness portfolio focuses on the change strategies and enablers that support the realization of the Strategic Plan and are critical to positioning UNICEF and partners to succeed in the Decade of Action. The humanitarian evaluation portfolio covers the UNICEF response to Level 3 humanitarian crises as well as such issues as localization, preparedness, risk-informed programming, accountability to affected populations and interagency humanitarian evaluations. The plan includes evaluations covering all five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan, focusing on achievements and shortfalls in the realization of the rights of the most vulnerable children, as well as the key constraints and enabling factors affecting the realization of their rights.
3. In addition to the priorities for corporate evaluations, the plan describes the support, including quality assurance and technical support, that the Evaluation Office provides to all levels of the organization, as well as partnerships within the United Nations system and the wider evaluation community. The Office implements its plan in a manner that is impartial, timely and responsive to diverse humanitarian and development challenges.
4. The plan covers corporate evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office. It does not include evaluative activities undertaken by regional and country offices. Country-level evaluations are described in the costed evaluation plans annexed to country programme documents that are presented to the Executive Board for approval. Regional offices carry out multi-country evaluations and support country offices to execute their costed evaluation plans.
5. Although set within a four-year time frame, the plan will be adjusted as necessary to cover emerging issues throughout the implementation period of the Strategic Plan, including those related to new emergencies. The Executive Board will be duly informed, through the annual report on the evaluation function in UNICEF, of emerging issues as they arise.

## II. Changing context

6. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 sets out a strategic approach to the realization of children’s rights and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the work of UNICEF and partners is achieving impact-level results. Toward this end, it also signals the organization’s commitment to accelerating its investments in data, research, evaluation and knowledge management, with a reinvigorated commitment to making better use of evidence to inform policies and programme delivery. In line with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 75/233 (QCPR)),

UNICEF has also committed to enhancing national evaluation capacity and working with United Nations partners to strengthen system-wide evaluation.

7. These commitments remain paramount, yet the challenges to meeting them have multiplied in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hard-won progress towards the realization of children's rights and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals has been interrupted and in many ways rolled back.

8. With so much at stake for children, and with the Decade of Action under way, it is more urgent than ever that UNICEF harness evaluative evidence to get back on track and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. This means faster, more robust analysis and embracing innovation in the organization's evaluation products and in how their takeaways are communicated. It means ensuring that evidence comes at the right time, aligning with key moments in the programme cycle. It means engaging more deliberately and meaningfully in strategic partnerships, both internally and externally, and building the capacity of national partners to generate and use the evidence needed to inform key decisions that will help to achieve the Goals.

9. This sense of urgency informs the plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025, most notably by strategically identifying the evaluation topics that will add the greatest value to organizational learning and accountability, and thus help UNICEF and its partners maximize the likelihood of success in delivering results for children. The overall number of evaluations planned for the institutional effectiveness portfolio has therefore grown compared with the previous quadrennium, reflecting the critical role of the enablers and change strategies detailed in the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 in supporting the achievement of results for children.

10. The plan leverages innovative and agile approaches to evaluation that increase not only their timeliness and efficiency but also their credibility and use, ensuring managers have robust evidence – when they need it – to inform key decisions in fast-changing environments.

11. Greater emphasis has been placed on supporting national evaluation capacity development and working across traditional evaluation boundaries. Within UNICEF, this renewed emphasis will require a genuinely whole-of-evaluation-function approach between the global and decentralized evaluation functions; it will also require strengthened partnership with the distinct but complementary knowledge and evidence functions within UNICEF, including research, monitoring, data analytics and audit, without detracting in any way from the distinct mandate of the independent evaluation function. With external evaluation partners, this renewed emphasis will entail increased joint and inter-agency evaluation, where appropriate. In this vein, UNICEF continues to engage in the ongoing development of the United Nations system-wide evaluation function, in accordance with the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system ([A/75/79–E/2020/55](#)). In keeping with the impact-level focus of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, the plan for global evaluations also places greater emphasis on impact measurement where appropriate and feasible.

### **III. Lessons learned**

12. At the broadest level, the plan is informed by lessons learned in implementing the 2018 revised evaluation policy of UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2018/14](#)). Several independent reviews in recent years have provided useful insights and lessons about the performance of the evaluation function in UNICEF. These have also helped to shape the plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025. The plan will be especially focused

on addressing emerging lessons learned and recommendations from the 2020 Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network's institutional assessment of UNICEF and the recommendations of the 2017 Development Assistance Committee-United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) peer review of the evaluation function of UNICEF, particularly related to the governance of the evaluation function as it enhanced its capacity at the decentralized level.

13. The evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 highlighted the critical importance of the enablers and change strategies in setting the basis for the organization to be more agile, to respond to new threats to children and to understand how to collaborate better with other United Nations agencies. These findings informed the renewed emphasis on the institutional effectiveness portfolio in the plan for global evaluations. In addition to serving an accountability function, corporate evaluations focusing on the change strategies and enablers will provide rich learning that will be applicable across Goal Areas and will inform efforts to bring successful strategies to scale and to collaborate better with partners.

14. The COVID-19 pandemic required the organization to adapt traditional evaluation approaches to unprecedented circumstances. These adaptations often involved new solutions and innovations, a trend that is likely to continue over the next four years. New technologies combined with more robust approaches and enhanced capabilities will enable better use of evaluation evidence. In implementing these new approaches, the Evaluation Office will take into account the associated risks and limitations in order to mitigate shortcomings and unintended effects and biases, especially taking into consideration the need for a balanced representation of the hardest-to-reach populations and children at risk.

15. The establishment of a dedicated innovation and learning capacity within the Office has greatly benefited the evaluation function. It has facilitated the testing of emerging evaluation methods and allowed the Office to support organizational learning through global and regional events and the use of social media to disseminate evaluation products and encourage their use.

16. A key lesson learned from the previous plan for global evaluations was that increased capacity for evaluation at the decentralized level allows the Office to focus more on value addition through the careful selection of strategic topics that complement the extensive body of evidence now available to the organization. The previous plan also demonstrated the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between evaluations and other forms of evaluative exercises. Other evaluative activities will continue to provide useful evidence for accountability and learning, complementing existing evaluation requirements.

17. Finally, building on lessons learned from the highly consultative process for the development of the Strategic Plan, the Office has for the first time undertaken regional- and country-level consultations in the development of the plan for global evaluations. Input from UNICEF regional and country offices provided important insights that informed the identification of topics for evaluation.

#### **IV. Guiding principles**

18. In this Decade of Action, with the COVID-19 pandemic further delaying progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, the most important guiding principle for the plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025 is that of urgency. Now more than ever, the work of the evaluation function must be strategically focused on the goal of helping UNICEF and its partners succeed through strengthened accountability and learning. The evaluation function, as the organization's sole source of independent and impartial evidence on organizational performance, plays a vital role

in informing decisions. In fulfilling this role, the function will continue to be guided by UNEG norms and standards and the evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

19. Another key principle is integration. In this vein, the plan has been prepared on the basis of an independent analysis of country programme costed evaluation plans, the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, the Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025 and numerous other sector- and portfolio-specific documents, as well as consultations at all levels of the organization and with United Nations partners. Mirroring the approach of the Strategic Plan, the plan for global evaluations incorporates a humanitarian lens into all evaluations. Evaluation processes will need to fully mainstream the principle of leaving no child behind, considering gender, disability and other sources of vulnerability and exclusion in all aspects of evaluation scoping and methods. Evaluation designs will also need to reflect the important interlinkages among the Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan and among the Sustainable Development Goals.

20. This integration extends to the evaluation function itself, with more concerted effort being made to strengthen meaningful linkages between the global and decentralized functions and forge a more harmonized evaluation function across the organization. This effort will be aimed at maximizing both substantive collaboration and efficiency between the global and decentralized levels of the evaluation function wherever possible, with a view to maximizing the achievement of results for children at the country level.

21. A related but distinct principle is that of managed collaboration. This principle will underpin the prioritization of the Evaluation Office’s approach to strategic partnerships (described in the section on other key priorities, below). Importantly, this principle will also govern efforts to deliberately and meaningfully coordinate and, where appropriate, collaborate with such complementary functions as audit, monitoring, data analytics, research and knowledge management towards the shared goal of harnessing information and knowledge for the realization of the rights of children. This coordination and collaboration must be undertaken within the parameters of the distinct independence mandated for the evaluation function by the Executive Board.

22. These principles underpin the commitment of the Evaluation Office to maximizing the contribution of evaluation to the work of the organization. At the same time, strengthening and maintaining the evaluation culture is an organization-wide responsibility, as underscored in the revised evaluation policy. The Office will continue to work closely with internal stakeholders to reinforce the importance of critical self-reflection in enhancing organizational performance and achieving better results for children, and of following through on evaluation recommendations through management responses and associated action plans that are thoroughly and meaningfully implemented. In this way, the principle of shared responsibility will shape the work of the Office.

23. Finally, a range of other guiding principles, such as enhanced strategic partnership with external evaluation partners, creativity and innovation as well as country-level focus, in both evaluations and the development of national evaluation capacity, will govern the work of the Evaluation Office. These principles are given dedicated attention in section VII.

## V. Objectives

24. The plan for global evaluations is aimed at fostering organizational accountability and learning in those areas deemed at the outset of the implementation period of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 to stand to benefit from evaluative analysis

on what works and does not work for achieving results for children. It will strengthen evidence-based decision-making by national policymakers, programme managers and governing bodies by providing timely and credible feedback on what is working well, what is working less well, in what ways, for whom and why.

25. The evaluations set out in the plan cover the full breadth of the organization's work for children, including all five Goal Areas as well as the change strategies and enablers. The plan also describes the ways in which the organization's capacity for managing evaluations will be strengthened.

26. Other important evaluative exercises, such as syntheses, reviews and evaluability assessments, are also foreseen, particularly given the urgency of the Decade of Action and the need to provide fit-for-purpose independent evaluative evidence in the most appropriate form for the specific circumstances. These other evaluative exercises are mentioned separately from the plan itself, however, as they are distinct from evaluation.

27. As in previous strategic planning cycles, the selection of specific evaluation topics included in this plan was based on an independent analysis by the Office to identify the topics that warranted dedicated evaluative attention as the organization embarked on the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. These topics were then refined through internal consultations, and the final selection was based on two overarching sets of criteria: context and feasibility.

28. The contextual criteria are:

(a) **Relevance:** The proposed topic is of critical importance to the achievement of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and the agency's commitment to the 2030 Agenda, and factors in different programme environments;

(b) **Utilization:** The timing and design of the evaluation are explicitly linked to a major UNICEF or inter-agency review or policy event and the evaluation is intended for the use of various stakeholder groups, including programme managers, governing bodies and partners;

(c) **Regional and sectoral coverage:** The topic is considered a top priority in several regions and/or headquarters divisions and is supported through the assessment of the costed evaluation plan(s) of the country or countries being reviewed, where relevant; the topic covers strategic programme areas that have not been the subject of an evaluation in the previous three years;

(d) **Investments:** The proposed topic represents an area in which substantial investments have been or are being made and it is likely that these investments can be adequately quantified;

(e) **Funding:** Additional funding is available to complement Evaluation Office resources;

(f) **Evaluation history:** The topic has not previously been evaluated at the global level within a defined period;

(g) **Humanitarian relevance:** The proposed topic has particular importance for humanitarian settings.

29. The feasibility criteria include:

(a) **Causality, attribution and contribution:** It is possible to measure the organization's specific contributions to the outcomes covered in the evaluation;

(b) **Impact:** The topic offers a viable opportunity to trace the programme logic through to effectiveness and impact measurement, and to inform advocacy efforts;

(c) *Evaluability*: The theme can be evaluated both in “principle” (i.e., there exists a clear programme logic or theory of change) and in “practice” (i.e., measures, including proxies, have been developed and data collected in association with programme logic).

30. On the basis of these criteria and the analysis of a wide range of relevant documents; lessons learned from previous evaluation plans; the guiding principles described above; and consultations with key stakeholders, including the Global Evaluation Committee, as well as with other United Nations agencies, the Evaluation Office proposes a set of topics and accompanying evaluations as the core of the plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025.

## VI. Evaluations

31. The plan for global evaluations includes a range of thematic evaluations to be delivered by the Evaluation Office. These focus on key elements of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 in relation to the relevance and coherence of programmes and the effectiveness and efficiency of their implementation. The outcomes, impact and sustainability of the work of UNICEF will also be assessed through thematic evaluations. Thematic evaluations will comprise both summative and formative evaluations, depending upon the stage of programme implementation. They might also involve case studies that cover an entire country programme or a thematic issue across several country programmes to enhance the usefulness of the evaluations, especially for national partners, and to foster cross-country learning.

*Summative* evaluations are usually conducted towards the end or upon the mature and robust implementation of an initiative to determine to what extent expected results have been achieved (and whether there are significant unintended consequences) for the purposes of accountability and to inform the future design and delivery of similar interventions.

*Formative* evaluations are conducted during the implementation of an initiative with a view to helping to improve performance. Many summative evaluations have a formative aspect insofar as they inform future phases of an intervention or guide new interventions of a similar kind; equally, formative evaluations may have summative elements that assess early phases of implementation.

32. In addition, a number of other evaluative exercises beyond full-scale evaluations are foreseen. These include the following:

(a) *Evaluation syntheses and reviews* examine evaluation evidence on a particular topic or theme in terms of coverage and quality, draw together key findings and lessons and present general conclusions and recommendations. Country-level and multi-country evaluations are important sources of evidence for evaluation syntheses;

(b) *Evaluability assessments* focus on readiness for evaluation both in principle (i.e., the robustness of the theory of change or programme logic) and in practice (i.e., the robustness of performance measures and data availability and quality) and on the conduciveness of the context. In keeping with the exigencies of the Decade of Action, in the period 2022–2025 evaluability assessments will be expanded to address a line of inquiry that extends beyond technical evaluation considerations to ask more fundamental questions about the extent to which the assessed programme or initiative has the key elements in place to succeed. By focusing on both of these levels, evaluability assessments will contribute to the likelihood of achieving programme targets.

33. The plan for global evaluations comprises 31 evaluations. The proposed evaluations will provide evidence on achievements related to the five Goal Areas as



well as to the change strategies and enablers. The distribution of topics is shown in table 1. In addition, seven evaluability assessments (including one rolled over from the previous plan) and three evaluation reviews and syntheses will be reported on through the annual report on the evaluation function in UNICEF.

Table 1  
**Distribution of evaluation topics**

<i>UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 component</i>	<i>Number of evaluation products<sup>a</sup></i>
Goal Area 1: 1. Strengthening primary health care and high-impact health interventions 2. Immunization services as part of primary health care 3. Fast-track the end of HIV/AIDS 4. Health and development in early childhood and adolescence 5. Mental health and psychosocial well-being 6. Nutrition in early childhood 7. Nutrition of adolescents and women 8. Early detection and treatment of malnutrition	4
Goal Area 2: 1. Access to quality learning opportunities 2. Learning, skills, participation and engagement	4
Goal Area 3: 1. Protection from violence, abuse and exploitation 2. Promotion of care, mental health and psychosocial well-being and justice 3. Prevention of harmful practices	5
Goal Area 4: 1. Safe and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene services and practices 2. Water, sanitation and hygiene systems and empowerment of communities 3. Climate change, disaster risks and environmental degradation	3
Goal Area 5: 1. Reducing child poverty 2. Access to inclusive social protection	5 <sup>b</sup>
Humanitarian action	3 <sup>c</sup>
Institutional effectiveness	7

<sup>a</sup> Excluding evaluations rolled over from 2021, which are full funded by the 2021 budget.

<sup>b</sup> Equity will be mainstreamed in all evaluations.

<sup>c</sup> Humanitarian action will be mainstreamed in most evaluations. Also, the list excludes Level 3 and inter-agency/joint humanitarian evaluations.

34. Evaluation processes will need to fully mainstream the principle of leaving no child behind, considering gender, disability and other sources of vulnerability and exclusion, into all aspects of evaluation scoping and methods. Accordingly, the planned evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025 is represented under the institutional effectiveness portfolio. In the same vein, joint evaluation products with other United Nations agencies are listed under the corresponding Goal Areas. The plan currently foresees five joint evaluations<sup>1</sup> and numerous other joint evaluative exercises. This number will likely increase as sister United Nations agencies finalize their evaluation plans.

35. Table 2 presents the priority evaluation topics and the ways in which they will be sequenced in the four years covered by the plan. While most of the evaluation products will be commissioned and managed by the Evaluation Office, joint evaluations undertaken in collaboration with other agencies will typically require shared costs and joint management.

<sup>1</sup> Excluding evaluations rolled over from 2021.

Table 2  
**Evaluation topics and products proposed for the plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025**

<i>Evaluation topic</i>	<i>Year of completion/submission</i>
<b>Goal Area 1</b>	
Evaluation of UNICEF work in public health emergencies <sup>a</sup>	2022
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator	2023
Evaluation of UNICEF work in preventing overweight and obesity in children and adolescents	2023
Evaluation of UNICEF work in primary health care	2024
Evaluation of UNICEF work in mental health and psychosocial support	2025
<b>Goal Area 2</b>	
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to improved teaching and learning <sup>a</sup>	2022
Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to the reduction of out-of-school children and improving opportunities for alternative learning pathways	2023
Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to early childhood development	2024
Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to the acquisition of transferable skills for adolescents and young people	2024
Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to teacher development and improved learning outcomes	2025
<b>Goal Area 3</b>	
Evaluation of the protection of children affected by migration in Southeast, South and Central Asia, 2018–2022	2022
Evaluation of the Joint UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to End Child Marriage, phase II 2020–2023	2023
Evaluation of UNICEF work in access to justice for children	2023
Evaluation of UNICEF work on violence against boys, girls and women	2024
Evaluation of the Joint UNFPA-UNICEF Programme on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation	2025
<b>Goal Area 4</b>	
Evaluation of UNICEF work in disaster risk reduction and climate	2023
Evaluation of the Accelerated Sanitation and Water for All programme 2023–2024	2024
Midterm evaluation of the UNICEF Strategy for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (2016–2030)	2024
<b>Goal Area 5</b>	
Evaluation of UNICEF work on disability inclusion	2022
Evaluation of UNICEF work in contributing to poverty reduction, including in humanitarian and fragile settings	2022
Evaluation of UNICEF work in contributing to disparity reduction in urban settings, focusing on slums and informal settlements	2023
Evaluation of UNICEF work to support shock-responsive social protection systems	2024
Evaluation of the impact of UNICEF work on inclusive social protection systems	2025

<i>Evaluation topic</i>	<i>Year of completion/submission</i>			
<b>Humanitarian</b>				
Evaluations of the UNICEF response to Level 3 humanitarian crises <sup>b</sup>	2022			
Review of the Global Education Cluster co-leadership arrangement (UNICEF-Save the Children International) <sup>a</sup>	2022			
Iterative evaluation of the UNHCR-UNICEF Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children <sup>a</sup>	2022			
Evaluation of the UNICEF response in the Syrian Arab Republic <sup>a</sup>	2022			
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the Yemen crisis <sup>a</sup>	2022			
Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the global Level-3 COVID-19 pandemic <sup>a</sup>	2022			
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the global Level 3 COVID-19 response <sup>a</sup>	2022			
Evaluation of the UNICEF approach to localization		2023		
Evaluation of the UNICEF investment in preparedness for timely, efficient and effective responses			2024	
Evaluation of UNICEF community engagement and accountability to affected populations in humanitarian action and connectedness to longer-term social accountability				2025
<b>Institutional effectiveness</b>				
Evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025	2022			
Evaluation of UNICEF approaches to communications and advocacy		2023		
Evaluation of human resources management in UNICEF		2023		
Evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2022-2025		2023		
Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025			2024	
Evaluation of innovation in UNICEF			2024	
Evaluation of UNICEF risk-informed humanitarian, development and peacebuilding-resilience programming				2025
<b>Cross-cutting activities</b>				
Capacity development	2022	2023	2024	2025
Methods and impact	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Other evaluative activities</b>				
Evaluability assessments, evaluative baselines, syntheses, among others	2022	2023	2024	2025

<sup>a</sup> These evaluations were included in the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 or added to the Evaluation Office workplan in 2021, with completion expected in 2022.

<sup>b</sup> The Level-3 humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, Northern Ethiopia and Yemen will be evaluated in 2022; other Level 3 crises will be evaluated if and when triggered.

## VII. Other key priorities

### Evaluation country programme results

36. The methodology for evaluating country programmes was reviewed to bring additional focus to results achievement at the country level, to strengthen links with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and to improve the timeliness and coverage of evaluations without undermining quality. Guidance on these evaluations was shared for adoption and adaptation throughout the function,

clarifying that, for the purposes of improving coverage and upholding the norm on independence, these evaluations are to be managed by the regional offices with support from the Evaluation Office.

### **Accelerating innovations, mainstreaming new methods and expanding impact evaluations**

37. The evaluation function has developed a comprehensive portfolio of evaluations that utilize a range of evaluation methods adapted to the needs of the diverse and complex programme contexts in which UNICEF operates. The Evaluation Office recognizes the need to expand its support to country and regional offices in their selection of the most appropriate and innovative evaluation approaches, including rigorous impact evaluations and the identification of alternative data sources to meet the growing demand for high-quality, robust, relevant and timely evidence, particularly at the outcome and impact levels.

38. During the four-year period covered by the plan for global evaluations, the Evaluation Office will form a methods innovation lab to accelerate and expand the application of innovative, cost-effective methods and tools as well as to utilize a wider range of data for evaluations. Specifically, the lab will focus on testing evaluative applications of alternative data sources for new and planned evaluations of impact including (a) administrative data; (b) multiple indicator cluster surveys and other household data; (c) remote high-frequency data; and (d) spatial data. The Office will respond to demand from country offices for evaluation data diagnostics, data analysis and new tools through the evaluation data and methods help desk. In addition, to satisfy existing demand for rigorous mixed-method impact evaluations and to expand the reach of this modality into new priority themes, innovative programmatic modalities and new contexts, the Office will launch the impact catalyst fund, with matching grants for competitively selected country-led evaluations. The Office will advise the decentralized evaluation function on elements to consider when selecting appropriate impact methods, on using existing and innovative data-collection tools and on new methodological approaches appropriate for the context.

39. The Evaluation Office recently recruited a senior specialist to promote and guide the implementation of the evaluation of the impact strategy and framework across different levels of the evaluation function, with a particular focus on improving coverage and the scale-up of innovative solutions, building capacity and enhancing institutional learning on impact evidence. The choice of thematic areas for increased coverage of impact evaluations will be driven by identified gaps in impact evidence relevant for the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. The Office will support the evaluation function with technical advice on the design of experimental, quasi-experimental and non-experimental impact evaluations, while promoting mixed-method approaches based on the comparative advantage of each method and their complementary value within the context. It will place greater emphasis on better alignment of impact evaluation and programme planning phases. It will also work with country and regional offices on building credibility and national ownership of impact evidence through the co-creation and co-design of impact evidence generation. Through the convergence of the methods, impact, innovation and learning teams, the Office will be well positioned to support impact evidence generation to help national partners to scale up transformative interventions and contribute to organizational learning.

### **Joint and inter-agency evaluations**

40. Joint and inter-agency evaluations will grow in importance in the quadrennium, in keeping with the interconnected nature of the Sustainable Development Goals and the spirit of the United Nations development system reform, as well as in recognition

of the need to minimize the evaluation footprint and seize on opportunities for greater efficiency, including cost-efficiency. The COVID-19 pandemic has also underscored the need for greater connectedness of programmatic efforts, from preparedness to response and recovery, and this connectedness of efforts has provided significant impetus for increased evaluation partnerships.

41. In line with the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243, UNICEF will also actively support the ongoing process of fully establishing a system-wide evaluation function to provide crucial evidence on the collective performance of United Nations system entities in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, UNICEF will continue to develop evaluation partnerships with non-United Nations partners, which were fostered during the COVID-19 pandemic, to jointly identify and implement areas of shared evaluation focus and to build national evaluation capacity. In this vein, concerted efforts will be made to enhance evaluation partnerships at the country level, both within United Nations country teams and with other country-level partners, including, wherever feasible, government partners, to coordinate and, wherever possible, collaborate around evaluative efforts in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Supporting national evaluation capacity development**

42. General Assembly resolution 69/237 on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level, adopted in 2014, provides the framework to support countries to establish national evaluation systems for reporting progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In its resolution, the Assembly invited United Nations entities to support, upon request, efforts to further strengthen the capacity of Member States for evaluation in accordance with their national policies and priorities.

43. Such capacity will be especially crucial in the Decade of Action as Member States accelerate their efforts to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals. The capacity to reflect critically on what is working, what is not, why and for whom, is essential if we are to see real progress for children. With this in mind, the Office began in 2021 to expand its roster of long-term agreements with consultants, with an explicit focus on tapping into evaluation expertise from programme countries.

### **Supporting strategic evaluation partnerships**

44. The Evaluation Office will continue to co-lead EVALSDGs<sup>2</sup> and serve as an active member of the EvalPartners' Management Group.<sup>3</sup> Through these partnerships and others, UNICEF will continue to support the preparation of voluntary national reviews.

45. Joint, inter-agency and system-wide work with both traditional and non-traditional evaluation partners will be paramount in this strategic plan cycle. The

<sup>2</sup> EVALSDGs is aimed at forming a strong evaluation partnership to inform, support, measure and assess development efforts around the Sustainable Development Goals.

<sup>3</sup> EvalPartners is managed by UNICEF and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation and is supported by numerous partners, including the International Development Evaluation Association; the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); the United Nations Evaluation Group; the United Nations Development Programme; the International Labour Organization; the International Development Research Centre; the Rockefeller Foundation; BetterEvaluation; the Latin American and Caribbean Network for Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization; the Programme for Strengthening the Regional Capacity for Evaluation of Rural Poverty-Alleviation Projects in Latin America and the Caribbean; the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association; and the International Program Evaluation Network.

Evaluation Office will conduct a review in early 2022 of current partnerships, with a view to strategically focusing on those partnerships that offer the greatest potential to maximize the contribution of evaluation towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the realization of children's rights.

46. The Evaluation Office will continue to promote learning and knowledge exchange on emerging evaluative evidence, which will include a library of impact evaluation materials and the use of internal and public dissemination and engagement tools. To this end, partnering with academic institutions will be critical for support, peer review and the publication of original material and learning products, and in the dissemination and engagement needed to promote learning from UNICEF for the benefit of the organization and the humanitarian-development sector as a whole. This includes showcasing and connecting the work of all levels of the decentralized function with UNICEF experts, academic and implementing partners and other United Nations system organizations, as well as engagement with such key stakeholders as young people and public policymakers.

#### **Enhancing evaluation quality and oversight**

47. The Evaluation Office will continue to play an active role in boosting support to evaluation at the country- and regional-office levels through facilitation, guidance, tools, training and improved systems to enhance the quality, credibility and timeliness of evaluations and the purposeful application of evaluation results throughout the programme cycle. This work will also support the enhancement of evaluation skills and competencies among UNICEF staff and the continuation of an external evaluation advisory panel (established during the previous quadrennium) charged with providing technical advice upon request.

48. To better enhance independence and adequate evaluation coverage at the decentralized level, the Evaluation Office will seek the continuation of the Evaluation Pooled Fund, which was established during the previous quadrennium to fund evaluations but is currently unfunded for the coming quadrennium. Resourcing evaluation activities would complement the effort made by the organization in funding capacities at the decentralized level by providing seed funding to foster the evaluation culture at the country level within UNICEF and with partners.

### **VIII. Resource framework**

49. The UNICEF integrated budget, 2022–2025 includes an approved provision of \$13.6 million (excluding staff costs) for global evaluations and other key evaluation-related priorities, including: (a) support for quality assurance; (b) technical guidance; (c) efforts to strengthen and professionalize the UNICEF evaluation function and underlying systems across the organization; and (d) the participation of the Evaluation Office in partnerships, networks and inter-agency initiatives aimed at strengthening and harmonizing evaluation within the United Nations system as well as initiatives to develop national evaluation capacity.

Table 3  
Annual resource framework for global evaluations, 2022–2025

Year	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
	Funding source		Total
	RR	OR	
2022	1 707	1 850	3 557
2023	2 357	1 220	3 557
2024	3 227	915	4 142
2025	1 457	880	2 337
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 748</b>	<b>4 865</b>	<b>13 613</b>

Abbreviations: RR = regular resources; OR = other resources (includes other resources-emergency and other resources-regular).

Note: The scope and implementation of OR-funded evaluations are subject to fundraising efforts.

Table 4  
Resource framework by evaluation product, 2022–2025

Evaluation topic	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
	Funding required		
	RR	OR	Total
<b>Goal Area 1</b>			
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator	250	0	250
Evaluation of UNICEF work in preventing overweight and obesity in children and adolescents	200	0	200
Evaluation of UNICEF work in primary health care	270	0	270
Evaluation of UNICEF work in mental health and psychosocial support	200	50	250
<b>Goal Area 2</b>			
Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to the reduction of out-of-school children and improving opportunities for alternative learning pathways	0	250	250
Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to early childhood development	250	0	250
Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to the acquisition of transferable skills for adolescents and young people	250	0	250
Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to teacher development and improved learning outcomes	200	50	250
<b>Goal Area 3</b>			
Evaluation of the protection of children affected by migration in Southeast, South and Central Asia, 2018–2022	0	0	0
Evaluation of Joint UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to End Child Marriage, phase II 2020–2023	0	0	0
Evaluation of UNICEF work in access to justice for children	200	0	200
Evaluation of UNICEF work on violence against boys, girls and women	200	65	265
Evaluation of the Joint UNFPA-UNICEF Programme on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation <sup>a</sup>	0	0	0
<b>Goal Area 4</b>			
Evaluation of UNICEF work in disaster risk reduction and climate	200	70	270
Evaluation of the Accelerated Sanitation and Water for All programme 2023–2024	200	50	250

<i>Evaluation topic</i>	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
	<i>Funding required</i>		
	<i>RR</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Total</i>
Midterm evaluation of the UNICEF Strategy on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (2016–2030)	200	100	300
<b>Goal Area 5</b>			
Evaluation of UNICEF work on disability inclusion	250	0	250
Evaluation of UNICEF work in contributing to poverty reduction, including in humanitarian and fragile settings	0	250	250
Evaluation of UNICEF work in contributing to disparity reduction in urban settings, focusing on slums and informal settlements	200	50	250
Evaluation of UNICEF work to support shock-responsive social protection systems	200	50	250
Evaluation of the impact of UNICEF work on inclusive social protection systems	200	50	250
<b>Humanitarian</b>			
UNICEF response to Level-3 humanitarian crises <sup>b</sup>	0	1000	1000
Inter-agency/joint humanitarian evaluations <sup>c</sup>	250	250	500
Evaluation of the UNICEF approach to localization	200	50	250
Evaluation of the UNICEF investment in preparedness for timely, efficient and effective responses	200	50	250
Evaluation of UNICEF community engagement and accountability to affected populations in humanitarian action and connectedness to long-term social accountability	100	150	250
<b>Institutional effectiveness</b>			
Evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025	200	350	550
Evaluation of UNICEF approaches to communications and advocacy	200	300	500
Evaluation of human resources management in UNICEF	200	250	450
Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025	100	250	350
Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025	200	300	500
Evaluation of innovation in UNICEF	200	350	550
Evaluation of UNICEF risk-informed humanitarian, development and peacebuilding-resilience programming	200	230	430
<b>Cross-cutting activities</b>			
Capacity development	1 628	0	1 628
Methods and impact	1 000	0	1 000
<b>Other evaluative activities</b>			
Evaluability assessments, evaluative baselines, syntheses, and other evaluative outputs beyond evaluations	600	300	900

<sup>a</sup> Funding for these evaluations is from other United Nations agencies.

<sup>b</sup> The Level-3 humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, Northern Ethiopia and Yemen will be evaluated in 2022; other Level-3 crises will be evaluated if and when triggered.

<sup>c</sup> Inter-agency/joint humanitarian evaluations taking place in 2022 include (i) the system-wide inter-agency humanitarian evaluation for the COVID-19 response; and (ii) the evaluation of the UNHCR/UNICEF Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children.

50. The resource framework is intended to be a general guide rather than a strict budget. Some flexibility is required to meet ad hoc demands that may arise in a given year and for participation in joint evaluations. Contingency funds may be required to address emerging issues that are in line with the overall priorities of the plan.



## **IX. Implementation**

51. A consultative approach, engaging the concerned stakeholders, will be undertaken to ensure the timely implementation of the evaluations and to maximize the use of the results. The approach to planning and delivering evaluations will necessarily be iterative and multilayered. At the level of annual workplans, further scoping work and consultation will be undertaken to identify evidence gaps, demands and opportunities in particular areas, with a view to elaborating a relevant and feasible evaluation agenda. At the level of each individual evaluation, scoping and design work will establish a meaningful, feasible and economical approach. Methods will be identified according to the requirements of the topic as part of the scoping and design phases of specific evaluations.

## **X. Risks**

52. Risks to the delivery of the evaluations set out in the plan include: (a) resource mobilization efforts falling short of targets, particularly in relation to the decentralized evaluation function; (b) delays in the execution of evaluations or other challenges, owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic or other external constraints; (c) a shift in organizational priorities and the governance of the evaluation function with the arrival of a new Executive Director of UNICEF; (d) a delay in the generation of management responses and/or the low implementation of evaluation recommendations; (e) a lack of understanding of the difference between evaluation and other functions, particularly performance monitoring and research, resulting in encroachment on the distinct mandate and role of evaluation; and (f) a corresponding lack of commitment to fulfilling the Executive Board decision to set aside 1 per cent of the programme budget for evaluation as a unique source of independent evidence on organizational performance, resulting in a dilution of this funding for non-evaluation purposes.

53. The corresponding assumptions are that other resources can be mobilized each year at the proposed level, the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic will gradually recede, the evaluation function will continue to remain a high priority going forward, fully supported by the new administration, and the pace of management response processes and the implementation of recommendations will increase.

54. These risks and assumptions as well as emerging challenges will be regularly monitored and actively addressed through adaptive management, wherever necessary. The Evaluation Office will continue its efforts to mobilize sufficient resources in a timely manner and will report on progress made in its annual report to the Executive Board on the evaluation function in UNICEF.

55. As noted in previous sections of the present document, the constraints posed by COVID-19 and other external factors have led to creative solutions that will continue to be implemented as much as possible for as long as they remain necessary and relevant. The promotion of additional creative and innovative approaches will continue to attenuate these risks while also enhancing timeliness, efficiency, and analytical robustness more broadly. Work to strengthen the organizational evaluation culture will continue, the role of the entire organization in this regard will be promoted and the new Executive Director will be fully briefed. Moreover, continued enhancements will be made to the processes for scoping and implementing evaluations, with a view to balancing the need for the active engagement of programme management in the evaluation process with the need to minimize the heavy investment of time these processes often entail. In addition, the status of outstanding management responses and unaddressed recommendations will be

highlighted early in the quadrennium, and measures put in place to promote lighter and faster action in these processes moving forward.

## **XI. Reporting**

56. Progress in the implementation of the plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025 will be reported in the annual report on the evaluation function in UNICEF, which is presented to the Executive Board each year at its annual session.

## **XII. Draft decision**

*The Executive Board*

*Endorses* the plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025 ([E/ICEF/2022/3](#)).

## Annex

### Corporate evaluations completed during the 2018–2021 quadrennium

<i>Evaluation topic</i>	<i>Year completed</i>
<b>Every child survives and thrives</b>	
Evaluation of the H4+ Joint Programme (the joint initiative of six United Nations agencies for technical support of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health)	2018
Evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age	2018
Evaluation of UNICEF programme on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and paediatric AIDS	2018
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to health systems strengthening	2018
Independent evaluation of the United Nations system response to AIDS 2016–2019 (joint with the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS)	2020
Joint evaluability assessment of the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All	2020
Evaluation of early child development and early stimulation and care	2021
<b>Every child learns</b>	
Evaluation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative	2018
Early childhood development kit humanitarian evaluation	2018
Evaluation of UNICEF girls' education portfolio (2009–2015)	2018
Impact evaluation of play-based early learning and development through the UNICEF early childhood development kit	2018
Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) and school readiness	2018
Making evaluation work for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 target 5: Equality and inclusion in education	2019
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to education in humanitarian situations	2020
Formative evaluation of UNICEF engagement with young people in peacebuilding	2020
Formative evaluation of inclusive education for children with disabilities	2020
Additional chapter on the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in the formative evaluation report on inclusive education for children with disabilities	2020
Review of teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic <sup>a</sup>	2021
<b>Every child is protected from violence and exploitation</b>	
Joint evaluability assessment (2018) and independent midterm review (2019) of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage	2019
Strengthening child protection systems: Evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programme performance	2019
Evaluability assessment of child protection in humanitarian action	2019
Evaluation of the UNICEF-UNFPA joint programme on female genital mutilation/cutting	2019
Rapid evidence assessment on protecting children on the move	2020

<i>Evaluation topic</i>	<i>Year completed</i>
Evaluation of UNICEF work in strengthening civil registration and vital statistics systems	2021
Programme evaluation of UNICEF work on strengthening multisectoral prevention and response to violence, abuse, and exploitation of children on the move in the Horn of Africa	2021
Evaluation of the Joint UNFPA-UNICEF Programme on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation, Phase III	2021
<b>Every child lives in a safe and clean environment</b>	
Evaluation of UNICEF drinking water supply programming in rural areas and small towns (2006–2016)	2018
UNICEF WASH action in humanitarian situations: Synthesis of evaluations 2010–2016	2018
Global evaluation of UNICEF water, sanitation and hygiene programming in protracted crises, 2014–2019 <sup>b</sup>	2020
Evaluation synthesis of United Nations system work towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 <sup>c</sup>	2021
<b>Every child has an equitable chance in life</b>	
Evaluability assessment of adolescent participation and empowerment	2019
Evaluation of approaches to social protection programming in humanitarian situations, focusing on cash-based programming	2021
Evaluation of UNICEF work for children in urban settings	2020
Rapid review of global social protection responses to the COVID-19 pandemic	2021
<b>Humanitarian action</b>	
Towards improved emergency response: Synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016	2018
Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies	2019
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the drought response in Ethiopia	2019
Joint humanitarian evaluation of the Evaluation Pooled Fund, in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	2019
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls	2020
Evaluation of Global Education Cluster action, 2017–2019: Strengthening coordination of education in emergencies	2020
Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies: Afghanistan	2020
Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies: Nigeria	2021
Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies: Somalia	2021
Formative evaluation of the UNICEF role as cluster lead (co-lead) agency	2021
Formative evaluation of UNICEF work to link humanitarian and development programming <sup>d</sup>	2021
<b>Evaluations of Level 3 and Level 2 emergencies</b>	
Evaluation of the Level 3 response to the cholera epidemic in Yemen: Crisis within a crisis	2018

<i>Evaluation topic</i>	<i>Year completed</i>
Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh	2018
Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan – Part 1: (Child survival – water, sanitation and hygiene, health, nutrition and related issues)	2018
Evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 crisis response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	2019
Real-time evaluation of the UNICEF response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe	2019
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique	2019
Review of the UNICEF response to the Level 2 emergency in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	2020
Real-time assessment of the UNICEF response to COVID-19 at the country level	2020
Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan – Part 2: (child protection, education, centrality of protection and related issues)	2021
<b>Change strategies and enablers</b>	
Evaluation of innovation in UNICEF work	2019
Independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse	2018
Evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan	2018
COVID-19 learning evaluation	2020
Development effectiveness review of UNICEF	2020
Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021	2020
Readiness assessment–climate and environment	2020
Evaluability assessment of the common chapter to the strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women	2020
Readiness assessment of business for results	2020

*Source:* UNICEF Evidence Information Systems Integration database.

<sup>a</sup> Includes a planned evaluation on early learning.

<sup>b</sup> Change of title of the evaluation of the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene in humanitarian situations.

<sup>c</sup> This activity replaced the evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to strengthening the enabling environment for water, sanitation and hygiene.

<sup>d</sup> This activity replaced the evaluability assessment of the UNICEF contribution to enhancing humanitarian-development integration.