

UNICEF Executive Board – First Regular Session 2020

ANNEX TO INFORMATION NOTE

Examples of UN Reform in Practice:

Transformative collaboration with UNDP, WFP and UNHCR

The 2018–2021 Strategic Plan of UNICEF emphasizes the strong commitment of the organization to work more effectively and efficiently with partners throughout the UN in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and to proactively contribute to the UN Secretary-General’s reform agenda. This commitment is further detailed in the Common Chapter of the Strategic Plan, where the organization focuses on working with specific UN agencies to achieve more results.

Recognizing the need to redouble cooperation efforts on an urgent basis, the Executive Heads of UNICEF and other UN agencies have agreed to focus on a number of key areas of partnership that will be transformative. The purpose is to demonstrate UN reforms in practice in achieving results at scale, and in bringing about efficiency and effectiveness gains.

This short paper provides an overview of progress in the areas of transformative action with UNDP, WFP and UNHCR. Similar efforts – which the Executive Board will be briefed on at a later stage – are also ongoing with other UN agencies, particularly with other New York-based entities.

Collaboration with UNDP

Innovative solutions at scale: Following a **Call to Action** by the two Principals in mid-2019, UNDP and UNICEF have embarked on a joint initiative to **identify sustainable innovative solutions** that demonstrate the ability of the two organizations to work together more efficiently in the delivery of results at scale. This collaboration builds on the extensive innovative work of the two agencies on the ground, particularly in the 60 countries around the world where UNDP accelerator labs are being established, and where UNICEF teams have amassed a solid base of experience. The goal is to test new ways of working together to address sustainable development challenges, building on past experiments in innovation, scanning what is happening in-country, mapping local solutions, and working with national partners to test ideas and experiment rapidly for scale.

To-date, over 190 joint solutions have been developed by teams across the world in response to the Call to Action, with promising innovations in the areas of climate change, investment in young people, big data, technology and platforms for development, and innovative financing. **Front-runner ideas** include: (i) gamification for climate, engaging children and young people in practical actions to address climate change and lack of environmental sustainability); (ii) tackling air pollution, through the use of innovative tools and analysis that enable monitoring of air quality by the general public, private sector and decision makers; (iii) linking young people to the future of work, through interactive and personalized technology-based opportunities (RLabs and Blockchain); (iv) management of childhood illnesses and improvement of the quality of care for children, through innovative technologies and collaboration with the private sector (PRIV-IMCI); and (v) development of a Child Bonds Standard, with a pre-issuance tool to assess the bonds potential impact on children before issuance, and a post issuance tool to verify the real impact on children (modelled against the existing platform of the SDG Bonds Standard supported by UNDP).

A generation of young solvers: UNDP and UNICEF, under the Generation Unlimited partnership platform, are working jointly to roll out and implement the second Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge globally, underway in 41 countries. The Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge calls on young innovators to design solutions to improve education, employment and civic engagement in their communities. It aims to inspire young people with brilliant ideas, but without the resources to bring them to life. This includes young refugees, those who face daily discrimination due to their ethnicity, their gender or their disability and those who are disadvantaged by poverty. Beyond UNICEF and UNDP, the partnership around the Youth Challenge includes other partners external to the UN, including Plan International and the Scouts.

Tackling climate change and environmental degradation: UNDP and UNICEF teams are working on three inter-linked areas of programming that tackle climate change and environmental impact: (i) **securing climate change-related finance** to address the needs of children, youth and the most vulnerable, with a focus on a set of large scale transformative projects in the water, education and health sectors in a select number of countries and joint outreach to a range of potential partners, including the Green Climate Fund; (ii) working to ensure that **climate policies, planning and budgeting are child-inclusive** in all countries where new generations of UN development cooperation frameworks are being prepared or where national governments are formally reviewing their commitments to climate action; and (iii) supporting the efforts of **children and young people to be active agents of change** in climate, energy and environmental efforts, by working together to increase opportunities for the participation of young people in global and national climate change discourses, and in debates around inclusive green economy.

Leveraging financing for development: UNDP and UNICEF are building on each other's social policy, public finance management and financing for development expertise – and collaboration with the World Bank and IFIs – to support countries in accelerating progress and results for children and young people. The two agencies have developed a **Joint Financing Literacy Course** to (i) transfer skills to UNDP and UNICEF staff members in the short-term; and (ii) develop a network of practitioners innovating in finance for the SDGs. The first in a series of trainings was rolled out in late 2019 for senior staff at country and regional level working together on joint solutions in policy level engagement, public finance management, child-friendly budgeting and budget transparency in support of achievement of the SDGs.

On the policy side, UNDP and UNICEF are collaborating with other UN agencies, the World Bank and IMF, through Integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs), a planning and delivery tool to finance sustainable development at the national level, with an initial 18 countries targeted in 2020. The INFF will help policymakers lay out a strategy to increase investment for sustainable development, manage financial and non-financial risks, and ultimately achieve sustainable development priorities. In addition, in many countries UNDP and UNICEF are exploring joint proposals for the pending SDG Joint Fund call on Financing.

UNDP and UNICEF are also developing innovative financing instruments in selected areas that showcase how combined expertise, streamlined engagement and clear division of labour can deliver a sustainable business model. As a first step, the agencies are working on a **joint mechanism for financing of solar energy systems**, to be implemented at a large scale. The focus is on jointly rethinking climate, risk and resilience financial instruments in the long-term. Other areas being explored include a climate change-resilience fund and a catalytic, guarantee facility.

There are a number of **efficiency and effectiveness gains** expected from the focused collaboration between UNDP and UNICEF. These include a significant reduction of staff time in the development of parallel innovations and financial instruments, and in the submission of individual proposals. Joint financing instruments can yield greater social impact in terms of the number of people reached, at a larger geographic scale. Finally, investing in risk and resilience activities and financing has proven to be more cost effective than a humanitarian response.

Collaboration with WFP

Investments in nutrition in the first 1,000 days of life, and through to school years: Under a renewed partnership commitment, UNICEF and WFP have joined forces to ensure that millions of vulnerable children, in fragile countries, are protected from early childhood wasting and receive the health and nutrition support they need in schools to grow, learn and thrive. The initiative focusses on two areas that require accelerated progress to support the SDGs: (i) **strengthening an integrated approach to reduce child wasting**; and (ii) **improving the nutrition and health of school children**.

In moving this initiative forward, WFP and UNICEF are deploying complementary operational capacities to support governments to implement an integrated approach in reducing child wasting and improving school health and nutrition programmes in a first group of 6 priority countries in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. In these countries, current estimates are that 6.5 million children are wasted, and 2 million school-age children are not being reached by national school health and nutrition programmes.

In reducing child wasting in the early years, WFP and UNICEF are pursuing a more systematic, transparent and accountable collaboration that leverages collective strengths more effectively and requires a paradigm shift. The approach will strengthen food, health, water and sanitation and social protection systems through an integrated package of interventions that prevent mothers and children from becoming malnourished.

This approach will also enable a more streamlined division of labour between the two agencies and other key actors. For instance, UNICEF is well placed to leverage and directly support national health systems, and provide overall coordination lead for all nutrition interventions, while both WFP and UNICEF bring essential, operational capabilities to support prevention and treatment of wasting, particularly in fragile settings.

The paradigm shift in action places **emphasis on early prevention**. WFP and UNICEF will identify context-specific actions under each of the three preventive areas of an integrated approach – maternal nutrition, children’s diets and feeding practices, and primary health care services and hygiene practices. The objective is to ensure that women and children benefit from the diets, services and practices needed to prevent wasting in early childhood.

When prevention fails, **early detection and treatment** is a must. In order to treat more children, more effectively, WFP and UNICEF will support the incorporation of early detection and treatment services for children suffering from wasting into primary health care services for children and women. Routine early detection of child wasting as an integral part of routine services for children will make treatment easier, shorter, less costly, and more effective. Together with this, simplified approaches for the treatment of child wasting – i.e. using one treatment protocol and one treatment product – that show strong potential to expand coverage and efficiency, will be actively tested and replicated.

In supporting children in the school years, WFP and UNICEF are working to lead a multi-stakeholder coalition to prioritise an integrated package of school health and nutrition interventions to 35 million of the most vulnerable children in 30 low-income and fragile countries. For children to maximise their potential and break free from the intergenerational cycle of poverty, investments in the health and nutrition of children need to be scaled up alongside investments in the learning environment.

This joint initiative is an ambitious, incremental scale-up to drive results and model transformational change in schools. It calls for leveraging new ways of working with existing and new partners, and a paradigm shift that focusses on a multi-sectoral approach involving not only health and education, but also food and nutrition security, adolescent development and participation, WASH, child protection, HIV/AIDS, and gender.

There are **efficiency and effectiveness gains** in both areas where WFP and UNICEF are joining forces. The paradigm shift being proposed demonstrates how integrated packages of support for prevention of wasting can be scaled up, with a clear return on investment. By scaling up prevention, we have the potential to reduce the need for treatment by up to 50 percent and put in place a continuum of care that links strengthened prevention to early detection and treatment of wasting through facility- and community-based interventions. Plans by the two agencies for a more efficient and regular supply of ready to use foods through joint demand forecasting and common tendering and contracting also have the potential to generate cost savings of around 35 per cent in supply chain elements, and at least 10 per cent in the cost of ready to use therapeutic food. Finally, by streamlining and improving the supply chain, and promoting and supporting governments to adopt simplified approaches, we envision increasing the treatment coverage by at least 50 per cent.

In school health and nutrition, returns on investment are equally noteworthy, ranging from US\$4 to US\$20 for every dollar spent depending on the context and specific intervention. This includes substantial savings for households through reduced health care costs and expenditure on food, financial gains from improved academic achievement, and benefits to the local economy, social protection systems and other services.

Collaboration with UNHCR

Securing a better deal for refugee children: UNHCR and UNICEF have developed a two-year blueprint for joint action, to deliver a measurably more effective and efficient response for refugee and returnee children, their families and host communities. The blueprint focuses on the priority areas of education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and child protection. In the first phase, joint actions will centre on 8 – 10 countries with a significant number of refugees, with corresponding global targets and specific indicators.

The aim will be to: (i) work with government to include refugees and returnees in relevant humanitarian and development programmes; (ii) advocate for refugees and returnees to have access to national services in countries of origin, in countries of transit and in refugee-hosting countries; and (iii) provide consistent technical, financial and programming support to host countries to include refugees in national development plans and budgets, alongside host communities.

With a view to ensuring a more predictable and inclusive response, the two agencies will focus on transformative goals in three key programme areas:

- **In education**, to ensure that all refugee and returnee children have access to quality primary and secondary education focusing on inclusion into national system; and to ensure that a significantly increased number of refugee adolescent and young people will have access to tertiary education, and technical/vocational education and training.
- **In WASH**, to ensure that all refugee children and their families will have access to safe and clean drinking water, and adequate sanitation in accordance with agreed standards and with a view to inclusion in national system as soon as possible after an emergency.
- **In child protection**, to ensure that all refugee children will have access to birth registration services and child protection systems; and all refugee women, girls and boys affected by gender-based violence will be supported with appropriate services.

Joint flagship initiatives in the three focus areas will include applying frugal innovation in settlements and host communities, a prominent emphasis on prevention and protection from sexual and gender-based violence in line with joint commitments in this area, and a focus on skills for employability for young refugees and hosts.

There are a number of **efficiency and effectiveness gains** expected from the new approach to partnership by UNHCR and UNICEF. These include, principally, a more robust response for refugee and returnee children and their families in education, WASH and child protection, and positive policy change in support of their inclusion into national systems. There will also be increased predictability and clear parameters of engagement between UNHCR and UNICEF in different contexts, as well as reduced duplication of efforts and increased cost savings as a result of clear division of labour – ensuring a smooth transition from humanitarian emergency interventions to development approaches. The combined efforts of the two agencies are also expected to yield more efficient mobilization and use of resources.

Collaboration across the UN system

The U-Report youth empowerment and engagement platform is one used widely across UN agencies along with young people, governments, NGOs and others. UNOCHA, UNHCR, ILO WFP, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UN Volunteers, and UNDP have used U-Report to engage young people and inform their strategy and implementation. UNHCR is using U-Report to connect refugees and migrants to information through U-Report On The Move. U-Report is used by 8.7 million young people and communities in 65 countries and growing.

In addition to programme driven delivering as one innovation initiatives, the UN Innovation Network facilitates agencies funds and programmes to connect and collaborate. Examples of such collaborations include:

- **A GAVI for Gigabites – GIGA**, is a key initiative launched by ITU and UNICEF. GIGA aims to finance connectivity for every school in the world and provide safe, useful, open source technology to young people. The GIGA initiative received a WIRED25 Award and is a Secretary-General endorsed collaboration with several countries signed on as leads/pathfinders, and a range of opportunities for innovation at scale and related efficiency gains.
- **The Innovation Accelerator of UNIN and WFP**, hosted the first Interagency Innovation Bootcamp for innovators from 11 different UN entities. Since then, several of the projects have been further developed and successfully launched, including UNIDO's Impact Investment Platform, Young UN's conecta and the Atrium. The Atrium is an interagency development sandbox for blockchain technology, designed to enable collaboration, and reduce the challenges of developing new ideas for UN staff.