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Plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025: draft for review

Summary

The draft plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025 has been prepared in accordance with the 2018 revised evaluation policy of UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2018/14](#)), which requires the Evaluation Office to prepare a plan for global evaluations, to be developed following the guiding principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) (General Assembly resolution [75/233](#)).

The draft plan is presented to the UNICEF Executive Board for information. It builds upon an in-depth analysis of lessons learned during the implementation of the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 ([E/ICEF/2018/3](#)). The draft plan includes a detailed description of evaluations that will be carried out in 2022 and outlines evaluation topics that will be submitted for decision at the 2022 first regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board. The final plan for global evaluations will include a list of evaluation products for the quadrennium, which will provide the body of evaluative evidence necessary to ensure organizational accountability and learning in support of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

* [E/ICEF/2021/23](#).



I. Introduction

1. The plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025 will enable the Evaluation Office (“the Office”) to carry out corporate evaluations to generate evidence on the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of UNICEF programmes as well as on the impact and sustainability of the organization’s work. This information is vital to assess progress towards results, to better understand what works – or not –, why and under which circumstances, and to provide continuous feedback to learn as the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 is being implemented.

2. The draft plan for global evaluations, 2022–2025 presented in this document will support the new UNICEF Strategic Plan by considering achievements and lessons in each of its five Goal Areas, and it looks into key change strategies and enablers that support their realization, paying particular attention to cross-cutting and foundational activities. The draft plan focuses on key thematic and responsive corporate evaluations that provide the evidence basis for timely decision-making.

3. In an increasingly diversified world, the draft plan factors in the different development contexts within which UNICEF works. It is important to note that the draft plan covers corporate evaluations conducted by the Office but does not include evaluative activities undertaken by regional and country offices. Country-level evaluations are described in the costed evaluation plans that are 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.

4. In addition to the priorities for corporate evaluations, the draft plan describes the support, including quality assurance and technical support, the Office provides to all levels of the organization, as well as partnerships with 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.

5. This draft plan is presented to the UNICEF Executive Board for information. It covers evaluations that will be carried out in 2022, such as joint evaluations with United Nations entities and other partners. It outlines priority evaluation topics for consideration by stakeholders, which will be included in the final plan that will be submitted for decision at the first regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board in 2022.

6. The final plan may need to be adjusted during the the next four years to respond to issues arising in the course of the implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, including those related to new emergencies. It may also need to be adjusted when the implementation of system-wide evaluations gets under way, as stipulated in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations working together. The Office will inform the Executive Board about new issues as they arise.

II. Evaluation function adapting to the new context and challenges

7. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic ushered in an era of profound change, requiring new ways of doing business while remaining focused on delivering results. From early 2020, evaluations started focusing more on learning, and some practices were introduced that differ from more traditional evaluation methods. The evaluation function recognized early on that in an operating environment that was rapidly changing and called for continuous adaptation, there

was an urgent need for an in-depth understanding of the ways in which countries were responding to the crisis.

8. In March 2020, the Office issued two technical notes to help to meet the organization's need for evidence as the UNICEF response to the COVID-19 pandemic evolved. The Office and the UNICEF COVID-19 secretariat have since launched learning evaluations of the global response to the pandemic, while regional and country offices have embarked on other initiatives to inform their work. In addition, from April 2020 onwards, ongoing or planned evaluations have incorporated a COVID-19 lens in their scope

9. Quick adaptation to the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic entailed anticipating the demand for evaluative evidence and addressing emerging needs by facilitating and coordinating faster and more timely assessments of the UNICEF response at country level, such as a real-time assessment launched by the Office to inform forward-looking reflections on the implementation of the organization's COVID-19 response. As of mid-June 2021, 43 country offices across all UNICEF regions had completed real-time assessments. Several regions plan to produce a second round of evaluative products on the UNICEF response to COVID-19, to generate additional learning on the most recent features of the response.

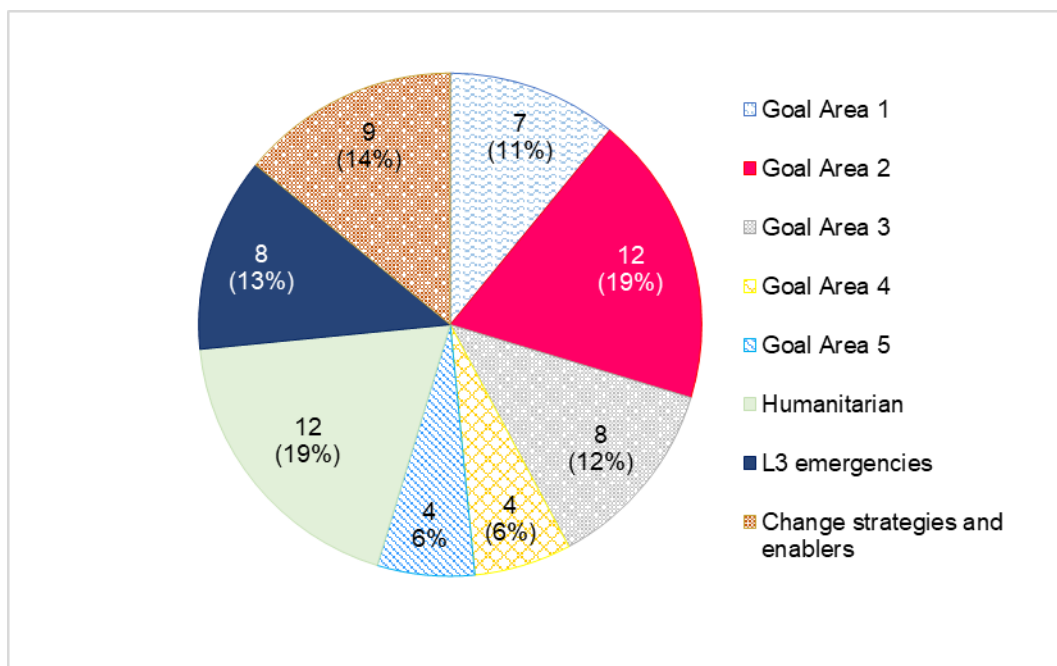
10. The Office, together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), also used U-Report, a global social platform created by UNICEF, as an evaluation tool to reach out to populations in programme countries, to gather their knowledge and attitudes on female genital mutilation practices. This was particularly opportune, given that the evaluation team could not conduct field visits due to travel restrictions. It is expected that U-Report will continue to be used as a potential instrument for remote survey collection. The Office is also introducing alternative data collection approaches to obtain information from hard-to-reach populations, using innovative methods.

III. Progress in the implementation of the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021

11. The plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021, endorsed by the Executive Board in decision 2018/2, contains corporate evaluations to generate evidence on the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of UNICEF programmes, covering all five Goal Areas, humanitarian actions and change strategies and enablers of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The Office is on course to fully implement the plan for global evaluations. Annex 1 lists the corporate evaluations that will have been conducted by the end of 2021.

12. Overall, the Office will have finalized a total 64 evaluation products in four years (see figure 1 below). In 2021, 10 corporate evaluations (including two joint evaluations), one readiness assessment and two reviews will be completed. Only two evaluations from the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 will be rolled over to 2022. These are the evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to improved teaching and learning, and the evaluation of UNICEF work in public health emergencies.

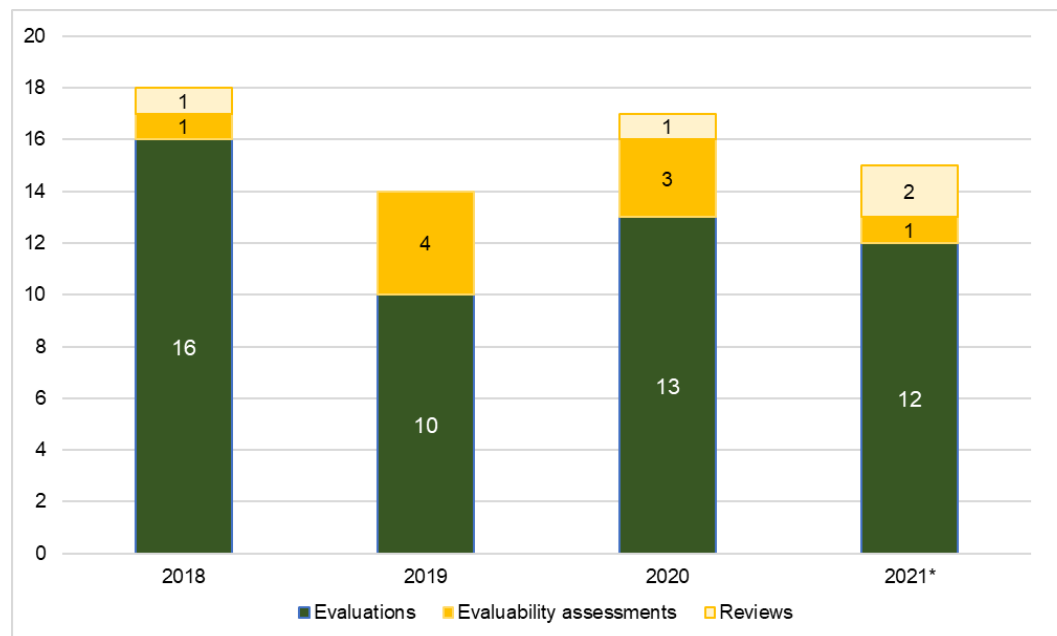
Figure 1
Evaluative products by Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 Goal Area (including inter-agency evaluations)



Source: UNICEF Evidence Information Systems Integration database (EISI).

13. The Office continues to adapt its range of evaluative products to respond to the situation on the ground, as well as to the UNICEF demand to have access to faster evidence on what works for children. The delivery and variety of evaluative products have been sustained at a high level since 2018, as presented in figure 2.

Figure 2
Evaluative products delivered by year, 2018–2021



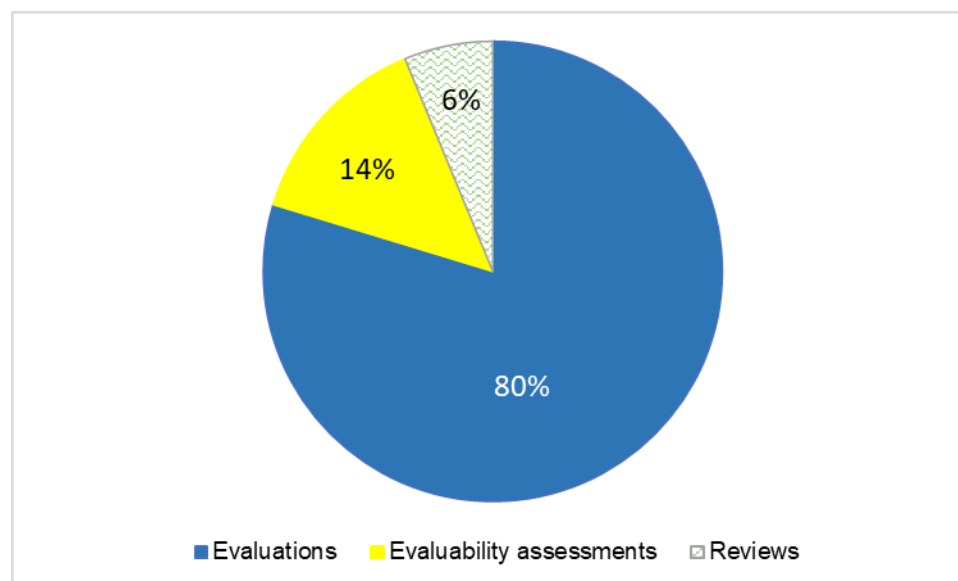
* The evaluation cycle is still in progress.

Source: EISI.

14. By the end of the 2018–2021 quadrennium, the Office will have finalized 52 evaluations (80 per cent) and 13 other evaluative products, which include four reviews (6 per cent) and nine evaluability assessments (14 per cent). This breakdown is presented in figure 3.

Figure 3

Evaluative products delivered by type of product, 2018–2021



Source: EISL.

15. Twelve evaluations were conducted jointly with other United Nations entities, as described in annex I, which shows the wide range of United Nations partners with which the Office worked in conducting evaluations.

IV. Lessons learned

16. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the work of the Office over the past year and a half has been geared towards helping UNICEF to understand how the pandemic affected outcomes for children, and to provide the organization with evidence to develop efficient and effective responses in its key programme areas, as well as in multisectoral interventions.

17. These adaptations often involved trialling new solutions and innovations, or repurposing old ones, a trend that is likely to continue over the next four years. Changes brought about by the pandemic will have long-term effects on how evaluations are conducted. New technologies to enable better use of evaluation evidence will have to be introduced. The Office will implement appropriate measures to mitigate possible risks associated with some of the new approaches, as they tend to be more difficult to deploy in countries that are not easily accessible compared to those that have the necessary infrastructure.

18. The revised evaluation policy of UNICEF (2018) was instrumental in clarifying accountabilities and roles in the evaluation function, as was the expansion of the human resources capacity, with the recruitment of regional evaluation advisers and multi-country evaluation specialists across all regions. This resulted in better exchange of evaluation data between countries and increased capacity of partners in data collection, and it enabled the evaluation function to expand the coverage of its evaluations, reviews and other knowledge products.

19. The revised evaluation policy was also crucial in ensuring better evaluation coverage of emergency responses, such as corporate evaluations of major UNICEF responses to Level 3 and Level 2 emergencies – including for South Sudan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Cyclone Idai and the Rohingya refugee crisis. Country offices are now more aware of the evaluation policy's requirement to evaluate Level 3 and Level 2 emergencies. The increased human capacity, especially at regional office level, was instrumental in advancing evaluation coverage, in particular of Level 2 humanitarian situations. Evaluation coverage of L1 emergencies is improving, but more efforts are required to enhance coverage of these evaluations. This will remain a focus for the evaluation function over the next four years.

20. Experience has shown that timely, well-planned and carefully executed evaluations with relevant and balanced findings and sound recommendations are the most valuable for learning and accountability purposes. The establishment of an 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.

21. The substantial number of evaluations conducted jointly with other United Nations entities have increased the complementarity of evaluation efforts across agencies and broadened the influence and visibility of the work of the Office.

V. Guiding principles and objectives of the draft plan

22. The draft plan for global evaluations is guided by the revised evaluation policy. It follows the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms of utility, credibility and independence and has been prepared on the basis of the objective analysis of the new Strategic Plan, as well as after consultations within the several UNICEF offices responsible for global programme guidance and support.

23. The draft plan is informed by the General Assembly resolution 70/299 on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, particularly in providing evaluation evidence on the child-focused Sustainable Development Goals.

24. The main objective of the draft plan is to outline the workplan that will enable the Office to conduct a set of independent assessments of UNICEF strategic choices and programme performance and results, and to provide feedback on operational effectiveness and efficiency.

25. Once finalized and approved, the plan will foster organization-wide learning about what works and does not work for achieving results for children. It will strengthen evidence-based decision-making by national policymakers and programme managers by providing timely and independent feedback on the work of UNICEF, thus enhancing transparent governance, organizational learning and corporate accountability for results for children.

26. The final plan will include a well-balanced mix of evaluation products covering all five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan as well as its change strategies, enablers and cross-cutting priorities. It will include evaluations of the humanitarian response in each component of the Strategic Plan and will cover all ongoing evaluations of the UNICEF response to Level 3 humanitarian emergencies. In doing so, the final plan will also contribute to building a body of evidence related to strengthening the nexus between the humanitarian and development work of the organization and its partners.

27. The final plan will focus on topics that are of strategic importance, where corporate investment is high, or in which UNICEF engagement is relatively new and requires more learning. Evaluations will also take into consideration the validation and scaling-up of proven programmatic solutions, multisectoral and integrated approaches to interventions, where applicable, and include the participation of stakeholders, especially marginalized children and adolescents.

VI. Criteria for the prioritization of evaluation topics

28. The 2030 Agenda calls for intersectoral, multi-stakeholder and country-led approaches to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded and increased the number, intensity and duration of humanitarian crises. The draft plan aims to ensure a balance in the selection of evaluation topics across the entire architecture of the new UNICEF Strategic Plan.

29. The Office has experience with several means of selecting and ranking topics. As the draft plan is being finalized, two sets of criteria, context- and feasibility-related, will be used to draw the final priority list of evaluation topics and products.

VII. Evaluation topics and proposed workplan for 2022

30. The Office considers that adequate time for reflection and consultation should be afforded between the finalization of the new Strategic Plan and the selection of priority topics to be included in the final plan for global evaluations, to ensure greater adherence to the actual needs of the Strategic Plan and better cohesion with other organizations, especially those that are currently developing their own plans.

31. The draft plan for global evaluations therefore presents a list of evaluations with detailed descriptions of the topics that will form the Office workplan during the first year of the Strategic Plan, and for which resources can be secured. It also outlines candidate topics for the remainder of the quadrennium, which will be discussed with a wide range of partners and stakeholders. The participatory process, which will be led by the incoming Director of Evaluation, will result in a comprehensive final plan of global evaluations, 2022–2025.

32. The 2022 Office workplan builds on the significant gains the UNICEF evaluation function has made by implementing the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021, as well as the increasing demand for evaluative evidence for informed decision-making and organizational learning. Table 1 presents the corporate evaluations to be conducted by the Office during the first year of the new Strategic Plan, covering all five Goal Areas, change strategies and enablers.

33. The topics listed were identified after consultation with several UNICEF offices and divisions on the key issues that need evaluative evidence at the beginning of the quadrennium. In total, 10 evaluations, including of four Level 3 emergencies, are planned for completion in 2022. Of these, only two evaluations are carried over from the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 – the evaluation of UNICEF contributions to improved teaching and learning, and the evaluation of UNICEF work in public health emergencies.

Table 1
Corporate evaluations to be conducted in 2022

<i>Evaluation topic</i>
Evaluation of UNICEF work in public health emergencies ^a
Evaluation of UNICEF work in primary health care and COVID-19 continuity of services
Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to improved teaching and learning: education response to the COVID-19 pandemic ^a
Environmental and social safeguards baseline assessment
Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to poverty reduction
Humanitarian action^b
Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the COVID-19 pandemic
Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic
Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the Yemen crisis
Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the humanitarian situation in northern Ethiopia
Change strategies and enablers
Impact evaluation for resilience learning in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (joint)

^a Rolled over from the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021.

^b Any new scaled-up Level 3 emergency response by UNICEF will be evaluated as part of the 2022 workplan.

A. Evaluation of UNICEF work in public health emergencies

34. Public health emergencies, the most common of which are infectious disease epidemics, pose substantial global risks, particularly for children and people in fragile settings. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how public health emergencies can cause severe socioeconomic hardship, in addition to devastating health impacts. The evaluation will analyse UNICEF cross-sectoral public health emergency preparedness and response, which bring together health; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); communication for development; child protection; supply; and emergency programming. It will also examine the extent to which UNICEF is fit for purpose in its public health emergencies preparedness and response work, capture lessons learned, and make actionable recommendations that will help UNICEF to optimize its contribution to public health emergencies. The Office has begun seeking inputs into this evaluation from its counterparts at the World Health Organization (WHO) and will continue to do so throughout the evaluation process.

B. Evaluation of UNICEF work in primary health care and COVID-19 continuity of services

35. As the United Nations Secretary-General recently reported, the rate of progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 3 has slowed down and will not be sufficient to meet most targets. The new Strategic Plan seeks to address these unprecedented challenges by focusing on resilient primary health-care systems as key to attaining universal health coverage and delivering integrated, prevention-focused services and support that enable children to survive and thrive. UNICEF has long prioritized support for community-based health platforms and efforts to strengthen primary health-care systems. In the present context, the COVID-19 pandemic is devastating health systems worldwide and threatens health outcomes that were already achieved. Pandemic mitigation measures, fear and misinformation are impeding access to

essential services, undermining trust in authorities and fuelling vaccine hesitancy. The Office will conduct a corporate evaluation of UNICEF work in primary health care and its response to challenges threatening service continuity due to COVID-19 and associated mitigation measures. To this end, the Office has begun seeking the input of its partners at WHO.

C. Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to improved teaching and learning: education response to the COVID-19 pandemic

36. This ongoing corporate evaluation will determine the extent to which UNICEF has contributed knowledge and tools to support education systems, especially their capacity to respond effectively to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The scope of the evaluation was re-purposed to a formative evaluation, commissioned largely for learning purposes. It will examine whether: (a) UNICEF is building the knowledge and global public goods to support an effective education response to the COVID-19 pandemic; (b) UNICEF-supported strategies were deployed effectively to enhance government initiatives for continuity of learning during school closures and attempt to reinstate safe and equitable in-school learning opportunities during and after the COVID-19 pandemic; and (c) UNICEF education teams utilized the existing frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools to respond to COVID-19, and if adjustments are being made to enhance preparedness for possible future disruptions of a similar scale.

D. Environmental and social safeguards baseline assessment

37. Environmental and social safeguards are critical to meeting UNICEF obligations for climate-resilient programming. The 2020 Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action also contain guidelines to reduce the environmental impact of programming and ensure climate resilience. These safeguards have been increasingly incorporated into UNICEF humanitarian programming, but there is a need for stronger integration and greater scale-up of environmental and social safeguards globally. The Office suggests to conduct a baseline assessment of UNICEF implementation of environmental and social safeguards, to provide evidence for expanding them, and to contribute to the development of a corporate framework. The assessment could also measure the extent of their implementation at the country level and help to provide a road map for further and more widespread integration of these safeguards into programming.

E. Evaluation of UNICEF contributions to poverty reduction

38. In the Strategic Plan and the 2030 Agenda, eliminating child poverty and ensuring access to social protection is a priority. UNICEF is supporting Governments to strengthen national capacities for measuring and monitoring multidimensional poverty, as well as increasing public expenditures for children in the social sectors. The organization is providing technical assistance to protect and increase financing for the scale-up of child-sensitive and inclusive social programmes, including in humanitarian settings. In response to the current reversals of gains made in poverty reduction – and UNICEF intensified interventions in this area, as laid out in the new Strategic Plan – the Office is undertaking a scoping exercise of UNICEF work in child poverty reduction, which could inform a full-fledged evaluation on this topic.

F. Evaluation of humanitarian action

39. Humanitarian action is well integrated throughout the new Strategic Plan. It is critical not only to saving lives and promoting dignity during crises, but also to building resilient systems, accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and realizing children's rights. New cross-cutting programmes on resilience, peacebuilding and climate action are steering UNICEF work in all contexts towards addressing fragility and the root causes of conflict, crisis and displacement – while building capacities to prevent, prepare for and respond to crises. Accordingly, the Office will ensure that humanitarian action evaluations are well integrated in the final plan for global evaluations. The following evaluations are already at the planning stage for implementation in 2022:

1. Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the COVID-19 pandemic

40. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic demanded a UNICEF-wide response and required global, regional and national-level collaboration among humanitarian, health, development and peace and security actors. It tested the extent to which humanitarian actors were able to work in solidarity with others, across different spheres to address the effects of a multi-dimensional crisis. The Office will conduct an evaluation of the UNICEF response to the COVID-19 pandemic that will consolidate lessons from global, regional and local levels as well as the evidence generated by different COVID-19 responses, including the many evaluations/evaluative exercises undertaken by UNICEF offices and by other organizations. This will include a light-touch, largely internal primary data collection, to update some of the evidence base and reflect on the learning by the organization in the past year and a half. The evaluation will be coordinated with similar efforts by other agencies that are also undertaking evaluations of their COVID-19 responses.

2. Evaluations of the UNICEF response to the crises in the Syrian Arab Republic and in Yemen, and to the humanitarian situation in northern Ethiopia

41. The revised evaluation policy states that responses to protracted humanitarian crises ought to be evaluated every three years. As evaluations of UNICEF responses in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen have not been undertaken recently, there is a corporate requirement to conduct these evaluations, for learning and accountability and to build on lessons from previous complex emergencies. The Office is also working closely with the Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa to undertake an evaluation of the UNICEF response to the humanitarian crisis in northern Ethiopia.

G. Joint impact evaluation for resilience learning in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

42. This joint evaluation is part of a larger climate and resilience impact evaluation initiative, which includes evaluations of resilience programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Niger and South Sudan and is being co-managed with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). It seeks to assess the resilience impacts of the joint programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The main outcome of interest is resilience, broadly defined as the capacity to absorb shocks and chronic stressors, adapt to changing and challenging physical and social environments, and transform capacities at the individual, household and community level. The evaluation is being conducted by Development Impact Evaluation/World Bank with technical support from senior evaluation managers from FAO, UNICEF and WFP. The evaluation includes an experimental (randomized control trial) and a non-experimental (qualitative-quantitative mixed method approach) component. The mixed method

component was introduced by UNICEF later, to complement and expand the originally proposed evaluation scope.

VIII. Evaluation topics for further consultation

43. As the final plan for global evaluations is still under development, consultations with key stakeholders about the priority themes to be evaluated during the quadrennium are ongoing and will continue until the finalization of the plan in the last quarter of the year. The draft plan will be finalized by the incoming Director of Evaluation on the basis of the above-mentioned lessons learned from the previous evaluation plans, the guiding principles, the prioritization criteria and the analysis of country-level costed evaluations.

44. Additional consultations will be held with key stakeholders, including the UNICEF Global Evaluation Committee and other United Nations entities, to agree on a set of evaluations that will form the core of the final plan for global evaluations. As of June 2021, the following topics have been suggested to be further discussed under the leadership of the Director of Evaluation.

A. Goal Area 1

45. Priorities in this area to be considered for the final plan include: (a) UNICEF work in health in emergencies, as providing life-saving health services represents one third of all UNICEF spending on emergency operations; (b) UNICEF contributions to preventing obesity in children and adolescents, in response to the growing prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity, with children from poorer households in low-, middle- and high-income countries increasingly affected; and (c) an evaluation of the organization's growing engagement in mental health and psychosocial support, given the important role this plays in achieving global development goals across sectors in development and humanitarian contexts.

B. Goal Area 2

46. Priority themes identified for evaluations in this area of work are: (a) UNICEF contributions to equitable access and scaling-up of education innovations, to examine (i) if the organization has supported the development of tangible solutions required to transform learning and make it accessible to all children, and (ii) the extent to which the innovations are scalable, equitable and sustainable; (b) UNICEF work in reducing the number of out-of-school children and improving learning opportunities for alternative learning pathways; (c) UNICEF contributions to equitable access and scaling-up of education innovations; (d) UNICEF contributions to early childhood development and improved foundational learning competencies; (e) UNICEF support to interventions improving the acquisition of skills by adolescents; and (f) UNICEF support to teacher development and improved learning outcomes.

C. Goal Area 3

47. Evaluations being considered for this Goal Area are: (a) the joint UNICEF/UNFPA Global Programme to End Child Marriage; (b) UNICEF work on violence against boys, girls and women, a high priority as the new Strategic Plan has adopted a gender-transformative approach to preventing and responding to violence against children; (c) UNICEF core roles, strategies and results to strengthen legislative and policy frameworks and capacities of justice systems, given that access to justice for children has not yet been evaluated globally; and (d) UNICEF work to monitor and report on grave violations of children's rights in situations of armed conflict, which would be the first corporate evaluation in this area of work.

D. Goal Area 4

48. In this area, emerging themes and programmes to be evaluated include: (a) capacity development work in WASH programming, a key element of UNICEF work that requires developing capacity of both staff and partners, including local governments, as recommended in the 2020 midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and as highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goal 6 Global Acceleration Framework; and (b) the Accelerated Water and Sanitation for All programme, which will be ending in 2022.

E. Goal Area 5

49. Important topics to be considered for the final plan for global evaluations include: (a) UNICEF support for expanded coverage of the shock-responsive social protection system, including cash transfers in humanitarian settings, as the organization is supporting scaling up cash support in emergencies; and (b) UNICEF contributions to increased access to inclusive, universal, gender transformative social protection systems, including CASH+ (an approach combining cash transfers with productive assets, activities, inputs, and/or technical training and extension services) and other sectoral approaches.

F. Evaluation of humanitarian action

50. In addition to the evaluations of humanitarian action described in section VII, the Office will respond to newly identified requirements. Recent evaluations and reviews of UNICEF humanitarian action noted a need to improve accountability to affected populations and working with local partners, therefore an evaluation on this theme would be a good candidate for the final plan for global evaluations. Following up on the recently completed formative evaluation of UNICEF work to link humanitarian and development programming, which constituted a baseline, the Office is proposing another global evaluation of UNICEF work on humanitarian and development programming to take place before the end of the quadrennium, to assess progress in this important area of work. The Humanitarian Review and a number of humanitarian evaluations have highlighted the need for UNICEF to continue its involvement in humanitarian action, anticipate the increase in the frequency, scale, severity, duration and complexity of humanitarian crises, and mainstream its international commitments in all aspects of its work. It would therefore be useful to conduct an evaluation assessing UNICEF progress in early warning and preparedness, to ensure more timely, efficient and effective humanitarian responses. It is a practice of the Office to prepare humanitarian evaluation syntheses every five years, and since the last one was prepared in 2017, a new synthesis will be included in the final plan. Additionally, UNICEF will continue to engage and support inter-agency and joint humanitarian evaluations, including the following: Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen; Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the COVID-19 humanitarian response; and Iterative evaluation of the UNHCR/UNICEF Fair Deal (Blueprint) for refugee children. Other humanitarian joint/inter-agency evaluations proposed during the quadrennium will also be supported.

G. Institutional effectiveness evaluations

51. UNICEF has made important progress on supporting gender equality over several years. However, more needs to be done to evaluate the organization's work on gender in humanitarian settings, improving access to gender disaggregated data and gender-based barriers to accessing basic social services. UNICEF would also benefit

from an updated assessment of the organization's progress in support of the 2019 prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse strategy, analysing the extent to which it has achieved its vision and whether the principles, values and goals drafted in the strategy are still fit for purpose. Although advocacy support has been an integral part of UNICEF work, little is known about how, for whom and to what extent these efforts have made a difference. An evaluation of this topic would be a critical tool to inform future advocacy strategies and enablers in support of efforts to leave no child behind. Communication for development plays a critical role in behaviour change strategies, but the number of evaluations assessing its impact within the organization is extremely limited. An evaluation of communication for development in UNICEF work would contribute to improved programmatic interventions, and help to understand what positive behaviour changes are possible, even in the most challenging contexts. The recent readiness assessment for business for results provided important insights into UNICEF engagement with the private sector. It would be useful to assess to what extent the strategies, tools and approaches applied contributed to business support of the child-focused Sustainable Development Goals.

52. More joint and inter-agency evaluations with other United Nations entities are expected to be included in the final plan, as the Office continues its efforts to increase collaboration in the design and execution of evaluations.

IX. Other key priorities

A. Accelerating innovations, mainstreaming new methods and expanding impact evaluations

53. The evaluation function has developed a comprehensive portfolio of evaluations that utilize a range of evaluation methods to tackle increasingly complex issues. Evaluation methods have been adapted to fit the needs of the diverse programme contexts in which UNICEF operates. The Office recognizes the need to expand its support to country and regional offices on their selection of most appropriate evaluation methods, including impact evaluations, and the identification of appropriate data sources to meet the growing demand for high quality, robust, relevant and timely evidence generation.

54. During the four-year period covered by the final plan for global evaluations, the Office will identify appropriate data sources and, depending on demand, support the application of data science tools, including processing and analytical methods. The Office will advise the decentralized evaluation function on elements to consider when selecting appropriate methods, on using existing and innovative data-collection tools, and on general methodological approaches.

55. The Office has recently recruited a senior specialist to promote and support impact evaluations and introduce additional innovative methods for data collection in complex settings with limited access or in hard-to-reach locations. This additional capacity will support the evaluation function to design and implement rigorous evaluative approaches, as well as to continue exploring innovative data sources and methodologies that are cost effective and easy to carry out, with the objective to estimate the impact of programmes and interventions throughout the organization. The Office will support the evaluation function with technical advice on the design of experimental, quasi-experimental and non-experimental impact evaluations. It will place greater emphasis on qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods, including innovative data-gathering approaches.

B. Joint activities with United Nations development system entities and support to system-wide evaluations

56. The reform agenda of the Secretary-General calls on the entities of the United Nations development system to work together more coherently and to strengthen evaluations and the evaluation capacity of countries. This has also been highlighted in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) (General Assembly resolution 71/243).

57. The establishment of a system-wide evaluation function has been one of the key proposals of the Secretary-General from the outset of the reform process. (See the report of the Secretary General entitled “Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all”, [A/72/124-E/2018/3](#); and the resolution adopted by the General Assembly in May 2018 entitled “Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system”, [A/RES/72/279](#).) A draft system-wide evaluation policy was prepared at the end of 2019 and will be finalized once the United Nations Chief of Evaluation in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General is appointed. The draft policy states that system-wide evaluation seeks to complement, not replace, the evaluative work of United Nations entities. The Office supports the United Nations reform agenda in many ways: (a) it has seconded a senior evaluation adviser to lead the System-Wide Evaluation Unit under the Executive Office of the Secretary-General; (b) it actively engaged in the development of the system-wide evaluation policy; (c) it supported the Decade of Action and the reform of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security; and (d) the Office is a member of the Advisory Committee of the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund and contributed to the related lessons learned and evaluability assessment exercise.

58. The Office is a member of the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation groups and participated in the evaluation of the drought response in Ethiopia, the response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique and, more recently, the first thematic inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on gender equality and empowering women and girls. The office also participated in the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the Covid-19 humanitarian response and the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The Office will also continue to actively support the inter-agency humanitarian group chaired by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), to ensure that inter-agency and joint evaluations of humanitarian responses are undertaken systematically.

59. The Office has been a core member of UNEG since it was first established and will continue to expand its engagement with the group. It is also a co-chair of EvalPartners, a global network that brings together United Nations entities; national, regional and global civil society organizations and networks; and a number of bilateral development agencies. The Office will continue to promote joint evaluation work, covering both the development and humanitarian fields, and to prioritize inter-agency evaluations and capacity development.

C. National evaluation capacity development

60. In keeping with General Assembly resolution [69/237](#) on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level, adopted in 2014, the Office will provide technical support to regional and country offices to engage partners, specifically regarding the production of high-quality field-level evaluations,

including impact evaluations and country-led evaluations of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The Office will increase its efforts to build partnerships at the regional level and to engage regional and country offices to more effectively contribute to national evaluation capacity development.

61. A blended evaluation learning programme, facilitated by academic institutions and available in several languages, will continue to be rolled out for staff and partners across all regions. The Office, in partnership with the National University of Singapore, will also launch an advanced technical training course focused on impact evaluation, to boost technical evaluation capacity among staff and government partners. This will be underpinned by an action plan designed to professionalize evaluation, with a focus on enhancing evaluation skills and competences among UNICEF staff and creating career growth opportunities.

62. The Office will continue to work closely with other United Nations entities, harmonizing evaluation approaches and system-wide collaboration, in line with the QCPR. It will cooperate with national partners and other stakeholders (Governments, civil society and the private sector), to support evaluation activities and strengthen national evaluation systems and organizational learning, and with academic institutions, international financial institutions and other development organizations.

D. Evaluation partnerships, learning and up-take of evaluations

63. The Office considers partnerships to be an essential component for the effective implementation of the plan for global evaluations. Partnerships are a key strategy of the evaluation function in UNICEF and a key element for nationally owned evaluation processes and leadership at country level.

64. The Office will continue to promote learning and knowledge exchange on emerging evaluative evidence, which will include a library of impact evaluation materials. To this end, partnering with academic institutions will be critical for support, peer review and publication, and to promote learning from UNICEF evaluations.

65. Through global partnerships and networks, UNICEF supports innovation and evaluation capacity development at the individual, institutional and enabling environment levels. Global partnerships include EvalPartners, EVALSDGs¹ and the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation. Inter-agency partnerships, especially through UNEG, allow UNICEF to contribute substantively to United Nations coherence in evaluation and to United Nations system-wide evaluations.

E. Enhancing evaluation quality and oversight

66. The Office will seek to boost 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 include the enhancement of evaluation skills and competencies among UNICEF staff and the engagement with the external evaluation advisory panel charged with providing technical advice upon request. To enhance independence, the Office will continue to seek core funds for its work, to reduce its reliance upon less predictable and earmarked other resources to fund evaluations.

¹ EVALSDGs is aimed at forming a strong evaluation partnership to inform, support, measure and assess development efforts around the Sustainable Development Goals.

X. Implementation

67. The Evaluation Office has established a good practice in adopting a consultative approach in the management of evaluations, whereby independent external teams of evaluators consult with the members of evaluation reference groups during the conduct of evaluations and present the findings to the managers responsible for the implementation of recommendations. This helps to ensure the timely implementation of evaluation results and to maximize their use.

68. The Office prepares annual workplans and reviews them regularly to identify evidence gaps, demands and opportunities in emerging topics, in order to keep the evaluation agenda relevant and at pace with the evolving needs of the organization. Scoping and designing each individual evaluation will ensure a meaningful, feasible and economical approach and evaluation methods that are appropriate to the requirements of the topic being assessed.

XI. Risks

69. The risks to the delivery of the evaluations that will be set out in the final plan for global evaluations include: (a) the capacity of the Office and the evaluation function overall might be constrained by limited or declining resources available to evaluation; (b) the Office capacity to engage in such a large number of evaluations might be limited as the COVID-19 pandemic continues and evaluations are delayed and unable to provide timely information; and (c) the very large body of evidence generated by the evaluation function might not be supported by an adequate organization-wide effort to manage the generated knowledge.

70. A key assumption is that top-level evaluation expertise is available for all planned evaluations and that there are adequate capacities across the evaluation function to support the ambitious agenda outlined in this draft plan. Accordingly, the Office will increase its efforts to mobilize technical resources. Possible delays will be minimized by frequently updating the roster of consultants and by continuing to set up long-term agreements with qualified institutions worldwide. A second key assumption is that, as the pandemic response continues to improve in most countries, UNICEF will gradually return to a relatively normal mode of operations, which will free up capacity to engage in evaluations, and that the subjects selected for evaluation will be evaluable despite any delays in their implementation resulting from the shift in the mode of operations towards a pandemic response. The Office will closely monitor this assumption to ensure that it is correct. Innovation and new technologies will continue to be pursued to help UNICEF to support national efforts to timely generate and use evaluation evidence.

71. The Office will work closely with UNEG, other United Nations entities and the United Nations Chief of Evaluation in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to respond to the evolving requirements of a system-wide approach to strengthening evaluations.

XII. Reporting

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

Annex

Plan for global evaluations, 2018-2021 – corporate evaluations completed during the quadrennium

<i>Evaluation topic</i>	<i>Year completed</i>
Every child survives and thrives	
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
Every child learns	
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to girls' education	2018
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 ^a	2021
Every child is protected from violence and exploitation	
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
Evaluation of UNICEF work in strengthening civil registration and vital statistics systems	2021

^a Includes a planned evaluation on early learning.

<i>Evaluation topic</i>	<i>Year completed</i>
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 Phase III of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)-UNICEF Joint Programme to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation	2021
Every child lives in a safe and clean environment	
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 ^b	2020
Evaluation synthesis of United Nations system work towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 ^c	2021
Every child has an equitable chance in life	
Evaluability assessment of adolescent participation and empowerment	2019
Evaluation of approaches to social protection programming in humanitarian situations, including 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
Humanitarian action	
Towards improved emergency response: Synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016	2018
Evaluation of coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies	2019
Joint humanitarian evaluation of the Evaluation Pooled Fund, in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	2019
Review of the UNICEF response to the Level 2 emergency in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	2020
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls	2020
Evaluation of the 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
Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan (Part 2)	2021
Formative evaluation of UNICEF work to link humanitarian and development programming ^d	2021
Evaluations of Level 3 emergencies	
Evaluation of the Level 3 response to the cholera epidemic in Yemen: Crisis within a crisis	2018
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 - WASH, health, nutrition and related issues)	2019
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

<i>Evaluation topic</i>	<i>Year completed</i>
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the drought response in Ethiopia	2019
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique	2020
Real-time assessment of the UNICEF response to COVID-19 at the country level	2021
Change strategies and enablers	
Evaluation of innovation in UNICEF work	2018
Independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse	2018
Evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan	2019
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 of the Strategic Plans	2020
Readiness assessment of business for results	2021

^b Change of title of the evaluation of the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene in humanitarian situations.

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

^d This activity replaced the evaluability assessment of the UNICEF contribution to enhancing humanitarian-development integration.

Source: UNICEF Evidence Information Systems Integration database (EISI).