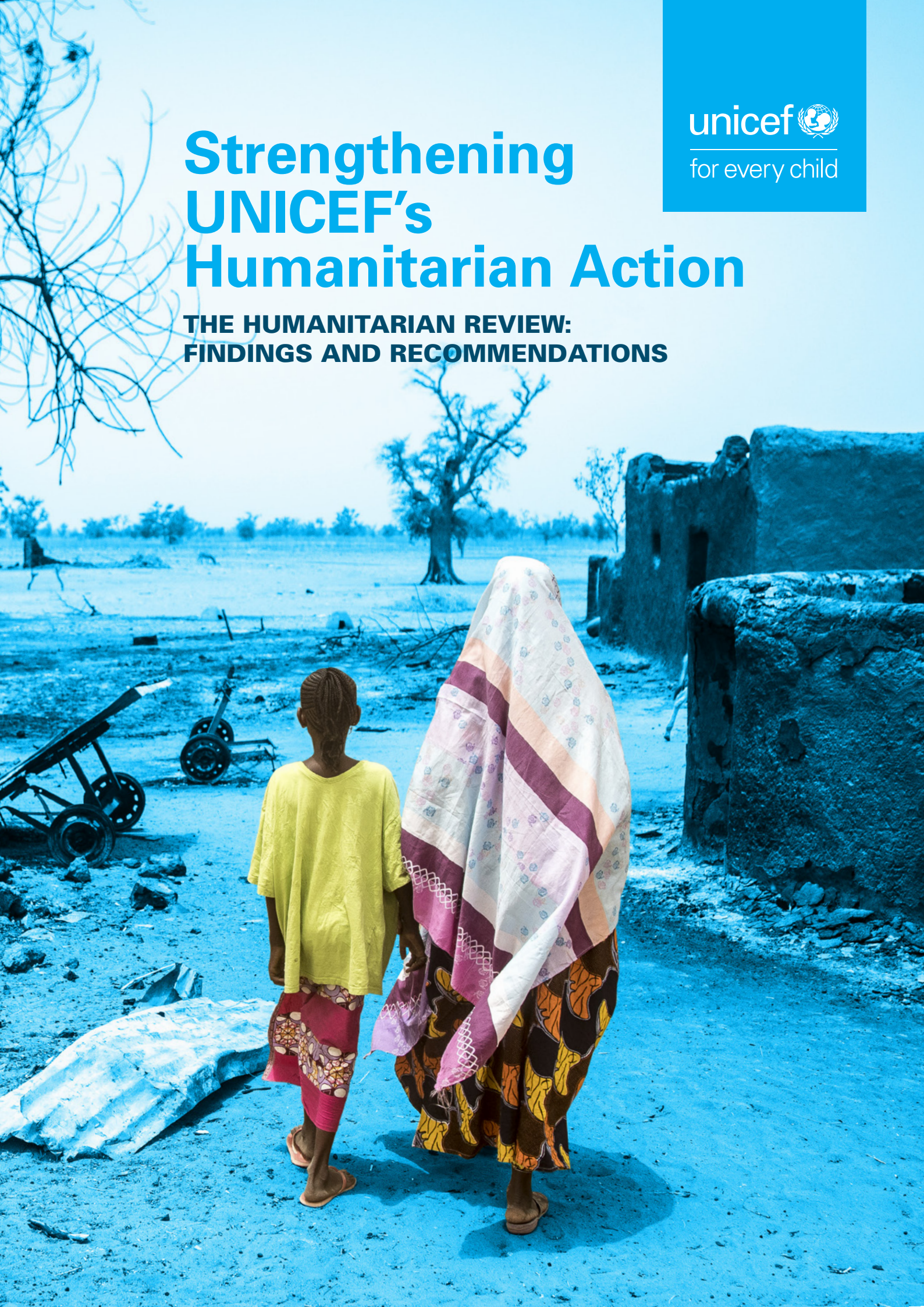


# Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action

**THE HUMANITARIAN REVIEW:  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**





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September 2020

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# Abbreviations

<b>AAP</b>	Accountability to Affected Populations	<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>CCCs</b>	Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action	<b>LHD</b>	linking humanitarian and development
<b>CERP</b>	Climate, Environment, Resilience and Peacebuilding Unit	<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>CHTE</b>	Complex, High-Threat Environment	<b>MIS</b>	management information system(s)
<b>CO</b>	Country Office	<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019	<b>NSAG</b>	Non-State Armed Groups
<b>CPD</b>	Country Programme Document	<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>DAPM</b>	Division of Analysis, Planning and Monitoring	<b>OED</b>	Office of the Executive Director
<b>DFAM</b>	Division of Financial and Administrative Management	<b>ORR</b>	Other Resources Regular (budget)
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo	<b>PBR</b>	Programme Budget Review
<b>EAG</b>	External Advisory Group	<b>PCA</b>	Project Cooperation Agreement
<b>EMOPS</b>	UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes	<b>PD</b>	Programme Document
<b>EPP</b>	Emergency Preparedness Platform	<b>PFP</b>	Private Fundraising and Partnerships
<b>ERT</b>	Emergency Response Team	<b>PHEIC</b>	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
<b>FAI</b>	First Action Initiative	<b>PM&amp;E</b>	Programme Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>FO</b>	Field Office	<b>PPD</b>	Public Partnerships Division
<b>HAC</b>	Humanitarian Action for Children	<b>PPE</b>	personal protective equipment
<b>HAF</b>	Humanitarian Access Framework	<b>PSEA</b>	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
<b>HIC</b>	High-Income Country	<b>RO</b>	Regional Office
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters	<b>R&amp;R</b>	Rest and Recuperation
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources	<b>RR</b>	Regular Resources (budget)
<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan	<b>RRT</b>	Rapid Response Team
<b>IB</b>	Institutional Budget	<b>SBP</b>	Stand-By Partner
<b>IRT</b>	Immediate Response Team	<b>SMQ</b>	Strategic Monitoring Question
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross	<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>ICVA</b>	International Council of Voluntary Agencies	<b>UNDSS</b>	United Nations Department for Safety and Security
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons	<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>IHL</b>	International Humanitarian Law	<b>US\$</b>	United States Dollar
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organization	<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration	<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
		<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# Preface

*In 2020, the number of people targeted for humanitarian assistance was 108 million – the highest of all time*

**OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS**, we have seen a rapidly changing and evolving humanitarian landscape.

The number, scale, duration, and complexity of humanitarian crises have increased dramatically, notably in violent conflicts and refugee and migration settings and public health emergencies.

These increases mean that more people than ever before are counting on UN humanitarian assistance. In 2020, the number of people targeted for this assistance was 108 million – the highest of all time.

At UNICEF, more than half of our annual global expenditure was spent on humanitarian action for several years, including our response to COVID-19.

Given these increases, and the growing stakes for affected populations, a review of how we can improve the equity, the quality, the predictability, and the timeliness of our humanitarian work could not be more timely.

This review surveys past evaluations and complements the findings of comprehensive internal and external consultations, as well as experiences emerging from our COVID-19 response. The outcome provides excellent opportunities to improve our overall humanitarian responses in terms of targeting, timeliness, and quality.

Since the beginning of the review process, consultations have yielded positive feedback on UNICEF's humanitarian action to deliver results for children. This was particularly evident from interviews with the External Advisory Group (EAG), which appreciated UNICEF as a valued partner – and often, a leader – in its sectoral areas of focus.

The review also uncovered some lingering weaknesses that need to be addressed by the organization and offers some bold and timely recommendations to address them.

We welcome these recommendations. While some can be quickly implemented, others will require a long-term approach, including investment. We look forward to working with our partners across the humanitarian system to weave these recommendations throughout our humanitarian response architecture.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to all who contributed to the review. The EAG – which includes donors, sister agencies, NGO partners and key thinkers on humanitarian action – provided invaluable insights and views. We are deeply grateful for their time and availability in sharing their competent and knowledgeable experience and suggestions for UNICEF to improve its humanitarian action.

I also want to thank all UNICEF colleagues who contributed to the review, through interviews, workshops or various feedback or inputs. I have once more seen first-hand the passion and dedication of colleagues to UNICEF's mandate. I believe that all UNICEF staff and partners will find the findings, insights, and recommendations herein useful and timely.

I wish also to extend my gratitude to the team that led the humanitarian review: Bernt Aasen, Steven Lauwerier, Hannah Curwen and Frederic Cave who coordinated the process and produced this report.

As we face the growing needs of these emergencies, I am confident that this review will help us make our humanitarian responses stronger, more effective, and more targeted in the coming years.



**Omar Abdi**  
UNICEF Deputy Executive Director  
for Programmes



# Glossary of Terms

**Accountability to affected populations (AAP):**

The ability of all vulnerable, at-risk and crisis-affected girls, women and men supported through UNICEF humanitarian actions to hold UNICEF to account for promoting and protecting their rights and generating effective results for them, taking into consideration their needs, concerns and preferences, and working in ways that enhance their dignity, capacities and resilience.<sup>1</sup>

**Blended finance:** A range of instruments that use grant funding to attract further private sector investment in emerging markets.<sup>2</sup>

**Blockchain technology:** A blockchain is a decentralized ledger of all transactions across a peer-to-peer network. Using this technology, participants can confirm transactions without the need for a central clearing authority. Potential applications include fund transfers, settling trades, voting, and many other issues.<sup>3</sup>

**Blueprint for action:** A plan of action that sets out a vision to address a certain issue. As of June 2020, UNICEF is working on joint blueprints for action with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR; Education, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Child Protection needs of refugee children) and the World Food Programme (WFP; nutritional needs of children).

**Bridge financing:** Often in the form of a bridge loan, this is an interim financing option that companies and other entities use to solidify their short-term position until a long-term financing

option can be arranged. It 'bridges' the gap between the point at which a company's money is set to run out and when it can expect to receive an infusion of funds. This type of financing is normally used to fulfil an organization's short-term working capital needs.<sup>4</sup>

**Catastrophe bonds:** These allow entities exposed to natural disaster risk to transfer a portion of that risk to bond investors. They work in a similar way to insurance, paying out when a disaster event meets certain pre-defined criteria (such as a specified earthquake magnitude).<sup>5</sup>

**Co-funding initiative:** An emergency preparedness initiative that seeks to support investments by Country Offices and Regional Offices to enhance the preparedness of UNICEF, partners and government actors in the short-, medium- or long term. This may be in relation to single or multiple risks, preferably in medium- or high-risk countries.

**Complex humanitarian emergency:** A humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict, which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single and/or ongoing UN country programme.<sup>6</sup>

**Core Commitments to Children (CCCs):** A global framework for humanitarian action for children undertaken by UNICEF and its partners. It is guided by international human rights law,

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- 1 UNICEF, *Putting People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action: Integrating accountability to affected people*, UNICEF, New York, March 2017.
  - 2 Willitts-King, Barnaby, Roshni Assomull, John Bryant, Clare McCartney, Tej Dhami and Dominic Llewellyn with Sarah Adamczyk, *New Financing Partnerships for Humanitarian Impact*, Humanitarian Policy Group, London, January 2019, <[www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12581.pdf](http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12581.pdf)>, accessed 4 September 2020.
  - 3 PwC, 'Making sense of bitcoin, cryptocurrency and blockchain', USA, 2017–2020, <[www.pwc.com/us/en/industries/financial-services/fintech/bitcoin-blockchain-cryptocurrency.html](http://www.pwc.com/us/en/industries/financial-services/fintech/bitcoin-blockchain-cryptocurrency.html)>, accessed 4 September 2020.
  - 4 Mitchell, Cory, 'Bridge Financing'. Investopedia, 27 July 2020, <[www.investopedia.com/terms/b/bridgefinancing.asp](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/bridgefinancing.asp)>, accessed 4 September 2020.
  - 5 World Bank, *Disaster Risk Insurance Platform: Insurance Solutions for World Bank Clients*, World Bank, Washington D.C., January 2020, <<http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/179781581013532050/World-Bank-Treasury-FABBK-Disaster-Risk-Insurance-Platform-Brochure-FINAL.pdf>>, accessed 4 September 2020.
  - 6 IASC, 'Definition of Complex Emergencies', Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group XVIth Meeting, 30 November 1994.

the Convention on the Rights of the Child and, in the case of complex emergencies, also by international humanitarian law. On an operational level, the CCCs are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.<sup>7</sup>

**Corporate emergency activation procedure:**

An executive directive issued by UNICEF to strengthen its capacity to respond immediately and effectively to a Level 3 (large-scale) emergency. It outlines the required chain of command and operating procedures.

**Coverage:** UNICEF defines this as “the extent to which major population groups facing life-threatening suffering are being (or were) reached by humanitarian action”.<sup>8</sup> Guidance provided by the World Food Programme expands this to include providing “impartial assistance and protection proportionate to need”,<sup>9</sup> which addresses concerns raised in the Scoping Report<sup>10</sup> about the breadth of assistance and the requirement for its timing to reflect need.

**Cryptocurrency:** A medium of financial exchange created and stored electronically in the blockchain using encryption techniques to control the creation of monetary units and to verify the transfer of funds. Bitcoin is the best-known example. It has no intrinsic value and no physical form, existing only in the network. Its supply is not determined by a central bank, and the network is completely decentralized.<sup>11</sup>

**Emergency Preparedness Platform (EPP):** An online tool for implementing UNICEF’s Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response.

**Emergency preparedness procedure:**

Mandatory procedure that ensures that preparedness is mainstreamed across UNICEF through mandatory Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPAs) and Minimum Preparedness Standards (MPSs) for Country Offices (COs), Regional Offices (ROs) and Headquarters (HQ).

**Equity-based approach in humanitarian action:**

Equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias or favouritism. It also means identifying risks and underlying vulnerabilities, targeting humanitarian action to, and prioritizing the needs of, those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged.<sup>12</sup> UNICEF is committed to an equity-based approach in humanitarian action.

**E-tools:** A platform to strengthen efficiency and results in UNICEF’s core work processes (work planning, partnership management, implementation monitoring) in development and humanitarian contexts. These include the Partnership Management Portal and the Field Monitoring Module.

**First Action Initiative (FAI):** An emergency preparedness initiative designed to help Country Offices rapidly increase UNICEF’s standing capacity to deliver an initial life-saving response to a likely humanitarian emergency due to an imminent/high risk. Countries eligible for the FAI are identified through UNICEF’s Office of Emergency Programmes’ horizon-scanning process. Actions to be considered for potential recipients of FAI funding are focused on preparedness for an initial life-saving response (first two weeks). A FAI investment should result in significant time and/or financial savings.

**Hard-to-reach or access-constrained areas:**

For the purpose of this report, these are locations that are remote or insecure, making them difficult for members of the humanitarian community to reach.

**Humanitarian access:** The ability of humanitarian actors to reach populations affected by crisis, and an affected population’s ability to access humanitarian assistance and services.<sup>13</sup>

**Humanitarian action:** Assistance, protection and advocacy in response to humanitarian needs resulting from natural hazards, armed

7 UNICEF, *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action*, UNICEF, New York, 2020.

8 This definition was used in the Scoping Report and is taken from Buchanan-Smith, Margie, John Cosgrave and Alexandra Warner, *Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide*, ALNAP/ODI, London, 2016, p. 114.

9 WFP, *Technical Note: Evaluation criteria and questions*, World Food Programme (WFP), Rome, Italy, 2016, p. 3.

10 Schenkenberg, Ed & Velina Stoianova, *Light Landscape Analysis to Support UNICEF’s Humanitarian Action Review*, November 2019 (February 2020 version).

11 PwC, ‘Making sense of bitcoin, cryptocurrency and blockchain’, USA, 2017–2020, <[www.pwc.com/us/en/industries/financial-services/fintech/bitcoin-blockchain-cryptocurrency.html](http://www.pwc.com/us/en/industries/financial-services/fintech/bitcoin-blockchain-cryptocurrency.html)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

12 UNICEF, *UNICEF Reference Document for Emergency Preparedness and Response*, UNICEF, New York, 2017.

13 UN OCHA, *OCHA on Message: Humanitarian access*, Version 1, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), New York, 2010.

conflict or other causes, or emergency response preparedness.<sup>14</sup>

**Humanitarian principles:** The principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence underline all humanitarian action. The Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action are grounded in these principles and UNICEF is committed to applying them in its humanitarian action. The UN has taken up the principles, derived from international humanitarian law, in General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114. The Code of Conduct underscores their global recognition and relevance for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.<sup>15</sup>

**Innovative financing:** A range of mechanisms intended to raise more money from capital markets for development and humanitarian aid, leveraging and supplementing the grants from governments, foundations and private donations that currently provide the bulk of resources for aid responses.<sup>16</sup>

**Integrated programming:** The intentional combining of one or more sector interventions by UNICEF to achieve improved humanitarian outcomes.

**Levels of emergency response (L1, L2, L3):** The scale of an emergency is such that: at Level 1, a UNICEF Country Office can respond using its own staff, funding, supplies and other resources, and the usual Regional Office/Headquarters (HQ) support. At Level 2, a UNICEF Country Office needs additional support from other parts of the organization (HQ, Regional Office and Country Offices) to respond and the Regional Office must provide leadership and support. At Level 3, the emergency requires UNICEF-wide mobilization.

**Non-state entities:** These include armed or unarmed groups. Depending on the context, these could include: militias, armed opposition groups, guerrillas, pandillas (gangs) and paramilitary groups; or state-like groups (self-declared states that are not recognized, or only partially recognized, by the international community); or 'de facto authorities', which have effective control of territory and self-governing administration but do not seek independence or secession.<sup>17</sup>

**Programme criticality:** An approach that involves determining which programmes are most critical in each part of a country (in terms of saving lives or requiring immediate delivery) and therefore warrant accepting a greater level of risk or a greater allocation of resources.<sup>18</sup>

**Public health emergencies of international concern (PHEICs):** The 2005 international health regulations define these as, "an extraordinary event which is determined... to constitute a public health risk to other states through the international spread of disease; and to potentially require a coordinated international response".<sup>19</sup> Recent examples include the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the West African Ebola outbreaks of 2014 and 2018.

**Quality:** The extent to which UNICEF adheres to its Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action benchmarks, plus its supplementary commitments to: 1) the Core Humanitarian Standard (including related Commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations); 2) technical standards for humanitarian programming (primarily Sphere, Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, and the Child Protection Minimum Standards); 3) high-level common themes of the World Humanitarian Summit and related Grand Bargain commitments, as reflected in UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

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14 IASC, *Introduction to Humanitarian Action: A brief guide for resident coordinators*, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), New York, 2015.

15 UNICEF, *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action*, UNICEF, New York, 2010.

16 Willitts-King, Barnaby, Roshni Assomull, John Bryant, Clare McCartney, Tej Dhami and Dominic Llewellyn with Sarah Adamczyk, *New Financing Partnerships for Humanitarian Impact*, Humanitarian Policy Group, London, January 2019, <[www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12581.pdf](http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12581.pdf)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

17 UNICEF, *Engaging with Non-State Entities (NSEs): Programme guidance*, UNICEF, New York, (forthcoming).

18 Egeland, Jan, Adele Harmer and Abby Stoddard, *To Stay and Deliver: Good practice for humanitarians in complex security environments*, UN OCHA, New York, February 2011, <[www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/publications/stay-and-deliver-good-practice-humanitarians-complex-security-environments](http://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/publications/stay-and-deliver-good-practice-humanitarians-complex-security-environments)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

19 WHO, 'IHR Procedures Concerning Public Health Emergencies of International Concern (PHEIC)', World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva, Switzerland, 2005, <[www.who.int/ihr/procedures/pheic/en/](http://www.who.int/ihr/procedures/pheic/en/)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

**Remote programming:** Programming without the presence of staff due to unacceptable security risks or the denial of access by authorities.<sup>20</sup>

**Risk-informed programming:** An approach to programming that aims to reduce the risk of hazards, shocks and stresses on children's well-being, their communities and systems, contributing to resilient development.<sup>21</sup>

**UN security risk management:** A UN Security Management System tool to identify, analyse and manage safety and security risks to UN personnel, assets and operations. The tool is risk-based, not threat-based. While threats are assessed as part of the process, decisions are taken based on the assessment of risk.<sup>22</sup>

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20 UNICEF, *Remote Programming in Humanitarian Action: Programme guidance*, UNICEF, New York, 2012.

21 UNICEF, *UNICEF Reference Document for Emergency Preparedness and Response*, UNICEF, New York, 2019.

22 UNDSS, 'What We Do', United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations, New York, undated, <[www.un.org/undss/content/risk-management](http://www.un.org/undss/content/risk-management)>, accessed 9 September 2020.

# Executive Summary

*As an agency, we need to put the 'E' back in UNICEF.*

— UNICEF staff member

## BACKGROUND

This review examines UNICEF's humanitarian operations in the context of the global challenges of the 21st century: rapid rises in the number, scale, duration and complexity of humanitarian crises; climate breakdown and the impact of extreme weather events; large-scale migration and displacement of populations; significant public health emergencies, including the global pandemic of COVID-19; and constraints and greater demands on funding from a widening community of humanitarian actors. The number of children in need grew to nearly 120 million in 2020, primarily in complex or refugee/migration settings.

The report is not an evaluation of UNICEF's work – these already exist in some quantity – but instead focuses on the changes that are needed to meet identified challenges. The changes required are proportionate to the scale of the challenges faced, yet there are also reasons for optimism in the many positive advances and promising work-streams of recent years, notably the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) and new Emergency Procedures. This review acknowledges these, while recognizing gaps and weaknesses that remain to be addressed.

The recommendations presented here outline both 'quick wins' for improved humanitarian action in the short term and the required strategic shifts in UNICEF's response to humanitarian situations in the medium term. The findings and recommendations of this review will also inform the preparation of UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and contribute to ongoing organizational improvement initiatives. Ultimately, these recommendations will help to ensure that UNICEF's humanitarian action is of high quality, reliable, equitable, timely – and fit for the future.

## METHODOLOGY

Two senior UNICEF staff members and a programme coordinator conducted this review,

supported by a field taskforce. Research and analysis took place from June 2019 to July 2020.

In addition to a literature review and desk research, we conducted over 173 individual, semi-structured interviews with a range of people with experience of the humanitarian sector: middle and senior UNICEF managers; experts from a range of UN agencies, academia and international and national non-governmental organizations (who formed the External Advisory Group); UNICEF partners; and staff on the ground. These interviews form the backbone of this review, and represent the 'voice' of UNICEF.

## KEY FINDINGS

Although this review necessarily focuses on what needs to change at UNICEF, there are many strengths in its systems and operations. Without exception, external advisers held UNICEF's humanitarian action in high esteem. UNICEF's global presence and reach mean that it is well placed to adapt to a rapidly changing world and the challenges of the 21st century. The main areas for improvement are described below.

### Reputation

Despite its significant influence globally, with a strong and sustained pre-emergency presence, UNICEF is not always seen by 'outsiders' as predictable in humanitarian emergencies. Contributory factors suggested by interviewees were: a need for clarity on UNICEF's role in emergencies; variations in the quality of programming; a need for greater focus in performance targets and quality assurance mechanisms on emergency responses; and bureaucratic processes that distract staff from their humanitarian work. In addition, while UNICEF's decentralized nature can be an advantage, it can have the unintended effect of making humanitarian action over-reliant on in-country leaders' personalities, skills and priorities, leading to unpredictable approaches and variable quality in programmes. The recently

updated Core Commitments for Children, and the development of the new Emergency Procedures and Revised Emergency Preparedness Procedures are timely initiatives with the potential to address these perceptions and boost UNICEF's humanitarian reputation.

### Leadership and capacity

*It's important for UNICEF to invest in leadership, as [that] is a change maker in the organization at the country level.*

—External Advisory Group

Although UNICEF has already gone some way towards improving its staff induction, welfare and support systems, a more coherent human resources (HR) strategy is required to ensure that the necessary capacities can be developed within the organization. More leaders with the right skills, qualities and expertise in humanitarian work are needed. When a leadership team's experience or skills do not fulfil the requirements of a specific emergency type and context, this can lead to challenges in the humanitarian response. At country level, some staff perform multiple roles as vacancies remain unfilled. UNICEF could do more to address these factors, including seeking out new talent. Representative positions should have clear succession plans and the organization could invest more in handovers or induction prior to deployment.

Interviewees told us that emergency work 'lacks prestige', and there is consequently often a shortfall in the number of staff with the requisite skills and experience for humanitarian contexts. A shortage of back-office support hampers quick and effective scale-up and scale-down. UNICEF stand-by partners deployed for surge expertise are often used for normal emergency staffing. UNICEF needs to invest in building on the existing skills of its own staff to ensure the technical skills needed are available internally.

### Funding

Like all humanitarian actors, UNICEF faces rapid changes in funding, not least following the impending economic downturn among what are normally traditional high-income donor countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Short-term funding and increases in funding conditions limit planning, implementation and continuity. The situation is not helped by the fact that UNICEF has not yet standardized guidance on tagging different parts of its expenditure as humanitarian or development, leading to challenges in reporting. Though only a few humanitarian donors provide

multi-year funding, as a funder, UNICEF itself often places additional restrictions on funding in order to ensure accurate reporting, and this can affect the flexibilities afforded to partners.

### Advocacy

*We need to position UNICEF within the 'one UN' system so we can influence on behalf of children and use the system for their benefit and advocate for them.*

—UNICEF staff

Despite the acknowledged strengths of UNICEF's advocacy, a more cohesive humanitarian advocacy strategy, with shared vision, messaging and accountabilities between countries, regions and headquarters will be required. Although some initiatives link UNICEF's advocacy to in-country action in a proactive manner, this is not standard practice. Advocacy is often reactive and linked to specific needs, or combined with fundraising efforts, rather than being anticipatory and strategic. More thorough evaluation of UNICEF's advocacy will help to clarify and measure its overall effectiveness.

### Linking humanitarian and development work

Despite the launch of several LHD initiatives, interviewees cited a need for the integration of humanitarian and development work to go further in order to address a current lack of clarity about LHD procedures and inconsistencies in practice across Country Offices. UNICEF currently plans humanitarian and development programming separately, using different processes and timescales. It does not invest enough in its pre-disaster development presence to enhance emergency responses, or make developmental gains from humanitarian action. Too often, implementation rests with individuals rather than through a corporate commitment. At all levels, LHD planning, monitoring and reporting could be integrated further. Additional findings and recommendations are expected as further reviews and evaluations are undertaken in parallel with the humanitarian review.

### Risk-informed programming

UNICEF's formalized risk appetite remains underdeveloped, leading to unpredictable humanitarian responses. Operational procedures do not currently facilitate the measured risk-taking needed. UNICEF's humanitarian action is over-dependent on in-country leadership, placing considerable pressure on individuals. Overall, this means UNICEF's humanitarian action is risk-averse and misses multiple opportunities.

UNICEF risk-assessment mechanisms relating to preparedness and planning encourage reactive, rather than proactive and agile, emergency responses. The Emergency Preparedness Platform is contributing to mitigating this, but requires further development to be better suited for dynamic risk analysis in volatile contexts.

### Access

Limited access, due to insecurity or restrictions, is a major barrier to reaching crisis-affected people, especially in complex, high-threat environments (CHTEs). Interviewees reported that leaders do not press enough for access: perceptions of access difficulties rather than the realities on the ground are limiting the organization's reach. UNICEF's ability to contribute to or lead collaboration on access with other actors would be enhanced by a greater focus on access, and recognition of the contribution that local partners can make to overcoming access barriers. The roll-out of the new access strategy will help to increase access to affected populations.

### Localization

*Local actors should not just be implementers, they should be partners, but we are a long way from this.*

—External Advisory Group

In places that UNICEF staff cannot access, or where agencies have withdrawn staff, many local partners 'stay and deliver'. However, UNICEF tends to underestimate the need to build the capacity of these local partners. Country Offices are often hesitant to engage with local partners, perceiving them as unreliable. Engaging without adequate assurance measures in place has risks, but we also need to recognize the risks that these organizations face in implementing programmes.

### Accountability to affected populations

*If affected populations are not involved from the onset of an emergency, your response will not be effective, and you might be providing aid the beneficiaries do not hope for.*

—External Advisory Group

Accountability to affected populations (AAP) is critical to effective UNICEF humanitarian responses, to ensure that crisis-affected populations receive accurate information, provide actionable feedback and participate in programme design. Despite recent improvements, AAP is still not central enough or sufficiently coherent

in UNICEF's humanitarian work, with AAP and Communication for Development departments working individually rather than collaborating. UNICEF often only engages with affected populations once programmes are running. While complaints and feedback mechanisms do exist to cover programmes, these also need to ensure that feedback is acted on, and that UNICEF's responses are communicated to affected populations.

### Partnerships

*If there was a clear distribution of tasks among humanitarian actors, it would make resourcing for donors much easier and more efficient.*

—External Advisory Group

The current work on deepening collaboration across UN agencies (including UNICEF) is enabling more efficient and effective humanitarian action. Now UNICEF requires a similar collaborative blueprint for action with the International Organization for Migration to reflect the changing coordination systems used in large-scale refugee/migration responses. UNICEF could also capitalize more fully on its position as a cluster leader to support more integrated programming between clusters and between humanitarian and development systems.

### Data collection, analysis and monitoring

Appropriate humanitarian action requires context-specific approaches, but UNICEF's responses tend to be standardized. Consequently, representatives in complex settings are often obliged to make key operational decisions with limited evidence. A more robust analysis combining specialist political, contextual and humanitarian perspectives, linked to disaggregated data collection and performance monitoring, would facilitate more accurate predictions and improved response to humanitarian emergencies.

Likewise, the current quantitative approach to performance monitoring using large amounts of data should be supplemented by greater depth of qualitative data, including measures of programme quality and adequacy, and beneficiary feedback. Despite having lots of data at its disposal, UNICEF's approach to humanitarian data collection has been less holistic, resulting in a series of snapshots rather than a full panorama. There is a need to develop staff skills and competencies to ensure that data analysis leads to improvements in programming.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The review's recommendations are directly based on the interviews conducted with members of the External Advisory Group and staff from across the organization, reflecting both UNICEF's current challenges and its desired end states.

The recommendations in the Humanitarian Review Report have been summarized below to provide an overview of the direction of the recommended areas for action. The report itself goes into further detail to provide guidance on the way forward. The change management process that is intended to follow this review will map out clearly the actions, resources and accountabilities for these recommendations to ensure that all are actioned and implemented.

Collectively, these actions will help the organization to become more agile, more able to fulfil its dual mandate and, most importantly, better able to meet the needs of all crisis-affected children.

### Preparing for future emergency contexts

- **Define** UNICEF's role in public health emergencies, with a clear strategy, increased technical capacity at all levels, and adapted strategies, including a no-regrets approach.
- **Reinforce** UNICEF's current capacities at HQ level, and in relevant regional offices (ROs) and country offices (COs), to support responses to large refugee and migration crises.
- **Ensure** that UNICEF can mainstream and increase the volume of humanitarian aid delivered through cash across sectors through organizational investment (both financial and in people) and in the development, maintenance and integration of beneficiary data systems.
- **Leverage** technology and innovation to improve the speed and quality of UNICEF's response, notably in humanitarian contexts.
- **Strengthen** the integration of supply needs in programme planning and response, especially on supply-driven programming in public health emergencies, working more closely with the private sector in order to build supply networks and ensure continuity within constrained markets.
- **Explore** new configurations of HQ field support in order to better target and prioritize technical assistance, advocacy and political engagement and streamline approaches across similar settings in different regions to better apply lessons learned.

### Improving humanitarian action

- **Invest** in the roll-out of the new CCCs, building on global COVID-19 momentum across the whole of UNICEF, to strengthen understanding and awareness of UNICEF's humanitarian mandate, and identify individuals as focal points for the CCCs to ensure their effective implementation.
- **Incorporate** lessons from the COVID-19 response into the new Emergency Procedures and begin to apply procedures beyond L2 and L3 emergencies where required.
- **Embed** humanitarian action in its next strategic plan and introduce more measurable and trackable goals for each area in order to emphasize UNICEF's humanitarian commitments.

### Leadership

- **Establish** a leadership strategy for the 'top 20' humanitarian Country Offices to ensure they have appropriate leadership.
- **Establish** adequate, standardized handover and induction mechanisms for senior managers in UNICEF's top 20 humanitarian crises and other countries at most risk.
- **Make** mandatory service of at least one full duty cycle in a senior management position in an emergency duty station for staff who reach director level.
- **Develop** an internal talent initiative to nurture new talent and diversify UNICEF's workforce in crisis-affected countries.

### Career management

- **Develop** a career management system for staff willing to serve in crisis-affected countries, with flexible career paths across both development and humanitarian work and regular rotation between hardship and non-hardship duty stations, as well as mechanisms for identifying suitable talent from diverse backgrounds.
- **Develop** a dynamic staff diversification strategy to ensure a diverse workforce in humanitarian settings.
- **Establish** a young humanitarian leadership development programme (in collaboration with other agencies and a training institute, preferably in the global South) to invest in the next generation of humanitarian leaders and attract talent from diverse backgrounds.

### Capacity

- **Develop** a learning platform, with links to policies and tools that are critical to



strengthening humanitarian responses, including compulsory courses in the CCCs.

- **Invest** in staff capacity by considering the establishment of an internal Humanitarian Action Capacity-Building Fund.
- **Ensure** that a dedicated cluster team is permanently in place where appropriate and develop a career path for cluster coordinators to attract talent, also adding cluster performance to country office leadership assessments.

### Scale-up and scale-down of emergency operations

- **Develop** an HR toolkit and a Programme Budget Review process for scaling up and scaling down emergency operations, including short-term contracting arrangements for rapid engagement of additional workforce.
- **Establish and standardize** regional rosters and talent pools to increase UNICEF's humanitarian capacity.

### Surge mechanisms

- **Create** a single Management Information System (MIS) for all UNICEF surge mechanisms and set up an ERT team to increase effectiveness.
- **Establish** a core team of seasoned representatives for temporary deployment in humanitarian leadership.
- **Finance** Emergency Response Team (ERT) and global cluster leadership using core UNICEF funding, and staff cluster coordinator positions with UNICEF personnel.
- **Develop** a capacity-building mechanism for surge missions, similar to the surge roster and systems used for Supply staff.
- **Identify** ways to increase the inclusion of stand-by partners from the global South into rosters and deployment, in order to further diversify UNICEF's short-term emergency workforce.

### Further duty of care

- **Develop** duty of care guidelines for UNICEF partners working in difficult settings, which cover exposure to security and health risks.

### Stay and deliver, and remote programming

- **Develop** a toolkit for remote programming situations that includes proper risk management measures.

### Flexible funding

- **Establish** funding mechanisms for countries facing humanitarian crises that have limited RR and IB funding allocations to guarantee the financing of key back-office functions.
- **Explore** innovative financing mechanisms to secure a much higher preparedness level and a more timely and appropriate response for future public health emergencies.
- **Review** the allocation processes of the 7 per cent set-aside to ensure adequate funding of programmes in CHTEs, emergency preparedness and LHD programming.
- **Invest** in real-time reporting mechanisms to improve reporting and improve access to flexible funding.
- **Standardize** tagging of programming to ensure that all humanitarian expenditure (including preparedness) is more accurately reflected and visible to external funders and donors.

### Advocacy

- **Ensure** that the 'top 20' humanitarian crisis countries have detailed, integrated advocacy strategies.
- **Establish** an internal review of current advocacy governance structures, with the aim of developing a new, integrated structure with clear accountabilities at all levels.
- **Increase** advocacy capacity at HQ, all ROs and specific COs, reinforcing the capacity for specialist advocacy on sensitive issues.

### Linking humanitarian and development work

- **Develop** a joint results framework for Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)/ Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) and Country Programme Document (CPD) results in all HRP/HAC countries.
- **Increase** organization-wide capacity for 'triple-nexus' programming, for example by establishing LHD ERT(s).

### Risk management

- **Develop** a common and comprehensive risk-appetite statement for the whole organization, across the different crisis types.
- **Develop** an organization-wide risk compact linked to risk types, which clearly defines shared risk accountabilities with donors and partners.
- **Define** the minimum risk-management structures for each crisis type.
- **Increase** the systematic use of global and regional risk analysis capacities, including

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).

- **Develop** training in risk management for operations staff to accompany the roll-out of the Emergency Procedures to increase staff capacity in this area.

### Access

- **Define** clear 'red flags' at organizational and CO level that indicate when principled humanitarian action could become compromised and to trigger a structured response process.
- **Prioritize** the roll-out of the Humanitarian Access Framework, including access negotiation training and with a focus on increasing and monitoring humanitarian access as a core commitment in the revised CCCs.
- **Consider** creating an ERT position on access to support COs in developing or updating their access strategies.
- **Increase** internal access capacities at the appropriate levels and increase support to partner organizations by deploying UNICEF staff to support partners on access issues.
- **Develop** a strategy for senior leaders to reach out beyond the traditional capitals to foster diplomatic relations for key crises.

### Localization

- **Develop** a localization strategy that considers the different crisis types and the roles of the different levels in order to address consistent engagement with local actors.
- **Develop** in-country lists of local organizations and their capacity, making it mandatory to develop contingency Programme Documents (PD) with local partners in CHTEs.
- **Include** technical and institutional capacity-strengthening for local partners in emergency preparedness action, and reach out to the local private sector to widen procurement and ensure continuity of supplies.
- **Play** a lead role in defining a localization agenda that puts anti-racism and anti-discrimination at its centre.

### Accountability to affected populations

- **Make** an AAP strategy, that includes PSEA, mandatory for all humanitarian contexts. This should be done in consultation with communities and governments to promote an inter-agency coordinated framework in each country.

- **Make** AAP (including PSEA) mandatory in all M&E frameworks in countries with humanitarian programming.

### Partnerships

- **Build** on the Partnerships Platform and inter-agency blueprints for action towards a common partnership format, collectively with other agencies
- **Explore or expand** the blueprint for action to other key humanitarian agencies (IOM) to strengthen working relationships on large-scale migration settings.
- **Establish** strong, community-led, organized and managed platforms capable of being engaged as soon as an emergency hits, with wider use of standby Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) that have a fully integrated PSEA strategy.
- **Prioritize** investment in cluster coordinators and national co-leads, through a pool of coordinators or by ensuring that programme and emergency staff are trained to cover cluster functions.
- **Advocate** for straightforward and simple coordination mechanisms in inter-agency work, avoiding the creation of parallel coordination structures where these are unhelpful.
- **Establish** a partnership focal point to focus on global partners to help provide a common interface and oversight on issues that go beyond a single country.
- **Develop** models of direct implementation for humanitarian settings.

### Data collection and analysis

- **Establish** links with universities, research institutions, analysts and/or consulting firms to complement contextual analyses of crises with political, economic and social analysis.
- **Develop** an appropriate way to measure the quality of UNICEF's work beyond targets, with monitoring frameworks that include indicators relating to programme quality and disaggregated data collection, use and analysis.
- **Develop** a menu of monitoring options for partners to use across various data collection and management platforms, to enable smoother and more sustainable operationalization with partners.

## PART 1

# Introduction and Background

*It is very positive to see that UNICEF is willing to be more ambitious, agile, predictable and courageous as UNICEF's leadership is much needed in international humanitarian crises.*

— Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council

The objective of this humanitarian review is to examine UNICEF's humanitarian operations broadly and in depth. Its results will inform an organizational rethink of UNICEF's configuration and capacity for principled humanitarian action, in order to improve its response. This includes how UNICEF's humanitarian action links with its development work and how it can adapt its regular programming to better prevent and mitigate the effects of crises, and prepare effective emergency responses.

This organizational rethink is designed to answer the question: does UNICEF's current business model prepare it for an effective response to a rapidly evolving landscape of crisis, whether that be a global pandemic, the climate crisis, or increasing global insecurity and migration? How can UNICEF adapt its model to ensure it can respond to future humanitarian contexts and needs quickly and effectively?

The review process was initiated partly in response to the Evaluation Office report, *The Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response*.<sup>23</sup> This made recommendations to increase UNICEF's capacity (in terms of its policy, structure, accountability, systems and resources) to deliver on its humanitarian commitments.

The global pandemic caused by coronavirus disease (COVID-19) arose during the humanitarian review process. The pandemic has changed

the ways in which UNICEF's personnel live and work, if only for a brief period, and also the way the organization responds to emergencies. This review outlines the lessons to be learned from both UNICEF's global COVID-19 response and the opportunities and challenges it has brought to the organization's ongoing humanitarian action.

Despite the global implications that a pandemic has for UNICEF's work, it is not typical of the organization's normal operating environment. While this review looks at what can be learned from COVID-19 to improve UNICEF's humanitarian action overall, it also outlines trends that UNICEF must consider to better prepare for the future. These include an overall increase in humanitarian needs and a shift towards responses in more complex environments, where needs are greater, and expectations of UNICEF higher.

Although this review necessarily focuses on what needs to change at UNICEF, there are many strengths in its systems and operations. Without exception, external advisers interviewed for this review held UNICEF's humanitarian action in high esteem. UNICEF is perceived as a unique organization because it "has a large global presence and has a mandate that gives it universality. Its presence before, during and after a crisis gives UNICEF important continuum." (9) Nevertheless, all agreed that UNICEF needs to keep pace with a rapidly changing world. This review aims to help UNICEF to do just that, in order to meet children's needs effectively.

23 Featherstone, Andy, Tasneem Mowjee, David Fleming, Katie Tong, Clemens Gros, Leonora Evans-Gutierrez, assisted by Abhijit Bhattacharjee, Kate Hale and Richard Burge, *The Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies*, UNICEF, New York, 2018, <[www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index\\_103536.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103536.html)>.

## 1.1 REVIEW PROCESS

This humanitarian review is not an evaluation and it does not investigate the effectiveness of UNICEF's humanitarian action. Instead, it seeks to understand and present what needs to change within UNICEF to improve its overall humanitarian action. It does so using the results of previous evaluations, the landscaping exercise undertaken by the Evaluation Office,<sup>24</sup> and a review of internal and external literature.

In addition, the findings are informed by over 153 semi-structured interviews with UNICEF staff in both headquarters (HQ) and the field, and 20 interviews with key thinkers in the wider humanitarian sector. These ensure that the findings reflect challenges currently affecting the implementation of UNICEF's humanitarian programmes.

### 1.1.1 Literature review and landscaping exercise

This review took place from June 2019 to July 2020 (see Figure 1). It began with a literature review of evaluations, after-action reports and annual reports on humanitarian action, including the reports of external agencies (see Annex I). To contextualize its findings and recommendations, this review also used the Evaluation Office's landscape analysis, which identifies and examines trends in the humanitarian sector.<sup>25</sup>

This desk research identified 10 factors influencing effective, good-quality humanitarian action by UNICEF:

1. Impeded access
2. Cooperation with international actors
3. Human Resources
4. Linking humanitarian and development programming
5. Localization and engagement with affected populations
6. Conditionalities and flexible funding
7. Context analysis and assessment of needs
8. Planning, monitoring and reporting of advocacy
9. Technology and innovation
10. Consistent and predictable quality of humanitarian action.

These factors informed the team's initial thinking and shaped the next stage of the review by providing key areas for discussion at the key informant interviews (KIIs).

### 1.1.2 External Advisory Group

To support this review, UNICEF enlisted an External Advisory Group (EAG) to provide objective, experienced knowledge of the humanitarian system, forecasts of the humanitarian environment over the next 5–10 years, and perspectives on UNICEF as a humanitarian actor and the challenges it needs to overcome. The EAG also provided guidance on good humanitarian practice that UNICEF could learn from, and eventually adopt, to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and scale of its humanitarian action.

The EAG comprised 20 individuals from UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), national organizations, donors, academic institutions and thinktanks in the humanitarian sector (see Annex III). Members were nominated by UNICEF senior management based on their agencies' close work with UNICEF or the individual's standing and experience in the humanitarian sector.

Each EAG member participated in an individual, hour-long KII (see Annex IV). After reviewing the preliminary list of ten factors outlined above, each member was invited to discuss in more depth the two that they felt were the most important to address, as well as describing any other significant thematic areas that were not in the initial list. They were also asked to comment on UNICEF's performance as a humanitarian actor and to identify good practice and other humanitarian actors from which UNICEF can learn.

### 1.1.3 Internal interviews

The review team then conducted semi-structured interviews with UNICEF employees to gain inputs from the field. The preliminary lists of factors and emergency types were used to facilitate these discussions.

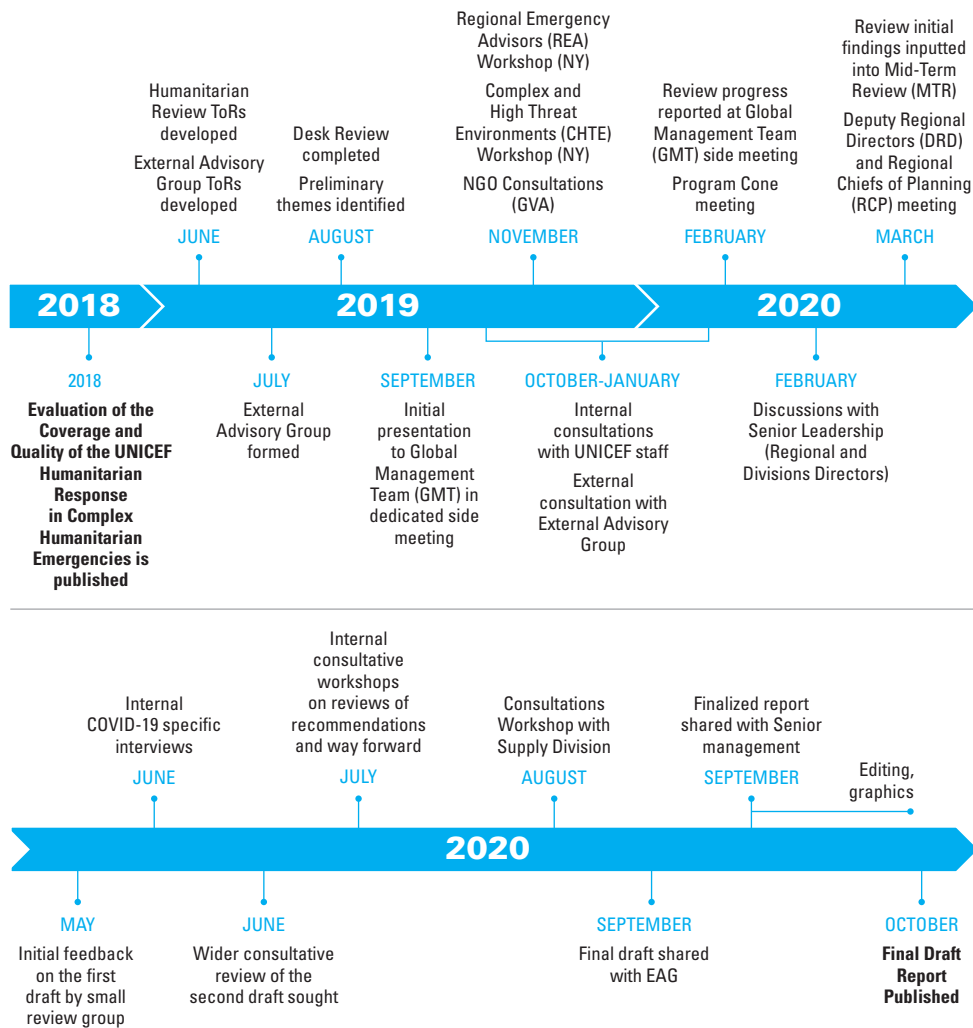
Interviewees comprised UNICEF staff from HQ in different locations and from Regional Offices (ROs) and Country Offices (COs) in each of UNICEF's seven operational regions. RO and CO staff were nominated by regional directors and regional emergency advisers, based on their experience at UNICEF. Staff selected were from

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24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

**FIGURE 1:**  
Humanitarian review road map



mid- to senior management to ensure feedback reflected a variety of experience, alongside an understanding of, and exposure to, UNICEF’s strategic operational and programmatic decision-making processes across a variety of divisions. The review team also consulted key individuals attending the Regional Emergency Advisers (REA) workshop and Complex High Threat Environment (CHTE) meeting in New York, as well as key partners attending the NGO consultations in Geneva in November 2019 (see Annex III).

In total, the review team completed over 135 hours of interviews with over 153 interviewees. As agreed during the interview process, their input was and remains anonymous, to encourage participants to speak freely. Interviewees have been assigned a random number (shown in brackets after the quote in question) to allow the review to reference specific interviews while maintaining confidentiality. Where direct quotes are used, these are displayed in quotation marks. In other areas, contributions are paraphrased. Where quotes have been attributed to individuals, their express consent has been obtained.

#### 1.1.4 Complementarity with ongoing workstreams

This is not UNICEF’s first review of its humanitarian action. The 2015 review, *Strengthening UNICEF’s Action in Humanitarian Crises*, led to considerable action to improve UNICEF’s humanitarian work and help the organization to continue to deliver on the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) in a changing global environment. Actions included progress in gaining better engagement of national staff and capacity-building; improving staff well-being; and improving the guidance and procedures on preparedness, resilience, LHD and working in CHTEs. Recommendations from the current review focus on the remaining gaps and emerging areas, particularly in relation to the increase in complex crises and the surge in public health emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF is already making changes to implement the recommendations of this latest review in order to improve the quality and consistency of its humanitarian action. Some of these are reactions

to the Evaluation Office 2018 report, notably reviewing UNICEF's CCCs and creating new Emergency Procedures.<sup>26</sup> The review also links to ongoing evaluations, such as assessments related to linking humanitarian and development programming, a review of the 'top 10' global emergencies, and the development of UNHCR and WFP blueprints for action (see Section 6.5.2).

In terms of broader processes, the review's initial findings have contributed to UNICEF's midterm review. The recommendations of this final report can inform discussions around UNICEF's new strategic plan for 2022–2025, ensuring it is in line with the wider context of the UN reform process.

The review also considered ongoing organizational improvement initiatives.<sup>27</sup> A large number of the recommendations can be linked to these and contribute to the organizational improvements envisioned. Nevertheless, some of its recommendations call for more systematic business operations in managing risks, partnerships and HR, and devolving authority and planning processes (see Part 4 and Part 6).

## 1.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND LIMITATIONS

The review was conducted by a small team of two senior staff members and a programme coordinator who supported the process. Supported by field taskforce, this small team assimilated global feedback from staff representing each UNICEF region, and countries with a range of classifications dealing with different emergency types.

Feedback from the interviews has been analysed and is presented in this report. Issues raised in this report, and its recommendations, reflect the perspectives of those interviewed, not the authors. This report presents key thematic areas that UNICEF must address to ensure its humanitarian action is consistently of high quality, equitable and therefore predictable. The recommendations outline the steps that UNICEF needs to take to improve its humanitarian response.

Finally, writing up this review coincided with the outbreak of COVID-19 and its spread to pandemic status. Such an international public health emergency has affected UNICEF's global operations, changing the way the organization approaches and experiences humanitarian action in certain aspects and highlighting some gaps in its response capacity. The review team conducted additional interviews focused on the impacts of COVID-19 to learn from the pandemic experience up to June 2020. These interviews and a brief review of some changes in UNICEF procedures and communications materials have been used to highlight areas of good practice that should continue, and areas of focus where learning from the COVID-19 pandemic will inform UNICEF's humanitarian action in the future.

## 1.3 REPORT STRUCTURE

- **Part 1** introduces the humanitarian review and outlines why it was undertaken. It sets out the methodology and how the review links with ongoing UNICEF reviews and evaluations.
- **Part 2** looks at the current humanitarian context and explores the potential future circumstances for which UNICEF needs to prepare. It proposes various 'lenses' through which we can usefully review UNICEF's humanitarian action and highlights some cross-cutting issues and emerging global trends.
- **Part 3** sets out the main elements and principles for reform. It addresses how UNICEF's humanitarian action and response can become better quality, more equitable, more consistent and more timely. It explains in detail how this review complements ongoing processes, such as the CCCs review<sup>28</sup> and the development of the new emergency procedures.
- **Part 4** examines the humanitarian leadership and capacity-building challenges UNICEF faces. It assesses whether UNICEF's workforce is fit for purpose and identifies the barriers to ensuring that the organization has the right people in the right place at the right

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26 Featherstone, Andy, Tasneem Mowjee, David Fleming, Katie Tong, Clemens Gros, Leonora Evans-Gutierrez, assisted by Abhijit Bhattacharjee, Kate Hale and Richard Burge, *The Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies*, UNICEF, New York, 2018, <[www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index\\_103536.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103536.html)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

27 Change management initiatives include ICTD Transformation, Review of Programme Implementation Modalities, Humanitarian Review, Transformation of Office of Innovation, Partnership acceleration and adaptation, Reform of HR and Preparations for the Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

28 <[www.corecommitments.unicef.org/](http://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/)>

time. It addresses career management in humanitarian action and how to develop and nurture diverse young talent.

- **Part 5** looks at UNICEF’s corporate commitment to humanitarian action, and how it ensures cohesion in this area. It discusses how financing and more strategic, joined-up advocacy can better support humanitarian action. It also reflects on how gains in both parts of UNICEF’s dual (humanitarian and development) mandate can better support improved responses.
- **Part 6** addresses some operational issues that challenge UNICEF’s ability to be accountable for achieving results for children through its humanitarian action. It examines

how barriers prevent UNICEF from delivering the highest quality of humanitarian response, and what needs to be done to overcome this.

## 1.4 BEYOND THE REVIEW

This review sets out recommendations that can be used to make and measure change within UNICEF towards achieving humanitarian action that is of a higher quality and is more equitable and consistent. These recommendations need to be translated into concrete, actionable steps. A change management process can use them to set up or support existing workstreams that will achieve tangible results and transform UNICEF’s humanitarian action.

## PART 2

# The Current and Future Context of Humanitarian Action

### 2.1 CURRENT AND PROJECTED FUNDING TRENDS<sup>29</sup>

The demand for humanitarian assistance has increased significantly in recent years.<sup>30</sup> The number of countries affected by violent conflicts is the highest for 30 years, and in 2018, the number of people targeted for UN humanitarian assistance surpassed 100 million for the first time.

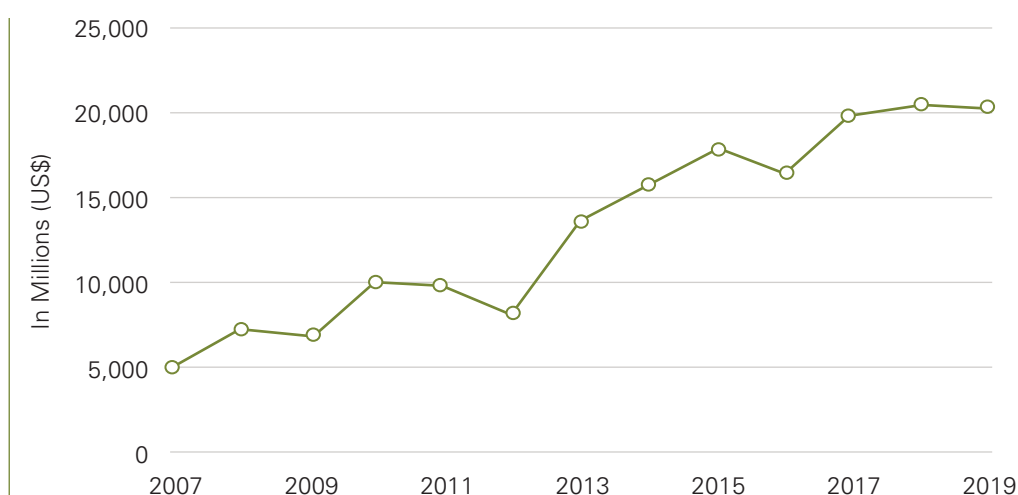
To meet the growing demand for assistance in multiple, simultaneous, complex and large-scale emergencies, UNICEF's humanitarian operations have increased significantly. Since 2007, UNICEF's expenditure on humanitarian action has increased five-fold to more than US\$2 billion a year (see Figure 2), with protracted, complex emergencies absorbing the largest share. In terms of expenditure on humanitarian assistance, UNICEF is the third largest UN agency (after WFP and UNHCR). In 2017, UNICEF responded to 337

humanitarian situations in 102 countries – the second largest number for more than a decade. In 2018, 55 per cent of all country-level expenses (from all funding types, not just Other Resources Emergency) supported humanitarian activities.

Between 2007 and 2019 we have seen a considerable increase in the gap between the overall humanitarian funding requirement and the overall humanitarian funding received. In 2018 this gap reached approximately 40 per cent of the funding requirement.

In 2020, the number of children in need grew to nearly 120 million, with approximately 60 million to be reached. Many of these children live in complex humanitarian or refugee/migration settings (see Figure 4). Although full data relating to the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet available, the children who are most affected (directly and indirectly) are likely to be in those settings.<sup>31</sup>

**FIGURE 2:**  
UNICEF  
humanitarian  
funding trend,  
2007–2019



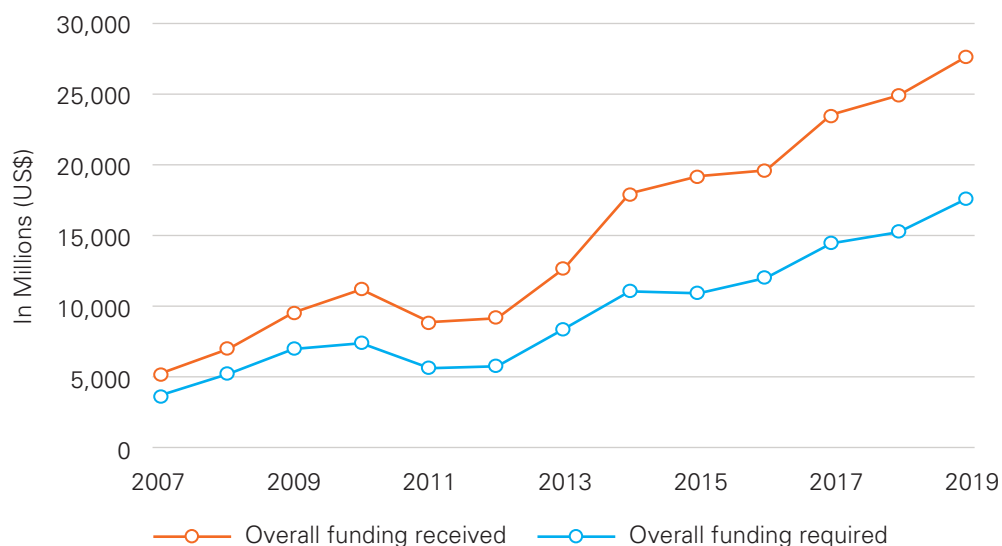
29 Figures in this section were compiled using financial data from UNICEF's Department of Finance, using 2018 financial data and data from UNICEF's 2020 HAC documents.

30 Needs increased five-fold and funding increased three-fold for the whole of the United Nations.

31 Figure 4 represents only the Ebola appeal, not COVID-19.



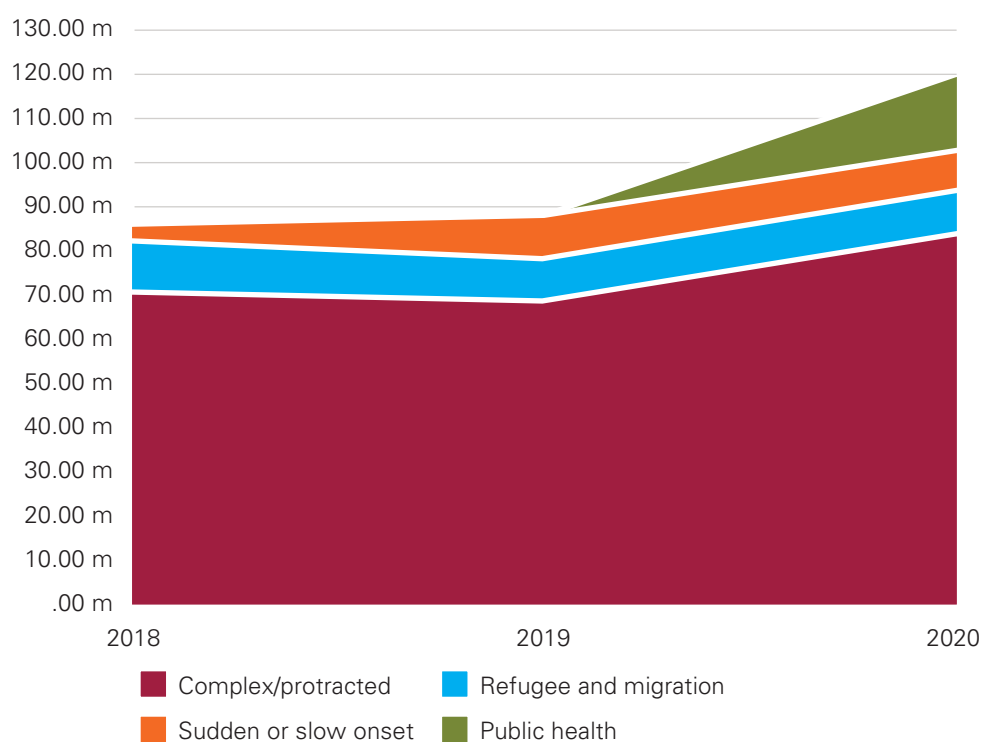
**FIGURE 3:**  
Global humanitarian funding trend, 2007–2019



The overall expenditure in countries included in the 2018 Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal represented 73 per cent of UNICEF’s overall expenditure that year.<sup>32</sup> Of this, the majority relates to 20 countries with large humanitarian programmes. These top 20 countries alone represent 64 per cent of UNICEF overall expenditure.<sup>33</sup> Within these

20 countries, two thirds of UNICEF’s 2018 expenditure was tagged as humanitarian. Much of the humanitarian expenditure was in complex emergencies and refugee and migration crises, which represented 99 per cent of UNICEF’s humanitarian expenditure in the top 20 HAC countries (see Figure 5).<sup>34</sup>

**FIGURE 4:**  
Children in need by emergency type, 2018–2020

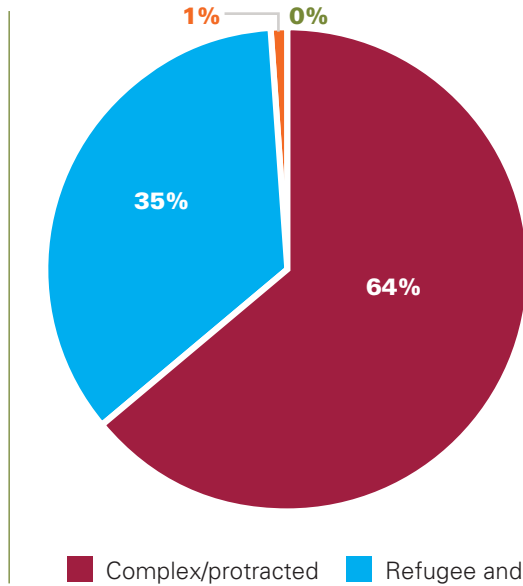


32 This includes Other Resources Emergency, Other Resources Regular and Regular Resources.

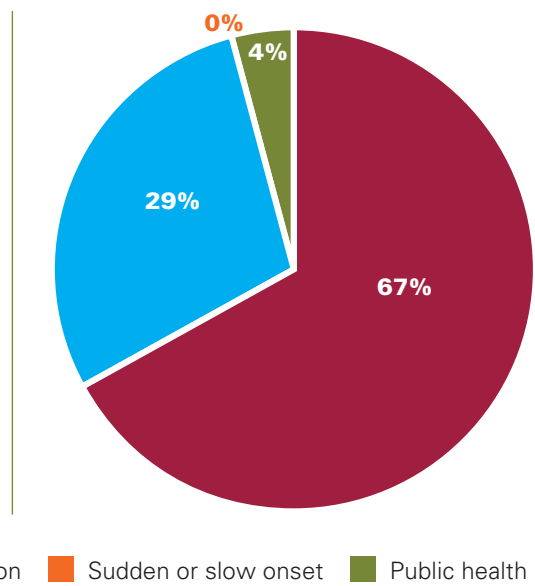
33 The top 10 countries in 2018 with a HAC appeal represent 47 per cent of UNICEF’s global expenditure, of which more than two thirds was tagged as humanitarian.

34 In the top 10 countries in 2018 with a HAC appeal, the humanitarian spending per emergency type was: 55 per cent complex crises, 42 per cent refugee and migration crises, and 3 per cent sudden- and slow-onset disasters.

**FIGURE 5:** Top 20 HAC countries: Humanitarian spending by crisis type, 2018



**FIGURE 6:** Top 20 HAC countries: Humanitarian spending by crisis type, 2020



The projections for pre-COVID-19 2020 are similar (see Figure 6). The top 20 countries of the global HAC appeal account for 89 per cent of UNICEF’s ask. Of this, 67 per cent of the projected needs were for complex crises. Coupled with large-scale refugee and migration crisis, these crisis types represent 96 per cent of UNICEF’s funding commitments. The projected public health emergency only considered the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (DRC). The COVID-19 appeal changes this picture. As the pandemic has a greater impact on vulnerable populations in complex crises, refugees and people on the move, these areas will be the focus of UNICEF’s COVID-19 response.

Looking at the top 20 HAC countries pre-COVID-19, sub-Saharan Africa remains the main theatre of UNICEF’s humanitarian action (see

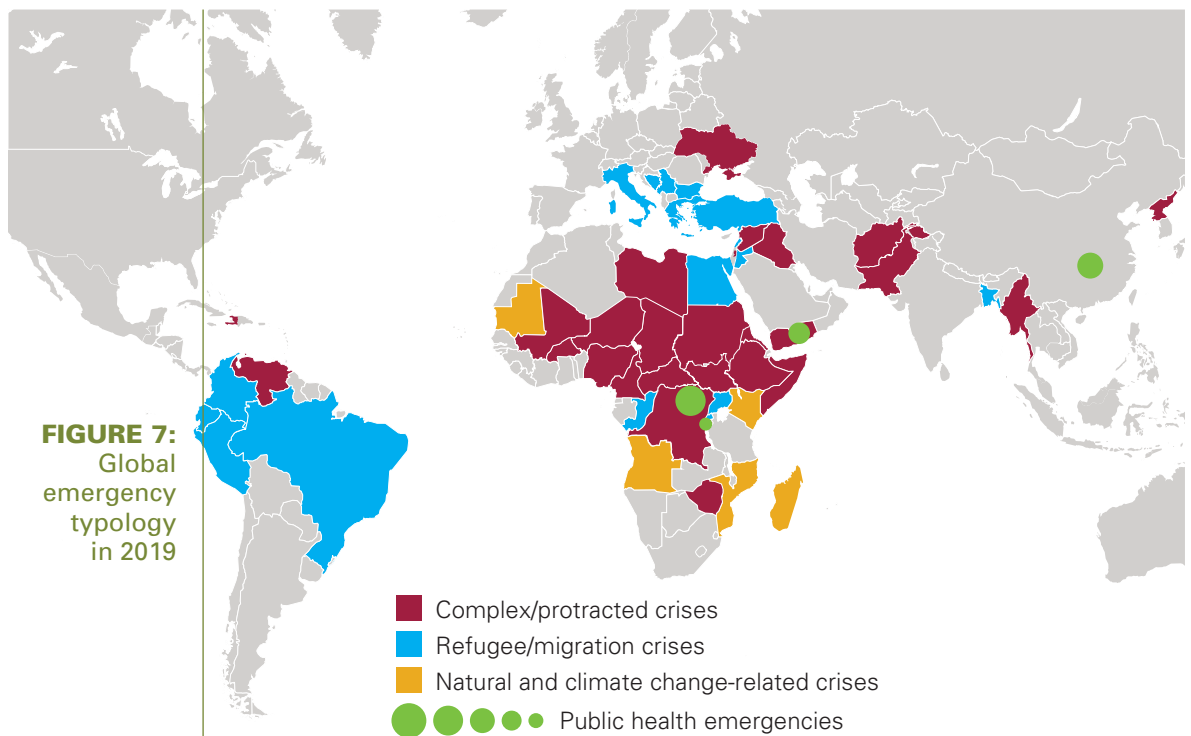


Figure 7), although its humanitarian action has gradually spread to the Middle East (Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Libya) and Latin America (the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela).

## 2.2 A CHANGING OPERATIONAL CONTEXT: EMERGENCY TYPES

The future humanitarian landscape is also evolving at pace. Interviewees for this report identified four main types of humanitarian crisis that UNICEF will need to adapt and respond to in the next 5–10 years:

- complex crises
- large-scale refugee and migration crises
- sudden- and slow-onset disasters
- public health emergencies.

UNICEF's current emergency response system was designed for sudden-onset emergencies, but the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that a one-size-fits-all approach is inappropriate. How UNICEF deals with COVID-19 in Yemen, a complex environment with severe humanitarian access challenges, will differ from its COVID-19 response in Bangladesh, where Rohingya people face severe overcrowding in displaced persons camps. Both need responses tailored to their specific contexts.

These views were reflected by the interviewee who said, "The [Level 2/Level 3] set-up is a relic from the Haiti and the tsunami response era. However, it is no longer legitimate for all situations... UNICEF may need to focus on a structure than can allow it to be more agile in all... types of disasters." (99)

Looking at UNICEF's humanitarian action through the lens of different types of crisis can highlight the different approaches, skills and tools that might need to be employed in each case to ensure that all of UNICEF's humanitarian action remains of good quality, and consistent and equitable.

### 2.2.1 Complex crises

Complex crises are strongly linked to fragility, where countries experience concurrent emergencies such as conflict, large-scale displacement or migration, public health emergencies or natural disasters, often in

contexts where populations are already very vulnerable to the impact of disasters.

Most observers believe that number of complex, protracted crises will continue to grow over the next decade. The UN has become more engaged in such crises in recent years.<sup>35</sup> One interviewee stated, "The entire humanitarian system needs to align better with protracted, complex and man-made crises. Humanitarian actors need to make the shift to better prepare for long-term crises with increased beneficiary needs, as this is what we will see more of in the coming years." (19)

UNICEF's core business sits within this space. Of the top 20 HAC appeals for 2020, 67 per cent can be categorized as complex. Complex crises fall into two main groups:

- **Conflict:** Crises where a breakdown of authority produces conflict present challenges for humanitarian access and security, testing humanitarian principles, increasing the cost of delivering assistance to children in need and requiring complex operations. The number of armed conflicts is increasing as few wars are being settled, so these needs will continue to increase. Many of UNICEF's CHTEs fall into this category, such as South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Somalia. Many involve dealing with asymmetric warfare, extreme violence, non-state actors as well as Governments that are parties to the conflict. These contexts present a steady increase in protection issues, a lack of accountability and increasingly problematic cooperation with host governments.
- **Socioeconomic and political crises:** These often require extensive political coordination. The adverse humanitarian consequences include worsening rates of moderate and severe acute malnutrition, large-scale forced displacement and lack of access to basic services. UNICEF must be equipped to address such crises, which currently include those in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Zimbabwe and Haiti.

### 2.2.2 Large-scale refugee and migration crises

Large migration crises are becoming more common. The global population of forcibly

35 IASC, 'Definition of Complex Emergencies', Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group XVth Meeting, 30 November 1994, <[https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy\\_files/WG16\\_4.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/WG16_4.pdf)>, accessed 17 January 2020.

displaced people has nearly doubled from 43.3 million in 2009 to 70.8 million in 2018.<sup>36</sup> Large-scale movement, both internally and across borders, has increased through the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, the Syria crisis, the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh and most recently the Venezuelan crisis. This type of emergency has a strong link to complex crises as armed conflicts are currently the key driving force in displacement: “28 of the 50 countries with the highest numbers of new displacements in 2019 faced both conflict and disaster-induced displacement.”<sup>37</sup> With a lack of viable and durable solutions, displacement is becoming more protracted.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, climate change is likely to become an increasingly strong driver of migration.

UNICEF’s response to these crises is growing in line with need. Large migration crises are the second largest category of UNICEF humanitarian action. They account for almost one quarter of the 2020 HAC appeal (approximately US\$1 billion of a total global HAC of US\$4.2 billion, excluding the COVID-19 HAC). However, there is a widely held view that displacement and migration need to be a more visible dimension of UNICEF’s humanitarian effort.

UNICEF’s systems and programmes were set up to respond in fixed, rural settings, which used to be the norm for contexts in need of humanitarian assistance. Large-scale, cross-border crises require new ways of responding to people on the move or in expanding urbanized centres. Tighter (intra)-regional coordination is needed to ensure consistency and continuity in the response – new inter-agency coordination mechanisms and ways of working that present challenges to UNICEF’s humanitarian action in this type of emergency. Alongside the cluster or sector response, UNICEF needs to find its place in emerging systems, such as the joint response platform in the Venezuela response. In responses spanning more than one region (for example, the Syrian refugee crisis and the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh), a stronger role for HQ could be envisaged. UNICEF also needs to collaborate closely with National

Committees when working in non-programme countries. (148)

### 2.2.3 Sudden- and slow-onset disasters

This category includes disasters such as the 2019 cyclone in Mozambique, and drought and subsequent food insecurity in Southern Africa. EAG interviews suggest that the size, speed and predictability of these types of disasters are expected to become more challenging, particularly as the growing impact of climate change and more frequent extreme weather events will increase people’s vulnerability to humanitarian crises.<sup>39</sup> UNICEF’s work on forecasting and preparedness will be critical to enable proactive responses to such increased vulnerability. In addition, growing levels of pollution and children’s exposure to this mean that UNICEF should prepare to respond to environmental health disasters, a sub-sector that some interviewees believe is currently underestimated.

Despite the likelihood of increased vulnerability to disasters for many populations, the Evaluation Office’s landscape analysis points to a decreasing space for international actors in humanitarian crises caused by natural hazards as national governments and local organizations have become more able to deal with such crises. UNICEF therefore needs to shift its approach to ensure it provides added-value in a shrinking space. Increasing support to host governments and building the capacity of local actors to respond to such crises can help further improve and support disaster preparedness and response efforts by actors who are from affected countries.

### 2.2.4 Public health emergencies

In addition to public health emergencies of international concern (PHEICs), such as the COVID-19 pandemic, there are also large, local outbreaks of diseases such as measles, and cholera epidemics in Yemen and Haiti, that are not of international concern. Even before COVID-19, public health emergencies were becoming a key type of humanitarian action for UNICEF. Since 2009, five PHEICs have been declared.<sup>40</sup> Events caused by chemical agents or radioactive

36 GMDAC, ‘Migration Data Portal: The bigger picture’, Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, Berlin, Germany, undated, <<https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/forced-migration-or-displacement>>, accessed 4 September 2020.

37 UN OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Review 2020*, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), New York, 2020, p. 14, <[www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020\\_v9.1.pdf](http://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020_v9.1.pdf)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Swine Flu (2009), Polio (2014), Ebola (2014, 2018), Zika (2016).

materials can also become public health emergencies or PHEICs.<sup>41</sup>

Trends show that UNICEF is responding to more disease outbreaks. In 2018, in addition to the four or five large public health emergencies with strong involvement at HQ level, UNICEF was involved in over 100 responses related to public health crises. Responding to these requires a different operational understanding of humanitarian action and niche skills, ranging from programme specialisms to logistics and supply-chain expertise. Having the right people in the right place is particularly important to ensure swift, good-quality public health emergency responses, where timeliness is particularly critical. UNICEF needs to be ready to respond with specialized skills in fast-changing, unpredictable contexts. The current COVID-19 response is testing UNICEF's systems and exposing gaps that need to be filled quickly. (57)

The inclusion of public health emergencies in the new CCCs presents an opportunity to elevate UNICEF's work in this field. However, the organization needs to clearly define its role in public health crises, particularly in its partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO). UNICEF needs to build on its strengths in public health responses and further develop its expertise in order to be ready to respond and to deploy and support staff. Public health emergencies have considerable impact on the most vulnerable people, requiring potentially greater and more multi-faceted responses in countries already facing complex crises. UNICEF's expertise in vaccination, nutrition and health-care systems in fragile settings can be key in leading preparedness and preventative or pre-outbreak efforts to better cope with large public health emergencies.

Looking more widely, programming in public health can be complemented by UNICEF's ability to provide a multisectoral, integrated approach through its role as cluster lead in Education, WASH and Child Protection. However, attention by donors to ongoing non-health-related crises affecting children is likely to reduce, alongside increased allocations of funding to economic support programmes in donor countries. UNICEF's work to link humanitarian and development responses can help to bolster its programmes against these negative impacts in both the short and long term. Partnerships with

medical research institutions, universities, disease control agencies and pharmaceutical companies for vaccine development and treatment will become increasingly important. Close work with government institutions in host countries to support their response will remain important.

In terms of local partnerships, effective and clear communication with affected communities builds trust and is an increasingly critical success factor in public health emergencies, as highlighted by the Ebola response in the DRC and the COVID-19 response in particular. At a time when many of UNICEF's international staff and INGOs have been unable to be present at project sites due to movement restrictions, national colleagues, their counterparts and partners have often remained in place and delivered responses. This provides UNICEF with an enormous opportunity to move forward with a localization agenda, including building the necessary capacity and systems. However, critical questions surrounding duty of care in partnerships and for staff need to be addressed.

Looking ahead, one interviewee explained that, long before the COVID-19 outbreak, "We have strategies for some of the old diseases, but for the unknown we don't." (18) It will be important to take stock of UNICEF's experiences in responding to COVID-19 and apply the lessons learned in future public health emergencies. The COVID-19 response has been made even more challenging by its global nature, host governments' confinement policies, border closures and restrictions on transportation and movement around UNICEF's global supply hub, all of which have made it difficult for the organization to use familiar methodologies. To improve its response in unpredictable contexts, UNICEF needs to look for new approaches at global, regional and country levels, where accountabilities are clear, particularly in relation to regional focal points. This will foster UNICEF's ability to be agile in the face of uncertainty and unpredictability.

## 2.3 A CHANGING OPERATIONAL CONTEXT: COUNTRY CLASSIFICATION

Global crises affect children everywhere, including climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and socioeconomic crises, and UNICEF must prepare itself to respond in every environment in order to

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41 WHO, *Ionizing radiation, health effects and protective measures: Key facts*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 29 April 2016, <[www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ionizing-radiation-health-effects-and-protective-measures](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ionizing-radiation-health-effects-and-protective-measures)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

meet its commitments. While classifying crises and emergencies may help UNICEF to respond more consistently, there is no one-size-fits-all response, since each type of emergency is affected by the context. The COVID-19 response has made this clear: a response to COVID-19 in Uruguay, a high-income country with health-care systems that can scale up to meet demand, and that can impose social distancing and provide economic support for businesses and individuals, is simply not possible in lower-income countries. For example, social distancing is almost impossible for many people in the DRC, particularly those living in slum areas. Similarly, South Sudan's health-care system needs considerable external support to give its citizens access to basic health care.

The country classifications used by the World Bank (high-income, upper-middle-income, lower-middle-income and low-income) add an additional lens to help identify key aspects of UNICEF's humanitarian action, while acknowledging that income status can change over time. Humanitarian programming similarities between Latin America and the Middle East become

more apparent when looking at UNICEF's work in middle-/high-income countries. Similarly, its programming in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa is very similar, as most crisis-affected countries in these areas are lower-income countries. Looking at humanitarian action through the lenses of both the type of emergency and the country classification highlights opportunities for UNICEF to improve the quality and consistency of its work.

Some strong foundational work has already been accomplished to enhance UNICEF's capability for engagement and programming in high-income countries (HICs), including responding to emergencies. However, more sustained efforts are required to further embed enhanced capacity and collaboration within UNICEF's systems. This includes UNICEF National Committees possibly having a stronger role in non-programme countries (see Section 5.3.2).

## 2.4 CROSS-CUTTING CONCERNS

In addition to the four humanitarian emergency types, country classifications and regional response perspectives outlined earlier, this review

### CONSIDERING CO CAPACITY IN EMERGENCY PLANNING: LEARNING FROM COVID-19

During the initial COVID-19 emergency response, UNICEF ROs reported receiving many different guidance notes or protocols to consider or follow. The organization needs to be mindful of the overwhelming nature of such a large amount of new information and guidance, particularly for smaller COs with fewer staff and capacity, or those unfamiliar with the speed of emergency responses.

The appropriateness of some of the guidance was called into question. For example, a CO without public health programming or public health staff cannot implement the guidance in the same way as a CO with significant public health capacity and experience. Guidance on missed rest and recuperation (R&R) as a result of COVID-19 related travel restrictions will be possible to implement in large offices with enough staff to cover longer absences, but smaller offices will struggle to adhere to such guidance while also ensuring that their programmes remain appropriately staffed.

UNICEF should consider the size and capacity of COs when issuing guidance, using the lenses of emergency type and country classification to target guidance appropriately. A central library housing all guidance would make such material available and ROs could play a strong role in filtering information.

Global Emergency Management Team calls that included all regions have facilitated valuable cross-regional learning that enables countries from different regions, but with similar contexts, country classification and crisis type, to share ideas. This type of cross-fertilization should be encouraged to help UNICEF standardize responses in similar contexts, while still allowing some local flexibility. (170, 171, 172)

identified four cross-cutting themes that UNICEF needs to consider: increasing urbanization; climate and environment; technology and innovation; and supply.

#### 2.4.1 Increasing urbanization

Conflict, climate change and related displacement mean that more people are migrating to urban centres as they seek access to services and income-generation opportunities, and as a consequence, the level of vulnerability in these urbanized populations is increasing.<sup>42</sup> In the Middle East, North Africa and Latin America, UNICEF's humanitarian action takes place mainly in urban environments, as well as in an increasingly urbanized sub-Saharan Africa. In preparing for the future, UNICEF needs to recognize these trends and be prepared to respond in growing urban environments where humanitarian and development approaches will need to interact in a more cohesive way.

#### 2.4.2 Climate and environment

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) *Global Humanitarian Overview* for 2020 cites climate change as an emerging trend and risk that is likely to increase affected populations' vulnerability to all types of disaster in the coming years. It states, "In 2019, 13 of the 20 countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change had an inter-agency humanitarian appeal. Eleven have had an appeal for the past seven consecutive years (2013–2019)."<sup>43</sup> Countries with significant, protracted emergencies and populations who are already vulnerable and affected by crisis are often also the countries at the greatest risk of increased vulnerability to climate change. Natural hazards are on the rise – in 2019 alone, twin cyclones Idai and Kenneth hit Mozambique and then Hurricane Dorian affected the Bahamas. Drought continues to be a significant driver of increasing hunger, affecting over 45 million people in the African continent.

Climate change is a factor in displacement and migration, for example as a result of competition for resources in drought-stricken areas, and loss of livelihoods and shelter due to storm or earthquake

damage. Future migration from Pacific islands is expected, due to rising sea levels. Air pollution has become a major public health concern, particularly for children as it can affect their development. The 2016 UNICEF report *Clear the Air for Children* reported that "almost one in seven of the world's children, 300 million, live in areas with the most toxic levels of outdoor air pollution – six or more times higher than international guidelines".<sup>44</sup> (176)

Despite its widespread impact across the main disaster types, there is still little funding for measures to help ensure that development and humanitarian programming is climate resilient. Early anticipation of the risks related to climate change is key to mitigating their impact. To protect children from climate- and environment-related risks, UNICEF needs to ensure that adequate financial resources from both developmental and humanitarian sources are committed to climate-resilient programming.<sup>45</sup> (176)

#### 2.4.3 Technology and innovation

*At UNICEF we need to change our mindset, though we struggle with change as an organization, and digitize so our processes become lighter and more agile. (81)*

UNICEF should continue to expand its investments in technology and innovation. If it does not adapt to the technologies of the future, it runs the risk of its humanitarian responses becoming less effective and relevant. As one EAG member put it, "As a sector, we are trying to address the problems of today and tomorrow with the tools of yesterday." (16)

This review identified leveraging innovation and advances in the private sector as key enablers in ensuring that UNICEF can deliver good-quality humanitarian responses. In 2020, UNICEF has access to more data and tools than ever. Technology provides opportunities for the organization to respond to crises in a more inclusive way by improving its ability to reach affected populations and achieve more effective and equitable strengthening of government systems. (77)

42 The New Humanitarian, *Ten humanitarian crises and trends to watch in 2020*, 1 January 2020, <[www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2020/1/1/humanitarian-crisis-to-watch](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2020/1/1/humanitarian-crisis-to-watch)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

43 UN OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Review 2020*, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), New York, 2020, <[www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020\\_v9.1.pdf](http://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020_v9.1.pdf)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

44 UNICEF, *Clear the Air for Children*, UNICEF, New York, 2016, <[www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_92957.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_92957.html)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

45 UN OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Review 2020*, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), New York, 2020, p. 17, <[www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020\\_v9.1.pdf](http://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020_v9.1.pdf)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

UNICEF currently employs various new technologies and approaches to ensure effective and efficient responses. These include blockchain data verification, end-to-end visibility in supply chains, cryptocurrency investments and innovative financing. Cataloguing and prioritizing innovations in humanitarian action and collaboration between UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) and the Office of Innovations are huge steps in the right direction.<sup>46</sup> This refocusing will help to provide a clearer picture of UNICEF's ongoing innovations in emergencies and enable further innovations to be driven by needs on the ground. It could also be an opportunity for closer collaboration with the private sector.

As well as the many benefits offered by technological innovation, there are also major challenges. Cyber wars and robotized weapon systems may become more common, changing the type of emergencies occurring and the

associated risks to children. UNICEF is under growing pressure to respond to emergencies digitally by using data and new technologies to identify the most vulnerable populations. However, switching to online data systems and tools presents challenges in terms of data protection and privacy. UNICEF will need to ensure strict safeguarding checks, procedures and policies to safeguard the rights of affected populations, particularly children.

UNICEF's communications channels are also changing, as populations are more globally connected than ever. This brings opportunities to connect with people in need in new and engaging ways and can be a tool for affected populations to hold duty bearers to account. However, there are also reputational risks as key messages may be missed or misinterpreted, resulting in unhelpful or inaccurate rumours. The COVID-19 'infodemic' is a good example of this. UNICEF needs to ensure that its communications

## CASH AS A PROGRAMME MODALITY

There is a big push from prominent donors to move to cash-based ways of delivering humanitarian assistance. Some donors would even like to see agencies working jointly to deliver cash, determining which of them can provide the best service at each stage of the programme cycle.

Some external interviewees noted that UNICEF has been inward-looking and not as active as WFP or UNHCR in the system-wide dialogue on cash assistance. It is true that UNICEF's global decision to scale up the use of cash assistance came later than for UNHCR and WFP and was informed by few successful examples at country level. UNICEF has now committed to scaling up the use of cash in its programming. To be fully translated into results, cash needs to be systematically considered in emergencies. Having both a developmental and humanitarian outlook, UNICEF is in a unique position to link these approaches by designing and implementing humanitarian cash systems that can transition into long-term, sustainable social protection systems where feasible. UNICEF must refine its business model to invest in using cash as a cross-cutting approach. (36)

The COVID-19 response provides an interesting springboard from which to invest further in cash as humanitarian agencies explore ways to provide aid in 'contactless' ways. With the socioeconomic fall-out of COVID-19 projected to require more investment than the response itself, cash will undoubtedly play a key role in the long term. UNICEF's investment in social protection systems will prove valuable, and its investment in emergency cash transfers during the initial response phase may present an opportunity to increase its development programming.

46 UNICEF's Global Innovation Strategy identifies the following areas as potentially beneficial for innovative work: access, data gaps, humanitarian financing, data protection, energy in emergencies, political and conflict risk analysis, predictive epidemiology, and social science for health in emergencies. The strategy is contained in UNICEF, *Matching today's challenges with tomorrow's solutions*, UNICEF, New York, 2020, <[www.unicef.org/innovation/sites/unicef.org/innovation/files/2020-04/Strategy%20Document%20\\_V4\\_13March2020%20%281%29.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/innovation/sites/unicef.org/innovation/files/2020-04/Strategy%20Document%20_V4_13March2020%20%281%29.pdf)>, accessed 4 September 2020.



## INNOVATIONS AND PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

UNICEF's global innovation strategy has defined humanitarian action as a priority. Public health emergencies feature as an area of humanitarian action in which innovation and technology can play a key part in advancing UNICEF's approach, and in improving the quality and equity of its humanitarian programming.

The strategy calls for investment in social science to deepen understanding of health behaviours and their impact on public health, and of predictive epidemiology to try to predict where disease will occur and spread.

In the early COVID-19 response, innovation was critical in strengthening public health systems' access to life-saving equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE). 3-D printers were used to manufacture parts for testing kits, ventilators and face coverings and immediately helped to address a shortage of these products.

Continuing to prioritize humanitarian action in the global innovation portfolio and public health emergency response will be important for UNICEF to ensure that its humanitarian action is as timely, high quality and equitable as possible.<sup>47, 48</sup>



teams and key leaders in COs and ROs are equipped to deal with this ever-evolving aspect of technology.

### 2.4.4 Supply

As highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic response, in public health emergencies, timely access to supplies is paramount in curbing the spread of disease. Pipeline management is something that UNICEF manages well, but supplies for public health emergencies are very specific and evolve quickly as new vaccines and treatments are developed, meaning that building buffer stocks for improved preparedness is not always appropriate. UNICEF needs to broaden a 'no-regrets' approach to ensure that the pre-positioning of resources for emergency responses can remain unhindered, while also measuring the risk of stock expiry against the risk of a delayed response or no response at all. When operating in high-risk environments, adaptive solutions are needed to ensure that UNICEF can provide equitable coverage to the most vulnerable and ensure last-mile delivery in a consistent and timely way. (158)

The COVID-19 pandemic has further emphasized the major role that supplies play in the preparedness and response to public health emergencies. The pandemic, and previous disease outbreaks such as those of Cholera, Yellow Fever and Ebola, show that pre-positioning supplies at country and global level is directly linked to a more timely, predictable, reliable and high-quality response. Following the West Africa 2014 Ebola assessments, UNICEF has established a cross-sectoral Health Emergencies Preparedness Initiative (HEPI) to enable it to respond better to public health emergencies for a specific set of priority diseases. Under HEPI, UNICEF has developed disease-specific supply lists, identified and selected adequate quality standards, defined the use of the products, and specified the pre-positioning of these supplies to cover a population of 250,000. This preparedness enabled quick support to China at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak when PPE supplies in that country were low. The experience with COVID-19, when supplies were suddenly requested by some 100 countries – at the same time as borders were closing – posed huge logistical challenges for supply chains, with requirements that far exceeded UNICEF's individual capacity.

47 UNICEF, *Global Innovation Strategy: Matching today's challenges with tomorrow's solutions*, UNICEF, New York, 2020, <[www.unicef.org/innovation/sites/unicef.org/innovation/files/2020-04/Strategy%20Document%20V4\\_13March2020%20%281%29.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/innovation/sites/unicef.org/innovation/files/2020-04/Strategy%20Document%20V4_13March2020%20%281%29.pdf)>.

48 Oanh Ha, K., 'Startups are 3D-Printing Scarce Ventilator and Test Kit Parts', 9 April 2020, *Bloomberg Business Week*, 9 April 2020, <[www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-09/the-3d-printing-community-is-the-pandemic-s-unlikely-hero](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-09/the-3d-printing-community-is-the-pandemic-s-unlikely-hero)>, accessed 4 September.

A global health emergency plan and response strategy is required for outbreaks and pandemics. This will define UNICEF's role, including the preparedness and response levels required. This strategy could also inform UNICEF's advocacy at country and at global level, position UNICEF in the global health system, and help manage the expectations of governments and donors.

#### **2.4.5 Recommendations to prepare for future emergency contexts**

*Desired end state: UNICEF has effective capacities and modalities of assistance prepared to respond to key emergency types.*

1. **Define** UNICEF's role in public health emergencies, with a clear strategy, increased technical capacity at all levels, and adapted strategies, including a no-regrets approach.
2. **Reinforce** UNICEF's current capacities at HQ level, and in relevant regional offices (ROs) and country offices (COs), to support responses to large refugee and migration crises.
3. **Ensure** that UNICEF can mainstream and increase the volume of humanitarian aid delivered through cash across sectors through organizational investment (both financial and in people) and in the development, maintenance and integration of beneficiary data systems.
4. **Leverage** technology and innovation to improve the speed and quality of UNICEF's response, notably in humanitarian contexts.
5. **Strengthen** the integration of supply needs in programme planning and response, especially on supply-driven programming in public health emergencies, working more closely with the private sector in order to build supply networks and ensure continuity within constrained markets.
6. **Explore** new configurations of HQ field support in order to better target and prioritize technical assistance, advocacy and political engagement and streamline approaches across similar settings in different regions to better apply lessons learned.

## PART 3

# Predictability, Quality, Timeliness and Equity of UNICEF's Humanitarian Action

### *As an agency, we need to put the 'E' back in UNICEF. (123)*

As the third largest UN humanitarian agency, UNICEF has a relatively big global footprint due to the sheer range of its programmes and services, strong relationships with host governments, and a wide network of partnerships. Its strong and sustained presence before disasters occur provides a launch pad for timely and effective humanitarian action. This gives the organization a strong comparative advantage in the field and it should be able to capitalize on its dual mandate to further improve its humanitarian action and long-term development programming.

Yet, despite this, UNICEF is not always primarily seen as such by observers. (11) This is a concern, since humanitarian response is an increasingly important element of the agency's work. With over 54 per cent of its 2018 funding tagged as humanitarian, there is a need to change this perception. UNICEF needs to invest in providing consistent, timely, good-quality and principled responses for children affected by humanitarian emergencies. (138, 86)

Several evaluations and reports point to inconsistencies in the quality of UNICEF programmes

and in its performance as humanitarian actor, often arising as a result of the negative impact of the initial barriers identified by this review.<sup>49</sup> For partners, these inconsistencies can make UNICEF unpredictable and challenging to work with.<sup>50</sup>

In terms of gauging the impact of UNICEF's humanitarian action, the previous CCCs and Strategic Plan encourage the measurement of performance by the percentage of targets achieved or the number of people reached by the organization's interventions. This presents a major risk that UNICEF may prioritize easily scalable responses that can produce high reach numbers over principled, high-quality and equitable action that ensures no child is left behind. Indeed, several evaluations have found weaknesses in the equity of UNICEF's programme approach, with few indicators to measure quality and weak quality assurance mechanisms.<sup>51</sup>

Overcoming this requires holistic approaches to humanitarian action, with renewed, shared commitments from UNICEF's representatives, regional and HQ directors, and senior leaders, based on a common understanding of the accountabilities and obligations to affected populations, host countries, partners and internally. UNICEF needs a more coordinated, multisectoral approach, breaking programmatic siloes so that all

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49 Areas where barriers were identified are: impeded access; cooperation with international actors; human resources; linking humanitarian and development programming; localization and engagement with affected populations; conditionalities and flexible funding; context analysis and assessment of needs; planning, monitoring and reporting of advocacy; technology and innovation; and consistent and predictable quality of humanitarian action.

50 UNICEF, *NGO Consultation*, UNICEF, New York, 11–12 November 2019, <[www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/UNICEF%20NGO%20Consultation%20Report%20November%202019%20\\_0\\_0.pdf](http://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/UNICEF%20NGO%20Consultation%20Report%20November%202019%20_0_0.pdf)>, accessed 4 September 2020.

51 Internal evaluations that found such weaknesses were: *Evaluation of UNICEF Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies and Management Response*; *Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh*; *Global Annual Results Report 2018*; *Verbatim Report, 2019*; *Annual Session*; and *Annual Report on UNICEF Humanitarian Action*.

its work, whether in humanitarian, development or peace and security causes, is linked within its strategies and programming.

Important work is already taking place in this area, including revisions to key strategic documents and procedures to help UNICEF improve its humanitarian action and accountability.

### **3.1 REVISING THE CORE COMMITMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION**

Interview responses for this review suggested that UNICEF's current humanitarian programme standards need updating to remove inconsistencies in programming at CO level. In revising the CCCs, UNICEF's corporate framework for humanitarian action brings clarity to what UNICEF expects of its emergency programmes and what it must do to ensure that its humanitarian action is principled, timely, reliable, equitable and of good quality. The revised CCCs aim to help UNICEF measure these factors more effectively, with clear benchmarks against corporate commitments in humanitarian action and clear roles and responsibilities for all divisions and staff, at all levels, to deliver emergency responses in a systematic and predictable way.<sup>52</sup> (21, 22, 48, 49)

The revised CCCs also reflect the current context within which UNICEF's humanitarian action takes place and the diversity of its emergency response. They include specific commitments relating to UNICEF's work in public health emergencies and with large movements of refugees, migrants and internally displaced people, which is hugely important in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and the global rise in displacement. A policy approach that supports the diversity of UNICEF's humanitarian action will enable improved preparedness for, and consistency in, the agency's responses. As a policy document, the CCCs need to be accompanied by clear field guidelines and training to ensure they are universally applied and fully integrated into UNICEF's humanitarian planning.

Including cross-cutting programme commitments in such a key policy document also supports benchmarking of the quality and equity of UNICEF's humanitarian action and ensures that these aspects are integrated into its regular

emergency work as standard practice. This should also help to address specific gaps in UNICEF's child-focused work, such as adolescents who often face extreme risks, particularly in complex environments. (48, 139, 140)

### **3.2 NEW EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

This review revealed that some teams implementing humanitarian programmes in COs felt that UNICEF's bureaucratic systems and processes was distracting them from the humanitarian response, with interviewees citing frequent meetings and the burden of administrative work in particular as holding back their practical work in effecting a timely and comprehensive humanitarian response. (138, 115)

There was a strong push from COs for simpler procedures that focus on the type of time-bound work needed in life-saving humanitarian responses. The new Emergency Procedures<sup>53</sup> being developed by EMOPS in 2019–2020 aim to address such concerns. The process has been fast-tracked to ensure that the global response to COVID-19 can benefit from such simplification, as timeliness is particularly critical in public health responses. Using the new Emergency Procedures in the COVID-19 response presents UNICEF with an opportunity to test them in perhaps the most demanding of emergencies, and to learn from this experience and adapt the procedures for maximum effectiveness in future. (48, 104) In addition, applying the new Emergency Procedures not only to L2 and L3 emergencies, but also linking them to emergency types, would help UNICEF's humanitarian action to become more focused and effective across the board.

### **3.3 REVISED EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PROCEDURE**

Interviewees felt that UNICEF tends to act rather slowly, particularly in sudden-onset disasters, suggesting that it is "reactive and not proactive". (70) Investment in preparedness was consistently cited as something that could help improve the timeliness of the response.

UNICEF's work on preparedness is guided by the Emergency Preparedness Procedure,

52 <[www.corecommitments.unicef.org/](http://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/)>

53 UNICEF's Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure (CEAP) for Level-3 ([EMOPS/PROCEDURE/2019/001](#)) and Level-2 ([EMOPS/PROCEDURE/2019/002](#)) Emergencies.

which came into effect on 30 March 2018. This explains what all UNICEF offices must do to prepare to respond to humanitarian crises, starting with a 10-point checklist of Minimum Preparedness Actions and Standards (MPAS). The procedure has made emergency preparedness mandatory, and also defined the roles and responsibilities among COs, ROs and HQ, and defined Minimum Preparedness Standards (MPS) for all UNICEF offices. In addition, UNICEF launched the Emergency Preparedness Platform (EPP) tool in January 2018 to support all offices in planning and monitoring preparedness. As emergencies become more frequent, the emergency preparedness procedure and the EPP together aim to ensure that UNICEF offices can deliver on the CCCs in a timely and effective way. (23)

Despite these commitments, interviewees felt that UNICEF still does not have strong accountability for its commitments in this area. Similar feedback was gathered by EMOPS when reviewing the emergency preparedness procedure. This resulted in EMOPS issuing a revised procedure in March 2020, containing the following main changes:

- a new set of MPS for COs
- mandatory benchmarks to meet the MPS
- clarification of what is required of COs, and more objective self-assessment of COs' level of preparedness in the EPP
- different mandatory benchmarks for COs in high-, medium- and low-risk countries, and an enhanced process to assess risk at country level.

In addition, the MPS, which addresses several challenges highlighted in this report, requires COs to work before an emergency to ensure their ability to kick-start a response rapidly and effectively. For example, this requires COs to sign contingency agreements with implementing partners, establish long-term agreements with vendors and service providers, and to plan for the refocusing of staff on emergency requirements. (23, 70, 124)

These revisions should help to increase the accountability and timeliness of UNICEF's immediate emergency responses. The organization must ensure such procedures and platforms are institutionalized and used correctly. In addition, dedicated funding towards preparedness needs to be secured to ensure overall improvements in humanitarian action. (23)

### 3.4 PRIORITIZATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

UNICEF's decentralized model is generally seen as an advantage and makes the organization more agile than other agencies. Nevertheless, this means a lot rests on the quality of decentralized leadership, which can be unpredictable or simply very different in style. This variability inhibits the appetite for calculated risks among ROs and COs, due to concerns about accountability. UNICEF's global leadership needs to develop a shared appetite for risk across the organization, leading changes in organizational culture and providing a clear vision and focus on continued investment in humanitarian action. (50, 110)

Having a clear, executive-level vision of where UNICEF's humanitarian action needs to be is key to delivering more focused responses. Priority-setting is currently a challenge, with one interviewee stating, "For UNICEF, everything is a priority." (86) As the humanitarian agenda becomes more complex and crowded, effective prioritization becomes ever more challenging, and there is a risk that in spreading its response too thinly, UNICEF may dilute its effectiveness. The Revised CCCs and the new Strategic Plan will help to clarify what UNICEF's Humanitarian Responses should aim to achieve, and provide some standardization and predictability. This together with sustained investment in capacity-building for UNICEF staff, which is detailed in Part 4 of this review, should enable the organization to overcome current shortcomings. (106)

In addition, based on the preliminary barriers to improved humanitarian action identified in the desk review, and the outcomes of interviews with UNICEF staff and the EAG, the review identified three key areas for focused change within UNICEF, which are explored in subsequent sections of this report:

- increasing humanitarian capacity and leadership
- guaranteeing corporate commitment to humanitarian preparedness and response
- ensuring accountability to children in humanitarian settings, measured against UNICEF's commitments.

The recommendations in these three areas will need close attention in order to increase the predictability, quality, timeliness and equity of UNICEF's response.

### 3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE UNICEF'S HUMANITARIAN ACTION

*Desired end state: UNICEF's key strategic documents, structures and procedures enable its humanitarian action to be equitable and of good quality, and ensure the organization is accountable to these commitments.*

1. **Invest** in the roll-out of the new CCCs, building on global COVID-19 momentum across the whole of UNICEF, to strengthen understanding and awareness of UNICEF's humanitarian mandate, and identify individuals as focal points for the CCCs to ensure their effective implementation.
2. **Incorporate** lessons from the COVID-19 response into the new Emergency Procedures and begin to apply procedures beyond L2 and L3 emergencies where required.
3. **Embed** humanitarian action in its next strategic plan and introduce more measurable and trackable goals for each area in order to emphasize UNICEF's humanitarian commitments.

## PART 4

# Humanitarian Leadership and Capacity-Building

*Getting humanitarian action right within UNICEF is really about Human Resources. (122)*

Through internal and external consultations, this review process has revealed that ‘getting the right people in the right place at the right time’ is perceived as the main factor that will enable UNICEF to improve its humanitarian action. Having strong, competent staff in critical leadership positions (such as country representatives, deputy representatives for programmes and operations, chiefs of field operations and section chiefs) is vital to deliver and lead humanitarian action. Several partners and EAG members felt that there is room for improvement in UNICEF’s HR, in terms of the capacity and technical skills of staff working in humanitarian environments, particularly those working in complex and conflict-affected settings.

### 4.1 SUPPORTING AND BUILDING STAFF CAPACITY

*When people signed up many years ago, UNICEF was predominantly development. Now times have changed, and we need to invest in the new generation. (104)*

For many years, UNICEF has mostly recruited new staff to pursue its ambitious child rights and development agenda. One interviewee commented: “UNICEF still staffs itself as if it’s a development agency. HR needs a strategic relook when it comes to emergencies.” (71) Shifting to incorporate humanitarian needs in its approach to HR would enable a more balanced approach to UNICEF’s dual mandate. The HR Division needs to be not just a service provider but a strategic partner in humanitarian action, to ensure that UNICEF can plan appropriately for the demanding and often time-bound HR needs related to

humanitarian action, and ensure that HR concerns are actively addressed throughout the programme cycle. (71)

A lot has already been achieved within HR to improve UNICEF’s humanitarian action. Following recommendations from the 2015 *Strengthening Humanitarian Action* initiative, additional paid leave for long-serving staff members in hardship duty stations was put in place<sup>54</sup> to try to counter long periods of time in challenging environments, often away from family members. Considerable measures to improve staff welfare and support have also been implemented, with an emphasis on recruiting additional staff counsellors to improve access to mental health support. Implementing the Rotation Policy, Fast Track Procedures and measures to improve benefits for national staff members have also benefited staff working in humanitarian settings. Induction processes through the Global Shared Support Centre have improved following efforts to streamline and speed up the process for emergency recruitment. Finally, HR colleagues continue to strive to better understand the needs of UNICEF’s humanitarian workforce, launching the Humanitarian Questionnaire in 2019 to gain feedback on aspects of HR. (109)

More can always be done, and this review aims to highlight remaining challenges in the field that were raised by a significant number of staff interviewees and EAG members. Some of these challenges may not be new, but their inclusion here means that UNICEF has not yet done enough to address them.

Several interviewees noted that a lack of attention to, and strategy for, HR in relation to humanitarian needs has left gaps in UNICEF’s humanitarian action. At country level, teams resort to ‘double hatting’ emergency roles as it is often challenging to fill HR vacancies in emergency duty stations,

54 As incorporated in Administrative Instruction CF/AI/2010-003 Amend. 1 on “Special Leave” and Executive Directive CF/EXD/2013-004 on “Staff Selection”.

which in turn means that UNICEF cannot fully prepare for, or respond to, humanitarian emergencies. Many have attributed this to limited experience from Humanitarian Action among staff within the division of Human Resources (DHR) and the absence of strong HR networks from which to pull suitable candidates or locate humanitarian leaders. Emergencies need to be built back into UNICEF's core mandate in a practical sense and in divisional planning. Looking at the emergency types might help to identify the different HR needs and appropriate processes in each case. (139, 140, 109, 104)

#### **4.1.1 General recommendation to increase UNICEF's humanitarian leadership and capacity**

*Desired end state: UNICEF has people with the right skills in the right place at the right time to respond to the needs of all crisis-affected children.*

1. **Tailor** HR field support for humanitarian action according to the specific needs of the type of crisis in question. This should incorporate a skills analysis for key staff, as well as workforce management analysis.
2. **Build** the capacity of HR staff (DHR, RO, CO), and their awareness and understanding of the specific HR needs in humanitarian settings. This could be by actively encouraging deployment in emergency contexts as part of a career path, or facilitating exchanges between the HR staff of sister agencies.

#### **4.2 INVESTING IN LEADERSHIP**

*It's important for UNICEF to invest in leadership, as [that] is a change maker in the organization at the country level. (8)*

Contributors to this review highlighted good-quality leadership as key to making UNICEF's humanitarian responses more predictable, effective and high quality. Finding and recruiting leaders for humanitarian emergencies appears to be challenging both within UNICEF and externally. By recognizing the different leadership skills required by different emergency responses, UNICEF can ensure that its recruitment system facilitates the consistent, good-quality responses that it aims to achieve.

When sudden-onset emergencies hit, COs do not always have staff who can lead and manage these challenging situations effectively as UNICEF continues to have a deficit of skilled and experienced staff who are willing and able to serve in emergencies in hardship duty stations. UNICEF needs to ensure it has leaders with the right skills, qualities and expertise to deliver its ambitious humanitarian agenda in an increasingly complex operational environment. This needs to be matched by comprehensive succession plans and investment in handover and induction arrangements for representatives, particularly in the light of the organization's decentralized model.<sup>55</sup> (109, 122, 133, 145)

The type of person that UNICEF recruits at senior level needs to be considered through the emergency-type lens. Different emergencies require different skills, and UNICEF needs an HR system to place the right people in the right job. Individuals who can respond rapidly to sudden-onset emergencies may not be adept at navigating CHTEs, and vice versa. Similarly, those leading in a country facing a public health emergency will need senior technical specialists to assist with critical decision-making, while also understanding the operational complexities of this type of emergency. The COVID-19 secretariat manages this well, pairing operational leads with technical specialists.

*If you have [Standard Operating Procedures] for L2 or L3, but your leadership is not fit for purpose in implementing the procedures, what do you do? Every time we delay a critical decision, the cost... is the lives of children. (147)*

As the correct leadership is key to improved humanitarian action, it is important to define what kind of people UNICEF needs. (128) UNICEF's current system largely depends on the personality of the country representative; this exposes a CO to reputational risk when a representative or senior leadership team is not experienced in humanitarian action. UNICEF needs to balance leaders across the roles of representative, deputy representative for programmes and deputy representative for operations. In countries that are more development oriented, at least one member of this triad should have appropriate experience of the emergency in question.

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55 UNICEF CHTE meeting discussions, New York, 2019.



Several interviewees mentioned that UNICEF does not always have appropriate senior staff on the ground during emergency responses, which can make dialogue or collaboration with other organizations difficult. One regional staff member pointed out that if senior leaders have little emergency experience, UNICEF will be totally unprepared if an emergency arises: “If UNICEF is serious about humanitarian emergencies, it needs to change this.” (122) Several interviewees went further, suggesting that it should be mandatory to serve a full duty cycle in an emergency to be considered for a role at director level.

UNICEF’s dual mandate and its commitment to enacting the links between humanitarian and development mean that it should value broad and varied experience in both humanitarian and development settings. Senior staff should be required to have experience in both areas. This will also ensure that COs are better prepared for humanitarian action, more alert to evolving risks, better able to take proactive action, and more able to recognize the developmental gains that can arise from humanitarian action. (67, 68, 137)

*If we don’t have a workforce that is fit for purpose, regardless of our mandate, then we won’t be fit for purpose. (146)*

A large number of the recommendations can be linked to these and contribute to the organizational improvements envisioned. Nevertheless, some of its recommendations call for more systematic business operations in managing risks, partnerships and HR, and devolving authority and planning processes (see Part 4 and Part 6).

UNICEF needs to invest in identifying new leaders who are ready for the challenges presented by an ever-changing world. It can, and should, invest in both growing this talent internally and seeking it externally. To identify and grow internal talent, people serving in complex humanitarian settings should be identified and developed. UNICEF’s focus should be on staff with the right skills, such as negotiation, risk-taking, ethics, drive for results, innovative thinking, problem-solving, and the softer people skills required in sensitive political settings. (116) When recruiting externally, UNICEF needs to ensure that its HR systems are flexible enough to enable headhunting, so that the organization can benefit from external skills and ideas, including those from the private sector.

UNICEF will need strategies for developing a new generation of humanitarians to meet growing

needs. Both internal and external recruitment provide opportunities to increase UNICEF’s gender and geographical diversity, which can in turn contribute to leadership teams that reflect the organization’s global nature. (9)

*We need to invest in the representatives – they are representing UNICEF and so we need to... ensure they have all the skills and information that they need to act. (109)*

UNICEF also needs to improve its institutional and contextual induction of senior leaders to ensure continuity in operations and improved humanitarian responses. Multiple UNICEF representatives from CHTEs reported having received limited induction on taking up post, citing factors such as the absence of a detailed handover process with the outgoing representative, and limited introductions to UNICEF processes and the contextual complexities from HQ or regional colleagues. Others argued for investment in language training, particularly for senior leaders, to strengthen individual development and increase the diversity of future senior leadership postings. Organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have detailed induction and handover processes, whereby future heads of delegation have time to research the country and operations, receive detailed briefs and have an extensive formal handover process in the country in question. (24, 26, 41, 126, 110, 131, 141)

This lack of a systematic induction affects the quality and consistency of UNICEF’s humanitarian response. Representatives stated that having the time to understand the context before arriving in a country is important as, after deployment, there is little time: learning must be done on the job in ad hoc ways.

#### **4.2.1 Recommendations to support improved humanitarian leadership**

*Desired end state: UNICEF’s humanitarian leaders and managers have the necessary skills, competencies and values to lead proactive, agile and effective emergency responses.*

1. **Establish** a leadership strategy for the ‘top 20’ humanitarian Country Offices to ensure they have appropriate leadership.
2. **Establish** adequate, standardized hand-over and induction mechanisms for senior managers in UNICEF’s top 20 humanitarian crises and other countries at most risk.

3. **Make** mandatory service of at least one full duty cycle in a senior management position in an emergency duty station for staff who reach director level.
4. **Develop** an internal talent initiative to nurture new talent and diversify UNICEF's workforce in crisis-affected countries.

### 4.3 EMERGENCIES AS PRESTIGIOUS WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

*We need to make working in emergencies prestigious. (122)*

Some interviewees noted emergency contexts are not 'prestigious' operating environments in which staff can build their careers. Those serving in challenging emergency duty stations felt they were paying a career price for choosing to do so. Furthermore, there is a perception that emergency work can be a distraction from UNICEF's development focus. As a consequence, leaders in disaster-prone duty stations are not always willing to focus on, or value, emergency preparedness. UNICEF will have to change its approach to humanitarian contexts. Humanitarian operations must be considered prestigious working contexts, and the organization must acknowledge and reward the contribution of those who work in such complex operations and challenging environments.

Part of making emergency work attractive means assessing how to offset some of the challenging working conditions that humanitarian staff endure. Again, different emergency types and country classifications must be considered here. For example, flexible working options may benefit HQ staff, but not necessarily those in emergency duty stations, especially as this complicates the organization's ability to stay and deliver. In certain complex contexts, this flexible arrangement has led to a lack of 'boots on the ground' during a response, which has a potentially negative impact on both the organization's risk management and reputation. Other benefits to those in challenging duty stations may be more helpful, such as flexibility in R&R policies and leave during the COVID-19 response. Supporting staff in this way can increase well-being and provide incentives to serve in challenging environments. (109)

*We need to make emergency work in UNICEF attractive to those who are both internal and external. (104)*

Supporting staff in challenging operating environments with the right benefits package is important

if UNICEF wants to fulfil its dual mandate by recruiting and retaining talented humanitarian staff. The erosion of the entitlement package means that benefits packages within UNICEF and other UN agencies no longer surpass those of other agencies. Some large INGOs offer benefits that rival those of UN agencies, and the increasing involvement of the private sector in humanitarian operations will only make it tougher to attract the best and the brightest people. UNICEF needs to compensate for the loss of its entitlement package with its own benefit offer, rooted in duty of care and staff well-being, alongside the agency's needs. Benefits should be tailored to the type of emergency and duty station where individuals work. There also needs to be a focus on the different needs of staff at various life stages, incorporating flexible, family-friendly support to secure the retention of talented women.

#### 4.3.1 Recommendations for making emergency roles attractive career prospects

*Desired end state: Humanitarian roles within UNICEF are desirable, and attract diverse, highly skilled and motivated individuals.*

1. **Establish** a young humanitarian leadership development programme (in collaboration with other agencies and a training institute, preferably in the global South) to invest in the next generation of humanitarian leaders and attract talent from diverse backgrounds.
2. **Increase** and **facilitate** secondments and exchanges with other appropriate UN agencies.

### 4.4 IMPROVING CAREER MANAGEMENT

Because complex hardship duty stations have such short deployments, UNICEF, like many humanitarian agencies, struggles with staff continuity. To strengthen its internal capacity, UNICEF must do more to nurture and retain talent within the organization. While benefits (financial, R&R and family-friendly incentives) can attract people to the organization, that is not enough. Several interviewees suggested that career management is a key area for improvement, and that supporting and improving career transitions could help people to feel more secure in their careers and so improve staff retention. According to a prominent humanitarian leader in the EAG, early career discussions may be more important than an improved reward system. Job security and career development continue to be highly valued,

especially among people working in hardship duty stations. (6, 109, 123, 145)

Flexibility will be key: some individuals will be comfortable moving between different categories of duty station, such as D to B, and some will move within the same category, such as E to E.<sup>56</sup> UNICEF should create career paths for different preferences, including those who may need to move for family-related reasons. Supporting these varied needs and investing in career development for staff at different life stages will be a win-win situation. It will enable UNICEF to develop senior staff and leaders with well-rounded experience across a variety of duty stations, while also practising good duty of care for staff in hardship locations. Empowering representatives to take a more active role in talent identification and management could help to nurture internal talent. (50, 104, 133)

As part of their career development and to improve staff retention and growth, staff should have access to training and support to help them broaden and deepen their skills and move out of emergency roles and duty stations should they choose to. Based on organizational trends, UNICEF needs to start identifying the capacity development needed for the workforce it wants in the future. Organizational learning and development units in HR could conduct this type of analysis to start diversifying the skills of UNICEF's workforce.

More forward-thinking career management and better staff retention may also ease the challenges of rotation by increasing the pool of experienced and varied people within UNICEF, which may broaden rotational choices for each staff member. Looking at rotation from the perspective of the specific type of emergency occurring may help to match individuals to appropriate duty stations more effectively than the current system, which at times lags behind the reality on the ground.

#### **4.4.1 Recommendations for improved career management**

*Desired end state: UNICEF attracts, develops and retains highly skilled and committed humanitarian staff from diverse backgrounds.*

## **WORKFORCE DIVERSIFICATION**

One of the EAG members observed, "UN agencies and the NGO community tend to be males from industrialised countries. Often, this is put down to the 'nature of the work' being more suited to men than women but we need to look at it more as [the] 'nature of how we do the work' and we need to change that." (3) In order to ensure gender diversity, UNICEF needs to look at how it can continue to encourage women to engage in the humanitarian sector.

In terms of geographical diversity, UNICEF needs to invest in its national staff, providing more global opportunities for talented individuals while also keeping diversity in mind when recruiting externally. The organization must invest in identifying and creating a diverse workforce, understanding the needs of staff of different genders and geographical areas. Some international NGOs, such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, have been very successful in diversifying their workforce in recent years, through continued investment and a consistent, deliberate approach to its HR and organizational direction. While striving to foster diversity in the organization, UNICEF must retain an appropriate level of experience to ensure good-quality programming. It must also ensure that staff from programme countries are not over-represented in the more junior positions at hardship duty stations.

UNICEF must understand that nationality does not necessarily reflect geographical diversity. For instance, a person from a Western country could be a member of a visible minority in terms of race and ethnicity – the measure of nationality does not capture this nuance. This is an important consideration to ensure that qualified candidates from visible minorities are not excluded from recruitment practices purely based on their nationality. One of the interviewees expressed this as follows: "UNICEF's diversification should be a dynamic process, not one managed by dogmatic rules or strict matrices on gender or geographical balances. Diverse talent needs to be developed within the organization, which will take time." (109, 116)

<sup>56</sup> Duty stations are categorized into one of five categories, A (least difficult working conditions) to E (most challenging working conditions). The hardship allowance is paid for assignments at B, C, D and E duty stations. Those categorized as H are based at HQ, where the United Nations has no development or humanitarian assistance programmes, or in member countries of the EU. The hardship allowance does not apply at H or A duty stations.

1. **Develop** a career management system for staff willing to serve in crisis-affected countries, with flexible career paths across both development and humanitarian work and regular rotation between hardship and non-hardship duty stations, as well as mechanisms for identifying suitable talent from diverse backgrounds.
2. **Develop** a dynamic staff diversification strategy to ensure a diverse workforce in humanitarian settings.

#### 4.5 BUILDING HUMANITARIAN CAPACITY

*We would like to see UNICEF strategically focus on equipping frontline staff as well as its stand-by partners with the necessary skills to respond effectively. There is a deficit of staff to do frontline response, and UNICEF must make a deliberate effort to train its staff. (9)*

To ensure that UNICEF can prepare for, respond to and transition out of an emergency, it needs to ensure that it has skilled staff who are flexible and have the required skills to work in different types of emergencies. Ensuring that staff have the right skills, knowledge and experience to respond in the way UNICEF expects to meet appropriate needs will ensure higher levels of predictability and quality globally. However, interviewees noted that UNICEF staff are no longer trained across the board on humanitarian response, which has affected UNICEF's overall preparedness for, and ability to respond to humanitarian situations effectively.

Building a broader understanding of humanitarian action across the organization will be important to expand UNICEF's humanitarian capacity. The roll-out of the CCCs is an opportunity to mainstream a basic understanding of UNICEF's commitments in humanitarian action across the organization, as were the webinars that introduced ROs and COs to the new fast-track Emergency Procedures for COVID-19. But UNICEF needs to ensure that staff also understand more complex topics such as international humanitarian law (IHL) and humanitarian principles. The humanitarian leadership training, initiated by EMOPS and rolled out in 2020, which will train about 100 staff members a year, is a step in the right direction, but will be insufficient to increase UNICEF's humanitarian capacity at scale.

The COVID-19 pandemic has focused attention on UNICEF's crisis responses among staff from all levels and divisions. UNICEF should capitalize on this important learning to help instil a shared understanding of both humanitarian and development work across the whole organization, enabling staff to embody its dual mandate more fully. (106, 134, 139, 140)

Since 2010, emergencies have spread to new parts of the world, creating new, complex and often protracted environments for humanitarian staff to navigate. The Arab Spring in 2011 led to complex humanitarian challenges and a large-scale refugee and migration crisis in the Middle East and Europe, creating a demand for more Arabic-speaking humanitarians. The 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa and the ongoing response in the DRC have required French-speaking, highly specialized public health professionals. The Cyclone Idai response in Mozambique required Portuguese speakers, and the socioeconomic crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that led to large-scale migration means that Spanish speakers have been in demand. Many interviewees noted that the increase in global emergencies has required more multilingual staff, but there is no overall incentive in emergencies to be multilingual, meaning that UNICEF has sometimes struggled to recruit good-quality candidates with the right language skills. Since many of today's emergencies are protracted, UNICEF could consider investing in staff language skills, alongside technical capacity, to increase the versatility of its current workforce. New staff members should be able to speak at least two UN languages, and staff should be encouraged to serve in different language zones throughout their career. (107, 109, 126, 121)

At the same time, UNICEF should continue to focus on developing the technical skills of national staff. When an emergency response occurs, the brunt of the work falls on national team members, particularly if access is restricted or if, as in the case of COVID-19, business continuity plans are put in place and staff are relocated. Locally recruited staff are sometimes not equipped with the skills to change operating modalities, such as a dramatic increase in the number of direct payments. The COVID-19 response has shown the need to invest in this to ensure UNICEF is able to stay in place and deliver responses. Investing in national staff will also strengthen UNICEF's global pool of staff with experience in emergencies, potentially helping to increase its linguistic and geographical diversity in line with its programming commitments. (111)

## CLUSTER COORDINATION AS A CORE FUNCTION

As an agency, UNICEF contributes significant technical expertise to cluster system leadership, by leading or co-leading three clusters (WASH, Education and Nutrition) and one Area of Responsibility (Child Protection). UNICEF should maximize its position in the key humanitarian coordination system and leverage cross-sectoral components between these clusters to ensure the rights of the child are upheld in humanitarian action. This will require raising the profile of cluster leadership through greater in-country investment and by addressing the specific career challenges that exist or are perceived to exist in cluster roles.

EAG members, including key donors, noted that UNICEF does not invest sufficiently in cluster-lead positions, but meets its obligations through external surge staff members, stand-by partners (SPBs) or by its own staff undertaking the cluster-lead function in addition to their regular job. There was consensus that as a mandated cluster-lead agency, UNICEF needs to use its position and expertise in this area to ensure a more consistent quality of work in its cluster and other coordination mechanisms to support good-quality coordination within the humanitarian sector. (9)

The factors to address in raising the profile of cluster coordination fall into three main areas: financial, structural and HR capacity, as outlined below. (3)

**Financial:** In-country investment in clusters was consistently reported as being insufficient, yet interviewees noted that, when leadership of the cluster is strong, this raises the standard of UNICEF programming for the area, indicating that prioritizing investment in cluster system leadership will have positive consequences for humanitarian work. EAG members from key donor agencies expect UNICEF to invest its own resources in cluster-lead positions in the future, demonstrating its commitment to consistently high-quality humanitarian leadership. (19, 136)

**Structural:** There is need for greater clarity about how UNICEF's cluster-lead role fits within its CO emergency structures. Once a cluster is activated under UNICEF's responsibility, the organization should be more prescriptive about the non-negotiable elements of funding and staffing a cluster team (coordinator, officer and information management). Confusion around reporting lines and accountabilities can dilute the impartiality of a cluster, leading to 'double hatting' and reducing the overall effectiveness of response coordination.

Interviewees reported that their experiences of cluster leads reporting to a range of roles, including representatives and deputy representatives, chiefs of field operations and emergency managers, hinders consistent, high-quality humanitarian action. Providing clear guidance in these areas at both the CO and regional level would go a long way towards solving this challenge. (32,33)

**HR capacity:** UNICEF often struggles to recruit high-level technical professionals into cluster coordination roles, which forces it to resort to SBPs. The perception of cluster coordination as a career 'cul de sac' needs to change. UNICEF should elevate the cluster-lead position, investing in the role internally and also enabling cluster leads and coordinators to transition to other roles that can benefit from their strong experience and understanding of the humanitarian architecture.<sup>57</sup> (32) Cluster leadership should be seen as a gateway to wider humanitarian discussions, strengthening relationships within global alliances such as the Alliance for Child Protection and Humanitarian Action, the Global Partnership to End Violence and Education Cannot Wait.

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57 Section 6.5.3 looks at investment in the cluster as part of cooperation with international actors and recommends action to elevate the cluster position and cluster career management.

UNICEF needs to identify new and young talent within the organization and to help these people develop their skills to become the humanitarians of the future. Attracting and developing new staff is an issue that goes beyond UNICEF and one that might benefit from an inter-agency approach. It is worth exploring options for an inter-agency humanitarian training programme for young talent through which agencies collectively train young people and create a larger recruitment pool. This approach could also help to address gender and diversity deficits across the sector, and develop the key skills needed by multiple agencies, such as public health specialists. (9)

#### 4.5.1 Recommendations for building humanitarian capacity

*Desired end state: Across UNICEF, staff have sufficient technical humanitarian, cluster and linguistic skills to enable agile, effective and good-quality humanitarian action.*

1. **Develop** a learning platform, with links to policies and tools that are critical to strengthening humanitarian responses, including compulsory courses in the CCCs.
2. **Invest** in staff capacity by considering the establishment of an internal Humanitarian Action Capacity-Building Fund.
3. **Ensure** that a dedicated cluster team is permanently in place where appropriate and develop a career path for cluster coordinators to attract talent, also adding cluster performance to country office leadership assessments.

#### 4.6 METHODS FOR RAPID SCALE-UP AND SCALE-DOWN

*We need to be able to learn from one emergency to another. We might be OK scaling up in some emergencies, but it is the scale-down that is challenging. How do we manage this and how can we be more prepared for it? (121)*

During emergency programmes, UNICEF needs to recruit good-quality staff quickly so that it can scale up operations quickly and effectively. It also needs to scale down smoothly when emergency responses end. However, at the onset of an emergency, UNICEF is often conservative in the number of new staff it inducts when scaling up because of the challenges COs know they will face when scaling down.

UNICEF needs a comprehensive strategy to retain new talent that has been brought in during a response, particularly locally recruited talent. At the same time, it needs to be willing to replace staff who do not have the right profile for emergency action or who are underperforming – and to do so quickly to safeguard its response and reputation. (104, 109) Providing strategic guidance and direct support from HR professionals on scale-ups and scale-downs, and keeping procedures flexible, will help UNICEF to deliver improved, timely humanitarian action while managing staff performance and expectations. To support this, a simplified Programme Budget Review (PBR) process could include provisions for scale-down from the outset. (126)

In addition to guidance on scale-up and scale-down procedures, UNICEF needs contracting procedures that allow speed and flexibility. Its favoured emergency contracting arrangements, such as temporary assignments, do not offer sufficient flexibility. UNICEF should investigate other contracting options to assess whether these can support the need for short-term emergency recruitment, such as highly qualified technical talent with the necessary language skills. This might include third-party contracting firms, as used more widely by other UN agencies, provided issues related to duty of care are thoroughly researched and clarified. If more short-term contracting options are a possibility, UNICEF will need to recruit individuals who are attracted to short-term contracts – for some, a short-term contract may be more enticing than a benefits package. (104, 133)

UNICEF is likely to require tailored solutions to scale-up and scale-down, depending on the type of emergency. Middle-income countries responding to their first emergency may find it difficult to increase their staff size rapidly and need additional support to manage the scale-up. Several interviewees noted that operational back-office support functions are the main bottleneck in those situations, depending on ROs' capacity and experience in delivering an emergency response at scale. Protracted crises might have more experienced emergency personnel at their disposal, and may not require special procedures, but recruitment in complex settings has added challenges. Representatives cited high staff turnover due to a short time in post, a lack of funding visibility and other complexities such as visa issues on top of the general difficulty in recruiting suitable candidates who are willing to work in hardship duty stations. Understanding the nuances of recruitment in each type of emergency and country classification will help

UNICEF to design recruitment systems that meet all organizational needs. (72, 131, 151)

#### 4.6.1 Recommendations for improving scale-up and scale-down

*Desired end state: UNICEF has appropriate systems, skills and capacity in place to facilitate rapid scale-up at the onset of a crisis, and smooth scale-down when emergencies recede.*

1. **Develop** an HR toolkit and a Programme Budget Review process for scaling up and scaling down emergency operations, including short-term contracting arrangements for rapid engagement of additional workforce.
2. **Establish** and standardize regional rosters and talent pools to increase UNICEF's humanitarian capacity.

#### 4.7 IMPROVING SURGE MECHANISMS

Timeliness in emergency responses largely depends on quick, decisive decision-making by CO management, well-functioning surge mechanisms and fast-track procedures for recruitment. UNICEF needs to improve its ability to recruit and deploy suitably qualified surge staff in sufficient numbers and in a timely manner. The Humanitarian Questionnaire will help to identify other internal staff who could be considered for deployment, but this needs further development to become a useful tool for mapping skills within UNICEF so that the gaps can be filled. Staff who put themselves forward via the Humanitarian Questionnaire will need to be screened and vetted. (74, 117) UNICEF has five different surge mechanisms: these should be combined into a single system to streamline the processing and oversight of surge requests.<sup>58</sup>

Surge capacity seems to be most successful in filling sectoral gaps, but UNICEF needs greater clarity on which mechanism is used to fill which kind of gap. The generally weak but critical links in surge are operations and programme monitoring and evaluation (PM&E). In order for operations to be able to change gear and focus as needed, it is critical to have senior support staff who can

lead major change management within teams. A strong PM&E support could help to compensate for the superficial humanitarian performance monitoring (see Section 6.6).

Surge missions with short deployments have a negative impact on the continuity and predictability of UNICEF responses. Bringing in outsiders can limit organizational understanding of local contexts. Surge teams with a local roster can be a solution in disaster-prone countries. In sudden-onset disasters, keeping coordination in the hands of the national team seems to be advantageous when capacity allows, such as in the response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique. Populating local surge rosters needs to be part of CO emergency preparedness plans and actions, and form part of the staff development plan in at-risk countries.

Investment in good-quality surge response pays off, as exemplified by the evolution in the frequency of supply function deployment. In the past, UNICEF requests for SBP support averaged 19 logistics deployments a year. Since 2017, this has fallen to an average of six requests a year. By using its surge mechanism effectively, and combining stand-by missions with internal surge in a targeted way, UNICEF's Supply Division has built a global community of practice that has undoubtedly improved the quality and reliability of the organization's humanitarian response.

##### 4.7.1 Emergency Response Teams

UNICEF's 25 Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) positions, which are based in HQ and are readily deployable to different countries, have been a partial success.<sup>59</sup> When not actively deployed, ERTs are embedded in different divisions in New York HQ.

Emergency deployments tend to be of individuals rather than multisectoral teams. This limits the ERTs' role as a catalyst for improving programme quality in humanitarian settings. Some critical areas such as public health, PM&E and operational support are under-represented. In addition to increasing ERTs in critical areas, linking humanitarian and development work was suggested as an area for exploration and development. This could help offices to better link their response to longer-term support for increased preparedness in 'at-risk' offices. (157)

58 Three are internal (Emergency Response Team (ERT), Humanitarian Support Personnel, Regional Rapid Response Mechanisms) and two are external (SBPs and Rapid Response Teams (RRTs)). 19 of the proposed 25 ERTs were filled, as of June 2020.

59 As of June 2020, a 26th ERT position has been created at P5 level supporting non-CPD countries ('natcom countries') and is under recruitment.

#### **4.7.2 Stand-by partners and Rapid Response Teams**

As noted above, UNICEF uses stand-by arrangements with external organizations to support its humanitarian action. However, SBPs deployed for surge expertise are often used as a normal emergency staffing mechanism. SBPs themselves have questioned why UNICEF needs their services to fill positions related to its core mandate and does not have its own in-house capacity. One factor is that SBPs can be deployed for six months, whereas an ERT deployment normally lasts eight weeks and an internal redeployment a maximum of three months. Cost is also a key element in underfunded responses. UNICEF should aim to build reliable and consistent in-house capacity in its core mandate areas and ensure it can identify and contract staff suitably swiftly. SBPs can complement this by helping UNICEF to expand in specialized areas where and when needed.

More than 14 UN agencies use the same SBPs, which puts a strain on the system. There is an active quest for new partnerships, but this seems difficult, particularly when looking for partners from the global South. (14)

Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) are another external surge mechanism used for stand-by arrangements, and to a lesser extent, to support UNICEF staff and UNICEF-led/co-led clusters and its Child Protection mandate. Unfortunately, RRTs are also regularly used to fill gaps due to recruitment delays and the need for technical expertise that is not available in UNICEF. Several interviewees expressed concerns that long-term cluster-lead deployment in some of UNICEF's most prominent emergency countries is through SBPs rather than UNICEF staff. As it is a core function of UNICEF to fulfil cluster leadership roles, some suggested that at the very least, the cluster coordinator should be a UNICEF staff member, financed by the organization, while reserving more technical functions for SBPs. (33)

#### **4.7.3 HQ and regional rosters and talent pools**

All the research for this review indicated that UNICEF's Supply Division roster functions well, as do some regional roster mechanisms. Lessons can be learned from the management and function of these mechanisms in order to improve other surge mechanisms. Nevertheless, there are still limitations. The regional rosters are not standardized, and their quality varies from region to region. They are only operational in certain regions and only deployed within,

not across, regions, meaning that opportunities for improving organization-wide learning and consistency are missed.

In some countries, visa issues limit UNICEF's surge capacity by restricting which individuals can serve in specific contexts. For example, strict regulations in Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic mean that visas are only granted to people of certain nationalities. Linking different regional rosters and deploying staff beyond their region would widen options for the organization. Another limitation is a shortage of qualified staff available for surge missions, and uncertainties over who is available for deployment, with COs often vetoing the release of their staff. However, despite these limitations, regional rosters are an instrument with great potential. To realize this, a standardized approach across regions would need to be developed, as well as ensuring that the necessary staffing levels are made available to enable appropriate coordination and administration of rosters.

In addition to its regional internal capacity, UNICEF needs to invest efforts in finding new talent and leaders, looking beyond its current talent pool. External talent pools need to be invested in to ensure UNICEF has access to people with the necessary specialized skills and who can be easily deployed when emergencies arise. One option to secure such access is to have a standing capacity similar to the UNHCR model.

Finally, operational skills are often overlooked, although the need for them is strong. In new emergencies, existing support staff often struggle to keep pace with the scale-up. In order to ensure administrative and operational tasks remain timely, additional staff are often required while a more permanent solution is found and existing staff are trained in the Emergency Procedures. One interviewee suggested that such challenges could be addressed by deploying whole teams rather than just a senior person, so that operational support comes as a package. UNICEF could use its large General Service workforce more effectively when considering humanitarian surge. This would enable the organization to deploy more staff in general support functions during crises. (126, 139, 140)

#### **4.7.4 The Immediate Response Team gap**

The abolition of the Immediate Response Team (IRT) mechanism, which enabled leadership staff to support the management of emergency operations, has left a gap, not least in good-quality leadership to manage emergency operations in the field. The ERT contains some senior managers, but not specifically staff who can easily step



in at Head of Office level. Several interviewees recommended having a pool of appointed representatives who can be deployed at short notice to kick-start the response in a crisis. In the words of an important UNICEF donor, “A stronger positioning of UNICEF in its humanitarian response will need a dedicated pool of senior officials that can be deployed very quickly in large emergencies, if UNICEF wants to be a flexible and agile agency who leads in humanitarian response.” (137)

Investing in its surge capacity regionally and at HQ level and ensuring that ERT positions do not remain vacant due to lack of funding will ensure that UNICEF has enough good-quality staff, in the right technical areas, to support emergency responses. The organization should establish a central focal point for all surge mechanisms to coordinate a standardized approach between the various internal and external mechanisms through the use of a unified MIS.

#### 4.7.5 Recommendations to improve surge mechanisms

*Desired end state: UNICEF has a streamlined system and sufficient qualified staff and other in-house resources to enable timely surge wherever and whenever it is needed.*

1. **Create** a single Management Information System (MIS) for all UNICEF surge mechanisms and set up an ERT team to increase effectiveness.
2. **Establish** a core team of seasoned representatives for temporary deployment in humanitarian leadership.
3. **Finance** Emergency Response Team (ERT) and global cluster leadership using core UNICEF funding, and staff cluster coordinator positions with UNICEF personnel.
4. **Develop** a capacity-building mechanism for surge missions, similar to the surge roster and systems used for Supply staff.
5. **Identify** ways to increase the inclusion of stand-by partners from the global South into rosters and deployment, in order to further diversify UNICEF’s short-term emergency workforce.

#### 4.8 DUTY OF CARE

In recent years, UNICEF has made a lot of progress in supporting staff welfare during emergency operations. The engagement of full-time counsellors as part of some CO teams, and RO counsellors, has increased support

for staff’s mental well-being, particularly in CHTEs. Interviewees also noted significant improvements in terms of staff’s working and living environments.

The COVID-19 pandemic has refocused attention on protecting staff while they exercise their duties. Within a public health emergency setting, this involves not only providing the necessary PPE and preventing contamination in the workspace, but also looking after the mental and physical well-being of staff working from home, and ensuring that staff and their families working in the field have access to adequate health-care services. For staff serving in duty stations, UNICEF’s proper duty of care includes enabling staff to enjoy their R&R safely outside the duty station. It is clear from the COVID-19 experience that this requires a joint approach with other UN agencies. The duty of care needs to be extended to UNICEF partners in the field that do frontline work, exposing themselves to health or security risks. In all situations, UNICEF needs to develop clear contextualized guidelines on its duty of care for staff members, their families where appropriate, and the staff of partner organizations. Marked improvements have been made, but UNICEF must continue its progress by formalizing and standardizing its guidance and practice in this area. (170)

#### 4.8.1 Recommendations to further duty of care

*Desired end state: UNICEF fulfils its duty of care to staff in partner organizations as well as its own staff.*

1. **Develop** duty of care guidelines for UNICEF partners working in difficult settings, which cover exposure to security and health risks.

#### 4.9 STAY AND DELIVER, AND REMOTE PROGRAMMING

*A firm stance is critical when we look at who to allocate our funding to. We don’t always see UNICEF having a strong stay and deliver approach. (20)*

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, stay and deliver has gained new attention. In countries already affected by crises, it is important that UNICEF keeps delivering essential services during the pandemic that go beyond the public health COVID-19 response. In several countries, essential services rely heavily on UNICEF, as humanitarian responses fill gaps that governments cannot fill due to the overwhelming nature of an emergency.

In situations where UNICEF staff cannot operate due to extreme risks, such as in many CHTEs, remote programming is an option of last resort. All this presents challenges in terms of risk management and duty of care towards partners. Despite extensive experience in some contexts, UNICEF often has difficulty finding the right procedures and having an appropriate risk management policy.

While COVID-19 has brought about new ways of working for UNICEF, with an increased ability to use alternative procedures, staff involved in humanitarian action need a systematic and transparent review of the appropriateness of such procedures. Not all job functions will be able to use these mechanisms. Staff need to understand which positions must be present in duty stations

to ensure that UNICEF can deliver humanitarian action in an accountable way, providing appropriate support to partner organizations and government agencies. (170)

#### **4.9.1 Recommendation to strengthen stay and deliver, and remote programming**

*Desired end state: When necessary, UNICEF has systems in place to ensure effective stay and deliver and remote emergency programming that leaves no child behind.*

1. **Develop** a toolkit for remote programming situations that includes proper risk management measures.

## PART 5

# Corporate Commitment to Humanitarian Action

At a corporate level, there is a clear need for UNICEF to give due weight to humanitarian action. The organization must ensure that its structures and actions reflect its dual mandate. This chapter explores how UNICEF's:

- financial systems and fund management could be used to increase its flexibility
- advocacy governance could be improved to make a clearer external commitment to the rights of children
- procedure outlining its commitment to the triple nexus (humanitarian–development–peace and security) could be institutionalized across the organization
- emergency preparedness procedures could enhance organization-wide preparedness.

Together, a number of steps will support increased consistency and predictability in UNICEF's humanitarian action, by building on existing workstreams and strengths as well as working to overcome gaps and weaknesses. Humanitarian principles need to be clearly understood across UNICEF. The organization needs to centre its work on the needs of children, and be ready to tackle increasing constraints in donor funding, using internal resources and flexible financing to prepare and respond to emergencies in an agile and timely way. Investing in innovation and more accurate reporting on spending will also be important in unlocking and optimizing funding opportunities. Partner organizations need similar flexibility, so UNICEF must endeavour to support them in a flexible way.

In terms of humanitarian advocacy, UNICEF needs to develop a clearer vision and strategy and focus on streamlining its messages, ensuring that COs, ROs and HQ all share the corporate line. Establishing a corporate position on its humanitarian action in each response will ensure

UNICEF has a stronger voice for children, while joining up UNICEF advocacy and focused work on the ground will give its humanitarian action greater impact. Furthermore, separating its advocacy from fundraising communications will enable UNICEF to be bolder in its messaging and to advocate more effectively for the rights of children everywhere.

One area where UNICEF's corporate commitment is clear is the humanitarian–development nexus, with 'the procedure'<sup>60</sup> laying out seven key areas for achievement. However, UNICEF must strive to institutionalize the procedure practically, and ensure context-specific application rather than 'linking for the sake of linking'. (12) Providing practical support to systemizing the links between humanitarian and development programming will require greater knowledge management and sharing of good practice within UNICEF, as well as staff capacity. Harmonizing planning, results and reporting frameworks between humanitarian and development programmes could support this.

## 5.1 MANY CONDITIONALITIES AND FEW FLEXIBLE FUNDS

As outlined in Part 2, funding for UNICEF's humanitarian action has significantly increased in recent years, with protracted complex emergencies absorbing the largest share.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, evaluations point to conditionalities, limited flexibility and short-term funding as constraints on planning and efficiently implementing HRPs. Donors appear to be becoming less flexible in the way they fund humanitarian agencies, including UNICEF. Global humanitarian thematic funding that is more adaptable to need is becoming less available, now comprising under 1 per cent of the total commitments received by UNICEF in 2019. Donors increasingly want to earmark funding,

60 [UNICEF Procedure on linking humanitarian and development programming](#), 3 May 2019.

61 This might change in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic.

## THE CHALLENGE OF CALCULATING HUMANITARIAN EXPENDITURE

Colleagues in the Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) cited challenges in tracking and 'tagging' (coding) humanitarian funding. First, definitions of 'humanitarian' funding can vary greatly. For example, the OECD DAC definition is far narrower than UNICEF's definition. This can make financial reporting challenging: data on humanitarian spending needs to be reported in different ways for different audiences. Different definitions between donors and grantees can restrict the use of funds.

There are also challenges arising from the way UNICEF internally tags its finances, which defines the spending designation – humanitarian, development or both. There is currently no standard guidance for tagging decisions, so individuals inputting tagging at field level often do not fully understand why the tagging is necessary, what it refers to, or how it will be used. For example, the Humanitarian Evidence and Learning Section in EMOPS, in collaboration with DFAM and the Division of Analysis, Planning and Monitoring (DAPM), found that in 2019, expenditure of US\$393 million of humanitarian spending from Other Resources Emergency (ORE) was mis-categorized as development funding. Furthermore, in reviewing US\$1.9 billion of expenditure from Other Resources Regular (ORR) and Regular Resources (RR) that was marked as non-humanitarian, it was found that at least US\$400 million could be re-categorized as humanitarian. These two adjustments would increase the humanitarian share of UNICEF's total expenditure for the year by a considerable 7 per cent. (162)

These departments have already begun to correct these oversights, but more needs to be done to improve UNICEF's financial reporting. Investment is needed in data capture on humanitarian spending so that UNICEF can better reflect its position on humanitarian financing. This will also help to review investments linking humanitarian and development workstreams more efficiently. (185)

either geographically or with strict conditionalities that restrict its use. Such restrictions make it difficult to deliver good-quality programming in humanitarian crises, as they can prevent agencies from reaching the people who are most vulnerable and in most need. (157)

### 5.1.1 Short-term funding commitments lead to planning challenges

Unbalanced funding levels across programmatic areas of a response make it difficult for UNICEF to operate in integrated ways. Short-term funding commitments affect its ability to plan an appropriate response and maintain continuity, particularly in relation to recruiting staff and partners. To help guarantee more consistent humanitarian responses, UNICEF needs to examine how to allocate more flexible funding to ensure a stable funding source for emergencies. (133) Using the emergency type and country classification lenses could help UNICEF to identify priority countries that need such financial support.

With more emergencies evolving in middle-income countries, which receive less funding from UNICEF's RR and Institutional Budget (IB), representatives operating in CHTEs felt that current RR and IB resources are not sufficient to sustain essential back-office functions such as finance and administrative support, which play a role in supporting more consistent programming. In CHTEs, where access and risk management are often challenging, reliable operational funding is particularly important for managing risk appropriately, which can in turn increase a country programme's reach and equity. Reviewing the RR allocation formula is complex, not a 'quick fix'. UNICEF needs to seek other core funding streams to ensure that countries without high RR allocations that are dealing with complex crises can at least guarantee back-office functions. Increasing the Set Aside allocation could support countries in this position and ensure consistency in UNICEF's humanitarian action. (110)

As well as looking at internal ways to create maximum flexibility within the restrictions on funding it has already received, UNICEF needs to evaluate how it can access more flexible external funding sources. Some interviewees suggested that UNICEF needs to improve its reporting on what it has achieved with its current finances in order to attract this type of funding. Rather than providing annual, abstract reporting in the global results report, UNICEF should move towards real-time data that tracks progress against dollars spent. A more robust and transparent monitoring and reporting system (similar to the CERF and Multi Party Trust Fund models) would allow the organization to show the impacts of grants as they are spent. Some e-tools, such as the Partner Reporting Portal and Field Monitoring module are promising in this respect. UNICEF must also demonstrate clear added-value in its international and local partnerships to ensure that funding streams remain open. (67, 68)

Finally, financial resources for emergency preparedness are scarce within UNICEF. Without significant additional investment, UNICEF will struggle to deliver more predictable humanitarian action. Preparedness has a high return on investment – recent studies of 84 UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR preparedness interventions found that for every US\$1 spent on preparedness, an average US\$4 in savings was made in the next emergency response, the response speed increased by an average of 14 days and there were significant carbon savings.<sup>62</sup>

UNICEF has already made some progress in improving its investment in preparedness. The First Action Initiative (FAI) and the Co-Funding Initiative aim to make the case for increased investment in preparedness to donors by calculating and communicating its return on investment. EMOPS and DFAM are working to more accurately reflect and increase UNICEF's own investment in preparedness. These initiatives will support increases in the predictability, quality and timeliness of UNICEF's humanitarian action and should continue to receive organizational support. (23)

### 5.1.2 Funding conditionalities

Response planning will become more challenging as donors increasingly restrict what funds can be used where and for whom, which can pose a threat to principled humanitarian action. This is especially true in CHTEs, where violent extremism is present alongside a counter-terrorism agenda.

UNICEF should be willing to have more open and honest dialogues with donors about such restrictions. As one of the largest UN agencies, with a significant stake in humanitarian leadership, UNICEF should share best practice in dealing with extremism and counter-terrorism in the context of humanitarian responses. Such discussions should define clear red lines with donors to ensure that all funding conditionalities respect humanitarian principles.

### 5.1.3 Improved flexibility in financing partners

Partner organizations appreciate UNICEF's contribution to the Grand Bargain workstream on flexible funding. UNICEF should continue this work, engaging with donors on the need for flexible, long-term funding to enable agencies to respond flexibly yet reliably. The organization also needs to ensure that the nature of its international and local partnerships does not create additional conditionality burdens. NGOs have described UN funding as 'the donor of last resort' due to its complexities and conditionalities. Partners noted that it is impossible for an NGO to operate in any humanitarian context just with UNICEF funding because of limitations on charging operational costs, as well as project timeframes and grant agreement turnaround times.

In addition, partnership agreement strategies mean that multi-year funding from a donor to UNICEF does not always translate into multi-year funding security for UNICEF partners on the ground. Likewise, NGOs are often surprised when receiving funding from UNICEF that its grant agreement places additional restrictions on the funding that differ from, or are additional to, those of the original donor. UNICEF needs to look more closely at its partnership agreements and try to ensure that the need for risk management and performance monitoring does not impede timely responses. (8, 10)

The need for flexibility truly came to the fore when the Supply Division (SD) strived to meet the sudden demand for PPE supplies, and bridge financing was increasingly required at a time of exceptional demand. The ability of SD to take risks and make advance payments became crucial in securing orders – having the funding readily available was the only way to guarantee production.

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62 PWC, *Emergency Preparedness: Return on Investment Model Result trend analysis*, January 2017. <[https://www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_81164.html](https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_81164.html)>

## INNOVATIVE FINANCE<sup>63</sup>

Responding to emergencies effectively and in a timely way requires the finances to be ready and available when a disaster hits. The current humanitarian financing system has endeavoured to ensure that funding mechanisms are as flexible and swift as possible through quick funding mechanisms designed for the first months of an emergency response, such as CERF. However, as needs increase, so do funding gaps as donors struggle to fund the world's growing humanitarian needs.

UNICEF needs to consider how it can increase its access to additional funding options, while optimizing its current funding mechanisms. The organization is already pioneering innovative financing within the UN system. Its investment in cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology is the first of its kind in the UN, and UNICEF also contributes to the wider UN system by co-leading the UN Innovation Network with WFP.

The cryptofund will increase UNICEF's reach beyond traditional communities, enabling it to serve more children and improve access to basic rights, needs and resources. The organization has invested in innovative financing through cash programming and by using mobile money transfers through public-private partnerships with key mobile phone providers, which has enabled safer and contactless support to affected communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Partnerships of this kind are important for the provision of humanitarian aid in the future. UNICEF must focus on strengthening its work in such digital approaches.

Financial options such as catastrophe bonds offer different and more immediate ways to fund emergency responses. The strategic use of blended finance structures also presents opportunities for UNICEF to use public or philanthropic funding as capital to bring in private sector investment. With humanitarian funding struggling to cover growing needs and the economy of many prominent donors being hit hard by the effects of COVID-19, unlocking additional finance could be key to ensuring stability in humanitarian financing, while also providing opportunities to link development and humanitarian programming.

These are just two innovative financing examples that could strengthen humanitarian funding. Organizations such as ICRC and OCHA have already begun to engage in this sector. To remain at the forefront of humanitarian funding opportunities, UNICEF should follow suit and engage in joint action and approaches. Yet innovative financing approaches require leadership buy-in and an appetite for risk, particularly at CO and HQ levels. Increased investment in innovative finance will require a cultural change throughout UNICEF – innovation teams cannot shoulder this alone. UNICEF will need to invest heavily in sharing knowledge across the organization to build consensus and capacity. It may also need to examine the role it wants to, and can, play in such financial spaces, so it can forge partnerships that enable it to advocate for the rights of children. (171, 174)

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63 Definitions of blended finance structures, bridge financing, catastrophe bonds, cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology are in the Glossary.

#### 5.1.4 Recommendations to secure more flexible funding

*Desired end state: UNICEF COs have access to sufficient flexible funding to deliver humanitarian action of a predictable nature and quality.*

1. **Establish** funding mechanisms for countries facing humanitarian crises that have limited RR and IB funding allocations to guarantee the financing of key back-office functions.
2. **Explore** innovative financing mechanisms to secure a much higher preparedness level and a more timely and appropriate response for future public health emergencies.
3. **Review** the allocation processes of the 7 per cent set-aside to ensure adequate funding of programmes in CHTEs, emergency preparedness and LHD programming.
4. **Invest** in real-time reporting mechanisms to improve reporting and improve access to flexible funding.
5. **Standardize** tagging of programming to ensure that all humanitarian expenditure (including preparedness) is more accurately reflected and visible to external funders and donors.

## 5.2 COHERENT ADVOCACY

Interviewees for this study consistently recognized the strength of UNICEF's advocacy in the humanitarian sector. One member of the EAG observed, "UNICEF leads the pack when it comes to advocacy." (10) However, they expressed a desire for the organization to lead and undertake advocacy that is broader, collective and more geared towards the humanitarian sector: UNICEF should "speak out and be strong on advocacy" (10), be more direct in its humanitarian advocacy and more strategic in its campaigning, not shying away from challenging issues but being bold in representing issues affecting children around the world. Others felt that UNICEF should use its talent for advocacy for a common good as part of the 'one UN' approach. (2, 10, 15)

To continue leading in the advocacy sector in a changing and complex environment, UNICEF will need to look at how it structures its advocacy, and how it links it to programming and data in ways that reflect children's needs in humanitarian settings. Possible ways to approach this are outlined below.

#### 5.2.1 Linking advocacy to response planning

*We need to position UNICEF within the 'one UN' system so we can influence on behalf of children and use the system for their benefit and advocate for them. (105)*

UNICEF staff at all levels suggested that although advocacy is an area where UNICEF is well regarded, the organization could and should improve its approach to achieve more. Many felt that having a cohesive advocacy strategy with clear vision, messaging and accountabilities at country, regional and HQ level would allow UNICEF to be bolder in its messaging, particularly in complex settings.

To further strengthen advocacy efforts and develop its external image as a credible humanitarian actor, UNICEF should ensure that advocacy messaging is linked to in-country action, so that its programming commits to achieving high-quality results for children in areas on which it advocates. One way to achieve this would be to pair HRPs with humanitarian advocacy plans. HRPs are based on an analysis of risks to the rights and well-being of children and women – the very basis of advocacy campaigns. Complementing response planning with advocacy planning covering grave violations of child rights, IHL and/or protection issues for women and minority groups would help UNICEF to link its action and advocacy. This practice is in place in some COs but is not standardized globally. Doing so would also help improve monitoring of UNICEF's advocacy efforts, which are rarely included in M&E and reporting and have remained largely unmeasured. (107, 138, 148)

#### 5.2.2 Enabling bolder, humanitarian-specific advocacy

*UNICEF is unmatched in terms of fundraising, creating an individual narrative and mobilizing empathy for children. However, to seek change for people who are in desperate need in conflict areas, war, turmoil and strife, UNICEF too often produces the same story. (14)*

Interviewees noted that UNICEF's advocacy activities are too often mixed with efforts to boost organizational fundraising and/or visibility. UNICEF must clearly define its advocacy aims separately from its communication on fundraising. Its communication, advocacy and fundraising need to be linked but not combined, with each one rooted in

## THE GLOBAL COVID-19 ADVOCACY FRAMEWORK

From the start of UNICEF's response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, strategic and integrated advocacy formed a core part of the emergency response and was recognized as essential for delivering programme aims. A global response, particularly in a PHEIC, calls for strong and clear messaging. Mechanisms to ensure that UNICEF talks with one advocacy voice during the pandemic have been tested at the largest scale and so could be replicated for other emergency responses in single or multiple countries.

During the COVID-19 response, a small group driven by the Division of Communication, Public Partnership Division and EMOPS were tasked with designing a Global COVID-19 Advocacy Framework. Delegating responsibility to a small group at the outset allowed for a clear, rapid process and enabled quick consultation at a senior level (with ROs, Supply Division, DAPM, Office of Global Insight and Policy, PPD, PFP, Office of Research and other divisions), which prompted cross-organizational buy-in. This process established a clear, future-facing framework that articulated integrated advocacy, and programme and communication priorities rooted where children's needs were the greatest. This formed the basis for all UNICEF advocacy work on COVID-19.

Immediately afterwards, UNICEF established a cross-divisional Advocacy Working Group to drive implementation. This group sits within the COVID-19 Secretariat and is responsible for delivering a global advocacy strategy, coordinating cross-organizational advocacy and supporting effective country-level advocacy. Establishing a cross-divisional group with delegated responsibility from EMOPS enabled clear, coordinated and collaborative decision-making that ensured UNICEF's advocacy could be backed up with action.

One of the working group's first activities was to publish an Agenda for Action, a public articulation of the framework with clear advocacy asks for decision-makers. This set a clear direction for UNICEF's global and national advocacy and communications, immediately amplifying UNICEF's voice, credibility and impact (this agenda was adopted by 172 UN Member States through a resolution). It also held the organization accountable to a single advocacy-driven communication agenda.

Developing a clear strategy and plan, based on a robust theory of change and analysis of UNICEF's strengths and where needs were greatest, delivered tangible impact. Ensuring that this work was supported by specific resources was also important – key individuals' time was repurposed to work on the advocacy agenda, leading to successful implementation of its priorities and plan.

Although it is too early to evaluate its full success, it is clear that considerable gains have been made in this area. The COVID-19 response evaluation must highlight lessons from this approach so that UNICEF can build on them in other contexts.

clear and defined aims. Defining its advocacy aims separately will allow UNICEF to be braver and have a stronger voice for children, particularly in CHTEs where most of its humanitarian action takes place. It will also help UNICEF to use its access to the Security Council in a more strategic way, employing evidence-based advocacy, particularly in relation to children's rights in CHTEs. (67, 68)

New humanitarian 'hotspots' are evolving quickly, requiring UNICEF to take a proactive approach through early advocacy. Such early advocacy is important in upholding the rights of children affected by crises, speaking out on their behalf and ensuring that funding can be redirected to respond to their needs. Having a clear advocacy vision and strategy will enable UNICEF to be more proactive and swifter in its advocacy efforts.

### 5.2.3 Improving accountability through an advocacy governance structure

UNICEF could be more strategic and coherent in its advocacy to uphold the rights of children during complex emergencies. Advocacy efforts are reactive rather than proactive, and out of necessity are responsive to specific requests to meet urgent needs or opportunities, rather than proactive and congruent with the organization's overall strategic objective to advocate for children rights and protection, which in humanitarian crises caused by conflict are at greater risk of being violated. Reporting on these requests and UNICEF's responses is not always as strong as it could be. Although important, these generic requests and the way in which they are handled individually dilutes the effectiveness of advocacy, particularly in complex settings where more targeted and sustained campaigns could have much more impact for both UNICEF and for children. (45, 160)

More coordinated and cohesive advocacy requires a clear advocacy governance structure, particularly for the sensitive issues that often arise in complex settings. UNICEF needs a strong humanitarian advocacy unit that can guide different levels in the organization on the agreed advocacy vision and core messaging and direction, and support close coordination between COs, ROs, EMOPS, Division of Communication and the Office of the Executive Director (OED). Thinking and planning cohesively will ensure high-quality, equitable advocacy. (45, 160)

As well as structural change in this area, UNICEF needs to strengthen its technical advocacy capacity in order to collate advocacy intelligence, plan campaigns and implement strategic private and public advocacy responses to the expected standard. To achieve good-quality advocacy work



and strategic thinking, UNICEF should invest in skilled advocacy staff at least at the regional level, while some larger, complex crises will require country-level advocacy staff. This gap could be addressed by ERT support specifically for advocacy. Building country representatives' advocacy skills during induction, while introducing their key accountabilities to undertake strategic advocacy, will also enhance the quality and capacity of UNICEF advocacy at field level. (107)

#### 5.2.4 Recommendations to ensure more effective advocacy

*Desired end state: UNICEF's humanitarian action advocacy is strong and coherent.*

1. **Ensure** that the 'top 20' humanitarian crisis countries have detailed, integrated advocacy strategies.
2. **Establish** an internal review of current advocacy governance structures, with the aim of developing a new, integrated structure with clear accountabilities at all levels.
3. **Increase** advocacy capacity at HQ, all ROs and specific COs, reinforcing the capacity for specialist advocacy on sensitive issues.

### 5.3 LINKING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

*UNICEF should be the voice of the nexus. (70)*

UNICEF has launched several initiatives in recent years to strengthen links between its humanitarian and development programming, such as the New Way of Working, Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, and Refugees and Resilience. Now the focus needs to be on translating policy into practice, through a coherent and systematic programming approach.

The demand for humanitarian assistance is increasing and the number of protracted crises is growing. With large public health crises, such as Ebola and the current COVID-19 crisis, the long-term socioeconomic impacts for children will be dire in many countries. It is more important than ever to ensure effective links between UNICEF's humanitarian and development programming and to ensure that humanitarian actors step into situations where development actors cannot.

As both a humanitarian and a development agency, UNICEF is well placed to respond to both sets of needs and should be able to capitalize on the complementarity of its dual mandate. UNICEF needs to be able to use its sustained presence before, during and after an emergency to ensure that its humanitarian and development work can be mutually supportive. (13, 70). However, in order to do so effectively and appropriately it will be important for UNICEF to have clear policy on how and when to link its humanitarian and development activity in order to safeguard the principles of humanitarian action. This is particularly important in complex environments where the government is party to a conflict.

At all levels, UNICEF needs to move forward in achieving integrated planning, monitoring and reporting of humanitarian and development programmes. As referenced in the Evaluation Office's landscaping exercise, responsibility for achieving this link should be shared between UNICEF's humanitarian and development programmatic areas to put the humanitarian–development nexus into practice.<sup>64</sup>

#### 5.3.1 The procedure to inform UNICEF's approach to LHD programming

In May 2019, UNICEF issued new procedures to institutionalize linked humanitarian and development (LHD) programming. Some 50 COs were selected to apply these procedures for risk-informed programming in both emergency preparedness plans and regular country programmes before the end of the year. Some individual COs managed the transition very well, but UNICEF has more to do to fully embed this at the corporate level. While having policy guidelines on LHD programming is a step towards improving the links between humanitarian and development work, there is a need for more guidance on its implementation in COs and on systematically integrating LHD activities in country programme documents (CPDs) and HRPs in order to iron out variations in COs' interpretation of the guidance on LHD programming and to ensure consistent accountability across the organization. (104, 110).

Recognizing that the procedure is still relatively new, and its institutionalization across the organization is a challenge, CO colleagues have made suggestions on how to achieve this. They cited increasing knowledge management

64 Featherstone, Andy, Tasneem Mowjee, David Fleming, Katie Tong, Clemens Gros, Leonora Evans-Gutierrez, assisted by Abhijit Bhattacharjee, Kate Hale and Richard Burge, *The Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies*, UNICEF, New York, 2018, <[www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index\\_103536.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103536.html)>.

and the sharing of good practice as areas in which the Climate, Environment, Resilience and Peacebuilding (CERP) unit could invest to provide practical support for systemizing LHD programming. While institutionalization is important, contextualization of the procedure at CO level will also be significant in ensuring its overall effectiveness.

In addition, interviewees suggested increasing the visibility of the CERP unit in the global Programme Division, as well as its capacity at HQ through the presence of surge staff to support UNICEF-wide implementation of the procedure and ensure good-quality programming.

Investing in regional capacity could also enable UNICEF to consider humanitarian and development work in a more consistent and objective way, identifying opportunities to link both country- and regional-level responses. The Sahel is a good example of a context where such an opportunity could be taken. (48, 134, 122, 58, 138, 104, 107, 110, 139, 144)

### 5.3.2 Enhancing staff capacity to support LHD programming

To date, initiatives surrounding LHD programming have largely been driven by personalities. Coupled with insufficient documentation on lessons

## LEVERAGING NATIONAL COMMITTEES FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN HIGH-INCOME COUNTRIES

UNICEF will need to be prepared to implement LHD programming in all types of emergency as well as in all country classifications. As mentioned in Part 2, humanitarian emergencies outside the traditional low-income country settings are becoming more frequent. In HICs in particular, there is considerable opportunity to use existing capacity and link humanitarian programmes to ongoing development work. The National Committees provide a useful resource. Some examples of how strengthening this relationship can support improved preparedness and response to emergencies in HICs are outlined below.

### Strengthening capacity for preparedness for sudden-onset emergencies

**response in HICs:** PFP and EMOPS led a reflection process on the lessons learned from five case studies of emergency responses in HICs (Japan, USA, Caribbean territories of Netherlands and the refugee and migrant responses in Europe) where UNICEF and the National Committees responded. From this reflection, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were developed to guide UNICEF and the National Committees in working together to respond to sudden-onset emergencies where a National Committee was present. The SOPs reinforce the importance of putting in place preparedness measures jointly implemented by UNICEF and the National Committee as a prerequisite for a more predictable response. These SOPs are currently being tested in the Caribbean with the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office and several National Committees as part of regional emergency preparedness plans. A dedicated ERT member, funded by the National Committees, is also being placed in EMOPS and will work with the National Committees to ensure that preparedness measures are taken in a systematic and structured way in other HICs that face elevated risk.

### Global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic require a global response

**by UNICEF:** The pandemic has had a universal impact, affecting children worldwide, including children in HICs. All HICs with a UNICEF office, such as Croatia, Oman, Gulf Area and Uruguay, were requested by the relevant governments to contribute immediately, reinforcing the need for UNICEF to have preparedness measures in place in these contexts. All the National Committees have responded to the crisis and have adapted and scaled up their advocacy programming in their countries. For example, they have moved swiftly to advocate with governments for greater measures to protect the most vulnerable children, and to use innovative channels to share and disseminate information to parents and communities, and to advocate for child-protection systems to meet the need for increased child protection during lockdown.

learned and a lack of overall institutionalization, this has meant that LHD programming has often suffered when a new management team arrived at a CO. Continuity of LHD programmes is strongly dependent on available funding – once the funding dries up, so does the initiative. CO leadership (through the representative, deputies and section chiefs) is instrumental in ensuring that LHD can be supported strategically through programmes and funding. When divisions between humanitarian and development occur at CO level, it is often because the leadership is not comfortable with one aspect of LHD.

To address this, UNICEF should no longer separate staff into ‘development’ and ‘humanitarian’ professionals, but work to institutionalize a dual capacity in each staff member, particularly leaders. The organization needs to invest in exposing staff to both humanitarian and development operations before they assume leadership roles to ensure that the senior levels in a CO can guide LHD in an informed and experienced way. The same applies to UNICEF’s implementing partners – the organization should invest in increasing awareness and practical understanding among its partners on the ground of what it means to implement LHD programming under UNICEF. (107, 148)

### **5.3.3 Harmonizing humanitarian and development planning, results and reporting**

*Data is key to understanding the nexus and monitoring it. (99)*

Many interviewees described the challenges they face in recognizing and acting on the cross-cutting themes that exist across the twin mandates of humanitarian and development work. It takes time for systems to move from a development to an emergency mindset, and vice versa. There is a need for greater investment in preparedness, early warning analysis and existing in-country networks to improve the timeliness of humanitarian action when emergencies arrive. By the same token, emergency response scale-downs do not always optimize the developmental gains made from emergency responses, such as access to new areas of a country, the identification of long-term needs and the continuation of a programming modality into long-term development work. (123, 149)

Defining shared outcomes between the HRP and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework is a step in the right direction, but will not be enough on its own. UNICEF currently plans its humanitarian

and development programming separately. Its humanitarian programming follows the HRP timeframe, aligning HAC appeal outcomes with HRP commitments with annual updates, or as emergency needs change significantly. By contrast, development programming is included in the CPD and spans a multi-year planning period, with content negotiated and agreed with governments. UNICEF needs to align these systems to an extent that enables a more practical approach to planning LHD programming. It may be possible to have a single humanitarian and development results framework with a joint monitoring plan. Developing such a planning framework would significantly assist COs in planning and monitoring LHD programming more effectively. (159)

Developing a joint planning and monitoring framework that enables COs to plan humanitarian action and development work simultaneously would also benefit UNICEF’s financial reporting and fundraising, as suggested in 5.1.3 above. A joint matrix could help to define the nature of each activity planned at CO level as humanitarian, development or LHD programming, and help to clarify how to tag financial transactions and improve financial reporting. This would provide better information on UNICEF’s action as a dual mandate agency, providing more accurate data for use in fundraising with donors, which is often a challenge for LHD activities.

Furthermore, a joint matrix would enable greater accountability. A joint matrix could enable clear, measurable reporting on all aspects of UNICEF’s mandate, with accountability more equally shared between humanitarian and development workstreams and collective action to achieve jointly agreed results. (84, 85, 64, 58)

### **5.3.4 Implementing linking humanitarian and development continuum in context-specific ways**

*UNICEF should not be linking for the sake of linking. (12)*

Despite all the benefits of LHD activity, EAG members heavily questioned the need for, and appropriateness of, linking humanitarian and development programming in every setting. EAG members warned against “linking for the sake of linking”, advising that flexibility and adaptability are needed when making decisions on linking both elements of UNICEF’s dual mandate. Areas targeted for implementation of LHD should be carefully analysed to ensure that the approach is contextually appropriate. (12, 13)

## MAKING DEVELOPMENTAL GAINS FROM HUMANITARIAN ACTION: COLLABORATING WITH THE ONALAB

UNICEF's work with the Onalab digital platform is a good example of how humanitarian action can provide space for post-emergency developmental gains, and how managing humanitarian and development programming in a joined-up way can help UNICEF to fulfil its dual mandate more successfully.

### Pre-famine response, Somalia, 2017

Early in the pre-famine response, UNICEF's cluster coordinator noted a gap in nutrition facility data as a barrier to providing an informed response. A subsequent countrywide data-gathering exercise used SMS reporting by facility staff equipped with rapid pro-technology geotagged nutrition facilities and systematic reporting on service availability, supplies and staffing at each facility. These data sets and data points were overlaid on a map using the Onalab digital platform to identify response gaps, enabling the nutrition cluster to improve targeting of the humanitarian response.

This extensive data from humanitarian action was then used for long-term developmental good. Population density data was overlaid with nutrition facility data on maps, enabling UNICEF to see where long-term health-care needs were likely to arise. UNICEF then rationalized its health-care partners to ensure that funding was directed to those working in areas requiring long-term strengthening of health-care systems. This work contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 3 by improving access to health-care systems, as well as increasing preparedness for the following drought cycle and associated food shortages and nutrition challenges in Somalia.

### Cyclone Idai response, Mozambique, 2019

At the outset of the Cyclone Idai response, UNICEF worked with partners and government in gathering data on the ground on the situation and impact of the cyclone. Following the Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment in the first weeks following the disaster, UNICEF worked with Onalab to visualize the assessment findings. After this process, CO and RO colleagues worked together to input the UNICEF and partner response on the Onalab platform. This included data such as OCHA 5W cluster data. This improved coordination and targeting across the cluster – an example of the 'one UN' philosophy in action.

UNICEF then used its continued presence before, during and after the disaster to help the Government of Mozambique strengthen its long-term data management systems relating to service availability and emergency preparedness. In addition to humanitarian data, UNICEF, via Onalab, overlaid critical facility and service delivery data to help identify long-term development gaps that need to be addressed.

These examples demonstrate that LHD activity promotes a strong culture of data use at all levels, supporting informed decision-making and equitable programming. Building information management capacity in national and sub-national government offices and creating an interface with existing MIS also enhances preparedness and promotes sustainability.

Principled humanitarian action and a clear policy on how and when to link humanitarian and development activity are both important. According to Hugo Slim, Director of Policy at ICRC from 2015–2020, this is one of the missing links in successfully implementing the triple

nexus (humanitarian, development, and peace and security). Like many UNICEF field staff working in complex environments, he observed that in some cases it may be inappropriate or impossible to implement LHD programming.<sup>65</sup> This should be understood as part of UNICEF's

65 Slim, H., 'Nexus thinking on humanitarian policy: How does everything fit together on the ground?' Keynote Address by Dr Hugo Slim to the World Food Programme (WFP) Annual Partnership Consultations. International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, 2017, <[www.icrc.org/en/document/nexus-thinking-humanitarian-policy-how-does-everything-fit-together-ground](http://www.icrc.org/en/document/nexus-thinking-humanitarian-policy-how-does-everything-fit-together-ground)>.

LHD policy. Where UNICEF deems it appropriate to engage in LHD programming in CHTEs, it will need clear red lines, especially in situations where the government is party to a conflict and principled humanitarian action is compromised. The development of a clear policy for such scenarios is necessary to ensure that UNICEF's behaviour in CHTEs is reliable and upholds humanitarian principles.

*Linking humanitarian and development [work] is very context specific. For example, the response in Syria will be very different from South Sudan, but nonetheless the capacity on the ground needs to be adequate to understand the situation in its entirety. (13)*

More than 60 per cent of UNICEF's humanitarian action is based in complex environments that

involve conflict or considerable socioeconomic and political challenges.<sup>66</sup> UNICEF has not yet invested significantly in the third aspect of the triple nexus, peace and security. People who have attempted to implement triple-nexus programming in UNICEF's country programmes noted that peacebuilding elements and conflict dynamics need to have a stronger presence in UNICEF's LHD programming. At present, this is far from systematic. UNICEF has high expectations of conflict-sensitive analysis, and now needs to develop the technical skills internally to support this, particularly at RO and CO levels. In several contexts, governments use the peace pillar to push a security and/or counter-terrorism agenda, to the detriment of child rights and an equity approach. Getting the right people in the right place with the right skills and stronger knowledge management is essential to ensure good-quality LHD programming and an appropriate balance between potentially conflicting priorities. (48, 138, 122, 131)

## USING EMERGENCY CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMMING TO IMPROVE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

During the 2019 drought response in Zambia, UNICEF was asked to set up an emergency cash transfer (ECT) programme to support communities affected by the drought and subsequent food insecurity. UNICEF established the emergency response with longer-term development goals in mind to strengthen Zambia's social protection system to become more responsive to future disasters so that future ECT interventions would eventually not be necessary.

Zambia already had a national social protection system, but its payment system was not functioning, and an economic downturn meant that entitlements had not been paid for two years. UNICEF used existing registration data from the national social protection system to target beneficiaries. It set up a more secure and reliable system to enable 97,000 households registered in drought-affected districts to receive emergency cash support.

This investment and collaboration between UNICEF and the Government of Zambia have helped to improve the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response. The government has expanded beneficiary registration to include an extra 53,000 households, so 150,000 households could receive support through UNICEF's new payment system.

Using the national registration system to register ECT beneficiaries builds the national database. If a database of vulnerable households already exists, the Government will be better prepared to respond to future disasters in a timely way. In addition, as UNICEF's secure payment system was built around the existing national system, it could eventually be transferred back to the Government. Both actions support the resilience of Zambia's national social protection system to ensure it can handle the increases in beneficiaries and entitlement values that may be required in response to future shocks and stresses, without increased risk.<sup>67</sup>

66 As per data discussed in Part 2 of this report.

67 UNICEF DFAM (2019) *Surge Support for UNICEF Zambia Emergency Cash Transfer Programme*. Mission report.

In order to mainstream LHD thinking, UNICEF needs:

- a clearly articulated strategy and operational framework
- a reinforced capacity for the third aspect of the triple nexus (conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding programming), particularly at the regional level
- a refined, analytical rethinking of its LHD programming from a capacity perspective, including that of partners.

### **5.3.5 Recommendations for more consistent links between humanitarian, development and peace programming**

*Desired end state: UNICEF fulfils its dual mandate by more effectively linking its humanitarian and development work.*

1. **Develop** a joint results framework for Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)/ Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) and Country Programme Document (CPD) results in all HRP/HAC countries.
2. **Increase** organization-wide capacity for 'triple-nexus' programming, for example by establishing LHD ERT(s).

In addition to these recommendations, the outcomes of the following activities should guide improvements in the LHD approach: the Evaluation Office's *Formative Evaluation of UNICEF's Implementation of the Humanitarian–Development Nexus*; similar exercises in the ROs of South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa; and the *Quality Review of Linkages between Humanitarian and Development (LHD) programming in the top 10 ongoing UNICEF Humanitarian Responses*.

## PART 6

# Accountability

UNICEF needs to look at how it implements programmes on the ground. Its systems and process should enable UNICEF to implement programmes in an optimal way to ensure predictability, equity and quality. Interviewees identified key areas for improvement in this area – specifically risk management, humanitarian access, localization, accountability to affected populations (AAP), partnerships, and contextual analysis, data collection and monitoring.

COs undertaking humanitarian programming, particularly those in CHTEs, need support to balance risk and compliance. Developing a risk-appetite statement, based on different emergency types, will be crucial in achieving this. UNICEF also needs to analyse how it can best manage risks in the funding and relationships it shares with implementing partners, ensuring that it pays due attention to its duty of care. Furthermore, UNICEF's preparedness and planning mechanisms that assess risk are not fit for purpose and require investment to ensure agile humanitarian responses that are proactive.

To ensure it can be held accountable against its commitment to equity, UNICEF needs to improve its risk appetite in terms of humanitarian access. It is important to ensure that staff understand how central access is to equity, and how to approach access in the field to ensure that every child can be reached. Many interviewees noted that UNICEF needs a culture change to improve humanitarian access and engage with the new Humanitarian Access Framework (HAF). Building consensus and a knowledgeable approach to humanitarian access within UNICEF, and consolidating its position on access issues, will enable the organization to contribute more effectively to the wider access agenda and support greater inter-agency collaboration.

Investing in the localization of humanitarian responses will be important to improve the quality of UNICEF's contextually appropriate programming. The COVID-19 response has shown that many local organizations can take on greater roles and are often best placed to act in challenging humanitarian environments. As localization becomes a greater focus for UNICEF, the

organization should engage with affected populations to improve its accountability. To do this, it needs to improve its feedback mechanisms to ensure that affected populations have a meaningful influence on programme planning. Increased cooperation with international actors will also support humanitarian action that is predictable and of good quality. Research participants suggested extending the blueprint for action beyond WFP and UNHCR to other UN agencies, in addition to engaging with coordination and cluster systems, to use UNICEF's influence more effectively within the humanitarian system.

Finally, to ensure that UNICEF's programmes are of good quality and that beneficiary targeting is appropriate and equitable, UNICEF needs to conduct more contextual analysis. This will ensure that the organization has a nuanced understanding of each humanitarian context and will facilitate greater preparedness through situational monitoring. Improving the collection and management of data to inform programme planning and performance monitoring is essential in this respect. UNICEF should select appropriate data-collection and monitoring tools based on needs on the ground, in order to improve its programming and monitor its quality and equity. UNICEF needs to invest in its capacity to manage and analyse such data in meaningful ways.

## 6.1 RISK MANAGEMENT

Both UNICEF staff and partners cited different approaches to risk management between different COs as an issue that needs to be addressed. UNICEF's capacity to ensure consistent programming across its work globally is at times hampered by the need for a more formalized risk appetite within the organization as a whole, so that humanitarian responses do not rely on individuals, particularly where a change of leadership can precipitate a change in approach – in the case of hardship duty stations, this change in leadership can happen after only two years. If approaches are not standardized, or continuity is uneven, this can be problematic for targeted populations and partners, as well as CO staff. Some interviewees felt that administrative burdens added to the challenge of adapting to

adjustments in priorities. The dissemination of a more comprehensive and corporate risk appetite that supports consistent, measured risk-taking would do much to dispel these uncertainties.

The ongoing work to simplify UNICEF's procedures, driven by the Office of the Deputy Executive Director (Management), seeks to reduce transactional burdens on COs to make the organization more versatile and flexible in its humanitarian responses. However, more needs to be done to improve risk management within UNICEF, particularly in CHTEs. As one respondent remarked, "The issue of risk appetite is also complex and challenging in a voluntarily funded organization whose donors are not willing to take any financial risk. Donors transfer risk to us in places like Yemen and Somalia where they can't operate." (178) There is a need for an open dialogue with donors on risk management in high-risk settings.

Stronger risk management systems may impose additional analysis systems and restrictions, so UNICEF needs to ensure that any extra processes clearly add value to the risk management process. In addition, the EMOPS workstream that is updating and adapting the Emergency Procedures is exploring more efficient procedures for different emergency settings, as rolled out in the COVID-19 response. (131, 157)

### **6.1.1 A common approach to risk management**

UNICEF needs to support COs that undertake humanitarian programming, particularly in CHTEs, to have a healthy appetite for risk alongside compliance. This will help to ensure that the organization's humanitarian action is timely and predictable and reaches those most in need. Many representatives in CHTEs felt that UNICEF's current risk appetite is not sufficiently embedded across the organization, and its aim to reach every child in CHTEs not yet realized. To reach every child affected by the increasingly multifaceted crises in CHTE, UNICEF needs to recalibrate its approach to risk.

To support greater confidence in risk-taking and ensure that UNICEF can become a consistently reliable humanitarian operator, collaborator and partner in complex environments, it needs to invest in developing a comprehensive risk-appetite statement. Such a statement should provide parameters for the organization's humanitarian action across the different emergency types. It should also be bold enough to enable UNICEF and its partners to reach the most vulnerable populations while still implementing risk-mitigation measures to protect the organization. When

developing risk statements, it is important to calculate the risk of inaction in the most complex environments, where humanitarian needs are often at their highest. The programme criticality framework used to guide security risk management could inform the definition of risk appetites beyond security risks. (48, 70, 115)

Many interviewees felt that UNICEF's risk appetite largely depends on a representative's personality, skills and ability to manage risk. Varying from country to country, such a lack of organizationally defined risk management leaves the organization heavily risk-averse and exposed. This carries a large opportunity cost in terms of both potential programme achievement and benefiting the hardest-to-reach children. It also places considerable pressure on individual representatives and leaves them personally exposed.

Representatives serving in CHTEs stated their need for greater, more proactive support from UNICEF for their management of risk. It is important to diversify risk-management mechanisms beyond individual accountability. In high-risk environments, the RO and HQ should have joint risk acceptance with the CO, creating a shared understanding of, and responsibility for, taking appropriate risks within UNICEF. This is particularly important in CHTEs where humanitarian needs are high, and the organization has a lot at stake. Sharing the burden of risk management in this way will enable UNICEF to go further in its humanitarian action and create a shared sense of ownership across decentralized management levels, which could also support greater coherence in other aspects of its humanitarian action. (41, 48, 129, 138, 157)

In environments with a considerable political risk, UNICEF needs an organization-wide strategy, based on continual risk analysis, which is executed cohesively at different levels of the organization. At a minimum, UNICEF needs a common approach to risk management among its top 20 high-risk emergency countries. This could also be linked to the different emergency types in which UNICEF works.

In some cases, staff at senior levels, for example in ROs and HQ, are better placed to deal with governments that are reluctant to support appropriate humanitarian responses or to communicate externally in sensitive areas. Where COs are tasked with assessing and managing risk, they need the expertise and support of senior staff such as these, possibly through a formalized risk compact that agrees roles and responsibilities as part of the L2/L3



memorandum.<sup>68</sup> The review team also noted a gap in specific ERT personnel to support COs in setting up risk-management mechanisms for large-scale emergencies in high-risk countries. Addressing this could have a significant impact in helping UNICEF to deliver improved risk management consistently.

### 6.1.2 Partnerships and risk

In fragile humanitarian settings, fiduciary risk (for example via fraud, diversion or corruption), the loss of donor funding and reputational risk become intense. UNICEF needs to prioritize the risk-appetite conversation in these complex settings, including with its donors to ensure that the accepted level of risk is clear and understood. When setting risk boundaries, UNICEF should remain driven by the needs of the affected populations and how best to deliver safe, consistently reliable programmes that are equitable and of good quality. (166)

In addition to rising to donor funding challenges, UNICEF needs to analyse how best it can manage risk in the funding of, and relationships with, its programme implementation partners. Finding an appropriate partner can be challenging in CHTEs: political and social instability, and changes in access, mean that the organization that is a strong partner today may not be the most appropriate partner tomorrow. Risks of reprisal in multi-faceted conflict settings can be high for both UNICEF and its partner(s), so partnership agreements need to be carefully monitored and measured for such risks.

UNICEF uses the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) framework to monitor financial risks in its partnerships. However, some interviewees suggested that this framework needs to be supplemented with other systems to monitor and manage important non-financial risks in partnerships in complex settings. UNICEF's current risk-management approach tends to be narrowly focused on financial risk. It is therefore risk adverse rather than risk informed, taking a box-ticking approach to risk management rather than a contextualized approach that weighs the potential gains from a partnership against the risk of loss of funds. (72)

### 6.1.3 Preparedness and risk analysis

The way UNICEF currently implements preparedness and planning mechanisms that

examine risk tends to be reactive rather than proactive. Staff interviewed for this review said it was not always possible to acquire real-time information on trends and risks from the EPP. More dynamic, real-time analysis is needed in countries where the context is volatile. This will require greater investment in more specialized risk analysis, perhaps by expanding partnerships with leading private sector organizations, such as thinktanks and research institutions. UNICEF already uses external data from the Index for Risk Management to contribute to risk analysis in horizon-scanning exercises. This approach could be expanded with organizations at regional levels for more granular analysis.

UNICEF also needs to improve internal investment in this area. Regional capacity in risk analysis could help to focus analysis and capture cross-regional and sectoral issues and trends, while providing the kind of real-time situational analysis needed for rapid, proactive responses, particularly in quickly changing CHTEs. (23)

Investing in staff to implement risk management is vital to increase UNICEF's preparedness for humanitarian action. Representatives and senior managers need to give weight to preparedness and risk-management activities. This is particularly important in countries that are largely development focused but that need to prepare for an emergency, or those that are facing a new and emerging emergency. Some countries have incorporated risk-informed programming in their CPD design, with the support of CERP colleagues from HQ. However, this support requires COs to be proactive in prioritizing risk management and preparedness.

### 6.1.4 Recommendations to improve UNICEF's risk management

*Desired end state: A comprehensive risk management system is in place that ensures effective risk identification, management and response planning, consistently integrating EPP, ERP and risk-informed programming across UNICEF operations.*

1. **Develop** a common and comprehensive risk-appetite statement for the whole organization, across the different crisis types.
2. **Develop** an organization-wide risk compact linked to risk types, which clearly defines

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68 UNICEF, *Venezuela Review Report*, UNICEF, New York, May 2020.

shared risk accountabilities with donors and partners.

3. **Define** the minimum risk-management structures for each crisis type.
4. **Increase** the systematic use of global and regional risk analysis capacities, including Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).
5. **Develop** training in risk management for operations staff to accompany the roll-out of the Emergency Procedures to increase staff capacity in this area.

## 6.2 HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

UNICEF evaluations and reports frequently point to impeded humanitarian access due to insecurity, or bureaucratic procedures and administrative restrictions imposed by host governments and Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs), as a major barrier to delivering humanitarian assistance. In many international conflicts, there has been an erosion of adherence to IHL in recent years. Lines are more frequently blurred between civilians and combatants, and humanitarians are increasingly pushed into engaging with NSAGs to advocate for the rights of crisis-affected populations and to be able to provide humanitarian aid to those in most need. In 2020, access has also been limited due to many governments' restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19.

When it comes to going the extra mile to reach those in need or to stay and deliver in difficult environments, UNICEF is not always consistent. How far UNICEF pushes the access agenda largely depends on individual CO leaders. The COVID-19 response has involved UNICEF taking different approaches to balancing its need to stay and deliver with its duty of care to staff and partners. Although specific contexts need to be considered, the organization needs to have clear overall guidance on its duty of care and support for field colleagues, with a particular focus on national staff. UNICEF also needs to consider its duty of care towards its implementing partners to ensure it does not just 'shift the risk' as partners have often reported. (72)

The revised CCCs include a core commitment on access, alongside five benchmarks that provide a foundation for a more predictable approach to access across different contexts. UNICEF needs to continue exploring how it values and approaches access as an organization to ensure it can continue to operate safely and reach the hardest-to-reach children who are most in need. (72)

### 6.2.1 Improving institutional risk appetite for access

Developing and rolling out UNICEF's Humanitarian Access Framework (HAF) will be crucial to address barriers that limit the organization's scope of action in the field, preventing it from reaching the hardest-to-reach children. Several interviewees suggested that the HAF should be finalized and rolled out as soon as possible, indicating its importance in CHTEs in particular. The framework needs to provide guidance on good practice to address practical challenges in the field. It needs to outline the boundaries of humanitarian action as defined by international law, humanitarian principles, core humanitarian standards and relevant policies. This needs to link with investments in defining UNICEF's risk appetite, as discussed above, clarify the boundaries of action for access and encompass contextual, organizational and programme or operational risks.

Many contributors noted that UNICEF needs a culture change in relation to humanitarian access. WFP was widely referenced as the UN agency to emulate in this respect. Many felt that WFP's culture prioritizes access, with staff who are 'willing to get out there'. In contrast, interviewees felt that UNICEF has challenges in this area. Some felt that support for humanitarian access from country-level senior managers was passive and that the HAF was undervalued, resulting in staff not pushing to get out into the field. Most interviewees felt that a CO's approach to access relies heavily on the attitude and approach of the country representative.

Currently, UNICEF leaders and staff in the field apply different approaches in different duty stations to deal with access challenges. When establishing an organizational position, UNICEF needs to consider how it can become more comfortable operating in CHTEs, so it remains able to ensure last-mile delivery in humanitarian aid, either through implementing partners or as the direct provider of last resort. UNICEF's organizational position on access should also consider how to remain predictable and principled despite the challenges of increasing funding conditionalities relating to humanitarian action in complex environments (see Part 5).

UNICEF must therefore invest in its representatives and its senior in-country leadership teams to ensure they perceive access as a key part of ensuring that the organization's humanitarian programming is predictable and equitable. UNICEF should consider obligating representatives and senior leaders, particularly those in CHTEs, to actively engage in humanitarian access through clear accountabilities in their terms of reference

and performance evaluation reviews. As complex, protracted crises become more common and UNICEF continues to invest the largest proportion of its humanitarian resources into CHTEs, the organization must invest in, and institutionalize, its approach to avoid access on the ground being driven by personalities. Humanitarian access should be a positive and consistent aspect of programming to enable UNICEF to reach the most vulnerable. (24, 26)

### **6.2.2 Developing a position on Non-State Armed Groups**

As the majority of UNICEF humanitarian action takes place in CHTEs, humanitarians are likely to need to engage with NSAGs more frequently, requiring UNICEF to establish a systemic, proactive and principled organizational approach to dealing with NSAGs, and to support leaders and staff in applying it consistently.

The Humanitarian Policy section's forthcoming guidance note on engaging with NSAGs, and other associated resources to facilitate a UNICEF-wide approach, will help to progress the organization's humanitarian access agenda. As these materials are finalized and rolled out, they should remain practical and focused on the field, with strong links to UNICEF's risk management approach to ensure the organization can deliver comprehensive and reliable responses in CHTEs. (8, 119)

### **6.2.3 Building leadership capacity in humanitarian access**

Within the UN system, some evaluations indicate that staff representing the UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) and the UN Security Management System have shown risk-averse behaviour and a tendency to perceive access challenges that are not actually present. Others point to situations where UNICEF's own staff have had little appetite for pushing the boundaries of access. One individual felt this was due to an overall lack of understanding of staff security by in-country management, and that the *perception* of danger rather than the *actual* danger prevents staff from moving into areas with challenging access.

UNICEF's presence, the presence of its partners, its breadth of programming and its popular mandate mean that UNICEF has multiple entry points with communities and actors through which to attain accurate information. UNICEF should be able to use this comparative advantage

to better support UNDSS in developing accurate situational analyses and in improving safety and security, which can result in improved access. (25, 26, 119)

While UNICEF's HAF acts as guidance, it will need to be used and applied correctly and consistently to achieve the desired results and outcomes. Representatives and senior leaders need to have the knowledge and capacity to use such frameworks well. UNICEF's in-country leaders, and those who advise on security and access, need to have a strong understanding of the organization's positions on risk and access. The organization's existing work to improve the capacity of its representatives and senior leaders in this area is important and should continue. It needs to consider making training mandatory before a representative takes on a role in a CHTE. Ideally, chiefs of Field Offices (FOs) could be empowered and educated to take on the role of access adviser in their respective duty stations. (23, 25, 26, 125)

### **6.2.4 Access through partnerships and programmes**

UNICEF needs to assess how it can use its existing community access, often gained through longer-term development programming, to broaden its humanitarian access. Long-running, widespread vaccination programmes (for example UNICEF's work on Polio) have given UNICEF and its partners a sustained presence and considerable community access in many contexts. UNICEF could use this more often as an entry point for additional humanitarian programming, using developmental gains to support the emergency response and achieve its dual mandate. In the current COVID-19 crisis, UNICEF must work through its local networks more than ever in order to reach the most vulnerable people. In many countries, local partners remain operational despite pandemic restrictions (although to varying degrees both between and within countries).<sup>69</sup> The COVID-19 response will clarify who is best placed to deliver humanitarian actions in public health emergencies, considering UNICEF partners' duty of care to their staff. (23, 141)

EAG members also noted that UNICEF needs to diversify its partnerships, expand its outreach and increase its localization efforts to ensure it can remain operational in situations where access is challenging. They particularly mentioned

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69 UNICEF (May 2020) Pulse survey findings.

ICRC and WFP as agencies that UNICEF should learn from in terms of approaching humanitarian access through partnerships. To strengthen its access, UNICEF could consider a more 'hands-on' approach with its partners, as WFP does, by sending access advisers into the field to support its partners in planning activities and troubleshooting. Creating a joint operational plan with its partners would enable UNICEF to better reach the most vulnerable and ensure quality and predictability in its programming. Internal and external interviewees alike suggested that UNICEF and other UN agencies should take a joint approach to training frontline and managerial staff in negotiating humanitarian access, covering its own staff and those of partner organizations. Such an approach would also support UNICEF's duty of care towards partner staff and facilitate increased localization (23, 117) (see also Section 2.3).

Humanitarian access should go hand-in-hand with programme criticality and business continuity planning. The initial COVID-19 response conducted 'light' business continuity planning exercises linked to programme criticality to determine staffing levels on the ground. This is an excellent practice. As part of the response, some COs negotiated 'essential service' status with national governments for UNICEF's operations, which allowed them to keep programmes going and staff moving despite pandemic restrictions. This should be balanced with a proper duty of care policy towards partner staff: the COVID-19 response has involved some positive steps towards this. In the DRC, for example, the UN set up a special health-care facility to treat its staff and those of its partners. Lessons learned from this response could easily be applied to other emergency operations to ensure a more coherent approach to UNICEF's duty of care towards its partners in humanitarian action.

### 6.2.5 Contributing to the wider access agenda

Some access constraints and inhibitors are external to UNICEF. The organization can try to address some of these issues alone, although a joint approach with other UN agencies and donors is often more effective. However, collective action can be challenging, particularly when a response involves parties to conflict. But even in the most sensitive situations, it is still possible to find a 'coalition of the willing' among different actors. By strengthening its own position internally, UNICEF will be able to set examples of good practice and contribute more effectively to, or even lead, collective work between action-oriented agencies. Operating as 'one UN' can be particularly beneficial when there is weak senior leadership at country

level within the UN system, which has failed or refused to engage with NSAGs. (136, 23, 105)

### 6.2.6 Widening the scope of humanitarian access

*It is wrong to believe that humanitarian principles are static – they are currently under threat. (3)*

In an increasingly multipolar world, gaining acceptance of humanitarian access is becoming a major challenge. Many EAG members discussed how humanitarian crises have become more diverse and globally spread. At the same time, political dynamics change, donor countries shift and key players in humanitarian access differ depending on the crisis at hand. They noted that UNICEF, like many other organizations, has experienced a legacy of Western influence, which is now changing along with shifting economic power. UNICEF as a whole needs to remain adaptable and able to engage with a range of different actors so it can sustain access in the most difficult humanitarian environments. It will need to widen its diplomatic reach in order to engage effectively and appropriately on behalf of children across the globe.(8)

It is more important than ever to separate humanitarian action from political agendas. The organization can achieve this by building a larger stakeholder community that is less likely to be perceived as representing certain interests, and connecting local organizations, important NSAGs and faith-based circles with stakeholders who do not have a role in international humanitarian assistance and have a lower media presence. (5, 6, 8) UNICEF's COVID-19 response presents an opportunity for improved access and coordination between the UN and national authorities, as well as between parties to conflict or political opposition groups.

### 6.2.7 Recommendations for improving humanitarian access

*Desired end state: UNICEF is equipped to effectively negotiate and maintain access for programme delivery in complex settings.*

1. **Define** clear 'red flags' at organizational and CO level that indicate when principled humanitarian action could become compromised and to trigger a structured response process.
2. **Prioritize** the roll-out of the Humanitarian Access Framework, including access

negotiation training and with a focus on increasing and monitoring humanitarian access as a core commitment in the revised CCCs.

3. **Consider** creating an ERT position on access to support COs in developing or updating their access strategies.
4. **Increase** internal access capacities at the appropriate levels and increase support to partner organizations by deploying UNICEF staff to support partners on access issues.
5. **Develop** a strategy for senior leaders to reach out beyond the traditional capitals to foster diplomatic relations for key crises.

### 6.3 LOCALIZATION

Many EAG members pointed out that real investment in localization and engagement with affected populations are key to good-quality humanitarian action, with one member stating, “It is important to see agencies invest more in local partners and to ensure consistency throughout its programming.” (20)

Ensuring good-quality, equitable and predictable humanitarian action requires a collective and systematic approach to building local capacity. This has been clear in the response to COVID-19, where local organizations have taken up more frontline work than ever and increased the breadth of their implementation in countries with access challenges. In places that UNICEF international staff cannot access, or where agencies have withdrawn staff to reduce international footprints, local partners have stayed and delivered.<sup>70</sup> This has forced UNICEF to localize more quickly and recognize the role of local partners. In the long term, localization is likely to include aspects of supply as well as programming. Building local partners’ capacity should remain a strong focus for UNICEF – it should maintain and build on the gains made in working with local partners.

#### 6.3.1 Improving UNICEF’s partnership approach

*Local actors should not just be implementers, they should be partners, but we are a long way from this. (11)*

Most NGOs view UNICEF as a grant manager or donor rather than a partner. UNICEF’s bureaucratic procedures often delay and complicate partnerships with local civil society organizations and national NGOs and give the relationship a contractual nature, leaving little space for discussions with local partners on programming approaches. In future, UNICEF needs to engage more consistently with the NGO community and involve itself in larger conversations with them on humanitarian action to ensure it remains focused on challenges on the ground. This could also extend to the way UNICEF manages its own clusters – in appropriate settings, it should explore co-leadership with local NGOs to support them in leadership roles. (14)

UNICEF’s preparedness and response plans tend to underestimate the need to invest in building the capacity of local partners, which may result in sub-standard performance. One interviewee stated, “Localization is not about an intervention; it is about strengthening local communities’ capacities.” (7) Investing in local capacity before needs arise will allow better-quality training and space for learning, leading to improved response quality. More localized responses will also improve timeliness. Furthermore, if all its partners are trained in the same way and to the same principles, a localized response could support the predictability of UNICEF’s humanitarian action, particularly in areas where access to international actors is constrained.

UNICEF COs should map local capacity, organizations and individuals as part of its standard pre-disaster preparedness activities, using platforms such as the inter-agency UN Partner Portal to create lists of potential partners and their strengths.<sup>71</sup> This could support faster deployment when needed and ensure that local capacity exists for the crisis types and sectors to which UNICEF expects to respond. Developing contingency programme documents (PDs) with approved local partners would also bolster preparedness and swift formation of partnerships. This has been undertaken in Somalia, where cyclical disasters occur.<sup>72</sup> In 2017, Somalia Water and Land Information Management analysis of river wall breakage points helped to determine future high-risk areas for flooding. UNICEF then

70 Schenkenberg van Mierop, E., *After COVID-19: Time to reset*, Here-Geneva, 22 March 2020, <<https://here-geneva.org/after-covid-19-time-to-reset/>>, accessed 12 September 2020.

71 See <[www.unpartnerportal.org/landing/](http://www.unpartnerportal.org/landing/)>

72 In Somalia, civil society organization selection matrixes and terms of reference for the UN Partner Portal (direct/open selection) and PD development were created to manage the development of contingency PCAs. Once the PD is developed and signed, the agreement can be activated within 12 hours of receiving the official request from UNICEF or the partner agency. Disbursement of funds to the partner organization can be done within the next 12 hours.

used district population figures to predict the scale of impact in those areas. In high-risk areas where it did not have an implementing partner, UNICEF identified new partners, and developed and signed contingency Project Cooperation Agreements (PCAs). When flooding occurred in 2019, these contingency PCAs were activated quickly, enabling UNICEF partners to respond rapidly and effectively. (1, 11)

UNICEF's current approaches to localized partnerships may pose challenges. Local civil society organizations and national NGOs are sometimes perceived as representing political and fiduciary risks, which can make UNICEF COs hesitant to engage with more local partners, particularly in complex settings. The organization needs to adjust its monitoring systems that govern partnerships to ensure that the operational challenges that local actors face are clearly understood and to ensure that partnership systems consider these challenges. Similarly, UNICEF's work on risk management should ensure that risk boundaries for working with local partners are defined based on knowledge of the complexities that come with working with local actors, understanding that local actors will need a different approach from international partners. At the same time, "UNICEF should acknowledge also the risks involved in engaging weak local partners without assurance of programme quality, fiduciary standards and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse." (173)

Local actors also often face their own risks in implementing UNICEF policies. UNICEF should make identifying risks to local partners common practice and identify how it can collaborate with partners to lower those risks. For example, UNICEF often relies on local partners to access hard-to-reach areas. In some cases, UNICEF's support for a local partner in access negotiations may ease the risk to the local partner if other negotiating parties know they are there on behalf of UNICEF. Overall, UNICEF needs to change its perception of local partnerships to see them as opportunities to deliver assistance through organizations and structures close to those in need. Ultimately, this is likely to result in more appropriate, contextualized assistance that better addresses the needs of crisis-affected people. (1, 11)

### **6.3.2 Localization efforts should be context-specific**

Forming greater links with local networks and using existing local consortia and networks have been recommended as a way to help UNICEF focus its localization efforts. However, as with linking humanitarian and development programming, interviewees also noted limitations to localization due to political sensitivities and access limits, and there may be scenarios where localization is more challenging. UNICEF needs a better analysis of where and when localization is appropriate, and better recognition of the fact that different disaster types call for different levels of localization and different ways to engage with host governments. This is as true in places where the government is party to a conflict and localization may come with significant risk, as it is in natural disaster responses where the host government has a high capacity to respond and UNICEF should follow its lead. (1, 107)

This review is supported by the findings of the July 2019 working paper, *A Review of UNICEF's Approach to Localization in Humanitarian Action*.<sup>73</sup> Improving how UNICEF partners with and views local actors, and contextualizing localization, were the main findings to come out of the review and are areas that UNICEF should prioritize. The review goes further into the different facets of localization and should be used to develop a comprehensive localization framework or strategy to improve both the quality and predictability of UNICEF's work through its partners.

Lessons learned from the COVID-19 response should heavily influence any localization strategy. It should be used as an exemplary response that can highlight both examples of good practice and areas for improvement. Given that COVID-19 is a global crisis, it will enable UNICEF to assess localization across its different operating environments and ensure that any framework considers the challenges faced in different types of crisis.

### **6.3.3 Recommendations for improved localization**

*Desired end state: UNICEF is meaningfully engaged with a greater number of local organizations in its humanitarian preparedness and response actions.*

1. **Develop** a localization strategy that considers the different crisis types and the roles of the

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73 UNICEF, *A Review of UNICEF's Approach to Localization in Humanitarian Action*, UNICEF, New York, 2019, <<https://media.ifrc.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2019/11/UNICEF-Oct-2019-Working-Paper-on-localization-.pdf>>, accessed 12 September 2020.

different levels in order to address consistent engagement with local actors.

2. **Develop** in-country lists of local organizations and their capacity, making it mandatory to develop contingency Programme Documents (PD) with local partners in CHTEs.
3. **Include** technical and institutional capacity-strengthening for local partners in emergency preparedness action, and reach out to the local private sector to widen procurement and ensure continuity of supplies.
4. **Play** a lead role in defining a localization agenda that puts anti-racism and anti-discrimination at its centre.

## 6.4 ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

AAP is a key component in ensuring the quality of UNICEF's programming. According to the revised CCCs, UNICEF aims to, through its AAP work:

*Ensure that all vulnerable, at-risk and crisis-affected populations supported through its humanitarian action are able to hold UNICEF to account for promoting and protecting their rights and generating effective results for them, taking into account their needs, concerns and preferences, and working in ways that enhance their dignity, capacities and resilience.<sup>74</sup>*

Nowhere is this more important than in public health emergency responses, especially when there is mistrust in a government institution. In UNICEF's Ebola response in the DRC and in its ongoing COVID-19 response, ensuring that affected populations have access to information that is consistent and reliable, and have a say in the programming that is set up for them is of utmost importance in saving lives. (94)

AAP should be at the core of UNICEF's work. To truly reflect its rights-based roots, UNICEF needs to make significant investments in this area. The road map for scaling up AAP, approved by RO and HQ directors in May 2018, sets a clear direction for systematically integrating AAP into UNICEF's programmes. (31)

The 2019 AAP strategic monitoring questionnaire (SMQ) analysis conducted by EMOPS shows that in 2018–2019, UNICEF made some good

improvements in AAP, with an overall global increase in its implementation across all measured components (information-sharing, participation, feedback mechanisms and the development of a clear strategy). UNICEF's information-sharing in countries responding to humanitarian situations was strong, with 70 per cent (47 countries) having made significant efforts in this area. Other areas of AAP need more work. Only 50 per cent of countries (34) reported having systems to ensure participation, and 41 per cent of countries (28) reported a strategy or approach in place to ensure coordination. In terms of established feedback mechanisms that can inform programme decision-making, only 38 per cent of countries (26) indicated significant efforts.<sup>75</sup>

While progress is being made, as less than half of UNICEF's COs manage to achieve more than 50 per cent of the organization's AAP goals, more needs to be done to ensure quality and predictability in the organization's accountability structures. The prominent inclusion of AAP in the revised CCCs should ensure that accountability remains high on the agenda. However, it will need to be incorporated in standard planning and partnership processes to ensure that communities participate in programme design and that their feedback is used to improve programming quality and equity.<sup>76</sup>

### 6.4.1 UNICEF and its partners have no systematic approach to AAP

The beneficiaries of humanitarian programmes do not yet have sufficient influence over how aid is prioritized and delivered. There is a risk that an imbalance of power between providers and recipients of humanitarian aid could be a precursor to potential abuse and exploitation. To mitigate such risks, UNICEF needs to prioritize engagement with affected populations and improve its feedback systems, so that beneficiaries are empowered to participate from a programme's inception.

Interviewees recommended including AAP in the planning phase of humanitarian interventions, allocating budget towards achieving AAP goals, and ensuring it is part of the M&E framework. Work has already begun to ensure that all planning, monitoring and reporting processes include an AAP component so that it becomes intrinsic to UNICEF's work. Training

74 <<https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/>>

75 AAP SMQ analysis 2019.

76 AAP SMQ analysis 2019.

on AAP has also begun in some regions and an AAP handbook is being field tested in 2020. These efforts should help UNICEF to institutionalize the commitments it has made towards AAP and provide clearer targets to guide achievement. Engagement and support from leaders at all levels must continue to support the mainstreaming of AAP in emergency programming. (99, 116, 125)

The way AAP responsibilities are structured within UNICEF, and how the different programmatic areas dealing with AAP mechanisms interrelate and connect, will determine the effectiveness of UNICEF's accountability. A lack of clarity on responsibilities and accountabilities within the organization on this topic diminishes the strength of AAP messaging, which – as a cross-cutting topic – is already lacking the required level of attention in emergencies. Furthermore, some elements of accountability (such as feedback mechanisms, information-sharing and participation) are built into programmes. This is an important step for mainstreaming AAP, but UNICEF should ensure that these initiatives are connected to ensure that all AAP elements of programming work together to deliver improved accountability. (84)

UNICEF also needs to connect its AAP initiatives in humanitarian action to its development work. The organization can use its presence and AAP work before an emergency to ensure that its AAP interventions related to humanitarian action build on the strengths established by its development programming. The new AAP handbook must provide clarity on the various UNICEF sections that communicate with communities and handle accountability to these communities, demonstrating how they contribute to AAP in a complementary way. (84)

*If affected populations are not involved from the onset of an emergency, your response will not be effective, and you might be providing aid the beneficiaries do not hope for. (15)*

The area of AAP where the greatest investment is needed is complaints and feedback mechanisms that allow affected communities to influence programming. In the benchmarking exercise<sup>77</sup>

to measure AAP programming against core humanitarian standards, this was the only area flagged as a major concern: "UNICEF's complaints handling mechanism for the affected population is not systematically documented and in place, and UNICEF's own complaints handling mechanism does not cover programming-related complaints." Where existing feedback mechanisms do cover programme-related complaints, there is seldom a system to ensure that feedback is acted on. In failing to engage affected populations effectively, UNICEF risks implementing programming that is not well targeted, that is culturally inappropriate or that does not fully address the needs of the affected population. (107, 125, 181)

Investing in a standard global approach to feedback mechanisms could support consistency in complaints and feedback mechanisms, but a basic system will need to be adapted to specific contexts in order to be relevant and successful. In addition, complaints and feedback mechanisms should be developed in conjunction with improved AAP monitoring systems, as they form an important part of such monitoring. As well as having a positive impact on AAP programming, improving complaints and feedback mechanisms could also serve to support and uphold UNICEF's commitment to the wider PSEA agenda by ensuring there are appropriate reporting channels at all levels. (15, 106, 107)

In dedicating resources to improving its internal systems, UNICEF can also contribute to the wider humanitarian system efforts to improve AAP. Despite a consensus on prioritizing AAP, coherence between different actors and agencies is often missing at response level, with each actor setting up their own complaints and feedback mechanism. Different agencies working together in the same response should adopt a common AAP approach, including joint complaints mechanisms. UNICEF's new AAP section in Geneva is well placed to contribute significantly to collaborative action and intersectoral coordination, ensuring that children's needs are considered cross-sectorally. As the major contributing agency to the cluster system, UNICEF could strengthen global collective action across responses and guarantee that children's rights, and their ability to hold duty bearers to account, are centre stage. (84, 107)

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77 Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative, UNICEF Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) Benchmarking Report, 1 October 2019



## ENSURING ACCESS TO LIFE-SAVING INFORMATION: U REPORT

U Report is an enabling factor that can be used alongside other tools to ensure that responses are more people focused, by increasing response localization and improving agency AAP.<sup>78</sup> It is neither a one-size-fits-all tool nor will it address all AAP needs, but it enables dialogue with individuals in communities that UNICEF is trying to reach and can be a key step in building communities' trust and facilitating their participation.

U Report is an SMS-based tool that uses an open-source mobile platform. It can be used to collect data and share information. Volunteers in affected communities can register with the tool and use it free of charge to share the information they receive with their communities. The tool can be customized to fit specific contexts to reflect local needs and priorities, and can be easily translated into local languages to ensure information is accessible. This is important in ensuring relevant information-sharing and in encouraging participation – actions need to be meaningful for the end user, the affected population.

U Report began in a development setting in Uganda in 2011, but its extensive, rapid and real-time reach means that it works in emergency situations. In 2019, U-Report 24x7 was used in Nigeria to support activities including rapid needs assessments, complaints and feedback mechanisms, coordination among response partners and performance monitoring.

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, U Report developed an information chatbot that enabled communities to access life-saving information across multiple social media platforms. By 15 May 2020, over 5 million people across 50 countries had accessed this chatbot in multiple languages. It has enabled affected communities to participate in the pandemic response, by sharing reliable, localized information from experts that can be used to influence behaviour change such as increased handwashing. The tool's use can highlight information gaps, and individual users can report rumours to ensure that false information is corrected. Information from users can help agencies to influence response coordination, relief efforts and further information-sharing, improving the quality of the response.<sup>79</sup> (44, 62, 63, 175)

### 6.4.2 Recommendations for increasing accountability to affected populations

*Desired end state: AAP is systematically included in UNICEF's humanitarian action and actively contributes to its performance monitoring and to Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).*

1. **Make** an AAP strategy, that includes PSEA, mandatory for all humanitarian contexts. This should be done in consultation with communities and governments to promote an inter-agency coordinated framework in each country.
2. **Make** AAP (including PSEA) mandatory

in all M&E frameworks in countries with humanitarian programming.

## 6.5 COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

UNICEF, alongside other UN agencies (particularly WFP, UNHCR, IOM and WHO) and larger INGOs, is balancing competition for funds and space with the need to coordinate and collaborate on emergency response programmes. UNICEF needs to use effective collaboration with other international actors to ensure improved outcomes for crisis-affected children. Bilateral agreements and the cluster approach facilitate coordination between agencies, but some topics require further clarification to help UNICEF focus its

78 <[www.unicef.org/innovation/media/4171/file](http://www.unicef.org/innovation/media/4171/file)>, accessed 12 September 2020.

79 UNICEF U-report team, *U-Report – CoVID-19 outbreak response*, 20 June 2020, <[www.unicef.org/innovation/ureportCOVID19](http://www.unicef.org/innovation/ureportCOVID19)>, accessed 12 September 2020; UNICEF USA (2 April 2020) *UNICEF's U-Report Playing Key Role in Global COVID-19 Response*, 2 April 2020, <[www.unicefusa.org/stories/unicefs-u-report-playing-key-role-global-covid-19-response/37142](http://www.unicefusa.org/stories/unicefs-u-report-playing-key-role-global-covid-19-response/37142)>, accessed 12 September 2020.

responses and solidify its niche in a changing humanitarian environment.

### 6.5.1 Positioning UNICEF more effectively in its partnerships

UNICEF is well positioned to move away from a 'grant and grantee' approach to one where it works alongside partners in a complementary way throughout the project cycle. As one EAG member put it: "A cultural change is needed in that regard." This cultural change is needed across the organization, including in its PCA process, which partners say focuses too much on process and not enough on outcomes such as effective partnership work, the exchange of ideas and capitalizing on the mutual benefits of partnership. (95) A movement away from a focus on contracts and financial commitments would help to optimize UNICEF's partnership work and ensure that its systems are more flexible and agile, allowing a more timely response from all partners. (110, 129)

Additionally, INGOs need to be convinced that UNICEF is a beneficial partner that brings key expertise to the table. Simplifying the PCA process to make it more predictable, and less cumbersome for partners, would be a step in the right direction. This could be done by making contingency PCAs the norm as a measure of preparedness. This would reduce time spent on identifying key partners and partnership documentation in the first phase of an emergency. It would also make NGOs more aware of potential partnerships with UNICEF, enabling them to plan their funding streams. This level of predictability from UNICEF could help to reposition the organization as a partner of choice for NGOs. Investing in technical leadership capacity, such as the cluster system, and building the capacity of partners, will also ensure that UNICEF can contribute highly skilled technical teams to its partnerships and provide a clear added-value to partners. (114)

Making UNICEF's added-value as a partner clear is more important than ever with the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional donor countries have seen some of the highest caseloads with prolonged

economic shutdown, meaning that economic recession may trigger a reduction in non-COVID-19 funding opportunities.<sup>80</sup> As one recent evaluation of the COVID-19 response states, "With a global economic recession, even those whose income is less dependent on government funding may be forced to rethink their model and adapt their way of working. Disruption requires risk-taking. Those organizations that are prepared to look at their relevance and added-value have a better chance of being fit for the future."<sup>81</sup>

UNICEF needs to increase its predictability as a partner and standardize the quality of its partnerships. NGO partners have mentioned facing challenges in dealing with inconsistencies between different UNICEF COs. The decentralized nature of UNICEF's operations means the level of engagement with partners and the interpretation of partnership rules and guidelines can vary by country – what is considered a good partnership in one region may not be the same as that in another. UNICEF's partnership approach can also change within a country when CO management changes. This lack of consistency causes frustration among partner organizations and can further delay the already complicated PCA process and obstruct good-quality programming. It is also unclear to NGO partners where the entry point is at UNICEF HQ.<sup>82</sup>

Recognizing that partners tend to manage partnerships in a more centralized way, other UN agencies such as UNHCR have assigned a single focal point at HQ level for their partners, which helps to provide clarity and consistency. Although UNICEF's decentralized nature may not lend itself to this approach, the organization needs to look at how to address the lack of consistency in its approach to partners. Having a partnership focal point for its international partners could provide some oversight on issues that go beyond a single CO. This would make UNICEF more accessible to its partners and support improved accountability.<sup>83</sup>

In humanitarian environments with short-term funding streams, it can be challenging to provide long-term commitments to partners. Donors have made efforts to increase the amount

80 Reis, C., '5 ways the coronavirus is making the world's vulnerable a lot more vulnerable', *The Washington Post*, 18 May 2020, <[www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/05/18/5-ways-coronavirus-is-making-worlds-most-vulnerable-lot-more-vulnerable/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/05/18/5-ways-coronavirus-is-making-worlds-most-vulnerable-lot-more-vulnerable/)> accessed 12 September 2020.

81 Schenkenberg van Mierop, E., *No crystal ball needed – evaluating the COVID-19 response*, 4 May 2020, HERE-Geneva, <<https://here-geneva.org/no-crystal-ball-needed-evaluating-the-covid-19-response/>>, accessed 12 September 2020.

82 UNICEF NGO ICVA workshop discussions 11–12 November 2019, <[www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/UNICEF%20NGO%20Consultation%20Report%20November%202019%200\\_0.pdf](https://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/UNICEF%20NGO%20Consultation%20Report%20November%202019%200_0.pdf)>, accessed 12 September 2020.

83 Ibid. p. 12.

of multi-year funding and have stressed the importance of UNICEF ensuring that this funding security is passed down to partners to improve the predictability of emergency responses. However, NGOs feel that UNICEF's partnership model focuses on the short term and that it has worked with few partners on a longer-term vision. UNICEF faces challenges in brokering long-term partnerships, particularly in CHTEs as a result of inflexible and short-term funding and risk-management processes. UNICEF needs to be as transparent as possible with its donors and partners on these challenges to foster more inclusive partnerships. It should also develop more flexible risk-management systems and partner performance monitoring systems to enable greater agility in its approach to partnerships. Tailoring partnership agreements to reflect what is needed from partners on the ground in each type of crisis will enable lighter procedures and a more flexible approach. The new Emergency Procedures could provide some guidelines on common requirements for partnerships in different types of emergency. (13, 87)

### **6.5.2 Extending the blueprint for action**

*If there was a clear distribution of tasks among humanitarian actors, it would make resourcing for donors much easier and more efficient. (17)*

Current humanitarian action requires a common planning approach and a clearer division of labour among key UN agencies. The completed work on deepening collaboration between UNHCR, WFP, UNDP and WHO is commendable and contributes to creating more efficient and effective humanitarian action. Considering the importance of PHEICs and refugee and migration crises in UNICEF's humanitarian portfolio, the organization should formalize its relationship with IOM beyond the ongoing joint initiatives in the form of a 'blueprint for action'. These blueprints for action or frameworks for closer collaboration should be clear on accountabilities, coordination and resource mobilization to ensure each agency's actions complement those of other agencies. The blueprint's phased roll-out, initially limiting implementation to several countries, could also be tested as a model that could support long-term partnership agreements. (54)

Creating new frameworks for collaboration with sister agencies is becoming increasingly important for UNICEF as the coordination systems used in public health responses and large-scale refugee and migration responses are changing. New

coordination structures are being implemented in parallel with the cluster system. In the DRC Ebola response, WHO rather than OCHA took the lead due to its health-focused, highly technical nature. In recent large-scale refugee and migration crises, humanitarians have often dealt with situations including migrants, IDPs and refugees. A joint platform between IOM and UNHCR has been set up alongside the cluster system, but the response teams have reported that this parallel structure generates time-consuming duplications of inter-agency ways of working and competing leadership roles among actors.

UNICEF needs to establish its position in these new systems and ensure it consistently advocates at all levels for a system that facilitates a well-coordinated response to address children's needs quickly and effectively. The newly developed partnership with WHO is essential to achieve this in public health emergencies. Similarly, as IOM becomes a larger coordinating player in migrant and IDP responses, it will also be important for UNICEF to develop agreements and partnerships with it. As well as security, collaboration frameworks will provide clarity and direction for UNICEF partnerships in different emergency types, building on the CCCs and clearly outlining the priorities for predictable responses. UNICEF partnerships with WHO could use the extended collaboration via the COVID-19 response fund or the global supply platform as a basis for a solid, long-term, global and thematic collaboration model. (91, 92)

### **6.5.3 Engaging more clearly with coordination and cluster systems**

The cluster lead role carries opportunities to improve not only inter-agency coordination, but also the overall quality of cluster members' responses and UNICEF's own programmes. As the UN agency contributing the most to the cluster system, UNICEF holds an influential position. This should enable it to ensure that humanitarian responses put the needs of children at their centre. This level of influence can be useful in challenging circumstances where humanitarian principles are under threat (such as in CHTEs) or where it is challenging to maintain the neutrality of humanitarian action (such as an integrated mission). Through its role as a multi-cluster lead agency, UNICEF can advocate for or lead collective action for positive outcomes, ensuring that the rights of children are upheld in all contexts. UNICEF should not take such a privileged responsibility lightly. It has a duty to invest in its contribution to collective coordination systems within humanitarian responses to ensure

the wider humanitarian response is principled and of good quality. (110, 138)

Strong cluster coordination should provide technical expertise and guidance to cluster partners, in addition to generally coordinating and monitoring responses to ensure they are of good quality and are conducted in an equitable way. Despite having solid programmatic capacity in its cluster lead areas, UNICEF often relies on SBPs for rapid mobilization and deployment, and both donors and partners are critical of this. UNICEF's continued reliance on external partners to provide such a crucial, central element of the response suggests a lack of investment in its cluster leadership. This reliance on SBPs also risks UNICEF losing its technical ability to contribute significantly to responses. UNICEF needs to invest in a collective pool of cluster coordinators that can be mobilized quickly to ensure good-quality cluster emergency responses. More importantly, cluster leadership is something that UNICEF committed to, and so it should invest in being able to fulfil this role itself. (42, 133, 86)

Investing in cluster leadership could also have a positive effect on UNICEF's own programming. However, some staff members feel UNICEF has made a systematic mistake in emphasizing the separation between cluster and programming work, leaving the organization open to risks of not delivering on cluster priorities. Some also think the cluster approach has contributed to technical fields becoming more fragmented. Clusters are a great way to share knowledge and ideas, and UNICEF's multiple cluster leadership responsibilities could pave the way for more integrated programming through exemplary action between its own clusters. The cluster system will also be critical in systematically applying LHD, which UNICEF is well placed to exemplify.

Cluster coordination is changing, with area-based, multisectoral approaches becoming more common at the local level. UNICEF should be open to playing a key role in these emerging coordination systems. Considering the challenging dynamic in the joint response platform to respond to the Venezuelan migration crisis, UNICEF should advocate for any new approaches to be kept simple and avoid duplication. (133, 65)

Finally, as provider of last resort for the clusters it coordinates, UNICEF also needs to investigate models of direct implementation, especially in protracted crises where it needs to be able to fill this role with confidence and in an agile fashion, with a particular focus in contexts where partners cannot operate. This will require staff

recruited for such emergency operations to have clear technical skills, as well as operational and programme management experience. UNICEF needs to foster a more field-level approach in such emergencies, actively encouraging staff to be visible on the ground, ready to take on frontline roles that are usually undertaken by implementing partners in other contexts. (47)

#### 6.5.4 Recommendations for improved partnerships

*Desired end state: UNICEF has more efficient, effective and agile partnerships, at all levels, that actively help to meet the needs of all crisis-affected children.*

1. **Build** on the Partnerships Platform and inter-agency blueprints for action towards a common partnership format, collectively with other agencies
2. **Explore** or expand the blueprint for action to other key humanitarian agencies (IOM) to strengthen working relationships in large-scale migration settings.
3. **Establish** strong, community-led, organized and managed platforms capable of being engaged as soon as an emergency hits, with wider use of stand-by Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) that have a fully integrated PSEA strategy.
4. **Prioritize** investment in cluster coordinators and national co-leads, through a pool of coordinators or by ensuring that programme and emergency staff are trained to cover cluster functions.
5. **Advocate** for straightforward and simple coordination mechanisms in inter-agency work, avoiding the creation of parallel coordination structures where these are unhelpful.
6. **Establish** a partnership focal point to focus on global partners to help provide a common interface and oversight on issues that go beyond a single country.
7. **Develop** models of direct implementation for humanitarian settings.

## 6.6 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

UNICEF tends to standardize its humanitarian responses, but doing so runs the risk of not adapting responses to their contexts, and therefore becoming less effective. Appropriate humanitarian action requires a thorough understanding of

the specific context – as demonstrated by the COVID-19 response – yet UNICEF’s contextual analysis is not as robust as it could be. Public health guidance should be appropriate for the country context: in the COVID-19 context, while social distancing may be appropriate and possible in European cities, it is not possible in some cities in Africa, Asia or Latin America that have large informal settlement areas with little distance between dwellings.

Improved understanding of affected populations’ vulnerabilities and the needs of children would ensure greater equity and quality in UNICEF operations. Previous evaluations and reports reviewed repeatedly identified weaknesses in relation to assessments of inconsistent quality, deficiencies in gender perspectives, and limited attention to the special needs of minority groups and how the needs of affected populations change over time. For effective targeting and to improve the equity of its responses, UNICEF needs to collect disaggregated data that can be ‘cut’ in different ways to highlight the range of vulnerabilities and groups in an affected community. With better disaggregated data, UNICEF could more effectively communicate the importance of reaching the population most in need rather than only reporting on high numbers. Such data will give the organization the evidence needed to push back against large reporting numbers, and instead make the case for greater equity.

Just as emergency responses can be focused on the numbers, so can UNICEF’s humanitarian performance monitoring. Few UNICEF indicators focus on programme performance, including quality, programming adequacy, feedback and satisfaction surveys. Overall, the organization’s approach feels very short term and does not reflect UNICEF as a rights-based and equity-focused organization. Without sufficient investment in performance monitoring, UNICEF will not be able to use the emergency management project cycle for increased gains in preparedness, running the risk of low-quality programming and repeated mistakes in implementation. UNICEF needs to review its monitoring systems and ensure that monitoring measures reflect the effectiveness and equity of its programming. Such measures should not only look at progress against HAC commitments,

but also against overall humanitarian needs and how UNICEF’s intervention has contributed more widely to meeting them. (84, 104, 106, 107, 138)

Perhaps the most important area for change is investment in linking contextual analysis, disaggregated data collection and performance monitoring more strongly. UNICEF needs to invest in better analysis and use of data to inform its programming, in both the planning and monitoring stages, to ensure its programmes are high quality, that its work addresses needs effectively and equitably, and that it holds itself accountable for its commitments to every child.

Related to this, UNICEF will need to enhance its evaluative work to ensure it provides an unbiased picture of UNICEF performance and ensuring that policies, strategies, programmes and advocacy are informed by relevant evidence at all levels of the organization.<sup>84</sup> Evaluations allow detailed exploration and explanation of what happened and why, using both quantitative and qualitative data, and are ideal for understanding the context and generating recommendations<sup>85</sup> and lessons that feed into the decision-making processes of the organization and its stakeholders.<sup>86</sup> The ongoing evaluation capacity enhancement, including at decentralized levels, will go a long way towards ensuring that UNICEF undertakes evaluations that are of high quality to ensure organizational learning and continuous improvement, and with sister UN agencies to capture how the wider UN systems are working together to achieve collective results.

### **6.6.1 Expanding contextual analysis to improve preparedness and responses**

Many COs reported challenges with contextual analysis, stating that if UNICEF cannot understand the context, it will not be able to deliver an appropriate emergency response. Contextual analysis is also lacking in wider humanitarian responses. One EAG member noted, “The humanitarian space must ensure it has a more robust, methodological and rigorous analysis” (3) so that UNICEF’s approach can be proactive and predictable rather than reactive. UNICEF must invest in internal contextual analytical capacity to ensure its programming remains relevant and appropriate. The COVID-19 crisis has shown the importance of this on a global scale. While the

84 UNICEF (2018) *Evaluation Policy*, UNICEF, New York <<https://undocs.org/E/ICEF/2018/14>>

85 Ramalingam, B, & J. Mitchell with J. Borton & K. Smart (2014). *Counting what counts: performance and effectiveness in the humanitarian sector*, ALNAP <[www.humanitarianlibrary.org/sites/default/files/2014/02/8rhach1.pdf](http://www.humanitarianlibrary.org/sites/default/files/2014/02/8rhach1.pdf)>

86 United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) (2016). *Norms and standards for evaluation*.

challenge of the pandemic is global, each region's or even each country's response will differ depending on various factors relating to existing humanitarian and developmental challenges, and the strength of health-care infrastructures, governance systems, industry and economies, and the UNICEF office. Strong contextual understanding is required not only to plan for the immediate pandemic responses, but also to start preparing responses to its lasting impacts, linking humanitarian responses to developmental programming more effectively. (3, 15)

As humanitarian contexts become more complex, so must humanitarians' analysis. Complex settings call for integrated data collection and analysis beyond the scope of current humanitarian assessments. With a shrinking humanitarian space, UNICEF must ensure it has a robust, methodological and rigorous analysis where specialist political analysis is used alongside humanitarian analysis to help predict future humanitarian challenges. Staff in COs and ROs, citing their experience of complex crises such as the Rohingya refugee crisis and the Ebola outbreak in the DRC, felt that greater investment in specialist political analysis could better prepare UNICEF for responding efficiently to emergencies such as these. Building on its existing system of context analysis and risk-mapping could ensure that the organization has more detailed analysis available for at-risk countries. Increasing links to regional private sector firms or academic institutions with specific expertise in this area, as well as increased HQ support for in-house contextual analysis, could be a way forward. (3, 55, 106, 123)

Several interviewees pointed out that ROs could also play a more prominent role in contextual analysis. As noted above, UNICEF has a macro approach to its emergency responses and tries to apply the same approach everywhere. However, effective analysis and responses require more granularity – a better understanding of the local context. As one interviewee put it, "It is good to have macro data, but it needs to be followed by micro understandings." (160) Expanding EMOPS' capacity for humanitarian contextual analysis to regional levels so that regional and county networks can be more strategically used could help to provide a more up-to-date picture of evolving contexts. Placing humanitarian specialists in the new Global Insight and Policy team at HQ level may also ensure that humanitarian analysis is considered in high-level discussions and that UNICEF can contribute externally to integrated contextual analysis in the wider humanitarian community. (144)

Improving its contextual analysis should enable UNICEF responses to be more forward thinking, as summed up by one interviewee: "Organizations of the future will need to know how to balance the needs of the present with the predictions of the future." (1) However, the organization needs to ensure that its systems, from preparedness onwards, can be as agile and responsive as the improved analysis.

UNICEF continuously tries to improve both the preparedness procedure and the EPP to implement learning and feedback from the field. Deeper analysis may be needed to understand whether COs can implement meaningful preparedness, whether ROs can provide adequate support, and whether preparedness is appropriately prioritized and risk informed. Understanding more clearly why some staff feel the EPP is not always a useful tool will support improvements, as not all challenges lie with the EPP tool itself. In addition, having stronger knowledge management of good practice in emergency preparedness and response would support idea-sharing between countries facing similar types of emergency, both within and between regions. This would support improved use of resources on tried and tested approaches, improving the overall quality of UNICEF's preparedness action. (23, 107, 129)

### **6.6.2 Gathering data on humanitarian needs and the situation of children in emergencies**

There is an increasing emphasis on evidence-based decision-making in humanitarian programming. Other UN agencies have invested heavily in data-collection systems that serve their own needs and also fill important data gaps in the wider humanitarian system. Examples include WFP's vulnerability analysis and mapping of food security, and IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix that maps migration and displacement. Data is an enabler of strong emergency responses. Multidimensional vulnerability data that is georeferenced and further disaggregated by population subgroups is needed to inform response planning and can enable UNICEF to better inform local populations and ensure they are able to hold duty bearers to account. It can also ensure that UNICEF's programmes are as equitable as possible. From a sustainability perspective, improved data collection on children's needs in emergencies can lead to a stronger evidence base from which to advocate for their needs, and to show the comparative advantage of UNICEF's intersectional work. (84, 122)

The preliminary results of DAPM's mapping of ways to improve data for action in humanitarian and fragile situations highlight key areas where UNICEF can build on existing assets to address key challenges and enable improved, data-driven responses. UNICEF has developed many different data-collection methods and tools and consequently has a lot of data at its disposal. It now needs to integrate these through tool interoperability to provide more comprehensive datasets, rather than individual snapshots. The creation of a comprehensive data set would play to UNICEF's strengths in multisectoral and integrated programming capacity, as well as contributing to improvements in cluster coordination. (84, 107, 129, 160)

As with other elements of humanitarian action, monitoring cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach if UNICEF is to remain agile. UNICEF has already invested a lot in its data-collection systems but it needs to adopt a 'menu' approach for COs, ROs and HQ to enable the right method to be used in the right context to facilitate larger, more coherent data sets to ensure that profiles of the needs of crisis-affected children are as rich as possible. Further investment in data partnerships will be important to make data on children's needs more widely available. UNICEF may not always be the best-placed agency to be the data 'innovator' or provider. By investing in collaborative ventures with universities and other academic thinktanks in areas such as predictive analytics, UNICEF can ensure that its data is child focused, and that appropriate data is made available to agencies working to address children's needs. While innovation is extremely important, UNICEF's focus for future data collection should be firmly based on need. (84, 107, 129, 149, 160)

### **6.6.3 Better data collection and management for improved accountability and performance monitoring**

As UNICEF invests in data collection, it must not overlook the importance of analysis and engaging the right talent to ensure data analysis results in better-quality programming, with feedback used to inform both programme design and course correction. Representatives in CHTEs must often make key operational decisions, and therefore need sufficient amounts of reliable data and evidence to inform these. This aspect of leadership in humanitarian settings differs greatly from development settings, where the availability and types of data are usually more plentiful. UNICEF must therefore ensure that representatives in humanitarian settings, particularly complex crises, have access

to good data and strong analytics to support robust leadership. This may mean UNICEF needs to reassess its global PM&E staff to ensure their skills mean that data can be digested at the CO level in a meaningful way to steer UNICEF's programming. As UNICEF makes further investments in its data-collection systems, it should evaluate the skills it needs to analyse data that still requires human analysis (such as knowledge of Open Data Kit and Rapid Pro suites), via recruitment and staff training. Just as importantly, UNICEF representatives and section heads need to become more data savvy, to understand what data they need in order to make informed decisions, to recognize the limits and possibilities of data solutions in their context and to ensure they direct office resources appropriately. (84, 95, 126)

Increasing its capacity to collect and analyse data will also strengthen UNICEF's advocacy. One interviewee expressed this succinctly: "Accurate data and reliable observation can translate [into] effective advocacy." (12). By using data-driven advocacy, UNICEF could be more articulate and shape opinion within the international community to ensure that children's rights are supported and promoted globally via humanitarian preparedness and response actions. The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the effectiveness of such data-driven responses, where predictive data analytics enabled both immediate responses to support the most vulnerable and modelling of the emergency's indirect impact, enabling better preparedness for children's long-term development needs. (149)

### **6.6.4 Recommendations to improve data collection and analysis**

*Desired end state: UNICEF's contextual analyses, disaggregated data collection on crisis-affected people's needs and performance monitoring are coherently linked to enable programming that is equitable and of quality.*

1. **Establish** links with universities, research institutions, analysts and/or consulting firms to complement contextual analyses of crises with political, economic and social analysis.
2. **Develop** an appropriate way to measure the quality of UNICEF's work beyond targets, with monitoring frameworks that include indicators relating to programme quality and disaggregated data collection, use and analysis.

3. **Develop** a menu of monitoring options for partners to use across various data collection and management platforms, to enable smoother and more sustainable operationalization with partners.



# Afterword

In a final revision of the draft Humanitarian Review by EAG members, UNICEF was commended for undertaking such a comprehensive, self-critical exercise, and for its transparency. Generally, there was a high level of satisfaction among them in respect of how their contributions have been incorporated and in the recommendations presented here. However, some EAG members told us they would have liked to see:

- a desired end state that includes a strong corporate commitment to humanitarian action, with clear corresponding priority-setting and communication to staff and donors
- specific recommendations on the need for joint needs analysis, and prioritized response planning and targeting with other agencies
- stronger recommendations on AAP and inclusion: first, a strategic approach to ensure inclusion of affected populations at the programme planning stage, and second, a multi-input approach to feedback from affected communities, with in-built course correction and flexibility. The report should also have greater focus on collective and inter-agency AAP (in line with UNICEF's cluster leadership role) and contain specific recommendations on this. It could also usefully make recommendations on assessing and strengthening UNICEF's approach and analysis of its commitments on gender equality and inclusion, as well as mechanisms to strengthen accountability in these areas
- a recommendation on how UNICEF should play an active and leading role in a coordinated approach to cash with other agencies and partners
- a desired end state regarding local partners, and stronger recommendations on localization, including, for example, a requirement that all UNICEF downstream funding cover not only the costs of implementing partners, but also investment in capacity-building, AAP and, in particular, ensuring PSEA and due diligence. This needs to link the UNICEF approach of 'shifting the risk' to implementing partners, preparedness and surge capacity and security management in challenging contexts
- the inclusion of concrete actions and domains of intervention to reinforce structural or general recommendations to ensure that the 'E is put back into UNICEF'
- flagging of the possibility that the global community can expect ever more complex global crises: COVID-19 is an example, not an aberrant phenomenon
- addition of the public relations consequences of crisis impacts on developed countries.

We would like to thank all EAG members for their contributions and encouragement throughout our work on the Humanitarian Review.

**UNICEF Humanitarian Review**

## ANNEX I

# Terms of Reference of the Humanitarian Review – Strengthening UNICEF’s Humanitarian Action

### BACKGROUND

UNICEF has been responding to humanitarian crises since 1946, advocating for the protection of children’s rights, meeting the basic needs of children and working to enable all children to reach their full potential. And the demand for humanitarian assistance has been increasing. The number of countries with violent conflicts is the highest it has been in the last 30 years. An estimated 535 million children – one in four – live in countries affected by conflict or disaster. As of early 2018, nearly 31 million children had been forcibly displaced by violence and conflict, including 13 million child refugees and more than 17 million inside their own countries.<sup>87</sup>

To meet the growing demand for assistance in multiple, simultaneous, complex and large-scale emergencies, UNICEF’s humanitarian operations have increased exponentially.

- Based on the latest publicly available figures,<sup>88</sup> UNICEF is the third largest UN agency in terms of expenditure on humanitarian assistance at US\$2.5 billion; behind UNHCR at US\$3.8 billion and WFP at US\$5.0 billion.
- In 2017, UNICEF responded to 337 humanitarian situations in 102 countries – the

second largest number of situations recorded since tracking began more than a decade ago.<sup>89</sup>

- In 2017, 55 per cent of all country-level expenses (from all funding types, not just Other Resources – Emergency) were tagged as supporting humanitarian activities.<sup>90</sup>
- In 2017, UNICEF procurement for emergencies also reached US\$553.3 million compared to US\$379.1 million in 2016.<sup>91</sup>
- UNICEF’s ORE revenue grew from US\$529 million (18% of total revenue of \$3.01 billion) in 2007 to over US\$2 billion (37% of total revenue of US\$5.47 billion) in 2017.<sup>92</sup>

The recent evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies highlighted key recommendations for UNICEF to **assess its organizational capacity (policy, structure, accountability, systems, resources) to deliver on its commitments on coverage, quality and equity, including as provider of last resort** and more specifically to undertake the following:

- Strengthen the understanding and capacity of all UNICEF staff (at both the HQ and CO levels) and partners about the practical use of

87 UNICEF, ‘Children under attack’, 2018 <[www.unicef.org/children-under-attack](http://www.unicef.org/children-under-attack)>.

88 Latest comparative data available is from 2016: United Nations System, Chief Executives Board for Coordination, ‘Expenditure by category’ <[www.unsceb.org/content/FS-F00-01?type=E02](http://www.unsceb.org/content/FS-F00-01?type=E02)>.

89 UNICEF, Global Annual Results Report, 2017: Humanitarian Action.

90 Ibid., p. 91.

91 UNICEF, Global Annual Results Report, 2017: Humanitarian Action.

92 For 2007–2016 data: <[www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_96015.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_96015.html)>; 2017 data: <[www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_102906.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_102906.html)>.

humanitarian principles to make structured, ethical decisions on programme access, coverage and quality.

- Strengthen the accountability of UNICEF to key rights-holders in complex emergencies.
- Influence inter-agency humanitarian architecture to improve coverage and quality.
- Adapt UNICEF's internal approaches and systems to improve coverage and quality.
- Formulate a strategic vision for achieving coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies.

In a briefing paper to the UNICEF Executive Board on response in complex humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF stated: "For UNICEF to maximize its coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies, it needs to promote internal change in the way that it designs and delivers integrated programmes and disseminates, interprets and acts upon policies and procedures."<sup>93</sup>

Lessons learned from the 2017 synthesis of UNICEF humanitarian evaluations from 2010 to 2018 included findings reinforced by the evaluation as cited in the briefing paper above, as well as those below:<sup>94</sup>

- Needs assessments are the foundation of effective humanitarian action – understanding needs is not just a fundamental part of humanitarian action but the bedrock on which effectiveness and efficiency rely. Circumstances may constrain access, and inter-agency processes may not deliver all that they intend. Nonetheless, humanitarian responses must be firmly grounded in an understanding of the needs they aim to address. Engaging with affected populations is a precondition of addressing equity concerns; it cannot be shortcut, or bypassed.
- There is no substitute for strategy – several of the experiences analysed show reactive, rather than proactive responses; a tendency to plan piecemeal and in siloes; and a lack of coherence across countries in a regional response. Yet UNICEF has the capacity and the learning available to enable it to plan more strategically. Not doing so is a missed opportunity for effectiveness.

- The CCCs in their current formulation do not reflect the changing nature of humanitarian crises and promote siloed rather than integrated responses. A more explicit and defined strategic overview within UNICEF's humanitarian action is needed, which is firmly geared to resilience and transition goals. This should be linked to the revisited CCCs.
- Focus on the future – many of UNICEF's changed procedures and protocols have emerged as a response to a particular experience. Documenting and learning from experience is important; but equally important is the kind of future focus and horizon scanning that enables systems and protocols to be developed, which will help identify and manage future risks.
- Learning needs direction – while much learning can be generated and some even applied, the systematic application of documented experience into changed corporate procedures is challenging. Transforming learning from the 'here and now' into corporate shifts requires systemic change and staff being fully on board.
- Systems-building is a process: despite the major effort that has been dedicated to improving systems for emergency response – reflected in the Level 2 and Level 3 SSOPs – the evidence examined here shows the limited authority and traction of such systems when they are not accompanied by a culture of confidence in their use.

Following from these evaluations, it has become evident that UNICEF's institutional alignment and capacity to meet the demands of the new humanitarian action reality needs to be assessed. UNICEF needs to assess whether the organization at all levels is optimally equipped to reliably respond to increasingly frequent emergencies in an optimal way.

- How do we ensure that UNICEF is equipped at country level to respond to more frequent emergencies? What needs to be done to enable UNICEF to move seamlessly from humanitarian action to development and vice versa? Will implementation of the new procedure for strengthening humanitarian and development linkages be sufficient or is anything else needed?

93 UNICEF Executive Board Annual session 11–13 June 2019: Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies (E/ICEF/2019/16), p. 2.

94 UNICEF, *Towards Improved Emergency Responses: Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of Humanitarian Action 2010–2016, 2017* <[www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/TOWARDS\\_IMPROVED\\_EMERGENCY\\_RESPONSES\\_Evaluation\\_Full\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/TOWARDS_IMPROVED_EMERGENCY_RESPONSES_Evaluation_Full_WEB.pdf)>

- How do we ensure that UNICEF is equipped to support both level 1 and 2 emergencies at regional level? There is a need to identify gaps and solutions on how to strengthen our capacity where necessary.
- What adjustments are required to ensure that we have sufficient capacity and ownership at global level to support level 1, 2 and 3 emergencies?

UNICEF needs to review the alignment of its business models to the needs of the new reality of its programmes, including hiring, deployment, resource mobilization for humanitarian action, etc.:

### 1. **Organizational ownership, accountability and coordination of humanitarian action**

Do we have full ownership and support from all levels of the organization for humanitarian action at UNICEF? Do all COs, including staff in senior management positions, demonstrate consistent, predictable, reliable emergency response? How can we strengthen the accountabilities for technical support, oversight and quality assurance from HQ and ROs to COs in emergency situations?

### 2. **Humanitarian leadership and technical capacity**

**Leadership profiling:** How can we ensure the senior management in COs in emergency-prone countries have the experience, skills and capacity required to lead and manage the UNICEF response in level 3 and level 2 emergencies? Are we able to quickly scale up and provide a predictable, quality response across the board? If not, what adjustments are required?

**Cluster leadership:** UNICEF doesn't consistently fill cluster leadership positions with additional staff and often relies on stopgap measures to save funds via SBPs and 'double hatting' UNICEF CO staff. This undermines the role the cluster can play in leveraging resources, ensuring quality and coverage for children in emergencies. How can we ensure we deliver on inter-agency commitments on leadership in clusters?

**Technical capacity:** Due to the increased number and scale of emergencies in recent years and changes in benefits to staff members working in emergency duty stations, it has become more difficult to attract quality, experienced staff to those posts. The changes in R&R benefits and Temporary contract benefits (compared to temporary fixed-term contracts) have

made these posts less attractive. How can we ensure we attract experienced, highly qualified staff to serve in key technical positions in emergency duty stations?

### 3. **Speed and agility of emergency procedures**

The key 'Simplified Standard Operating Procedures' are often not implemented and even when adopted are still far too slow for rapidly changing contexts where other agencies have been seen to be more agile. To continue to speed up the implementation of HRPs, how can we ensure SSOPs are consistently implemented in emergencies? What can we learn from other humanitarian actors to continue to speed up delivering our emergency response? This should be addressed through the new Emergency Procedures being drafted, with a robust plan for implementation.

### 4. **Diversified humanitarian partnership base**

How can we diversify the base of 'stand-by' and implementing partnerships? How can we increase the use of the private sector to implement our HRPs? Can we diversify to include partners from BRICs and other countries? Why are there so few ready-made agreements with local NGOs covering certain sectors or geographical areas in the preparedness plans? Why are there no agreements for delivering goods/services to People in Need (PiN) with the private sector in these plans?

### 5. **Resource mobilization**

How can we increase the predictability of humanitarian funding? How can we ensure continued funding of emergency responses in protracted humanitarian crises? How can we increase the amounts of global flexible/unmarked humanitarian funding and multi-year funding to support better integration of humanitarian to development programming? To what extent are RR and IB core resources allocated to support humanitarian staffing capacity and our work at country, regional and HQ levels? There is currently no system in place to track if our organization resources are being invested in humanitarian action. In protracted crisis, we need to also consider using core resources for humanitarian action.

Finally, as UNICEF continues to strengthen the link between humanitarian action and development programming, findings from the Repositioning and Realignment exercise

identified that the planning, monitoring and reporting processes, guidance and systems are largely different, leaving COs to manage parallel processes.<sup>95</sup> There is a need for greater integration of the two processes, which, if implemented, would benefit both humanitarian and development work and support preparing staff to be able to easily switch from one to the other.

## OBJECTIVES

The objective of the review is to conduct an overall organizational rethink of UNICEF configuration and capacity for humanitarian action, including the commitment to strengthen the linkages with our development work. This rethinking of capacity is aimed at reconfiguring current human and financial resources in a more optimal way so they are more in line with the current trend of approximately half of the organization's results being tagged as humanitarian.

Specifically, the assessment team will be expected to achieve the following:

- Take stock of UNICEF's capacity for humanitarian action as compared to the leading agencies (OCHA, UNHCR, WFP etc.) in the sector and identify the top 10 barriers to UNICEF being able to systematically deliver principled and timely humanitarian action to minimum standards or beyond for coverage and quality as defined by our CCCs. The findings from evaluations as outlined in this note highlight five areas which will require further investigation, alongside other issues which the external advisors may raise. This necessarily also requires desk reviews of similar agencies' reviews where possible.
- Make recommendations on the actions needed to rapidly address the top 10 barriers going forward and the enablers required to do so.
- Link and articulate this important exercise with other key organizational reviews including the 'HQ repositioning & realignment exercise', the previous Strengthening Humanitarian Action (SHA) process, and the ongoing revision of the CCCs and Emergency Procedures (replacing the SSOPs).

Deliverables	Timing
<p><b>1. Take stock of UNICEF's capacity to consistently deliver quality and principled and timely humanitarian action and identify the top 10 barriers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a desk review of recent emergency evaluation conclusions/ recommendations and management response, 'what's at stake' paper presented to OED, after-action reviews (AARs), and the recent study of our Corporate Emergency Activation Protocol and Simplified procedures (SSOPs), and other humanitarian agencies' reviews and evaluations.</li> <li>• Conduct interviews with internal and external informants – UNICEF colleagues at different levels, and humanitarian partners including UN Agencies, NGOs and donors – to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• find out how the external partners perceive UNICEF: do they see us as a humanitarian agency? (This could help produce a baseline view of UNICEF's humanitarian image with donors/ partners/ NGOs). How does this vary by country/ region?</li> <li>• identify the barriers and current UNICEF good practices in working with UNICEF</li> <li>• identify areas of humanitarian action where UNICEF is particularly weak</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Six weeks
<p><b>2. Best practices from other leading humanitarian agencies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the informant interviews and desk reviews, identify which best practices from other actors in the sector UNICEF could potentially adopt in addressing UNICEF's 10 main barriers.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. Recommendations to address the 10 main barriers and the key enablers to improve UNICEF's capacity for humanitarian action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estimate the one-time and annual costs of these enablers</li> <li>• Develop a process and road map for implementation</li> <li>• Provide a change management strategy and mitigation measures for identified risks</li> </ul>	Six weeks

95 UNICEF, Repositioning & Realigning the Planning, Monitoring & Reporting Function in UNICEF (Internal), 2019, p. 5.

## PROCESS AND GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

In order to achieve the objectives and produce the expected deliverables, the project team will use the following methodology:

- First step will be a desk review of recent, relevant documents such as evaluations, audits, after-action reviews, board papers, etc. Based on the findings of the review, the project team will elaborate a preliminary list of operational and structural factors, or 'barriers', which appear to constrain quality, coverage, efficiency and effectiveness in UNICEF humanitarian action.
- The preliminary list of barriers will be validated with consultants and staff in the Evaluation Office who have been actively involved in recent evaluations of emergencies.
- Informed by the desk review, the project team will carry out interviews with the members of a pre-established External Advisory Group (EAG) in order to identify good practices of delivery of humanitarian action which UNICEF could learn from and adopt with the aim of overcoming barriers. EAG members will also, based on their own personal experience, be encouraged to share a frank assessment of UNICEF's strengths and weaknesses as a global humanitarian actor.
- Based on the external interviews, the project team will draft a document providing an overview of revised barriers and good practices, or 'enablers', which should be subject to further analysis. This overview will be shared and discussed with the Director of EMOPS and Deputy Executive Director (DED) for Programmes along with a tentative list of internal, technical experts who could contribute to the analysis and validation of barriers and enablers. Eventually, if considered useful, the project team could also organize a video conference between OED and members of EAG.
- The consultation with internal experts will be accompanied by gathering of data and other evidence to substantiate barriers and enablers. At this stage, it is highly likely that the project team will require the cooperation of 'data-collectors' in various HQ divisions and offices.
- After the first round of internal consultations and the preparation of the evidence for barriers and enablers, the project team will prepare a revised draft of the document to be shared and discussed with Director of EMOPS and DED for Programmes.
- With comments from OED duly incorporated, the draft document with barriers and enablers will be subject to a second round of internal consultation at the level of the Global Management Team (RDs and concerned HQs Directors).
- The project team will take all comments and proposals from the consultation with members of the GMT into consideration in the elaboration of the final document.
- Once decisions have been made on the enablers the organization will adopt in order to strengthen its capacity for humanitarian action, the project team will do risk assessments and prepare road maps for implementation.

## MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCES

This review will be conducted by an internal project review team. An external advisory group composed of highly experienced professionals from different parts of the humanitarian sector will also be consulted.

The review will be under the purview and guidance of the Office of the EMOPS Director; this will include a regular review of milestones and deliverables with the EMOPS Director, DED Programmes and OED. Additional resources required remain to be determined, based on proposals by the consultant.

## ANNEX II

# Desk Review Documents List

### UNICEF DOCUMENTS

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## ANNEX III

# List of Members of the External Advisory Group

**Ahmed Warsame**

Director of Global Emergencies, UNHCR

**Ameerah Haq**

Chair of Board, BRAC

**Dominik Stillhart**

Director of Operations, ICRC

**Dr Jean-Clément Cabrol**

Director of Support and Preparedness, MSF Suisse

**Dr Mairo Mandara**

Senior Fellow, Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)

**Elhadj As Sy**

Secretary General, IFRC

**Gilles Collard**

Director General, Bioforce

**Jan Egeland**

Secretary General, Norwegian Refugee Council

**Julien Schopp**

Vice President of Humanitarian Policy and Practice, InterAction

**Karin Landgren**

Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UN

**Manuel Bessler**

Deputy Director General, Swiss Humanitarian Aid (SHA)

**Matthew Wyatt**

Deputy Director and head of CHASE, UK DFID

**Mushtaque Chowdhury**

Deputy Executive Director, BRAC

**Randolph Kent**

Visiting Professor, King's College London

**Reena Ghelani**

Director Operations and Advocacy, OCHA

**Renee Van der Weerd**

Executive Director of Health Emergencies, WHO

**Sheila Grudem**

Deputy Director Emergency Preparedness, WFP

**Susanne Mallaun**

Head of Strategic Partnerships, ECHO

**Trey Hicks**

Assistant to the Administrator of USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, USAID

**Vinod Menon**

Senior Professor, MIT – World Peace University

## ANNEX IV

# List of Interviewees

Abdul Kadir Muse	Etleva Kadilli	Jorge Olague
Ahmed Ould Sid'ahmed Ould Aida	Ettie Higgins	Josephine Ferreira
Aida Oliver	Eva Mennel	Juan Santander
Aloys Kamuragiye	Fatou Wurie	Justus Olielo
Alwin Nijholt	Fayaz King	Kate Alley
Andrea Suley	Fillippo Mazzarelli	Ken Leggins
Andrew Chelelgo	Flora Alexander	Kerida Mcdonald
Anna Azaryeva	Fouzia Shafique	Kevin Curtis
Annalies Borrel	Fran Equiza	Laura Bill
Anne Favreau	Franck Bouvet	Laura Olsen
Annmarie Swai	Frankie Chen	Laure Anquez
Antonio Galli	Frederic Emirian	Lauren Cheshire
Antonio Marro	Gary Stahl	Laurence Christian Chandy
Ayano Suzumura	Gautam Narasimhan	Leon Fajardo
Benjamin Fisher	Gavin Adam Wood	Lilian Reyes
Berina Arslanagic	Genevieve Boutin	Linda Jones
Bernt Aasen (in his capacity of RD a.i.)	Geoff Wiffin	Lisa Bender
Bolton Nyema	Gianluca Buono	Luc Chauvin
Carla Haddad Mardini	Grant Leaity	Mads Oyen
Carlos Navarro Colorado	Hamady Ba	Majed Altwal
Carmen Van Hesse	Hamish Young	Manuel Fontaine
Carole Vignaud	Hani Zarrini	Manuel Garcia Herranz
Catherine Dickehage	Herve Ludovic De Lys	Marc Rubin
Cecilia Sanchez Bodas	Ilaria Carnevali	Mari Denby
Charles Antoine Hofmann	Jacobus de Hoop	Maria Agnese Giordano
Charles Nzuki Aden	Jalpa Ratna	Mark Beatty
Christopher Bono	Jamshed Hasanov	Megan Gilgan
Claire Mariani	Jan Eijkenaar	Michael Copeland
Claude Dunn	Jane Mwangi	Michel le Pechoux
Daniel Couture	Jane Strachan	Michele Messina
Diane Holland	Jason Uliana	Michele Servadei
Diane Kepler	Jayant Bararia	Milj Laasko
Dominic Stolarow	Jean Gough	Mohamed Ayoya
Dominique Porteaud	Jean Metenier	Monique Lindr
Dragan Markovic	Jelena Jovanovic	Mustapha Ben Messaoud
Ed Shenkenberg	Jeremy Hopkins	Nada Elattar
Edouard Beigbeder	Jerome Pfaffmann	Nana Essah
Estelle Langlais	Joaquin Gonzalez-Aleman	Naqibullah Safi
	Jock Baker	Nathalie Hamoudi

Nicola Bennett  
Nicoletta Confalone  
Odile Bulten  
Omar Abdi  
Omar Robles  
Paloma Escuerdo  
Paradzai Nematadzira  
Patrick Lavandhomme  
Paul Farrell  
Paulin Nkwosseu  
Pernille Ironside  
Peter Frobel  
Peter Hawkins

Philippe Duamelle  
Pryia Marwah  
Raquel Wexler  
Richard Bailey  
Richard Wecker  
Rosario Buendia  
Ross Tomlinson  
Segolene Adam  
Shanelle Hall  
Sofie de Dobbelaere  
Stefano Fedele  
Stephane Arnaud  
Steven Zimmerman

Tasha Gill  
Ted Chaiban  
Ted Maly  
Thomas Asare  
Thorodd Ommudsen  
Tim Grieve  
Toby Fricker  
Tom Olsen  
Verena Knaus  
Vidhya Ganesh  
Yannick Brand

## ANNEX V

# Participant List of Senior Management Validation Workshops

Adam Christopher Tibe

Afshan Khan

Allyson Chisholm

Andreas Wuestenberg

Annmarie Swai

Anthea Moore

Bernt Aasen

Bram Meij

Cairan O'Toole

Carlos Navarro

Carmen van Heese

Carole Vignaud

Cecilia Sanchez Bodas

Charles-Antoine Hofmann

Djani Zadi

Dorica Tasuzgika Phiri

Ellen Dougherty

Ettie Higgins

Eva Mennel

Gaudeamus Mbabazi

Geeta Narayan

Genevieve Boutin

George Laryea-Adjei

Gerald Cabildo

Grant Leaity

Hamish Young

Hannah Curwen

Hannan Sulieman

Jacqueline Mary Williams

Jalpa Ratna

Jane Mwangi

Jean Gough

June Kunugi

Kambou Fofana

Karin Hulshof

Kirsi Madi

Laura Olsen

Lauren Cheshire

Lori Issa

Luc Chauvin

Lucy Aghadjanian

Manuel Fontaine

Marc Rubin

Marie-Noelle Fall

Marie-Pierre Poirier

Mark Hereward

Megan Gilgan

Meritxell Relano

Michael Copland

Mirna Yacoub

Mohamed Malick Fall

Nana Essah

Nicola Bennett

Nisar Syed

Nobuko Takahashi

Omar Abdi

Paul Farrell

Pernille Ironside

Richard Greene

Roger Diaz Flore

Rosario Buendia

Sanjay Wijesekera

Sara Beysolow Nyanti

Sara Bordas Eddy

Segolene Adam

Shane Sheils

Steven Lauwerier

Suvi Rautio

Tom Olsen

Tsedeye Girma

Typhaine Gendron

Vidhya Ganesh

Yannick Brand

Yvon Roy

## ANNEX VI

# Interview Methodology and Guidance

## 1. STRUCTURE OF INTERVIEWS

### General questions

- How do you see the evolution of humanitarian action over the coming 5 years? What do you see as the major challenges/opportunities?
- What do you see as the strengths/weaknesses of UNICEF? What are the opportunities for the organization?

### Thematic questions

The Humanitarian Review Team identified 10 themes/barriers (see below) around which they wanted to guide the conversation. Two main themes were used for each interview, chosen based on the most relevant expertise or context of the work of interviewees.

Within each theme, the team believed it was important to recognize the general overarching questions, which were emphasized throughout the review process:

- What are the trends in the humanitarian community in this area? How do the selected key actors approach this area (or are likely to approach it in future)? How does this compare with UNICEF's approach in this area?
- Which actors in the humanitarian community appear to have made the most progress in this area or are seen to be leaders in this area? How has their approach helped them to advance their work in this area? What can UNICEF learn from them with a view towards the future?

## 2. KEY THEMATIC QUESTIONS

The barriers to humanitarian action in UNICEF presented in this note are outputs of the desk review phase of the Humanitarian Review exercise used to guide interviews. These include internal barriers, where UNICEF has control over

fixing the barrier, and external barriers, where UNICEF can only contribute to overcoming the barrier. The short analysis of each barrier was followed by suggested questions to be raised with members of the External Advisory Group (EAG) and with UNICEF staff through internal consultations. The EAG was asked to comment on the preliminary list of barriers and UNICEF's performance as humanitarian actor in general, but the focus will be on guiding UNICEF towards good practice by other humanitarian actors that the organization can learn from and, eventually, adopt as enabling factors. In the internal consultations, staff were asked to comment on and rank barriers in order of importance, as well as contribute to identify enabling factors that can eliminate, or reduce, the negative impact of barriers to humanitarian action and increase the predictability of UNICEF as a humanitarian actor. Particular attention will be given to analyzing the feasibility of implementing enabling factors, taking into account the diversity of capacities and roles at HQ, RO and CO level.

### 1. BARRIER: IMPEDED HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

#### Suggested question for EAG members:

- Where, and to whom, should UNICEF look to learn how to build capacity for a more active and decisive role in Security Risk Management?

#### Suggested questions for UNICEF staff:

- What investments and/or support from HQs/ROs are needed for COs to play a more active and decisive role in Risk and Security Management and to perform in accordance with UNICEF's manual and institutional framework for access?
- What good examples do we have in UNICEF for delivering assistance to most vulnerable groups without having direct access?

## 2. BARRIER: LIMITED LOCALIZATION OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES AND ENGAGEMENT WITH AFFECTED POPULATIONS

### Suggested questions for EAG members:

- What are the lessons from international humanitarian actors in terms of working with local and national organizations which could benefit UNICEF's agenda for localization of responses?
- How can UNICEF ensure that the views and feedback from affected populations, including children, systematically inform the programmes and related decision-making?

### Suggested questions for UNICEF staff:

- What investments and/or support from HQs/ROs are needed for COs to improve capacity-building of local and national partners?
- How can our modalities of partnership be turned into an opportunity for better assistance close to people in need and taking into account their views and feedback?

## 3. NOT FULLY LEVERAGING COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL ACTORS IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

### Suggested questions for EAG members:

- How can UNICEF find stand-by partners from programme countries?
- Which are the issues that require further clarification in terms of roles and approaches among UN agencies and between UN and INGOs?

### Suggested question for UNICEF staff:

- What changes are needed in internal procedures and priorities for UNICEF to use cluster-lead positions to exercise leadership in inter-agency forums and improve the coherence and quality of humanitarian response plans?

## 4. BARRIER: EQUITY WEAKNESS IN THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

### Suggested questions for EAG members:

- Where can UNICEF find good practice to learn from with regard to providing humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable populations in crises?
- How can UNICEF ensure quantitative results do not come at the expense of quality and equity in interventions?

### Suggested questions for UNICEF staff:

- How can UNICEF improve knowledge management so its own good practice for high-quality responses to the most vulnerable populations can guide all humanitarian programmes in all COs?
- How can UNICEF improve mechanisms for quality assurance for its performance in humanitarian action and, at the same time, ensure adequate coverage?

## 5. BARRIER: INSUFFICIENT ANALYSIS OF CONTEXT OF CRISES AND ASSESSMENTS OF NEEDS

### Suggested questions for EAG members:

- How can UNICEF improve analysis of context and needs without causing undue delays in assistance to people in need?
- Where can we find good examples of the humanitarian community jointly doing sustained, high-quality context analysis and assessments?
- How can UNICEF be flexible, adopt responses to context and at the same time be a predictable partner?

### Suggested question for UNICEF staff:

- How can UNICEF use preparedness planning to improve the knowledge of context, as well as the quality of assessments of risks, needs and vulnerabilities?

## 6. BARRIER: INCOMPLETE PLANNING, MONITORING AND REPORTING OF ADVOCACY

### Suggested questions for EAG members:

- Who are the humanitarian actors with a proven, well-documented track record in advocacy that UNICEF could learn from?
- Where can UNICEF find models for monitoring the impact of advocacy in humanitarian crises?

### Suggested questions for UNICEF staff:

- How can UNICEF mitigate risks when being an outspoken advocate in highly politicized humanitarian crises?
- How can UNICEF maximize the use of its structures at COs, ROs and HQs and become more systematic and predictable in humanitarian advocacy?

## 7. BARRIER: INCONSISTENCIES IN LINKING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

### Suggested questions for EAG members:

- In humanitarian crises linked to situations where the government is party to conflict, how can UNICEF have a development programme supporting national institutions and, at the same time, ensure it adheres to the principle of 'neutrality' in humanitarian action?
- Which are the organizations that have made good progress in linking humanitarian and development programming?

### Suggested questions for UNICEF staff:

- Which are the current procedural, structural and cultural factors that need to change for UNICEF to be able to do integrated planning, monitoring and reporting on development and humanitarian programmes?
- How can our programming be better at linking humanitarian and development work in different settings?

## 8. BARRIER: MANY CONDITIONALITIES AND FEW FLEXIBLE FUNDS

### Suggested question for EAG members:

- How can UNICEF mitigate the effects of highly earmarked and short-term funding commitments?

### Suggested question for UNICEF staff:

- How should UNICEF change its fundraising strategies in order to obtain more flexible and multi-year funding?

## 9. BARRIER: LIMITATIONS RELATED TO HUMAN RESOURCES

### Suggested questions for EAG members:

- How should UNICEF invest in order to quickly upgrade staff capacity for humanitarian action?
- Are there specific programme or operational areas UNICEF should give priority to in order to increase its capacity for humanitarian action?

### Suggested questions for UNICEF staff:

- What additional learning opportunities should UNICEF invest in to enable staff to improve their performance in humanitarian action?
- Which incentives should UNICEF introduce to attract more staff to learning opportunities and assignments in COs attending to humanitarian crises?

## 10. BARRIER: UNPREDICTABILITY OF THE QUALITY OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

### Suggested question for EAG members:

What is expected from UNICEF in order to become a predictable partner?

### Suggested question for UNICEF staff:

What investments and changes are needed in COs, ROs and at HQs for UNICEF to become a predictable humanitarian actor?

## 3. COVID-19 INTERVIEWS

### Additional methodology considerations for COVID-19

COVID-19 erupted during the review process. In order to ensure the Humanitarian Review remains of the moment and reflective of the humanitarian response today, the team has worked hard to include COVID-19 examples and references into the review.

COVID-19 has been integrated into the review through reflecting on how it changes the humanitarian response typology for public health, what key lessons have been learned and which good practices are being seen, as well as how COVID-19 highlights gaps within UNICEF's humanitarian response today. Key objectives for the interview will be centered on two points:

- What are the good practices in UNICEF's humanitarian response that COVID-19 has highlighted?
- What are the main challenges within UNICEF's COVID-19 response, and what needs to be done to improve in future?

### Guiding interview questions

#### Programme

- How should COVID-19 change our approach to public health emergencies in the future?
- What have been the main bottlenecks to 'stay and deliver' during this time? How has it impacted UNICEF's programmes and partners? What could have been done better?

#### Coordination

- Explain the evolution of the structure of the COVID-19 secretariat. What have been the main challenges in internal coordination for COVID-19?



- Are the current response leadership structures (GEC/Secretariat) fit for purpose in a global emergency response? What can we learn from leading COVID-19 for other large-scale, multi-country or cross-regional responses?
- Have there been any interdivisional coordination successes to come out of COVID-19?
- How has internal coordination outside the Secretariat worked between HQ, ROs and COs? Are the roles clear? Have there been any bottlenecks?
- How has the cooperation with other actors been in the response, with WHO and other UN agencies as well as with UNICEF partners?

#### **LHD programming**

- How has UNICEF prepared for the long-term impacts of COVID-19? Were there any challenges in raising interest in long-term impacts and programming to respond to such impacts?

#### **HR**

- Has UNICEF undertaken appropriate duty of care for its staff and partners during this time? What are the key lessons learned?

#### **Supply**

- What have been the main changes that the supply division has had to make in its approach to COVID-19? How will this change the supply work of the future?





