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Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

Management response to the evaluation report

Evaluation of UNICEF work for children in urban settings

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the UNICEF response to the evaluation of UNICEF work for children in urban settings, completed in 2020. It provides a summary of the actions that the organization will take to address the recommendations.

Elements of a decision for consideration by the Executive Board are provided in section VI.

* E/ICEF/2021/1.

Note: The present document was processed in its entirety by UNICEF.



I. Overview

1. The evaluation of UNICEF work for children in urban settings sought to assess the relevance of UNICEF approaches in urban areas and the results achieved so far and to identify good practices and lessons learned. The evaluation analysed the ongoing work of UNICEF for children in urban settings with an eye to the considerations and preparations for the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

2. The evaluation time period covered that of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 as well as the strategic plan baseline for urban work, 2016–2020. The case studies contained in the evaluation report also examined earlier programming results. In-depth case studies were conducted in five countries: Belize, Brazil, Spain, the Philippines and the Syrian Arab Republic. India was added later for studying the UNICEF response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The evaluation covered UNICEF work at the global level as well as at the country level.

II. Urbanization and children

3. Over half of the world’s children now live in cities. These figures are set to increase in the coming years, with an estimated 2.5 billion people added to the existing urban population of 4.4 billion by 2050, mostly in Asia and Africa. Currently, the slum population exceeds 1 billion and continues to increase. If left unchecked, it is estimated that it will reach 2 billion in 2030. This means that in 10 years, one in four people globally will be slum-dwellers, a large proportion of them children. When child well-being is assessed, urban averages are generally better than rural averages. However, these averages mask large inequities within cities, with the poorest urban children faring worse than their peers in rural areas in many countries. Dense urban centres are also increasingly exposed to epidemics, natural hazards and pollution. Over 90 percent of COVID-19 cases are in urban areas and cities have dangerously high pollution levels, with 9 out of 10 urban residents breathing polluted air.

III. Analysis and findings

A. Drivers of change for children in urban settings

4. Delivering results at scale for children in urban settings requires different approaches than those used in rural areas, approaches that address the drivers of change in urban contexts. The evaluation created a framework to guide the analysis of drivers of change in urban contexts and to answer the evaluation questions based on three interconnected dimensions of change: (a) equity and inclusion (the core vision of change); (b) urbanization and planning (the spatial organization of change); and (c) complex adaptive systems (the management and implementation of change).

B. Main findings

5. UNICEF work in urban settings is largely relevant to the goals and strategies articulated in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the 2017 strategic note on UNICEF work for children in urban settings (“urban strategic note”). The current Strategic Plan places work in urban settings under Goal Area 4. However, as it is a cross-cutting issue, UNICEF will need to include relevant results areas and targets for work in urban settings under other Goal Areas as well. The urban strategic note should be updated to articulate a programme framework with associated indicators and identify responsibilities and resources from headquarters to the country level for contributions to urban results.

6. UNICEF employs three main approaches to working with children in urban settings: integrated, sectoral and the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), all of which have different country-specific models under them. The approaches draw from three different UNICEF frameworks or guidance for work in urban settings, local governance and the CFCI. Country offices need harmonized guidance on what urban programming in different contexts should look like and how UNICEF should work for children in urban settings.

7. The integrated approach has the strongest potential to achieve results for children in urban areas. Seventy-two country offices are engaged in urban programming. Currently only five of them work through an integrated approach, while 76 per cent of country offices use a sectoral approach for urban programming in development and humanitarian contexts. Only the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and immunization sectors have produced sectoral strategies and guidance for working in urban areas.

8. The CFCI model has gone the farthest in developing goals and a results framework, but it is not attuned to reducing disparities in urban settings nor does it specify targets and indicators. The CFCI recognition process is weak and a potential risk for the UNICEF brand, as in some CFCI models in high-income countries, cities and municipalities are given recognition in anticipation of the work they will do based on the commitments made, without an evaluation of the results achieved.

9. Within headquarters, only two posts are focused on the urban sector: a Senior Urban Adviser and an Urban WASH Specialist, both in the Programme Division. Only one regional office, the East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, has created an Urban Specialist post (currently stalled in recruitment due to lack of funds). In the regions with the fastest rates of urbanization and the most pressing urban inequities and crises, UNICEF has no designated focal points (Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, West and Central Africa) or budgets.

10. UNICEF does not sufficiently address the drivers of change, especially two major trends of exclusionary growth and planning, associated with the urban poor and informality. There is little focus on disaster risk reduction management or climate change adaptation or on addressing environmental degradation issues related to air and water pollution and waste in urban programming. Addressing the needs of vulnerable children in urban settings, especially in slums and informal settlements, should be at the core of UNICEF programming in countries with widespread urban informality.

11. Urban governance systems are more complex and bigger in scope than local governance systems. It is not possible to achieve results at scale working solely on bottom-up approaches with cities. The country cases across all the approaches reveal that municipal policy and resources, in cities large and small, are dependent on national and regional policy frameworks and fiscal transfers. This is particularly true in humanitarian crises, in which municipal resources can be easily overwhelmed. Effective urban governance involves the municipal-national interface, municipal capacity, the role of the private sector and political systems and institutions. To achieve results at scale, UNICEF urban approaches need to engage with all tiers of government.

12. The supplementary analysis on the UNICEF response to the COVID-19 pandemic identified three important lessons to inform future responses to emergencies in urban contexts: (a) countries with existing urban programmes were able to rapidly respond at scale, leveraging existing data, platforms and relationships to protect populations and ensure the continuity of services; (b) in countries in which UNICEF had invested in preparedness, Governments were more agile in their response through

cash transfers; and (c) the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed hidden vulnerabilities and priorities that should shape UNICEF work going forward.

IV. Recommendations

13. UNICEF agrees with the recommendations as follows:

Recommendation 1

14. Update the urban strategy note and issue an organizational procedure to give clear direction to country offices and partners on the ways in which UNICEF will enhance its support to children in urban settings, including regarding partnership models and the focus and scope of programming, and address unique structural barriers to child well-being in urban settings, spelling out the roles of headquarters, regional and country offices and National Committees

15. There is recognition that UNICEF must increase organizational focus and build staff capacity in programming in urban areas (slums in particular), while ensuring clarity regarding the interconnections between the various streams of work at all levels (i.e., national and subnational levels) and their contextual application.

16. UNICEF also agrees on the need to:

(a) Prioritize increasing work in urban settings with specific results areas and targets in the new strategic plan;

(b) Assist country offices to develop workplans and investment proposals to implement the redefined urban agenda.

Recommendation 2.1

17. In low- and middle-income countries with slums and informal settlements, prioritize addressing the needs of children through the most appropriate programming and partnership models, according to UNICEF comparative advantages:

(a) Develop and implement a whole-of-organization approach to advocacy, partnerships and fundraising for children in urban slums and informal settlements;

(b) In countries with slums, prioritize the above in country programme documents and workplans;

(c) Develop global and regional strategic partnerships to support actions for children in slums;

(d) Build coalitions and strengthen local capacity for the collection and analysis of intra-urban data on the situation of children in urban settings, including a specific multiple indicator cluster survey module covering issues relating to informality, with better disaggregation within surveys (e.g., age groups, gender, slum/non-slum);

(e) In partnership with sister United Nations agencies, strengthen advocacy for child-responsive urban planning, participatory slum upgrading, safe public spaces for children and child-friendly transportation systems as well as for issues around urban waste and environmental degradation.

Recommendation 2.2

18. In high-income countries, refocus the CFCI to deepen engagement in child rights advocacy and child participation:

(a) Streamline accountability for the CFCI to enable its expansion as a strategic engagement in the urban areas of high-income countries only. UNICEF

agrees on the need to refocus and strengthen the CFCI and to define accountabilities, and recognizes the need for this to be restricted to high-income countries where the CFCI is part of UNICEF programming. In high-income countries, the engagement at the regional and local levels with government authorities and other stakeholders will be informed by the application of regional and local governance programming, including the urban organizational procedure. This procedure will bring together the 2017 strategic note on UNICEF work for children in urban settings (“urban strategic note”), the guidance on local governance and a revised CFCI approach as one part of a wider approach to realizing children’s rights across a range of territorial contexts;

(b) Given the reputational risks associated with the recognition or certification by UNICEF of cities and municipalities as child-friendly, the organization should engage with such relevant partners as governments (state or national) or think tanks (e.g., universities) that could take over the accountabilities of the recognition/certification process based on a robust monitoring and evaluation system.

Recommendation 3

19. Work on the link between humanitarian and development programming in cities and towns, exploring the ways in which investment in infrastructure and governance can reduce exposure and risk for affected populations and help cities to be more resilient.

Recommendation 3.1

20. Enhance preparedness capacity within urban areas from a multi-hazard perspective and link to climate resilience and environmental degradation.

Recommendation 3.2

21. Develop additional guidance on applying the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action in urban settings, including in slums and informal settlements.

Recommendation 4

22. Expand organizational capacity in staffing and architecture at all levels to support the urban agenda and provide for the appropriate institutional location of the few urban specialists that the organization has. In addition, introduce a multilevel support system for addressing urban issues, especially those related to slums, and facilitate partnerships and resource mobilization.

23. Regional offices and country offices should articulate their urban focus in light of their contexts and programme and partnership priorities, and designate urban focal points to coordinate and support urban programming in country offices.

V. Key evaluation recommendations and UNICEF management response

<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible section(s)</i>	<i>Expected completion date</i>	<i>Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled</i>	<i>Supporting documents</i>
<p>Evaluation recommendation 1: Update the urban strategic note and issue an organizational procedure to give clear direction to country offices and partners on how UNICEF will enhance its support to children in urban settings, including the focus and scope of programming, programming and partnership models, how to address unique structural barriers to child well-being in urban settings, and spelling out the roles of headquarters, regional and country offices and National Committees.</p> <p>Prioritize increasing work in urban settings with specific results areas/targets in the new strategic plan.</p> <p>Assist country offices to develop work plans and investment proposals to implement the redefined urban agenda.</p> <p>Management response: Agree</p> <p>The urban strategic note of 2017 will be updated considering the lessons from the analysis of the drivers of change for the well-being of children in urban settings and lessons learned from ongoing programmes. An organizational procedure will be issued on urban programming, bringing together the urban strategic note, the guidance on local governance and a revised Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) approach as one part of a wider approach to realizing children's rights across a range of territorial contexts.</p>				
Update the urban strategic note with programme components and indicators based on emerging evidence and lessons learned from existing country programmes for a coordinated multisectoral response to address structural barriers to the well-being of children in urban settings.	Programme Division, Urban Unit, Urban Task Team and Social Policy Section	30 June 2021	Not started	Country office annual reports for the period 2018–2020, report of the evaluation of UNICEF work for children in urban settings, case studies
Develop an urban situational analysis to articulate urban-specific results areas and targets for the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.	Programme Division, Urban Unit Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, Data and Analytics Section	28 February 2021	Under way	
An organizational procedure will be issued on urban programming, bringing together the urban strategic note, the guidance on local governance and a revised CFCI approach as one part of a wider approach to realizing children's rights across a range of territorial contexts. This will give	Director, Programme Division	30 September 2021	Not started	

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direction to sectors for developing guidance on systems- strengthening in work for children in urban settings and clear direction to country offices on context-specific programming and partnership models across low-, middle- and high-income countries to address the unique structural barriers to child well-being in urban settings and define the roles of headquarters, regional and country offices and National Committees.				
Conduct three global webinars/sessions for regional management teams on the updated urban strategic note and organizational procedure.	Programme Division, Urban Unit and Social Policy Section	31 December 2021	Not started	
On-site and online support to at least 10 countries per year for integrating urban programming in their country programme documents.	Programme Division, Urban Unit and Urban Task Team	31 December 2022	Not started	
<p>Evaluation recommendation 2:</p> <p>2.1 In low- and middle-income countries with slums/informal settlements, prioritize addressing the needs of children through the most appropriate programming and partnership models according to UNICEF comparative advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Develop and implement a whole-of-organization approach to advocacy, partnerships and fundraising for children in urban slums and informal settlements; (b) In countries with slums, prioritize the above in country programme documents and workplans; (c) Develop global and regional strategic partnerships to support actions for children in slums; (d) Build coalitions and strengthen local capacity for collection and analysis of intra-urban data on the situation of children in urban settings, including a specific multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) module covering issues relating to informality, with better disaggregation within surveys (age groups, gender, slum/non-slum, etc.); (e) In partnership with sister United Nations agencies, strengthen advocacy for child-responsive urban planning, participatory slum upgrading, safe public spaces for children and child-friendly transportation systems, and issues around urban waste and environmental degradation. <p>2.2 In high-income countries, refocus the CFCI to deepen engagement on child rights advocacy and child participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Streamline accountability for the CFCI to enable its expansion as a strategic engagement in urban areas of high-income countries only; 				

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<p>(b) Given the reputational risks associated with UNICEF recognizing or certifying cities and municipalities as child-friendly, UNICEF should engage with relevant partners such as government (state or national) or think tanks (e.g., universities) that could take over the accountabilities of the recognition/certification process based on a robust monitoring and evaluation system.</p> <p>Management response: Agree</p> <p>With more than 1 billion people currently living in slums, half of them children, and the numbers estimated to double in the next 10 years, an organization-wide strategy will be developed for advocacy, partnerships and fundraising for children in slums and informal settlements. Urban programming at all levels (i.e., national and subnational, etc.), will be tailored to country contexts, with low- and middle-income countries focusing on strengthening the capacity of cities for the analysis of intra-urban data, child-responsive urban planning and strategic interventions to address the unique structural barriers to child well-being; in high-income countries the organizational procedure will be promoted (where contextually applicable) and the CFCI will focus on child-rights advocacy and child participation, with the accountabilities of the recognition/certification process transferred to the appropriate partners.</p>				
Constitute an interdivisional task team to strategize and develop an action plan for advocacy and programming for children in slums and to support country offices.	Programme Division	June 2021	Under way. There is an urban task team consisting of sectoral urban focal points, which will be expanded to bring in relevant staff from other divisions.	
Estimate the child slum population in 40 low- and middle-income countries.	Programme Division, Urban Unit Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, Data and Analytics Section	April 2021	Under way. This is being undertaken with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).	
Advocate and develop a chapter on children in slums and informal settlements for inclusion in the End-Line Global Report on Slums 2021.	Programme Division, Urban Unit Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, Data and Analytics Section	April 2021	Under way. This is being co-created with UN-Habitat.	
Strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders focusing on slums (UN-Habitat, Cities Alliance and Slum Dwellers International) to promote the rights of children in slums through improved data,	Programme Division, Urban Unit Division of Data, Analytics,	April 2021	Under way. Letter of engagement signed with UN-Habitat. UNICEF accepted as a	

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advocacy and programming.	Planning and Monitoring, Data and Analytics Section		member of Cities Alliance.	
Within the context of the new UNICEF strategic plan, identify high-impact priority programme areas (in sectors) to focus the organization's work in urban areas, including a specific focus on slums.	Programme Division, Urban Unit and Programme Division sections	September 2021		
Undertake advocacy to include key child-specific urban indicators in the global urban monitoring framework.	Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, Data and Analytics Section	April 2021	UNICEF included in the expert group.	
A specific MICS module for issues relating to informality will be considered as part of the development of MICS-7 and its feasibility will be reported, contingent upon technical considerations and resources.	Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, Data and Analytics Section	December 2021		
Establish a clear plan and road map for capacity-building and technical support to strengthen the programmatic component of the CFCI, child-rights advocacy and child and youth participation.	Programme Division	March 2021	Under way Mapping of capacity-building needs in high-income countries conducted.	
Define accountabilities, roles and responsibilities for the CFCI between the Programme Division, the Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division and National Committees, in line with the emerging approach to programming in high-income countries and in country offices in which the CFCI is undertaken as part of the local governance approach to UNICEF programming.	Programme Division	December 2021		
Develop a plan to transfer accountability for recognition/accreditation to the relevant national Governments or national partners.	Programme Division	December 2021		

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<p>Evaluation recommendation 3: Work on the humanitarian-development nexus in cities and towns, exploring how investment in infrastructure and governance can reduce exposure and risk for affected populations and help cities to be more resilient.</p> <p>Enhance preparedness capacity within urban areas from a multi-hazard perspective and link to climate resilience and environmental degradation.</p> <p>Develop additional guidance on applying the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action in urban settings, including in slums and informal settlements.</p> <p>Management response: Agree</p> <p>Informality raises exposure to economic shocks and environmental risks. These are compounded by climate change, pollution and a lack of waste management. Increasingly, the urban face of humanitarian crises is reshaping emergency and crisis response. In recent years, urban areas have seen an increase in conflict and violence as well as in outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as Ebola and, currently, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); slums and informal areas have emerged as hot spots for transmission, with 90 per cent of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in urban areas. Analyses for risk-informed programming and guidance for operationalizing frameworks for preparedness and humanitarian action will be reviewed and revised for a city-specific response, taking into account such characteristics of urban environments as density, informality, complex interdependent systems and the diversity and multiplicity of actors.</p>				
Develop guidance on including the consideration of urban environments in the contextual risk analysis in emergency preparedness plans.	Office of Emergency Programmes, Risk Analysis and Preparedness Section	31 December 2021	Not started	
Review emergency preparedness plans to determine whether there is scope for adjustments for urban environments.	Office of Emergency Programmes, Risk Analysis and Preparedness Section	31 December 2021	Not started	
Develop and/or adapt operational tools and guidance to build the capacity of municipal authorities to lead and coordinate multisectoral preparedness programming and service provision to children in urban areas across linked humanitarian and development programming.	Office of Emergency Programmes, Global Cluster Coordination Unit	31 December 2021	Develop humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law guidance and training (completed). Coordinate the implementation of the government-led training package on water, sanitation and hygiene in emergencies	

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			<p>(completed, not yet online).</p> <p>Develop toolkit on child participation to support the COVID-19 pandemic response (completed, not yet online).</p> <p>Adapt the child participation coordination handbook for use by local governments (completed, not yet online).</p> <p>Adapt the child participation guide and training package on coordination, preparedness and response for Latin America (completed, not yet online).</p>	
<p>Provide support to 10 country offices to implement the UNICEF Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming; strengthen the focus on risks to children in urban settings as an integrated part of risk and conflict analysis, which informs both humanitarian and development programming and linkages to peace.</p>	<p>Programme Division</p>	<p>31 December 2021</p>		<p>UNICEF Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming</p>
<p>Support the roll-out of the UNICEF Guidance on Local Governance and Sustaining Peace in three</p>	<p>Programme Division</p>	<p>31 December</p>		

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countries, with a focus on engagement with municipal authorities and actors and building peace in urban settings.		2021		
Support country offices to engage in climate, environment and disaster risk reduction in urban settings, including developing guidance that includes existing resources on data and analysis, advocacy positions, partnerships and recommendations for the implementation of programming.	Programme Division	31 December 2021		
Provide guidance to country offices and partners on protection and advocacy measures to prevent and address specific protection threats against children in urban humanitarian crises.	Office of Emergency Programmes, Humanitarian Policy Section	31 December 2021	Provide legal, operational and protection humanitarian policy to regional and country offices on various thematic concerns, such as: (a) Attacks on civilian objects, such as schools and water and sanitation infrastructure; (b) Ongoing support on the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, notably as it impacts urban centres, including the killing and maiming of children, attacks on hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access;	

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			<p>(c) Humanitarian consequences of the effects of explosive weapons in populated areas;</p> <p>(d) Protection threats, international humanitarian law dilemmas emanating from siege scenarios and the evacuations of civilians;</p> <p>(e) Guidance on urban internal displacement, with a special focus on the vulnerability of children.</p>	
Develop sector/cluster-specific guidance for urban settings, including in slums and informal settlements aligned with the Core Commitments for Children.	Office of Emergency Programmes, Global Cluster Coordination Unit Programme Division	31 December 2021		
<p>Evaluation recommendation 4: Expand organizational capacity in staffing and architecture at all levels to support the urban agenda and to provide for the appropriate institutional location of the few urban specialists that the organization has. In addition, introduce a multilevel support system for addressing urban issues, especially those related to slums, and facilitate partnerships and resource mobilization.</p> <p>Regional offices and country offices to articulate their urban focus in light of their contexts and programme and partnership priorities and designate urban focal points to coordinate and support urban programming in country offices.</p> <p>Management response: Agree</p> <p>The organizational capacity of UNICEF will be expanded to address the enhanced scope and thrust of programming for children in urban contexts. Staff skills will be upgraded and internal structures developed to strengthen urban systems to address the unique programming challenges in urban environments and to navigate the complex urban governance system. Regional offices and country offices will be supported to articulate their urban focus and leverage partnerships and networks</p>				

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to maximize the organization's efforts. The location of urban specialists within country programmes will continue to be guided by contextual realities and what makes most sense to country and regional offices in light of the programmatic results and resource-mobilization opportunities, as defined in country programme management plans.				
Undertake a functional and capacity analysis of the Programme Division, the Data and Analytics Section of the Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring and the regional offices for urban programming to provide recommendations for staffing and the appropriate institutional location of the urban specialists and to establish a multilayer support system for country offices.	Programme Division	31 December 2021	Not started	
Develop and deliver a blended training course for staff to enhance the understanding of the context and the drivers of change for children in urban settings.	Programme Division with the Learning and Knowledge Management Unit Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring	June 2022	Learning assessment completed. Long-term agreement in place.	
In the organizational procedure on urban programming, include direction and guidance to regional offices to articulate their urban focus based on their contexts and programme and partnership priorities, and designate urban focal points to coordinate and support urban programming in country offices.	Programme Division		Not started	
Develop a pitch document for urban programming resource mobilization.	Programme Division, Urban Unit, with Public Partnerships Division	30 June 2021	Not started	

VI. Draft decision

The Executive Board

Takes note of the evaluation of UNICEF work for children in urban settings, its summary ([E/ICEF/2021/3](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2021/4](#)) and of the evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, its summary ([E/ICEF/2021/5](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2021/6](#)).
