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Plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017: review and update for 2016-2017

Summary

The plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017 was presented at the first regular session of the Executive Board of 2014. The plan presented the guiding principles and objectives for global thematic evaluations in UNICEF, as well as a prioritized list of topics, along with details of the resource framework, the approach to implementation, key risks and the reporting arrangements.

The present report updates and revises the plan. It reviews progress in implementing the plan and presents revisions to the plan for the period 2016-2017. The approach and principles underlying the original plan and its implementation are unchanged. Revisions to the list of topics for evaluation in 2016 and 2017 reflect emerging priorities and are limited in scope. The evaluation plan therefore remains closely aligned with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017.

* E/ICEF/2016/1.



I. Introduction

1. This report updates and revises the UNICEF plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017, which was presented to the UNICEF Executive Board at the first regular session of 2014. The present report reviews progress in implementing the plan and presents revisions to the plan for the period 2016-2017. The approach and principles underlying the plan and its implementation are unchanged, and reference should be made to the earlier document for additional details.

2. The revised evaluation policy requires the Evaluation Office to prepare “a global evaluation plan, laying out strategic priorities for evaluation and identifying major global thematic evaluations to be undertaken independently by the Evaluation Office; designing and managing global evaluations in line with international standards of best practice; and providing timely dissemination of the results for action by management and other stakeholders”.¹ The plan for global thematic evaluations responds to this requirement.

3. The global thematic evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office are wide-ranging exercises intended to take a comprehensive view of the work of UNICEF in a particular subject area or theme and to provide, in each case, findings, conclusions and recommendations of strategic relevance to the organization. The plan for global thematic evaluations provides a framework for undertaking these major evaluations. The plan is closely aligned with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 and is intended to support and inform the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

4. The revisions presented in this document were made following consultations across UNICEF offices at headquarter and regional levels. Colleagues were invited to review the topics proposed for evaluation in 2016 and 2017 and indicate their preferences as well as to suggest new topics where these were felt to be important. The revisions made by the Evaluation Office reflect emerging priorities but are limited in number and scope. The evaluation plan therefore remains closely aligned with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017.

5. This report is organized as follows: following a note on context, the purpose and key principles of the plan are reiterated and the overall content of the plan over the period 2014-2017 is briefly recapped (sections II to IV). Section V describes progress in implementing the plan in 2014 and 2015, providing a snapshot of implementation status at the end of 2015. Section VI presents plans for 2016 and 2017, including a number of revisions to the original plan. Readers wishing to review the list of evaluations proposed for 2016-2017 should turn to this section. The subsequent sections outline the resource framework, key risks and arrangements for reporting.

¹ See paragraph 35 (b) of the Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2013/14](#)).

II. Context

6. This document is concerned with the global thematic evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office and does not cover the other activities undertaken by the Office.² Nor does the plan cover evaluations undertaken by other offices across UNICEF, notably the relatively large number of evaluations conducted at regional and country level that address different requirements.³

7. Related exercises undertaken by other parts of UNICEF (e.g. audits, assessments and research studies) have been taken into account in preparing the plan for global thematic evaluations so that duplication of assessments and evaluations conducted by others can be avoided.

III. Plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017: purpose and principles

8. The plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017 aims to provide a coherent framework within which useful evaluation evidence can be generated on the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the organization's work under the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, as well as providing evidence, as far as possible, of impact and sustainability.

9. The key evaluation principles set out in the revised evaluation policy — utility, credibility and independence — guide the selection and delivery of global thematic evaluations. Relevance and demand from UNICEF management, staff and stakeholders is closely tied to utility. Revisions to the plan reflect evolving stakeholder needs, demands and interests. Coverage is also important in reflecting UNICEF activities in terms of geography, sectoral or thematic focus, and resource allocations or expenditure. A related consideration is additionality: this concerns the need to deliver evidence and analysis that adds to the existing stock of knowledge and avoids duplication.

10. The plan also gives attention to risk, addressing areas where UNICEF may be facing high levels of risk, including through novel, innovative or contentious work; operations in unstable environments; and interventions involving many stakeholders and long delivery chains.

² In line with the revised evaluation policy, the Evaluation Office contributes to oversight of UNICEF work in a number of ways: conducting evaluations; engaging in partnerships to undertake evaluations and promote evaluation capacity development; developing and maintaining systems for managing evaluation results, including evaluation results generated by evaluations conducted at regional and country levels; and guiding and supporting the development of the evaluation function across the organization.

³ In line with the revised evaluation policy, each office is responsible for preparing its own integrated monitoring and evaluation plan, which is designed to reflect the needs of its own particular programming context, objectives and work. This reflects the decentralized management structure of the organization.

IV. Overview of the plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017

11. This section summarizes the topics set out in the plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017 and the rationale for their selection. Under the plan, it is expected that the Evaluation Office will deliver four major evaluations and two smaller evaluations each year, as well as two evaluation synthesis studies. Supporting activities include preparation of relevant scoping and methodological studies. The full set of topics set out in the original plan is listed in annex I.

12. The rationale for selecting the evaluations listed in the plan is to provide evaluation evidence focusing on the seven outcome areas and implementation strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan, as well as the cross-cutting themes of gender equality and humanitarian action.

13. To avoid overstretching and spreading resources too thinly, several sets of issues were excluded. The plan does not include specific evaluations of organizational effectiveness or management as described in the “management efficiency and effectiveness” section of the UNICEF Strategic Plan. Assessments of the performance of specific divisions are not included in the present evaluation plan, as such assessments are routinely covered by the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI). Similarly, country programme evaluations have not been included in the plan as country offices are systematically audited by OIAI.

V. Progress in implementing the plan, 2014-2015

14. Progress made in implementing the plan in 2014 and 2015 is summarized in tables 1 and 2 that follow. While many of the evaluations have been completed, others are still in progress. As noted in the annual report for 2014 on the evaluation function in UNICEF,⁴ there were delays in launching the implementation of the plan resulting from the need to complete ongoing evaluation activities rolling forward from the previous period. In addition, the unprecedented number of Level 3 emergencies required urgent attention. In these circumstances, adjustments to the plan were made, as noted in tables 1 and 2. Certain topics have been added and others either postponed to 2016 or dropped from the schedule to allow space for more pressing corporate priorities in the coming two years.

15. The Evaluation Office also engaged in several evaluations that do not appear in the plan. These were mainly joint evaluations and included three evaluations undertaken jointly through the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group that assessed the humanitarian response by the United Nations to emergencies in the Central African Republic, the Philippines and South Sudan. The Evaluation Office also participated in a joint evaluation led by the World Food Programme evaluation office on the REACH partnership (Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition); and served on the reference groups of two ongoing evaluations under the Independent System-Wide Evaluation initiative coordinated by the Joint Inspection Unit. Joint ventures of this kind can be difficult to address in medium-term plans, as calls for support may often arise at short notice.

⁴ [E/ICEF/2015/10](#), presented at the annual session of 2015.

16. Experience has shown that methodological activities can be hard to formalize. Although the plan made provision for one formal methodological output in each year, it has proved more practical to take up methodological challenges directly related to planned or ongoing evaluations. For example, methodological work on evaluability was needed initially to inform the evaluability assessment of the Strategic Plan, and has since been adapted for use in guiding the design of new country programmes. Likewise, evaluation challenges posed by the ongoing Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme are being addressed through piloting of a “developmental evaluation” approach in Ethiopia and Myanmar, in which evaluators attached to programme teams provide real-time support for change, adaptation and performance improvement. Given these practicalities, formal methodological outputs have therefore been dropped from the plan, although methodological work will continue and, where appropriate, UNICEF will continue to support the United Nations Evaluation Group and other partners in relevant methodological efforts.

Table 1
Status of evaluations planned for 2014

<i>Year (2014)</i>	<i>Status at the end of 2015</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
1. Child protection: combating violence against children	Completed.	–
2. UNICEF alignment with the Millennium Development Goals	Scoping exercise completed. Full evaluation cancelled.	Scoping indicated that UNICEF was well aligned and a summative evaluation would add little value.
3. Policy dialogue and advocacy work for children at national level	Scoping and mapping exercise completed. Full evaluation cancelled.	Scoping exercise was unable to establish a coherent focus or clear demand for a corporate-level evaluation.
4. Education: early learning and development standards (ELDS) and school readiness	Completed.	–
5. Evaluability of the Strategic Plan	Completed.	–
6. Communication for development: support for normative change	Under implementation.	Due for completion mid-2016.
7. Nutrition: review of evaluation results	Completed.	Presented to the Executive Board in September 2014.
8. Syria crisis: lessons learned synthesis of existing evaluations (joint) [†]	Launched.	Due for completion mid-2016.
9. Methods for evaluation of innovation	Superseded by work on evaluability.	Methodological work on evaluability informed the evaluation of the Strategic Plan and is informing ongoing guidance on the design of country programmes.

[†] Conducted jointly with the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group.

Table 2
Status of evaluations planned for 2015

<i>Year (2015)</i>	<i>Status at the end of 2015</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
1. Health: strengthening national health systems and capacity	Postponed to accommodate an evaluation of the UNICEF response to the Ebola epidemic.	Evaluation on strengthening health systems to be launched in 2016. Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the Ebola epidemic is due for completion mid-2016.
2. Preventing stunting: improving equitable use of nutritional support and care	Launched.	Due for completion end-2016.
3. WASH: supporting access to safe drinking water and hygienic practices	Postponed.	For implementation in 2016, with a specific focus on rural/small town water supply programming. Due for completion end-2016.
4. Education and Peacebuilding programme	Completed.	–
5. Support for national capacity development	Superseded.	Replaced by a major evaluation of the UNICEF humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic and the subregion (completed).*
6. Partnerships: implementation of the partnership strategy	Superseded.	Replaced by an evaluation of UNICEF response to crisis in the Central African Republic (completed).*
7. Social protection: review of evaluation results	Completed.	Presented to the Executive Board in September 2015.
8. Innovation: results of evaluations of new technologies and approaches	Postponed.	Innovation synthesis review to be undertaken in 2017. Replaced in 2015 by a review of evaluation results in WASH (due for completion in early 2016).
9. Methods for evaluation of policy	Superseded.	Replaced by pilot work on developmental evaluation (ongoing to mid-2016).

* These topics were deemed urgent and were therefore added to the plan.

VI. Revision of topics for 2016-2017

17. For the period 2016-2017, UNICEF is again scheduling six thematic evaluations each year. These represent a balance among sectoral issues drawn from the outcome areas and implementation strategies of the Strategic Plan, and between developmental and humanitarian concerns. Outcome areas not covered over the period 2014-2015 are

given priority, with particular attention to the health, HIV and AIDS and WASH sectors. Two synthesis reports will also be produced each year.

18. Tables 3 and 4 that follow summarize the topics and schedule for 2016 and 2017, respectively. Annex III presents in greater detail each of the topics currently scheduled for 2016-2017, indicating their intended focus and outlining how they link to the strategic objectives of UNICEF.

19. The revisions made by the Evaluation Office are few in number and scope. Most of the topics currently scheduled for evaluation in 2016 and 2017 already appeared in the original plan. However, following scoping consultations, the focus of several topics has been sharpened. For example, the evaluation of the UNICEF intervention in the WASH sector is now focused on UNICEF programming in rural areas and small towns.

20. Three new topics that did not appear in the original plan have been included: (a) technology in development; (b) coverage and quality of UNICEF humanitarian response in complex/high-threat environments; and (c) a synthesis of results from evaluations of UNICEF humanitarian action in protracted emergencies. Consultations indicate that each of these are considered to be high priority and they are now scheduled for implementation in 2017.

21. Technology in development is an increasingly important area of UNICEF activity, building on work on innovation initiated some years ago. More recently, work to develop and apply new technologies has been undertaken widely across UNICEF. Scheduled for 2017, an evaluation would provide an opportunity to assess the use of technology in development in UNICEF, including the rationale for its use and the framework for introducing, supporting and managing its use in programmes assisted by UNICEF. The aim would be to learn lessons from experience to date with a view to informing future efforts in the fast-evolving area.

22. Several recent evaluations have assessed the UNICEF response to protracted emergencies. A synthesis of key findings, lessons and conclusions from these evaluations would be timely in view of the increasing number of such emergencies. A thematic evaluation of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex and high-threat environments would allow for a deeper and more systematic analysis with a view to further improving, where possible, the coverage and quality of UNICEF action in such challenging contexts.

23. Several topics originally scheduled for 2016-2017 have been removed, given a lack of demand. These include: a summative evaluation of the Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES); a joint evaluation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Transformative Agenda; evaluation of integration and cross-sectoral linkages in UNICEF work; evaluation of the UNICEF approach to building resilience in the face of shocks and crises; and evaluation of the Global and Regional Programme under the Strategic Plan.

24. As in the preceding years, all evaluations listed will be commissioned and managed by the Evaluation Office, with the exception of joint evaluations, which will be undertaken in collaboration with other agencies, typically through arrangements involving shared costs and joint management.

Table 3
Topics proposed for global thematic evaluations, 2016

<i>Type</i>	<i>Year (2016)</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
1. Major evaluation	Strengthening national health systems and capacity	Carried forward from 2015.
2. Major evaluation	Girls' education and gender equality	As previously scheduled.
3. Major evaluation	Rural/small town water supply programming	Carried forward from 2015 with a sharpened focus.
4. Major evaluation	Preventing stunting: improving equitable use of nutritional support and care	Under implementation.
5. Evaluations	Preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV	As previously scheduled, now with a sharpened focus.
6. Evaluation	Health: H4+ joint programme on maternal, newborn and child health (joint)	As previously scheduled, currently under implementation.
7. Evaluation synthesis	Synthesis of evaluation findings in the HIV and AIDS sector	Brought forward from 2017 to complement item 5 above.
8. Evaluation synthesis	Review of UNICEF development effectiveness 2012-2015	As previously scheduled.

Table 4
Topics proposed for global thematic evaluations, 2017

<i>Type</i>	<i>Year (2017)</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
1. Major evaluation	Research evidence: support of generation and use of knowledge	As previously scheduled.
2. Major evaluation	Technology in development	New topic.
3. Major evaluation	Gender Action Plan	As previously scheduled.
4. Major evaluation	UNICEF work to strengthen child protection systems	Previously scheduled as an evaluation synthesis study, now to be conducted as a global thematic evaluation.
5. Evaluation	Support to national policy development in social protection	As previously scheduled, now with a sharpened focus.
6. Evaluation	Coverage and quality of UNICEF humanitarian response in complex/high-threat environments	New topic.
7. Evaluation synthesis	Synthesis of evaluation results on innovation/new technologies	Carried forward from 2015.
8. Evaluation synthesis	Synthesis of results from evaluations of UNICEF humanitarian action in protracted emergencies	New topic.

25. Due to their inherent unpredictability, evaluations of the UNICEF response to Level 3 humanitarian emergencies are not listed. However, it is anticipated that the Evaluation Office will continue to manage evaluations of these emergencies when conditions on the ground permit. These evaluations will not duplicate the operational peer reviews undertaken by senior managers in the first weeks of a major emergency, but will be undertaken at a later stage when the response is more mature, with the aim of identifying emerging results while also informing any adjustments required. The Evaluation Office will also continue to liaise with the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group to undertake joint evaluations of the wider United Nations response to these emergencies.

26. Several joint evaluation activities are anticipated but are not yet clearly defined; they are therefore not listed. These include joint evaluation activities relating to several joint programmes. The Evaluation Office is consulting on evaluation plans for a UNICEF/UNFPA programme on child marriage as well as on a second phase of the UNICEF/UNFPA joint programme on female genital mutilation/cutting. Under the Independent System-Wide Evaluation initiative, efforts on the joint evaluation of the contributions of the United Nations system to statistical capacity-building will continue into 2016.

VII. Resource framework

27. The Executive Director approved an increase in financial allocations to the Evaluation Office for the period 2014-2017. Allocations of regular resources (RR) to the Evaluation Office for the period totalled \$18.2 million. The budget of the Evaluation Office funds not only the programme of global thematic evaluations, but also other activities for which the Office has responsibility. These include support and oversight, in particular efforts to strengthen and professionalize the UNICEF evaluation function and underlying systems across the organization; and participation of the Evaluation Office in partnerships and networks, primarily inter-agency activities aimed at strengthening and harmonizing evaluation within the United Nations system, as well as initiatives to develop national evaluation capacity.

28. In recent years, the Evaluation Office has allocated \$450,000 to each major global thematic evaluation; \$250,000 each to more narrowly scoped evaluations; and \$50,000 each for desk studies, such as evaluation synthesis reports. The main costs relate to consultancy fees and travel, based on the assumption that Evaluation Office staff closely scope, prepare and manage evaluations, including dissemination of evaluation results.

29. Allocations along these lines are reflected in the annual budget framework set out in table 5 below. Experience during 2014-2015 has confirmed the broad accuracy of these projected unit costs, and they remain the resource planning baseline through 2016 and 2017.

Table 5
Resource framework for evaluations, per year, 2014-2017
(In thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Total cost</i>	<i>Funding source</i>	
		<i>Regular resources (RR)</i>	<i>Other resources (OR)</i>
1. Major evaluation	450	450	–
2. Major evaluation	450	450	–
3. Major evaluation	450	450	–
4. Major evaluation	450	–	450
5. Evaluation	250	250	–
6. Evaluation	250	–	250
7. Evaluation synthesis	50	50	–
8. Evaluation synthesis	50	50	–
9. Methodological review	50	–	50
10. Scoping studies	100	50	50
11. Contingency	200	–	200
Total	2 750	1 750	1 000

30. The resource framework is intended to be a general guide rather than a strict budgetary structure. While there is now greater predictability in the level of resources allocated to the Evaluation Office, it is expected that funding of \$1 million in other resources will need to be mobilized annually. Some flexibility is required to meet ad hoc demands that may arise in the course of any given year, for example, for humanitarian evaluations and participation in joint evaluations. Contingency funds may be required to address emerging priorities where they are considered important and in line with the overall priorities of the plan for global thematic evaluations. The framework therefore includes contingency funding of \$200,000 in other resources.

VIII. Risks

31. Risks to delivery of the plan for global thematic evaluations include the following:

(a) *High demand for corporate-level evaluations not included in the plan.* The commitment to undertaking corporate-level evaluations of major emergencies requires the Evaluation Office to give urgent attention to such evaluations. If a large number of such emergencies arises, this will place heavy demands on available staff time and resources. Similar pressures may arise if UNICEF faces demands to participate in a significant number of high-priority joint evaluations. The plan may require adjustment to respond to emerging demands of this kind.

(b) *Changes to the Strategic Plan.* The plan for global thematic evaluations is focused on the priorities set out in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. While major changes to the Strategic Plan are not expected, the evaluation plan will be further adjusted to address any significant shifts in strategic priorities.

IX. Reporting

32. Progress made on implementation of the plan for global thematic evaluations will be reported in the annual report of the Evaluation Office and the annual report on the evaluation function, which are presented to the Executive Board each year. The Executive Board will thereby be able to maintain oversight of the plan for global thematic evaluations through 2016 and 2017.

Annex I

Topics included in the plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017, as presented to the Executive Board in 2014¹

Table 1
Topics proposed for global thematic evaluations, 2014-2017

<i>Type</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
1. Major evaluation	Child protection: combating violence against children	Health: strengthening national health systems and capacity	Health: H4+ joint programme on maternal, newborn and child health (joint)	Health: supporting global and regional initiatives
2. Major evaluation	UNICEF alignment with the Millennium Development Goals	Preventing stunting: improving equitable use of nutritional support and care	Education: Girls' education and gender equality	Social inclusion: supporting policy and systems improvements
3. Major evaluation	Policy dialogue and advocacy work for children at national level	WASH: supporting access to safe drinking water and hygienic practices	Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES)	Research evidence: support for generation and use of knowledge
4. Major evaluation	Education: early learning and development standards (ELDS) and school readiness	Education and Peacebuilding programme	HIV and AIDS: improving equitable use of proven HIV prevention and treatment interventions	Gender equality: implementation of the Gender Action Plan
5. Evaluations	Evaluability of the Strategic Plan	Support for national capacity development	Transformative agenda (joint) ⁷ : improved coordination of humanitarian action	Resilience: sustaining development gains in the face of shocks and crises
6. Evaluation	Communication for development: support for normative change	Partnerships: implementation of the partnership strategy	Integration and cross-sectoral linkages	Global and Regional Programme: results achieved under the Strategic Plan
7. Evaluation synthesis	Nutrition: review of evaluation results	Social protection: review of evaluation results	WASH: review of evaluation results	HIV and AIDS: review of evaluation results

¹ Plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017, [E/ICEF/2014/3](#), presented at the first regular session of 2014.

<i>Type</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
8. Evaluation synthesis	Syria crisis: lessons learned synthesis of existing evaluations (joint) [†]	Innovation: results of evaluations of new technologies and approaches	Review of UNICEF development effectiveness, 2012-2015 (meta-evaluation and synthesis)	Child protection: support for national systems and capacity development: results of evaluations
9. Methodological studies	Methods for evaluation of innovation	Methods for evaluation of policy	Methods for participatory evaluation involving young people	Methods for evaluation of normative work

[†] Conducted jointly with the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group.

Annex II

Evaluation products

1. Under the plan for global thematic evaluations, it is expected that the Evaluation Office will deliver four major evaluations and two smaller evaluations each year, as well as two evaluation synthesis studies. Supporting activities will include preparation of relevant scoping studies and annual preparation of a methodological review.
2. The “major evaluation” category includes the large-scale global thematic evaluations undertaken independently by the Evaluation Office. Each of these large-scale evaluations deals with an important topic or theme, and usually evaluates not only the relevance and coherence of the broad strategic framework and overall results achieved, but also the efficiency and effectiveness of country and regional implementation. They assess, where possible, the outcomes, impact and sustainability of UNICEF work. Such evaluations often adopt a case-study approach, looking closely at performance in several country programmes and engaging with key partners and stakeholders at country level. Case studies may be complemented by questionnaire surveys that provide a broader picture. Major evaluations are demanding of time and resources, taking 12 to 18 months to complete, at an estimated average cost of \$450,000.
3. Recent examples of such global thematic evaluations include, for example, the evaluation of UNICEF work to combat violence against children, and the evaluation of UNICEF support for early learning and school readiness.
4. The “evaluation” category covers evaluations of a more modest scope, which typically look at an issue or a programme of narrower scope than the broad thematic areas of the work of UNICEF. The methodology is more limited, with less emphasis on country case studies, while nevertheless aiming to assess results and determine the efficiency and effectiveness of country and regional implementation. The ongoing evaluation on the UNICEF approach to communication for development is an example.
5. The “evaluation synthesis study” category covers a different kind of product from the evaluations described above. The synthesis studies review the evaluation evidence available on a particular topic or theme. Typically, they will review the coverage and quality of the evaluation evidence base, draw together key findings and lessons from the evaluations reviewed, and present general conclusions and recommendations based on the analysis. While desk review is the main task involved, this may be supplemented by interviews and surveys. Examples of such studies include the review of evaluation results in the field of nutrition and the review of results from evaluations of the cash transfer modality.
6. Each of these products generates findings, lessons, conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations are generally directed towards UNICEF management and require preparation of a formal management response.
7. The remaining category concerns “methodological studies”. The issues to be addressed by evaluation continue to develop and change, and evaluation methods likewise continue to evolve. Methodological work by the Evaluation Office is intended to develop suitable methods and guidance for addressing such evaluation challenges within UNICEF, drawing on international best practice.

8. Evaluations can include both summative and formative elements. Summative evaluations are usually conducted towards the end of an intervention to determine how far expected results have been achieved (and whether there are significant unintended consequences); for purposes of accountability; and to inform the future design and delivery of similar interventions. Formative evaluations are conducted during implementation, with a view to helping to improve performance. Of course, many summative evaluations have a formative aspect insofar as they inform the future phases of an intervention or guide new interventions of a similar kind; equally, formative evaluations may have summative elements that assess the early phases of implementation. Evaluations undertaken under the plan for global thematic evaluations will, in most cases, consider both summative and formative aspects.

Annex III

Summary of global thematic evaluations to be conducted in 2016-2017

Sectoral programming [reflecting the focus areas of the Strategic Plan]

Education

Girls' education programmes

1. The emphasis on girls' education in current UNICEF programming has long roots, extending as far back as the mid-1990s through the African Girls' Education Initiative, the precursor to UNICEF girls' education programmes. It contributed to identifying and defining girls' education as a top UNICEF organizational priority that was prominent in the medium-term strategic plan 2002-2005. Additional programming innovations increased the attention and commitment, resulting in the basic education and gender equality focus area in the medium-term strategic plan 2006-2013. Since then, UNICEF has implemented girls' education programmes in every region, with large investments from education thematic funding, and has provided leadership as the secretariat of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative.

2. The evaluation of girls' education scheduled for 2016 will assess the strategies that UNICEF has deployed to bring more girls into school and to increase their school participation and success. It will also examine the extent to which the intended education outcomes and/or results were achieved, as well as broader outcomes for gender equality. The evaluation will also examine the soundness of the new girls' education programme strategies (as articulated in the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2014-2017) and whether programming is based on coherent theories of change, and determine if the necessary architecture is in place for managing and reporting of results.

WASH

UNICEF rural/small town water supply programming

3. UNICEF water supply programming has been undervalued since 2000, although it represents the second biggest area of investment by the WASH section globally and is directly linked to the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals. This evaluation would assess the relevance, effectiveness, equity, efficiency, sustainability, scalability and impact of UNICEF water supply interventions in rural areas and small towns, and in development settings in low- and middle-income countries. It would help to identify UNICEF comparative advantage in this area and focus programming where the organization has or may have the greatest added value and impact. A particular focus would be put on the recent growth areas for UNICEF investments within the sector, including water service management models, water quality at home, and integration with other WASH and non-WASH interventions (e.g. WASH in Schools). The evaluation would also document the experience with emerging strategies in the areas of manual drilling, real-time monitoring, household

water treatment and safe storage, and water safety planning. Finally, it would seek to fill the knowledge gap on sector regulation and institutional strengthening.

Child protection

UNICEF work to strengthen child protection systems

4. Unlike health and education, child protection efforts in national governmental structures are not normally contained in one integrated and publicly prominent ministry. The relevant management units typically spread across the health, education, interior, social welfare and justice portfolios. Moreover, efforts are required at each level of Government, including steps to develop understanding and trust by children and their families. The attempts to define and activate a systemic approach for child protection in such settings has been a UNICEF priority in recent years, but the elements that work best and the overall success of the systemic approach have never been evaluated. The evaluation is likely to use a case-study approach to provide an in-depth analysis of particular applications of the systems approach, including instances where progress has been much stronger or weaker than expected. Of significant interest will be systems-strengthening efforts in the context of both strong and weak States. In the latter, the approach depends on efforts made by non-governmental and civil society organizations. A unifying theme across the case studies will be an assessment of UNICEF guidance and support to child protection systems development through the organization's headquarters and regional offices.

HIV and AIDS

Preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV

5. UNICEF has been a leading institution in programming to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) for more than a decade, and significant progress has been achieved. This experience provides the opportunity for an unusually deep examination of UNICEF efforts to scale up PMTCT and paediatric care and treatment programmes all over the world and its contribution towards the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The lessons learned can help UNICEF and partners to adapt to new scientific knowledge, strengthen government capacities and adjust development partnerships.

6. The evaluation will cover UNICEF PMTCT and paediatric AIDS care and support programmes, and will examine the organizational engagement at global, regional and country levels. It will assess four aspects of PMTCT programming: (a) thematic leadership, advocacy and partnership; (b) resource mobilization; (c) strategic information, knowledge generation and dissemination; and (d) UNICEF organizational presence at the global, regional and country levels. Within these four aspects, the evaluation will pay particular attention to the cross-cutting issues of gender and gender inequality, child rights and HIV, and equity.

Health

Health systems strengthening

7. Strengthening of health systems is an integral part of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 outcome that aims for “improved and equitable use of high-impact maternal, newborn and child health interventions from pregnancy to adolescence and promotion of healthy behaviours.” In addition, a new UNICEF health sector strategy being developed includes a heavy focus on health systems strengthening.

8. This evaluation is primarily intended to learn lessons from extensive existing programming in the area of health systems strengthening — much of it embedded in UNICEF country programmes of cooperation. The evaluation will look across that experience and assess the approaches that have or have not worked, the underlying reasons and the circumstances involved. This evidence base can help to guide implementation of the new health sector strategy as well as establish a baseline against which to gauge progress in the coming years.

End-line evaluation of the H4+ Joint Programme 2011-2016

9. This evaluation is to be conducted jointly with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Government of Canada. It will examine a partnership programme (the H4+ partnership) that was created to harness the collective strengths and distinct advantages and capacities of UNFPA, UNICEF, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the World Bank and the World Health Organization to address reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health in the countries with high burdens of maternal and child morbidity and mortality. With grants from the Governments of Canada and Sweden, the H4+ partners have jointly assisted maternal and child health programmes in 10 countries.

10. The evaluation will inform the reform and future direction of H4+. The evaluation will serve a dual purpose of global and inter-agency learning, as well as strengthening accountability among the H4+ partners for the results achieved under the grant support. Among the priority issues to be addressed are:

- (a) the extent to which H4+ has contributed to strengthening national health systems in the programme countries;
- (b) changes in integrated health service provision along the continuum of care, covering intended and unintended outcomes of country-level support financed by the H4+ programme;
- (c) the extent to which H4+ has helped to identify innovative approaches, promoted their scale up at national level and their replication across countries;
- (d) collective progress in issues of supply, which has included extensive engagement with the UNICEF Supply Division, to harmonize a list of essential medical devices, revise the list of pharmaceuticals and facilitate access by nations and ultimate end users of all income levels.

Nutrition

Preventing stunting

11. Adequate growth and development of children is central to the UNICEF mandate. The organization has a track record of many decades of leadership and programme response in addressing undernutrition in children. This evaluation is the first formal attempt to assess UNICEF strategies and programme performance in reducing rates of stunting among children under age 5. The purpose of the evaluation is twofold: first, to contribute to improving the organization's accountability for its performance and results; and second, to generate evidence and learning to guide effective action towards the sustainable reduction of stunting in the coming years. The evaluation will generate learning on effective approaches — including the use of upstream policy work, multisectoral engagement, governance, coordination and partnerships, and key interventions required to reduce stunting in various contexts. It will identify actions that need to be undertaken to sustain the gains made and scale up interventions that work, as well as addressing inequities where these exist.

Social policy

Support to national policy development in social protection

12. A robust body of global evidence — including major contributions from UNICEF — has established the effectiveness of various social protection strategies. However, a major gap in the evidence base is how Governments and partners can best be supported to design and experiment with policies, and to subsequently scale them up sufficiently to have broad social and economic impacts. This evaluation would catalogue and analyse the methods used to advocate and research in the initial phases, and then to advocate and build capacity to expand the coverage and scale of interventions that have proven successful. While the emphasis will be on public systems, the critical role of communication and partnership with communities will also be included. This evaluation will be attentive to the constraints that relatively small UNICEF offices in middle-income countries in particular operate under, and will examine if there are missed opportunities for those offices compared to more amply resourced offices. In both settings, the ability of UNICEF to locate influential niches within a programming universe of many other large partners, including the development banks, will be of interest. The results will help UNICEF to focus its efforts on confirmed best practices while targeting areas of weakness for improvement.

Humanitarian programming

Coverage and quality of UNICEF humanitarian response in complex/high-threat environments

13. This evaluation concerns UNICEF approaches to extend the coverage and quality of response to affected populations in complex/high-threat environments where prevailing security concerns constrain access. This topic specifically addresses situations affected by conflict, and also relates to the wider discussions in the lead up to the World Humanitarian Summit around localization of humanitarian action. The challenges of managing security issues and access constraints have emerged in a

number of recent evaluations. The evaluation would look at the UNICEF strategy and target-setting processes; various modalities used by UNICEF to extend coverage, such as the rapid response mechanism; and aspects of the implementation of programme criticality mechanisms. A global thematic evaluation would provide a systematic and objective overview of various country contexts and assess how and how far UNICEF efforts are working, identifying where and why response efforts are succeeding or failing to reach affected populations. It would determine how much of this is attributable to the limits of humanitarian action in politicized environments and draw conclusions on whether or how UNICEF could do more.

Organizational issues

Research evidence: support for generation and use of knowledge

14. This evaluation will develop a deep understanding of the cycle of research/evidence generation and use at UNICEF to create value for children. It will explore different dimensions of *how* and *why* research/evidence is being generated and for *what* purposes and *when*. It will also look at *who* are the main stakeholders across the spectrum of those processes. The evaluation will examine the organizational needs, incentives and constraints that may encourage and/or hinder research generation and use (both internal and external). Issues to consider include the following:

(a) Defining the scope of research/evidence generation and the implications as to what is left out of that definition; and considering the relationship among research, evaluation, and data collection/analysis;

(b) Defining and assessing research impact, including paying attention to the differences among doing, disseminating and using good research;

(c) Assessing where UNICEF is generating and not generating a sufficient amount of quality research, by sectors and by cross-cutting topics important to fulfilling the Strategic Plan outcomes;

(d) The structure of research governance, implementation and use in UNICEF, starting with, but extending well beyond, the Office of Research;

(e) The fit of the UNICEF research function to the rapidly evolving information environment, e.g. research in the age of fast and abundant information and the challenge of maintaining agility;

(f) Understanding how different stakeholders perceive and react to the incentives to commission, develop and use research evidence.

Technology in development

15. The technology revolution over the past few decades has amplified hopes in the public and international development sectors for easier, better and bolder ways to tackle the world's most complex problems. The perception that there exist "quick wins" and well-tested utilitarian solutions is driving investments that influence decisions and programming. Meanwhile, there is limited information about the actual role of technology in driving development results for children.

16. Technology in development is an increasingly important area of UNICEF activity, building on work on innovation initiated some years ago. More recently,

work to develop and apply new technologies has been undertaken widely across UNICEF. Scheduled for 2017, the proposed evaluation would look at the use of technology in development at UNICEF, and seek to clarify the rationale for its use in programmes (who, why, how and for whom) and its relationship to wider systems thinking and strategic approaches, which are essential to the effectiveness and sustainability of these innovations. The aim would be to learn lessons from experience to date, with a view to informing future efforts in this fast-evolving area. Among other areas across UNICEF, the evaluation will examine as a priority initiatives in information and communications technology, digital technology and innovation. The effectiveness of specific innovations will be examined within the larger governance context around resourcing, technical support and communication, among other factors. This could unpack and address critical questions and inform thinking on important but sensitive issues such as big and open data, privacy, ownership, analytics and legal frameworks.

Gender Action Plan

17. The Gender Action Plan (GAP) is a fully articulated approach to gender mainstreaming that was designed to unfold within the same period and the same structures of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. The plan is both a general corporate priority and specific set of commitments in terms of accountabilities, targeted programming priorities, resourcing, architecture (i.e. staffing and structures within UNICEF) and indicators and results. Five key performance benchmarks are to be tracked. The evaluation would examine performance in each of these domains and explore why performance has or has not met expectations. The objective would be to support decision makers in the formulation of the next GAP as well as to offer guidance to offices at all levels that are working to improve their performance on gender equality.
