



MOPAN 2015-16 Assessments

**United Nations
Children's Fund (UNICEF)**

Executive Summary

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This institutional assessment of UNICEF covers the period from 2014 to mid-2016. Applying the MOPAN 3.0 methodology, the assessment considers organisational systems, practices and behaviours, as well as the results UNICEF achieves. The assessment considers five performance areas: four relate to organisational effectiveness (strategic management, operational management, relationship management and performance management) and the fifth relates to development effectiveness (results). It assesses UNICEF's performance against a framework of key indicators and associated micro-indicators that comprise the standards that characterise an effective multilateral organisation. The assessment also provides an overview of its performance trajectory. MOPAN assessed UNICEF in 2009 and 2012.

Context

UNICEF

- Was created in 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly to provide emergency assistance to children in countries devastated by World War II
- Is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- Is governed by its Executive Board, which comprises 36 members and is managed as a UN Agency, under UN rules and regulations
- Aims at the promotion and realisation of the rights of the child and strengthening the capacities of governmental partners to fulfil their obligations towards children under the Convention
- Is funded entirely through voluntary contributions, from governments, corporations, civil society organisations, and individuals
- Refreshed its vision of equity in 2010 as the major strategic driver for the organisation going forward

Organisation at a glance

- Established 1946
- Expenditure: USD5.1 billion (2015)
- Active in 190 countries
- Over 8 000 core staff
- Operates through:
 - Headquarter offices in New York, Geneva, Copenhagen, Florence, Brussels, and Tokyo
 - 7 regional offices
 - 157 field-based offices

Overall performance

The overall conclusion of the 2016 MOPAN assessment is that while there are some areas where performance can be improved, UNICEF meets the requirements of an effective multilateral organisation. It is a mature and confident organisation whose systems, processes and behaviours are fit for purpose according to its mandate and mission. UNICEF has assumed ownership of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and has a strong strategic architecture, geared to delivery on the Convention. UNICEF has strong awareness of its own comparative advantages – its convening power, advocacy capability, broad outreach across multiple sectors, strong field presence, and a mandate that covers the development-humanitarian continuum – and deploys these effectively within programmes, policy and normative work.

UNICEF has shaped its operational management to align delivery on its mission and mandate. A profound cultural ethos of the “rights of the child” permeates the organisation and translates into a strongly mission-driven institution. UNICEF prioritises relevance to the needs of children and women needs, and has introduced systems to maximise operational flexibility. Its efforts to strengthen government leadership and ownership, to foster collaboration, and to enhance national capacities, are especially valuable assets. The organisation is strongly future-focused, undertaking a wide range of horizon-scanning activities and being unafraid to experiment with innovation.

Reforms are underway in acknowledged areas of weakness such as human resources and results-based management, with systems aimed at bringing greater coherence to a highly decentralised organisational architecture. Yet despite UNICEF's maturity and confidence, there remain areas where performance can be improved. These include results based management, particularly as UNICEF moves forward into a new strategic planning period. Clarifying the different roles the organisation can adopt in varied operating contexts will help ensure that future relevance is sustained. Accountability and learning can be improved by improving evaluation coverage and systematising knowledge generation. Finally, environmental sustainability is an emerging agenda but requires additional momentum going forward.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths

- **A core commitment to the realisation of child rights**, which permeates different levels of the organisation
- **Commitment to organisational transparency** of both financial and programmatic data (although improvements can still be made)
- **Ongoing performance management improvements**
- **Embrace of cross-cutting issues** of gender mainstreaming, equity, good governance and human rights
- **Operational agility** and the ability to adjust to needs on the ground
- **Communications, advocacy and resource raising**, particularly in emergencies
- **A focus on the future**, including horizon-scanning of the wider context and high-level support for innovation

Areas for improvement

- **Results-based management**, particularly a stronger emphasis on results logic for the next strategic plan and country strategies that clearly sets out the rationale for prioritisation/choices made
- **Results-based rather than means-based budgeting** for clearer links from requirements to results; and more coherent/explicit reporting of expenditure against results
- **Clarity on the envisaged differentiation** of roles in different operating context in relation to UNICEF's comparative advantage
- **Evaluation coverage levels**, with emphasis on robust evaluative evidence on the efficiency and sustainability of UNICEF programming
- **Knowledge generation**, with more systematic approaches required
- **Use of country systems**, particularly more explicit corporate guidance
- **Environmental sustainability**, which requires additional focus and momentum