

PERFORMANCE AT A GLANCE: UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund

DECEMBER 2021

Overview

UNICEF'S PERFORMANCE

In 2020, UNICEF faced formidable external challenges to its work on behalf of the world's children: sustainable development deficits, persistent humanitarian crises and fragility, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and environmental crises and climate change. UNICEF also faced pressing internal challenges, such as translating programme results into more significant gains at the outcome level and working with growing earmarked funding and too few core resources. Challenges also included implementing new system-wide changes required by UNDS reform, doing more to combat sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH), and making the best of opportunities linked to innovation, shared services, and digitisation.

In this demanding global context, UNICEF's performance is found to be strong and balanced across MOPAN's four main dimensions of multilateral effectiveness: strategic management, operational management, relationship management, and performance management. However, UNICEF's performance on results was more mixed, with most output results achieved in both development programmes and humanitarian action but slower progress at the outcome level and room for improvement on environmental sustainability, efficiency, and sustainability. Based on this MOPAN assessment, some overall conclusions can be drawn.

UNICEF is well-oriented towards its mission statement and mandate

Accordingly, the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 is aimed at the vision of 'realising the rights of every child' and 'starting with the most deprived'. This vision is grounded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides the foundation for everything UNICEF does and which UNICEF considers to be a fundamental strength. At this level, however, questions arise about whether the centrality of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and development priorities in UNICEF's 2018-2021 results framework adequately reflect the humanitarian and normative aspects of UNICEF's mandate. Indeed, the UNICEF Strategic Plan was less clearly aligned with humanitarian principles and policies than with the SDGs, despite humanitarian action accounting for a majority of UNICEF's programmes budget. Equally UNICEF's focus on programme delivery in low-income countries that targets specific groups and rights leaves potential gaps in addressing 'intersectional' discrimination and exclusion more universally, including in high-income countries.

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UNICEF capitalises well on its main strengths

The overall assessment describes how UNICEF's key strengths across functional areas drive the organisation's effectiveness and combine to support the achievement of results across a global portfolio of programmes. Ongoing monitoring of the UNICEF Strategic Plan shows the organisation performs well on its main 'enablers' and 'change strategies,' which describe *how* UNICEF delivers results worldwide. Unfortunately, as found in the evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021, the organisation's monitoring, evaluation and learning activities pay too little attention to these enablers and change strategies compared to the results. This makes it difficult to invest in the capacities most needed to achieve UNICEF's priority goals. For UNICEF, the challenge of capitalising on its own strengths extends to leveraging its 'comparative advantage' in relation to other actors at global and country levels. While UNICEF formally defines comparative advantage at strategic plan and country programme levels, this is not always done in a dynamic way or informed by evidence of changing contexts. UNICEF's overall partnership model could go further to identify existing capacities and opportunities and then purposefully leverage them to generate higher value outcomes.

UNICEF is evolving appropriately to address challenges to its operating model

At the Midterm Review of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, UNICEF prioritised eight areas where it would accelerate efforts to 'bend the curve' with respect to related SDG targets, and UNICEF's draft Strategic Plan 2022-2025 now addresses the challenge of translating programme results into significant gains for children at the outcome level. UNICEF is advocating for more flexible funding and working with donors through the UN Funding Compact, while diversifying funding sources to address the problems of insufficient core resources and a declining 'quality' of funding. UNICEF is increasing the scope and scale of its work with UN agencies to seize opportunities and meet expectations linked to UNDS reform, but also with a view to achieving its own goals and accelerating SDG outcomes. Through the Reimagining Business Models Project, UNICEF is reviewing its operating model and organisational structure to make the most of innovation, shared services, and digitisation. Decisions arising from this project were to be presented to the Executive Board in late-2021, when further analysis of their appropriateness would be required. More broadly, UNICEF's evolving performance in response to rapidly changing contexts will be the subject of ongoing discussions at Executive Board level in years ahead.

UNICEF is undeniably a forward-looking organisation

At the corporate level, the UNICEF Strategic Plan uses a four-year horizon and looks towards achieving SDGs by 2030, informed by a strategic thinking process involving much of the organisation and by intelligence and foresight work done by UNICEF's Office of Global Insight and Policy, the organisation's internal 'think tank'. In each goal area, UNICEF develops longer-term strategies looking ahead more than a decade, such as the education strategy 2019-2030. At country level, planning works according to a five-year horizon informed by Situation Analyses, which are periodically updated. UNICEF's performance history shows an organisation that is willing and able to think ahead and adapt to changing contexts, through its commitment to continual learning and its perennial organisational reform activities.

LOOKING AHEAD

UNICEF's ability to stay effective and fulfil its mission in such a complex global environment will depend on many factors. The assessment brings six such factors into focus.

UNICEF's strategic planning processes can help the organisation navigate global challenges for children

While UNICEF's future direction remains to be seen, the new Strategic Plan 2022-2025 comes at a crucial time when accelerated progress is needed to achieve the SDGs for children, particularly children in fragile contexts and humanitarian crises. In setting ambitions for the 'decade of action' until 2030, the Strategic Plan offers UNICEF a way to drive systemic changes and make significant progress on SDGs for children. In the Plan, UNICEF will continue working towards the five goal areas, but with a shift towards outcomes, an intersectoral approach, and development and humanitarian action working together. To make it work, UNICEF will need to build on the strengths of the current Strategic Plan and processes, while also strengthening contributions to outcomes, increasing sustainability of results, and addressing inconsistencies in humanitarian action.

UNICEF's risk management capabilities can help the organisation manage organisational risks

Looking ahead, the global environment poses risks that UNICEF alone has limited control over, but need to be understood and managed. For example, UNICEF's core funding could be reduced or increasingly restricted and earmarked by large donors as result of COVID-19's potential economic impact. UNICEF's effective work could be threatened by an increasingly constrained and contested multilateral system. Deepening humanitarian crises, fragility, and vulnerability concentrated in specific areas could strain the organisation's capacities. In such contexts and others, fluctuating levels of government's commitment to child rights, gaps in the capacities of implementing partners, and the insufficient prioritisation of children who are being 'left behind' could further complicate UNICEF's programmes.

UNICEF's strategic leadership capacities can help deploy resources to priorities

As UNICEF makes choices about relative strategic and cross-cutting priorities, it will need to balance a global commitment to priority groups (the most vulnerable, ensuring 'no-one is left behind') with its normative role to uphold the rights of all children (realising the rights of every child). UNICEF can capitalise on its proven effectiveness at implementing 'cross-cutting priorities', such as gender equality and humanitarian action, to further advance other cross-cutting concerns such as human rights and the environment. Such choices remain complicated the ongoing difficulty of allocating funding to strategic priorities when most of the funding received is earmarked funding.

UNICEF's evolving business model can help make the organisation fit-for-the-future

The Reimagining Business Models Project (shortened to 'the Project'), launched in mid-2020, offers UNICEF an opportunity to adjust its organisational structure to be more agile, more responsive to shocks and emergencies, and identify more transformative solutions. The Project can assist the organisation in addressing siloes created by vertical accountability lines, and maximise use of digital platforms for horizontal online collaboration. It also provides an opportunity to consolidate the efficiency gains made by establishing the Global Shared Services Centre in 2015, and to further simplify planning and budget processes. By aligning these efforts with the UNDS reform agenda, UNICEF can further increase efficiencies, at the same time as improving its partnerships with UN partners. In making these organisational reforms, UNICEF must be meticulous in continuing to reduce the administrative burden on country offices. Doing so would free up staff time for improved programme capacity, efficient programme delivery, and achieve more sustainable collective outcomes. By increasing efficiencies and ensuring resources are used in the best way possible to achieve intended results, UNICEF will be better placed to pursue a more ambitious agenda, accelerate contributions to SDGs, and catalyse transformational changes.

UNICEF's evolving partnership model can help leverage greater resources for children

With its regular resource funding down to 20% of total funding, UNICEF will need to mobilise more core resources to fulfil its mission. The challenge is made more urgent when predicted available resources are expected to contract in years ahead. In this context, UNICEF's strong resource mobilisation function will play an important role in raising funds, but it will need to be complemented by an ever-greater ability to leverage resources from public and private sources, including domestic resources, international financial institutions, and the UN system. Similarly, UNICEF will need human resources to achieve its goals, and the five enablers in the new Strategic Plan, focused on staff, embody UNICEF's recognition of people as its greatest asset. But, as reflected in UNICEF's change strategies, UNICEF will need to go beyond the capacities of its own staff, and catalyse external partnerships, in order to achieve its goals. Accordingly, UNICEF will need to further develop its partnership model from a focus on programming, fundraising and advocacy, to one that leverages resources for children and catalyses partnerships for outcomes at global, regional, and county levels.

UNICEF's performance management system can help it achieve stronger results

The new Strategic Plan highlights the importance of performance enablers and change strategies as a 'first line of defence' against identified strategic risks, and commits to fully articulating their role in contributing to systemic change and monitoring their effectiveness alongside programmatic results. This will demand an evolved approach to results-based management which focuses on helping the organisation catalyse transformative and systemic change at the outcome level. To do this, UNICEF can build on its strong resource based management (RBM) system, evaluation

function, and programme results. But it will also need to strengthen evidence for impact pathways, increase the utility of performance monitoring for country programmes, increase the use of evidence and learning in programme design, develop tools and approaches for adaptive management, and strengthen the coherence of its disjointed evidence functions. By late-2021, UNICEF had launched an 'adaptive management' process to begin addressing these issues.

By building on its strong organisational performance, addressing challenges highlighted in the MOPAN assessment, and considering the factors of effectiveness described above, UNICEF will increase its capacity to achieve strategic goals, drive systemic changes for children by 2030, and realise the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged.

Strengths and areas for improvement

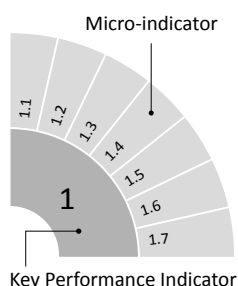
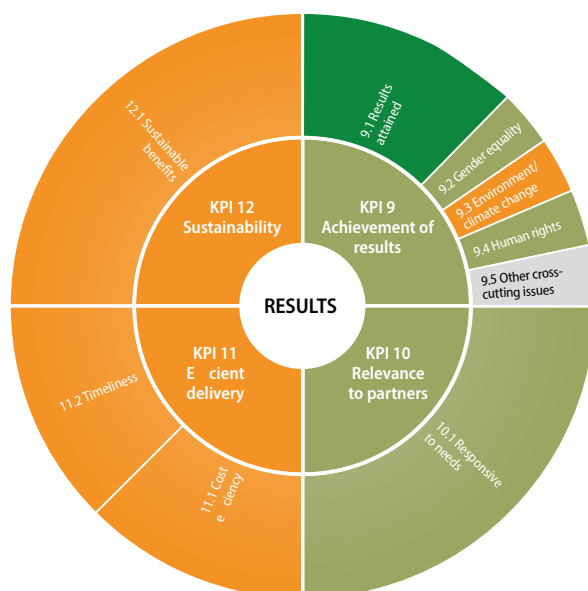
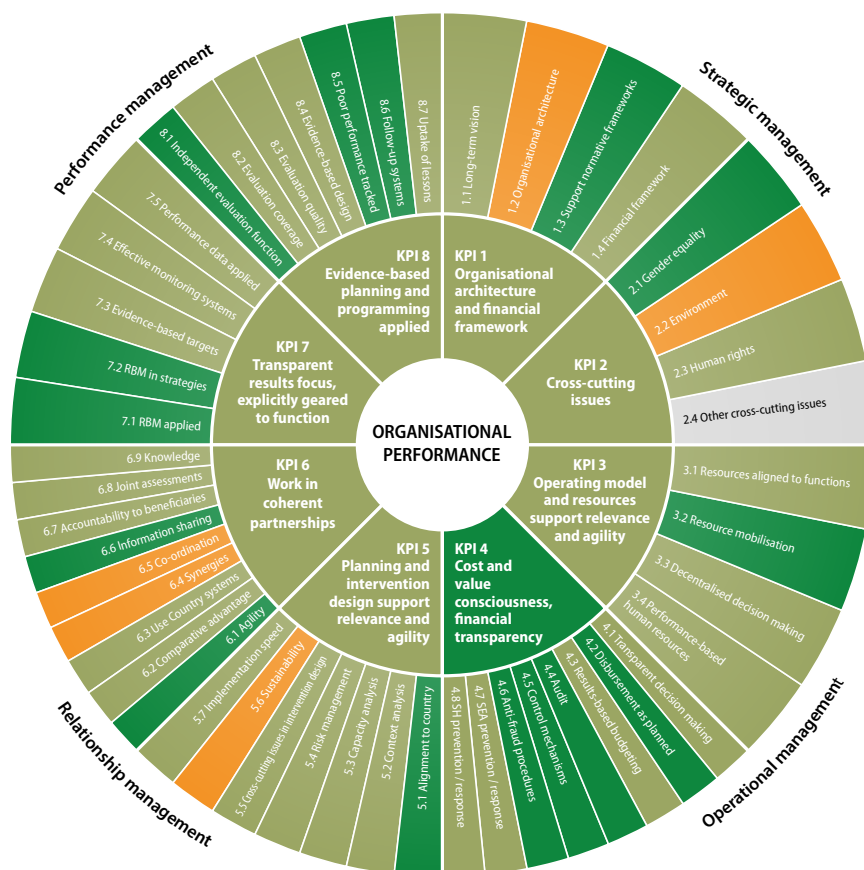
Main strengths

- A **Strategic Plan** enables UNICEF to implement its goals for children, with a comprehensive results framework and integrated budget that involve every part of UNICEF.
- Approach to promoting **gender equality** as a cross-cutting priority enables systematic implementation of global commitments.
- **Resource mobilisation** strategy supports achievement of the Strategic Plan, working to maximise regular resources and leverage public and private sector resources.
- **Financial accountability** practices in auditing, internal controls, and anti-fraud ensure transparent and accountable systems.
- **Country programmes** are aligned with national priorities, can flexibly respond to changing situations, and deliver relevant results.
- **Engagement with UN partners** through UNDS reform and global strategic partnerships aimed at accelerating progress towards achieving SDGs.
- A **results-based management system** and results framework applied at global and country levels, supported by an independent evaluation function.
- Delivery of **output-level results** in both development programmes and humanitarian action across the five goal areas.

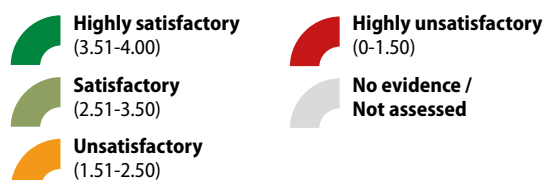
Main areas for improvement

- The **operating model** and **organisational structure** are not purposefully aligned with the Strategic Plan and are being reviewed.
- **Resource alignment** to strategic priorities is complicated by UNICEF's reliance on inflexible additional resources ('Other Resources').
- **UNICEF's role in country strategies** does not maximise contributions from national capacities including implementing partners and mobilising national resources.
- A **partnership model** focuses on programme implementation, fundraising and advocacy more than developing catalytic partnerships that can achieve higher level goals at scale.
- **Performance management** system, including results framework and evidence generation, is not enough geared towards helping country programmes to achieve UNICEF priorities.
- **Outcome-level results** are off-track and slowing UNICEF contributions to SDGs, despite strong output-level results.
- **Efficient delivery and sustainability** of results fall short because UNICEF lacks means to measure efficiency and insufficient national resources are invested to make results sustainable.

PERFORMANCE RATING SUMMARY FOR UNICEF



How to read these charts



MISSION AND MANDATE:

UNICEF's mission is to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet children's basic needs, and to expand opportunities for children to reach their full potential. Guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles, set international standards of behaviour towards children, and mobilise political will and material resources to deliver policies and services to children and their families.

GOVERNANCE:

UNICEF is governed by and accountable to an Executive Board, which is subject to the authority of the Economic and Social Council and provides inter-governmental support and oversight. The Board comprises 36 members representing the five regional groups of UN Member States. UNICEF is administered by an Executive Director appointed by the UN Secretary-General in consultation with the Executive Board.

STRUCTURE:

UNICEF is headquartered in New York, and has additional corporate offices in Geneva, Copenhagen, Florence, Budapest, Brussels, Tokyo and Seoul. A highly decentralised organisation, UNICEF is active in more than 190 countries, with seven regional offices providing oversight and technical assistance to country offices, who lead the organisation's collaboration with host governments. UNICEF is also supported by 33 national committees who advocate for the organisation worldwide. In 2020, the total staff count was 15 745 individuals, 70% of whom were national staff.

FINANCE:

In 2020, UNICEF's total income from the public and private sectors reached USD 7.6 billion, an 18% increase from 2019, most of which was earmarked funding for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF's total expenses amounted USD 5.7 billion in 2020, out of which 57% was humanitarian expense.

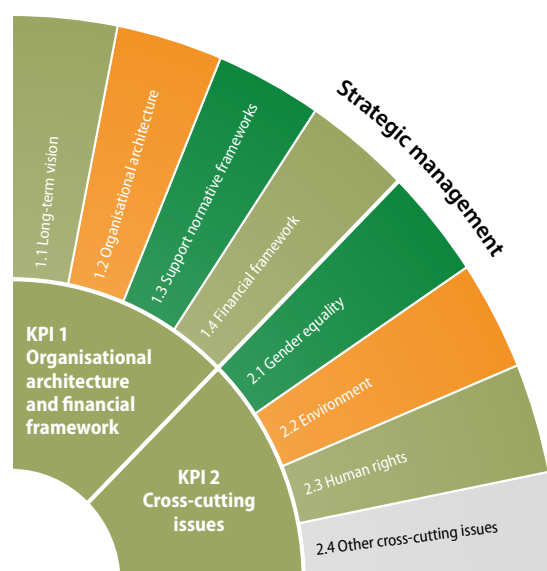
Key findings by performance area

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF UNICEF

Ratings for UNICEF's strategic performance, the first performance area, are driven upwards by the organisation's implementation of normative frameworks in development and humanitarian action, financial framework, and gender equality. Improvements are possible when it comes to having a long-term vision, and approaches to the environment and human rights. Performance was constrained by an organisational structure that did not explicitly support the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 but was under review through the Reimagining Business Models Project.

UNICEF's strategic management is distinguished by significant strengths:

- **Strategic Plan:** The UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 defines a clear vision for the organisation, grounded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It supports the achievement of the 2030 Agenda by establishing five goal areas linked to SDGs most relevant to children. It provides a comprehensive results framework that allows every part of UNICEF to align activities with these goals.
- **Integrated budget:** The Integrated Budget is a robust financial framework, which supports implementation of the Strategic Plan. It encourages a mix of flexible RR and restricted OR funding, and invites a looser earmarked funds through 10 thematic funding instruments established to support the Strategic Plan.
- **Gender equality:** UNICEF mainstreams gender equality in the Strategic Plan as a 'cross-cutting priority'. Programming is increasingly gender-responsive, and the gender architecture is relatively well-resourced.



UNICEF's strategic management faces two notable challenges:

- **Human rights:** The Strategic Plan 2018-2021 embeds the principles of human rights and partners recognise that UNICEF promotes the rights of the child and the most disadvantaged. However, the organisation maintains a relatively small human rights unit, diminished application of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) and prioritises programming approaches in low-income countries – an approach which may leave 'intersectional' gaps and do too little to address discrimination and exclusion in high-income countries.
- **Environment:** The Strategic Plan 2018-2021 also commits to environmental sustainability and climate change (ESCC) and developed indicators to monitor commitments, but implementation is inconsistent across country programmes, often focused on water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programmes, and limited by relatively weak processes and capacities.

UNICEF's strategic management faces a potential risk:

- **Organisational structure:** UNICEF uses a 'highly decentralised' organisational structure which supports relevant decision-making at country office (CO) level, but the organisational structure is not purposively aligned with the Strategic Plan 2018-2021. Interviewees considered UNICEF's model outdated for an increasingly digitised organisation. Its vertical chains of command were perceived to create siloes, complicate corporate coherence, and leave accountability gaps, particularly at headquarters level. At the time of assessment, UNICEF's organisational structure was undergoing a timely review to better support implementation of the Strategic Plan.

OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF UNICEF

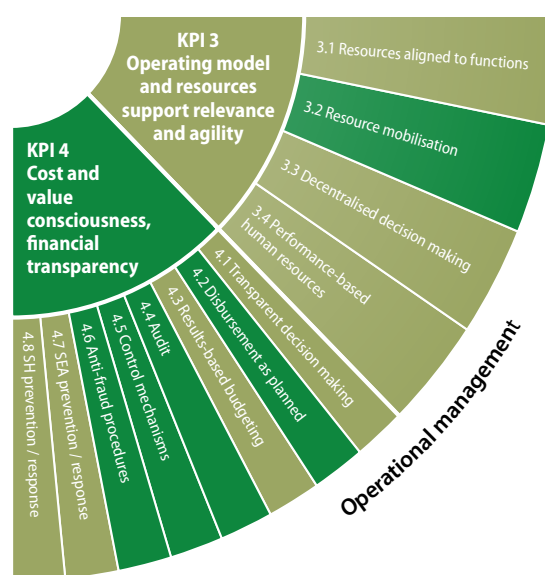
UNICEF performed well or very well in the area of operational management. The ratings for operational management are elevated by UNICEF's resource mobilisation, disbursements as planned, and financial accountability functions. Operational performance could be further improved in resource alignment, decentralised decision-making, performance-based human resources, transparent decision-making, results-based budgeting, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and prevention of sexual harassment (PSH).

UNICEF's operational management shows some significant strengths:

- **Resource mobilisation:** UNICEF's resource mobilisation activities support implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and aim to diversify funding sources. UNICEF advocates for more flexible and multi-year funding. It generates almost half of the organisation's regular resources from private sources, enabling it to be a 'mandate-based' organisation (instead of 'project-based').
- **Financial accountability:** UNICEF's financial accountability, including auditing, internal controls, and anti-fraud practices meet the highest standards. UNICEF commissions external audits on financial statements annually that comply with international standards. It has a strong internal audit function that systematically investigates, and addresses concerns raised by internal control mechanisms. It has robust policies and procedures to prevent, detect, investigate, and sanction for all types of fraud and misconduct.

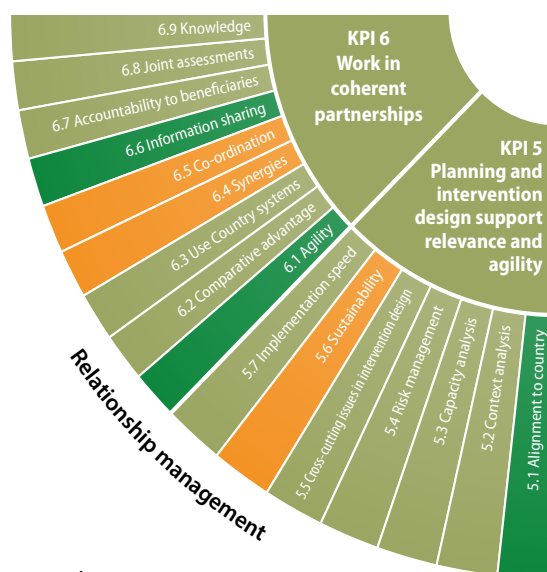
UNICEF's operational management faces important challenges:

- **Resource allocation:** UNICEF's resource allocations are aligned to the Strategic Plan through the Integrated Results and Resources Framework, and country offices are empowered to reallocate resources. In practice, however, most of UNICEF's funding is earmarked which complicates resource allocations to strategic priorities. While UNICEF makes transparent allocations, disburses allocations as planned, and uses results-based budgeting, it lacks yearly estimations of resource allocations across functional areas and has struggled to implement a functioning budget formulation tool.
- **Human resources:** UNICEF's Human Resources Strategy 2018–2021 supports the Strategic Plan, and introduced a new approach linking performance management to staff performance. However, staff performance assessment management sometimes relied too much on the role of the Country Representative which led to imbalances in promotion practices. UNICEF also began promoting a 'matrix' reporting structure with dual reporting lines to functional areas in regional offices and HQ. This approach is being used by the HR function and being trialled in several other functions. Importantly, UNICEF also recognised the importance of a conducive work environment and fostered a change of culture to promote respect in the workplace, as well as developing capacities to prevent and address sexual harassment (PSH).
- **PSEA:** UNICEF made progress in developing practices and systems for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), implementing them in 54 country offices and conducting mandatory training of 96% of its staff. However, the capacity of country offices and implementing partners to address SEA, including in non-humanitarian contexts, remained limited compared to requirements.



RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT OF UNICEF

UNICEF performed well in relationship management, which for UNICEF refers to ‘partnership’ management, including country programmes implemented with governments and stakeholders at country level as well as global partnerships implemented with UN agencies, governments, business, and other actors. UNICEF’s partnership performance ratings are driven upwards by their relevance, alignment to country, and context analysis, and by their flexibility and agility. Partnership performance shows opportunities for improvement on the use of national capacities, capacity analysis, analysis of comparative advantage, and use of country systems, as well as collaborative approaches, such as coordination and joint assessments. Performance risks were identified on indicators for synergies to catalyse resources and the sustainability of programmes.



UNICEF’s partnership management is distinguished by significant strengths:

- Country programme relevance:** UNICEF’s country programmes are consistently relevant to context. They are well aligned with national priorities and respond to the needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups. Country offices conduct situational analyses that inform country programme designs and review them annually with partners to ensure continued relevance. The organisation made important progress in developing practices and systems for accountability to affected populations (AAP).
- Country programme flexibility:** UNICEF’s country programmes are increasingly flexible. The organisation has institutional procedures in place to support speedy implementation, to allow programmatic changes in response to changes in context, and to make partnership more agile. In recent years, mechanisms to adjust human and financial resources to align with changes in the country programme have become increasingly flexible. UNICEF also has strong processes to manage operational and strategic risks, with a new enterprise risk management policy and framework that requires country programmes to adopt ‘risk-informed’ programming, more consistent and better aligned to strategy.
- UN partnerships:** UNICEF’s partnerships with UN organisations are a strength. In humanitarian action, UNICEF effectively engages in the UN Country Team and as a cluster lead agency contributes to stronger inter-agency responses. With regard to UNDS reform, UNICEF made notable progress with contributions to the Resident Coordinator system, implementation of the Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System (MAF) and establishing mechanisms to support the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). At global level, UNICEF is an active member of the UN Business Innovations Group (BIG) which guides implementation of common business reforms and reported collective savings of close to US\$100 million in 2020. Similarly, UNICEF has developed global strategic partnerships with UNDP, WHO, WFP and UNHCR, aimed at transformational change across specific countries on specific issues. In responding to COVID-19, for example, UNICEF’s strategic partnership with WHO through the COVAX facility is an initiative capable of making a difference at scale.

UNICEF’s partnership management faces notable challenges:

- National capacities:** UNICEF’s strengthening of national capacities remains an important challenge in country programmes. UNICEF commits to strengthening country capacities, but its capacity building efforts are not always evidence based. It assesses the capacity of most Implementing Partners (IPs) but does not systematically address the capacity gaps found. It uses country systems but lacks a formal policy to guide their use. It is committed to

promoting South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC), but more efforts are needed to translate this into wider practice.

- **National resources:** UNICEF's mobilisation of national resources is another challenge. UNICEF's strategic partnerships are generally based on an analysis of comparative advantage, but country programmes do not always clearly define the roles and responsibilities of different partners in implementation. UNICEF also aims to increase fundraising for regular resources from public sector resources in programme countries, notably by establishing 'hybrid offices'¹ in East Asia, Latin America and Central Asia, and also by leveraging the private sector through its innovative 'Business for Results' approach aimed at building the capacity of country offices to engage with the business sector. But these promising approaches are still at an incipient stage, and few countries can yet demonstrate large scale strategic partnerships with the private sector.
- **Global 'strategic' partnerships:** UNICEF's global strategic partnerships are both a challenge and opportunity. UNICEF's operating model depends on partnerships with other United Nations entities, businesses, civil society, and children and young people. But UNICEF's approach to partnership has often focused on its own programme implementation, fundraising and advocacy, more than leveraging resources for children and catalysing large-scale changes for children. To this end, UNICEF has prioritised global strategic partnerships with the 'transformative' potential to accelerate global progress towards SDG targets, on health (e.g., GAVI), education (Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait), nutrition (Scaling up Nutrition Movement). As mentioned above, it has also developed global strategic partnerships aimed at transformational change with UNDP, WHO, WFP and UNHCR.

UNICEF's partnership management faces potential risks:

- **Country programme catalysation:** UNICEF country programmes do not sufficiently catalyse outcomes to achieve strategic goals. They do not consistently distinguish UNICEF's strategic position vis-à-vis partners or thoroughly assess what others are doing and how UNICEF will complement their efforts. They are not consistently informed by substantive discussions on how UNICEF intends to leverage funding and partnership resources, including from the private sector.
- **Results sustainability:** UNICEF country programmes do not sufficiently include a sustainability focus or monitor sustainability. Separate humanitarian and development programming, using processes and schedules that are not well-aligned, creates siloes and hinders UNICEF's ability to fully operationalise the humanitarian and development nexus. This adversely affected the sustainability of humanitarian programming. Partners surveyed also expressed clear reservations about the sustainability of UNICEF's programme impacts.

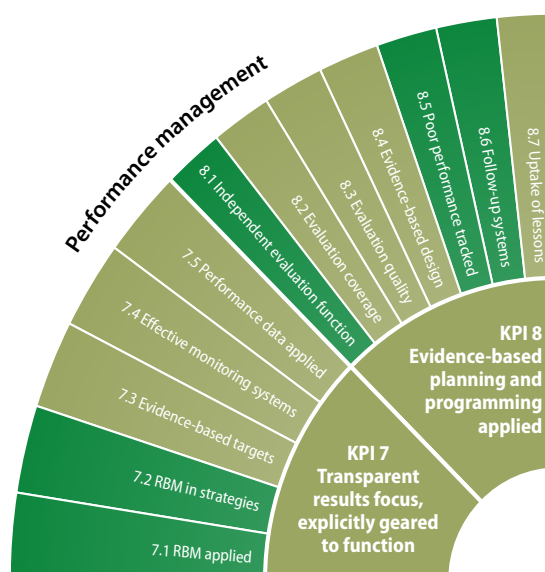
1. Almost all COs combine RM with programme delivery. Hybrid offices normally refer to those that are mobilising both public and private funds. Some country offices in middle to upper middle-income countries in East Asia and Latin America as well as Central and Eastern Europe, have private sector fundraising operations (PSFR) which mobilise funding from the general public domestically through individual giving, as well as business and private foundations, and generate flexible funding, including for global RR as well as to fund programmes implemented in these country offices. While all country offices combine RM with programme delivery, only some countries generate funding for global RR.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OF UNICEF

UNICEF's performance management ratings are driven upwards by indicators for results-based management (RBM), including RBM application and having RBM in strategies, and for the evaluation function, its independence, tracking of poor performance, and follow up systems. Performance management shows room for improvement on indicators relating to decentralised evaluations, including coverage and quality, and performance monitoring, including having evidence-based targets, effective monitoring systems, and applying performance data, as well as utilisation of evidence and learning, including evidence-based design and the uptake of lessons learned.

UNICEF's performance management is distinguished by significant strengths:

- **Results-based management:** UNICEF has a strong RBM system in place, with dedicated budgets, processes and accountability mechanisms that ensure its application across the organisation. The corporate results framework is based on sound RBM principles, while the Strategic Plan and Country Programme Documents include results statements and SMART indicators. Interviews indicate UNICEF's RBM system is seen as a reference among peers at global and country levels.
- **Evaluation function:** UNICEF's evaluation function is an important strength. The organisation has a strong evaluation function with a high degree of independence. UNICEF's evaluation plan is well funded and evaluation coverage has increased over time. UNICEF has a robust system to ensure the quality of its evaluations and has made efforts to increase the capacity of staff in evaluation.



UNICEF's performance management faces notable challenges:

- **Framework:** The UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 is accompanied by a comprehensive results framework which provides clear linkages between the corporate and country office results frameworks, following a streamlining exercise in 2019. While the UNICEF Strategic Plan and Country Programme Documents include results statements and SMART indicators, their impact pathways are not always grounded in strong evidence, and they do not always adequately reflect the complexity of joint programming and multisectoral action. They tend to overemphasise short-term outputs and focus insufficiently on outcome-level changes.
- **Country performance:** The UNICEF Strategic Plan commits to using monitoring data in decision making, and requires country offices to use RBM tools and corporate indicators to measure their compliance. But country offices feel the heavy burden of results reporting is not sufficiently balanced by practical benefits for decision-making or applied learning about 'how' country programmes successfully achieve results at country level. UNICEF lacks the tools to generate evidence in real-time to support 'adaptive management'. A more mature RBM system would move beyond a 'tools and compliance' mind-set.
- **Evidence utilisation:** UNICEF has clear accountability mechanisms to ensure that evaluation recommendations are acted upon in a timely manner but use of evidence to inform the design of programming is not yet consistent. Too few CPDs currently incorporate evaluation findings and lessons, and more agile M&E tools are required to support adaptive management. UNICEF has three formal evidence functions: evaluation, research, data/statistics, but the organisation's evidence system is fractured, and this complicates access and utilisation by country offices who are practically responsible for programme effectiveness.

UNICEF's RESULTS

UNICEF's results performance was mixed, as judged by the MOPAN framework and based on UNICEF management information and a selection of evaluations only. UNICEF results ratings were driven up by results in UNICEF's Strategic Plan. But they showed room for improvement on relevance, gender equity and human rights. They revealed potential risks with regard to the environment, timeliness, cost-efficiency, and sustainable benefits.

UNICEF's results performance reflected significant strengths:

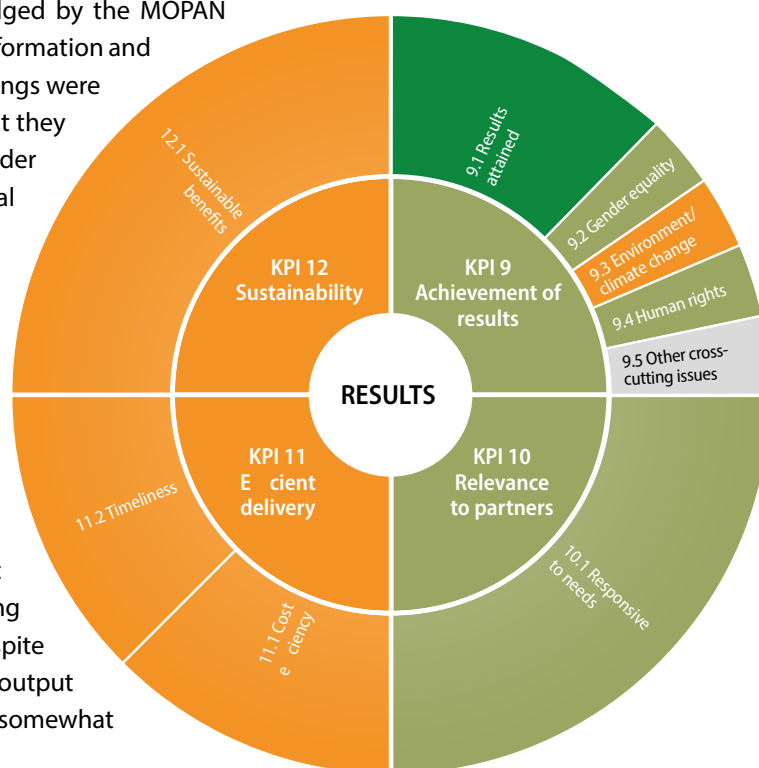
- **Outputs:** By 2020, UNICEF achieved most output results in both development programmes and humanitarian action and across the five goal areas, according to UNICEF corporate results reporting against the strategic plan. UNICEF achieved or is close to meeting milestones for 22 out of the 25 result areas, despite the pandemic. Around 72% of Strategic Plan output milestones are met or nearly met, while 13% are somewhat off track and 14% are significantly off track.
- **Relevance:** UNICEF programmes are relevant to the needs of beneficiaries but could be more relevant still. A meta-analysis conducted by the MOPAN assessment team, with the majority of sampled evaluations (13 of 15 evaluations) found that UNICEF programming is driven by and respond to the needs of beneficiaries.

UNICEF's results performance reflected some challenges:

- **Outcomes:** UNICEF's progress through jointly owned Country Programme outcomes has been slower than outputs, with related national SDG targets for children often off-track. This is the case across all goal areas, albeit to different extents. Just over one third of outcome indicators are already achieved or are on track to meeting 2021 targets. But progress on most remains slow, mirroring the challenges in accelerating progress towards the SDGs.
- **Cross-cutting:** UNICEF's cross-cutting results are mixed. Country programmes are increasingly achieving gender equality results, despite room for improvement and limited use of gender transformative approaches that address the root causes of gender inequality. UNICEF shows some positive results in human rights and equity programming, but there are indications that vulnerable groups are not systematically included in programme design. However, UNICEF shows little evaluative evidence of its programmes contributing to environmental sustainability and climate change. The few results reported, as of end 2020, were mostly in WASH.

UNICEF's results performance revealed a few potential risks:

- **Efficient delivery:** UNICEF's results are mixed for the cost-efficiency of programming. Several challenges were identified in the timeliness with which programming was delivered, including in humanitarian action. UNICEF lacks methods and tools to demonstrate efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- **Sustainable benefits:** UNICEF's results too often unsustainable, although some progress is being made in building partner capacity and fostering an enabling environment. Often sustainability gaps reflected a lack of national resources invested to support programme benefits.



About this assessment

This is the fifth MOPAN assessment of UNICEF. The assessment was championed by Switzerland and the USA on behalf of the MOPAN Network. It focuses on the period mid-2016 to end-2020, and relies on three lines of evidence: a document review, interviews with selected UNICEF staff at headquarter-level and country/regional-level, and a survey with selected UNICEF partners across partner types and geographic regions.²

3.1 Methodology applied in this assessment

The MOPAN 3.1 methodology employed in this assessment uses a framework comprised of 12 key performance indicators (KPIs) and 57 associated micro-indicators (MIs). The framework benchmarks the international good practices that characterise an effective multilateral organisation. To ensure MOPAN assessments remain relevant to stakeholders and aligned to current practices, the MOPAN framework and methodology remain in constant evolution. For more information, please see MOPAN's 3.1 methodology manual.³

About MOPAN

The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) is a network of 21 members and observers⁴ that share a common interest in assessing the effectiveness of the major multilateral organisations that they fund. These include UN agencies, international financial institutions and global funds.

The Network generates, collects, analyses and presents relevant and credible information on the organisational and development effectiveness of the organisations assessed. This knowledge base supports organisational learning among multilateral organisations, as well as their direct clients and partners, and other stakeholders. Network members and other stakeholders use the reports for their accountability requirements and as a source of information for strategic decision making.

2. The survey was sent to respondents in 14 countries in different regions, although some partners from other countries responded as well. These countries were: Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Laos, Lebanon, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Yemen.

3. Available at www.mopanonline.org.

4. As at 1 October 2021: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States; the European Union and Qatar are observers.