

Joint Statement

Executive Board of UNICEF

Annual Report 2020 on the evaluation function in UNICEF, Agenda Item 8

ANNUAL SESSION 2021

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Mr. President

I make this statement on behalf of Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, Turkey, Yemen and my own country, Switzerland.

We thank the Evaluation Office for its annual report and for the corresponding management response.

We commend UNICEF's Evaluation Office on its excellent performance in a highly challenging year. The record number of evaluations and evaluative products delivered and the increase in evaluation coverage speaks to the ability of UNICEF's Evaluation Function to swiftly adapt and innovate faced with rapidly changing needs and challenges by effectively mainstreaming new and innovative tools and evaluation methods. We encourage UNICEF to continue working on innovative and remote solutions, to further improve flexibility of its evaluative work with regard to changing and challenging contexts, without, of course, jeopardizing quality.

We would also like to acknowledge the decisive role of the recently recruited evaluation specialists at field level in strengthening the evaluation function's capacities and thereby contributing to the good results in the reporting year.

However, the reversed trend in expenditures for evaluation that remain far off the established target of 1% of evaluation expenditures as share of programme expenditures is of great concern. While we understand that mainly two regions remain well below the target and that spending on evaluation has stalled after the onset of the

COVID-19 pandemic, we also take note of the reduction in available funds from the Evaluation Pool Fund that contributed to the lower than expected expenditures.

We would like to re-iterate our expectation to provide adequate funding to the evaluation function to enable the attainment of the 1% target in the course of the next Strategic Plan and urge UNICEF to make the necessary resources available.

We would like to seek further information on the following questions:

By when does Management foresee the recovery of the evaluation spending to the pre-COVID-19 trends and achievement of the 1% target?

What is the expected impact of the incorporation of the Evaluation Pool Fund into UNICEF's integrated budget from 2022 onwards on the evaluation function and expenditure?

We welcome the slight increase in the number of impact evaluations compared to 2019. With UNICEF's welcome ambition to put even greater emphasis on supporting impact through its new Strategic Plan, we encourage UNICEF to expand the use of rigorous impact evaluations, particularly in thematic areas where new approaches have potential for scaling-up or where existing impact evidence on approaches is lacking.

As regards cross-cutting topics, we take note of the reported increase in incorporating gender into evaluations and welcome efforts to more systematically address disability issues, notably in humanitarian evaluations. At the same time we would like to recall the Evaluation Policy's commitment to address gender in all evaluations and would welcome more information on how the Evaluation Office is addressing this requirement.

With regards to evaluations covering humanitarian actions we welcome the slight increase in humanitarian action coverage compared to last year but urge UNICEF to accelerate evaluation coverage of humanitarian action considerably in order to more adequately reflect humanitarian spending and would welcome more information on UNICEF's strategic approach thereof.



On a final note: As joint and system-wide evaluations become increasingly numerous and pertinent, we would be interested to learn more about UNICEF's engagement with other UNDS entities to share evaluation knowledge at a global level in order to foster accountability and learning from system-wide evaluation evidence across the system and within UNICEF.

Let me close by re-iterating our commitment to the precious work of the evaluation office in promoting institutional learning and accountability thereby contributing to increased programme effectiveness.