

## UNICEF Evaluation Management Response Template

**Evaluation Title:** Evaluation of UNICEF’s Work in Public Health Emergencies

**Region:** Global

**Office:** HQ – Health Emergencies Preparedness and Response (HEPR)

**Evaluation Year:** 2024

**Person-In-Charge for Follow-up to Management Response:** Douglas Noble

**Overall Response to the Evaluation:** The Evaluation of UNICEF’s Work in Public Health Emergencies (PHEs), 2024 presents a welcome set of recommendations in organizational structures, human and financial capacity, programmatic approach, and inter-agency collaboration. The evaluation covered the period 2015-2021 and has been published in 2024. Yet, the recommendations are still relevant and will assist UNICEF in moving forward to refine its approach to PHEs.

**Planned Use of Evaluation:** The Evaluation will be used to inform and influence UNICEF’s programming, including with current PHEs.

**Allowed Editors:** Douglas Noble, Sarah Karmin, Anna Mukerjee

### Summary

This report provides an overview of the UNICEF management response to the Evaluation of UNICEF’s work in Public Health Emergencies, which was completed in 2024. It provides a summary of the actions that UNICEF has taken, that are ongoing, and that will be taken to address the recommendations.

### Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the increasing threat of public health emergencies (PHEs), particularly for those in vulnerable, low-income, and humanitarian settings. In the last 50 years, diseases like cholera and dengue have resurfaced, posing major global health risks. UNICEF, recognizing the serious impact of public health emergencies on children’s rights, has expanded its efforts in global health security, epidemic preparedness, and response strategies to address these challenges. The organization has enhanced its focus on both immediate crisis response and long-term recovery efforts.

This evaluation reviewed UNICEF’s adaptation to its PHE role by examining areas such as relevance, efficiency, and sustainability. The findings showed that UNICEF generally aligned its actions with national strategies, decentralized decision-making, and had recognized strengths in data systems. However, there were issues like insufficient preparedness funding, understaffing, and challenges in implementing gender and equity initiatives. The evaluation also emphasized UNICEF’s valuable partnerships, particularly with the WHO, and advised reinforcing its organizational structure, resource management, and inter-agency collaboration for better preparedness in future health crises.

In summary, the Evaluation of UNICEF’s Work in Public Health Emergencies, 2024 presents a welcome set of recommendations in organizational structures, human and financial capacity, programmatic approaches, and inter-agency collaboration. The evaluation covered the period 2015-2021 and has been published in 2024. Yet, the recommendations are still relevant and will assist UNICEF in moving forward to refine its approach to PHEs.

Overall, UNICEF agrees with the proposed recommendations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS:

### Evaluation Recommendations

#### Area 1: Organizational Structures

**Recommendation 1: UNICEF should ensure that its institutional architecture to prepare and respond to PHEs is: (1) clarified and (2) appropriately institutionally empowered:**

1.a Develop a clear institutional narrative which clarifies that PHE preparedness and response is inherently multisectoral and requires a cross-institutional response; and which emphasizes UNICEF’s comparative advantages.

1.b Develop an operational plan, geared to the narrative, that clarifies roles and responsibilities for PHE preparedness and response at all levels of the organization.

1.c Explicitly clarify the multisectoral role and remit of the PHE team, with a clear narrative rationale and engagement strategy, positioning it to reach across sectors to both support preparedness and engage in response when emergencies strike.

1.d Develop an institutional-wide accountability and reporting framework for PHE preparedness and response, informed by the existing accountabilities in the Strategic Plan, to assess and report on UNICEF’s performance in addressing PHEs.

**Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree**

**If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:**

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
1.a Develop a clear institutional narrative which clarifies that PHE preparedness and response is inherently multisectoral and requires a cross-institutional response; and which emphasizes	HEPR	Douglas Noble, Sarah Karmin	Q1 2024	Completed	The HEPR Section led the development of the Operational Response Framework for Public Health Emergencies. It outlines a set of organizational priorities and actions for a comprehensive response to PHEs. UNICEF's institutional narrative is outlined	<a href="https://www.unicef.org/media/153596/file/Operational%20response%20framework%20for.pdf">https://www.unicef.org/media/153596/file/Operational%20response%20framework%20for.pdf</a>

<p>UNICEF's comparative advantages.</p>					<p>on page 4 of the Framework and its interventions for a multisectoral approach are outlined on page 9. Figure 5 clearly illustrates UNICEF's PHE approach as inherently multisectoral and comprising of a cross-institutional response. UNICEF's comparative advantage in responding to PHEs are highlighted throughout the Framework.</p> <p>A webinar was held in February 2024 with ROs and COs for validation. The Operational Response Framework for Public Health Emergencies was published in March 2024. The Framework has been translated into Arabic, French and Spanish (October 2024) .</p> <p>UNICEF also developed the Infection, Prevention and Control Roadmap, which identifies the required capacities at CO, RO and HQ level together with accountabilities and resources required. This was the outcome of an extensive consultative exercise involving ROs across sectors. This is ready but needs to be resourced.</p>	<p><a href="https://unicef.sharpoint.com/sites/PD-IPC/">https://unicef.sharpoint.com/sites/PD-IPC/</a></p>
<p>1.b Develop an operational plan, geared to the narrative, that clarifies roles and responsibilities for PHE preparedness and response at all levels of the organization.</p>	<p>HEPR</p>	<p>Douglas Noble, Sarah Karmin</p>	<p>Q1 2024</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>The HEPR Section led the development of the Operational Response Framework for PHEs. It outlines a set of organizational priorities and actions for a comprehensive response to PHEs. The section "Coordination across UNICEF for a public health emergency" (pages 12–14) outline UNICEF's Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure and coordination for public health emergencies within UNICEF. In</p>	<p><a href="https://www.unicef.org/media/153596/file/Operational%20response%20framework%20or.pdf">https://www.unicef.org/media/153596/file/Operational%20response%20framework%20or.pdf</a></p>

					<p>this section of the Framework, roles and responsibilities for PHEs are outlined.</p> <p>A webinar was held in February 2024 with ROs and COs for validation. The Operational Response Framework for Public Health Emergencies was published in March 2024. The Framework has been translated into Arabic, French and Spanish (October 2024).</p> <p>After the operationalization of the Framework for the L3 MPOX response in August 2024, the procedures, roles and responsibilities across the organization will be reviewed and revised based on response learning.</p>	
<p>1.c Explicitly clarify the multisectoral role and remit of the PHE team, with a clear narrative rationale and engagement strategy, positioning it to reach across sectors to both support preparedness and engage in response when emergencies strike.</p>	<p>HEPR/ EMOPS/SD</p>	<p>Douglas Noble, Pete Mansfield, Nagwa Hasanin</p>	<p>Q4, 2025</p>	<p>Underway</p>	<p>The HEPR Section led the development of the Operational Response Framework for Public Health Emergencies. It outlines a set of organizational priorities and actions for a comprehensive multisectoral response to PHEs. "Annex 2: Interventions by UNICEF response objectives" outlines the interventions for UNICEF's response objectives to PHEs, under three objectives (contain, control and mitigate which are described on pages 10 and 11) for a multisectoral approach.</p> <p>The framework on preparedness (HEPI 2.0) still needs to be concluded across PG, EMOPS and SD.</p> <p>UNICEF and WHO developed a two-year Joint Action Plan around the five areas of the WHO HEPR framework (December</p>	<p><a href="https://unicef.sharpoint.com/:w:/r/teams/PD-PHE/Working%20Section/UNICEF%20WHO%20Joint%20Action%20Plan%20for%20HEPR%202024-2025/UNICEF-WHO%20Joint%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Health%20Emergency%20Preparedness%20and%20Response%2020%20May2024.docx?d=we4250f1b9feb487aad543d715f7adb71&amp;csf=">https://unicef.sharpoint.com/:w:/r/teams/PD-PHE/Working%20Section/UNICEF%20WHO%20Joint%20Action%20Plan%20for%20HEPR%202024-2025/UNICEF-WHO%20Joint%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Health%20Emergency%20Preparedness%20and%20Response%2020%20May2024.docx?d=we4250f1b9feb487aad543d715f7adb71&amp;csf=</a></p>

					<p>2022). The Plan details activities that the two organizations will implement together at the global level.</p> <p>UNICEF developed the Infection, Prevention and Control Roadmap, which identifies the required capacities at CO, RO and HQ level together with accountabilities and resources required. This was the outcome of an extensive consultative exercise involving ROs across sectors to ensure a multisectoral approach. This is ready but needs to be resourced.</p>	<p><a href="#">1&amp;web=1&amp;e=2o8CNx</a></p> <p><a href="https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/PD-IPC/">https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/PD-IPC/</a></p>
1.d Develop an institutional-wide accountability and reporting framework for PHE preparedness and response, informed by the existing accountabilities in the Strategic Plan, to assess and report on UNICEF's performance in addressing PHEs.	HEPR & EMOPS	Douglas Noble/Pete Mansfield/Deirdre Kiernan	Q4, 2025	Not yet started and will be completed in line with the new strategic plan	Drawing on the revised emergency procedures process and the new strategic plan process, UNICEF will ensure that accountabilities and learning are included in both the new Strategic Plan and the revised Emergency Procedures, as well as strengthening the iterative learning and evidence generation components of PHE preparedness and response.	

## Area 2: Human and financial capacity

### Recommendation 2: Ensure that UNICEF has adequate and appropriate organizational capacities to prepare for and respond to PHEs.

- 2.a Enhance capacity, via skills and personnel, for PHE preparedness and response across all sectors and levels of the organization, including at regional and country levels. Ensure that staff are trained in prevention, preparedness and response, pandemic accord discussions and revised International Health Regulations.
- 2.b Building on institutional tools where available, enhance and upskill UNICEF's awareness and capacity for gender equality, inclusion and human rights within PHE preparedness and response, in alignment with the normative commitments of the Strategic Plan.
- 2.c Enhance and systematize data analysis and compilation skills for PHEs, so that analysis can be translated into decision making and course correction where needed.
- 2.d Commit to staff posts within the PHE team to support medium-term planning and capacity development, rather than relying on short-term contracts.
- 2.e Use the organizational narrative above to develop a resource-raising strategy for UNICEF's PHE capacity.

### Recommendation 2: : Ensure that UNICEF has adequate and appropriate organizational capacities to prepare for and respond to PHEs.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
2.a Enhance capacity, via skills and personnel, for PHE preparedness and response across all sectors and levels of the organization, including at regional and country levels. Ensure that staff are trained in prevention, preparedness and response, pandemic accord discussions and revised International Health Regulations.	HEPR & EMOPS	Douglas Noble	Q4 2025	Underway	<p>The HEPR section is working with regions and countries to develop and roll out capacity strengthening across the organization, focusing on the content of the Operational Response Framework including a webinar series on PHEPR.</p> <p>The HEPR section will work with EMOPS to establish a system to proceed with a skills programme, to ensure that accountabilities and learning on application are included in both the new SP and the revised Emergency Procedures.</p> <p>In May 2024, UNICEF's published editorial in BMJ Global Health on making the best interests of the child a primary consideration during pandemic preparedness</p>	<a href="https://gh.bmj.com/content/9/5/e015917">https://gh.bmj.com/content/9/5/e015917</a> .

					<p>and response articulated UNICEF’s position for the Pandemic Agreement process.</p> <p>On RCCE, a five-module course has been designed (and is available on Agora), which is aligned with the updated Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action Toolkit (CHAT).</p>	<p><a href="https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=43565">https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=43565</a></p>
<p>2.b Building on institutional tools where available, enhance and upskill UNICEF’s awareness and capacity for gender equality, inclusion and human rights within PHE preparedness and response, in alignment with the normative commitments of the Strategic Plan.</p>	<p>HEPR &amp; PG (GBViE)</p>	<p>Sarah Karmin</p>	<p>Q4, 2022</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>The HEPR and Child Protection (GBViE) teams developed a toolkit and training on gender and GBV (2022). It is available on Agora.</p> <p>The HEPR and Child Protection (GBViE) teams developed Key Considerations for GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response in PHE, a related toolkit to help facilitate implementation and training on gender and GBV in PHE (2022). It is available on Agora Teams.</p> <p>The HEPR section has worked with ROs on workshops (MENA) and piloting (ESARO) and cheat</p>	<p><a href="https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=39316">https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=39316</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/kp/key-considerations-(english)-mitigating%2C-preventing-%26-responding-to-gender-based-violence-in-public-health-emergencies">https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/kp/key-considerations-(english)-mitigating%2C-preventing-%26-responding-to-gender-based-violence-in-public-health-emergencies</a></p>

					<p>sheets on GBV risk mitigation for specific outbreaks (e.g. mpox, Ebola).</p>	
<p>2.c Enhance and systematize data analysis and compilation skills for PHEs, so that analysis can be translated into decision making and course correction where needed.</p>	DAPM	Maria Muniz	Q4, 2025	Underway	<p>The DAPM Health and HIV Unit is working with the IOA team based in DRC to learn from and build on continuity of essential services (CES) analytics in IOA, to support scale up and replication in other countries.</p> <p>The PHEPR IOA Team developed and rolled out an IOA Toolkit of quantitative analytics to support CES analytics drawing from routine, facility based health information systems. The Toolkit pilot is planned for the end of 2024 in Somalia.</p> <p>For behavioural data, the Community Rapid Assessment (CRA) methodology was developed and implemented to track the uptake of recommended practices during COVID-19 across two regions (and</p>	

					included in 'Best of UNICEF Research'). It is now being deployed for the mpox response.	
2.d Commit to staff posts within the PHE team to support medium-term planning and capacity development, rather than relying on short-term contracts.	PGLT	George Laryea-Adjei	Q2, 2024	Completed	<p>Following the MTR of the strategic plan, the Associate Director and Public Health Emergency Unit Head posts were moved to RR funding, institutionalizing the position of the PHE team in UNICEF.</p> <p>There is still a discrepancy between the desire to make RCCE a core 'predictable' element of UNICEF's offer and the lack of dedicated RCCE staff in regional offices (to support countries) and global PHE team. There is only one SBC ERT globally, who is in constant demand.</p>	
2.e Use the organizational narrative above to develop a resource-raising strategy for UNICEF's PHE capacity.	HEPR & PGLT & EMOPS	Douglas Noble	Q2, 2025	Underway	A funding pipeline has been established. A resource-raising strategy is under development.	

**Area 3: Programmatic approach**

**Recommendation 3: Adjust UNICEF’s programmatic approach to ‘future-proof’ for PHE preparedness and response**

3.a Linked to the institutional narrative above, ensure that guidance and operating procedures for PHE preparedness and response define ways of working, aligned with UNICEF’s multisectoral nature and ensure the engagements of UNICEF staff across all sectors and levels. Key areas include IPC, health systems strengthening and disaster risk reduction.

3.b As far as feasible and appropriate, embed a PHE prevention lens and articulate clear priorities to embed the approach into ongoing programming in key sectors such as health, WASH, education, social protection, RCCE and others.

3.c Ensure implementation of the recommendations in the evaluation of UNICEF’s investment towards institutional strengthening for social and behavioural change, to upscale RCCE capacity and resources, considering its proven role in PHE preparedness and response.

3.d Ensure the integration of gender equality, inclusion and human rights commitments, alongside protection, and AAP considerations, in both PHE preparedness and response activities.

**Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree**

**If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:**

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
3.a Linked to the institutional narrative above, ensure that guidance and operating procedures for PHE preparedness and response define ways of working, aligned with UNICEF’s multisectoral nature and ensure the engagements of UNICEF staff across all sectors and levels. Key areas include IPC, health systems strengthening and disaster risk reduction.	HEPR	Douglas Noble	Q1 2024	Completed	The HEPR section led the development of the Operational Response Framework for PHEs (March 2024). It outlines a set of organizational priorities and actions for a comprehensive response to PHEs. The Framework outlines ways of working and accountabilities across Divisions including between EMOPS and PG.  UNICEF capacities on PHEs are strengthened through the use of the PHE toolkit.	<a href="https://www.unicef.org/media/153596/file/Operational%20response%20framework%20for.pdf">https://www.unicef.org/media/153596/file/Operational%20response%20framework%20for.pdf</a>

					<p>It provides an overview of actions and PHE response plan templates that COs should use for PHEs.</p> <p>UNICEF developed the Infection, Prevention and Control Roadmap, which identifies the required capacities at CO, RO and HQ level together with accountabilities and resources required. This was the outcome of an extensive consultative exercise involving ROs across sectors. This is ready but needs to be resourced.</p>	<p><a href="https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/PD-PHE/SitePages/PHE-Toolkit.aspx">https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/PD-PHE/SitePages/PHE-Toolkit.aspx</a></p>
<p>3.b As far as feasible and appropriate, embed a PHE prevention lens and articulate clear priorities to embed the approach into ongoing programming in key sectors such as health, WASH, education, social protection, RCCE and others.</p>	HEPR	Douglas Noble	Q4 2025	Underway	<p>This is part of UNICEF’s efforts for risk-informed programme and systems strengthening and recovery efforts are critical. Work is in progress to ensure enhanced preparedness such as the ongoing revision of UNICEF’s Health Emergency Preparedness initiative.</p> <p>The WASH section developed the Global WASH sector Resilience Index which measures</p>	

					resilience of the WASH sector globally and is about prevention. The next step is to develop a methodology for measuring resilience at country level, identifying barriers and solutions. This is about preventing sector collapse and therefore saving lives and reducing suffering.	
3.c Ensure implementation of the recommendations in the evaluation of UNICEF's investment towards institutional strengthening for social and behavioural change, to upscale RCCE capacity and resources, considering its proven role in PHE preparedness and response.	PG (RCCE)	Vincent Petit	Q4 2025	Underway	Updates on the management response to the recommendations of the evaluation of UNICEF investments towards institutional strengthening for social and behaviour change (SBC) can be consulted in the attached link.	<a href="https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/reports#/detail/19441/evaluation-of-unicefs-investment-towards-institutional-strengthening-for-social-and-behaviour-change">https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/reports#/detail/19441/evaluation-of-unicefs-investment-towards-institutional-strengthening-for-social-and-behaviour-change</a>
3.d Ensure the integration of gender equality, inclusion and human rights commitments, alongside protection, and AAP considerations, in both PHE preparedness and response activities.	EMOPS & PG	Sarah Karmin	Q2 2024	Completed	Gender equality, inclusion and human rights commitments, child protection and AAP are fully integrated in PHE preparedness and response activities. The Operational Response Framework articulates UNICEF's multisectoral approach in PHE responses.	

**Area 4: Inter-agency collaboration**

**Recommendation 4: Confirm UNICEF’s positioning of PHEs with partners and follow through with relevant coordinated action.**

4.a Translate the institutional narrative above into a communications strategy for partners, aiming to confirm and convey UNICEF’s comparative advantages in PHEs.

4.b. Continue to clarify UNICEF’s contribution and specific roles within the global memorandum of understanding with WHO at country and regional levels, bringing its comparative advantages to enhance the collective response, whether in humanitarian emergency or development settings.

4.c Strengthen engagement with and feedback from the inter-agency horizon scanning group from a PHE perspective.

**Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree**

**If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:**

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
4.a Translate the institutional narrative above into a communications strategy for partners, aiming to confirm and convey UNICEF’s comparative advantages in PHEs.	HEPR	Douglas Noble	Q2 2025	Underway	During the Mpox L3, communications and resource mobilization approaches have been taken as part of the organization wide IMST. These require further institutionalization.	
4.b Continue to clarify UNICEF’s contribution and specific roles within the global memorandum of understanding with WHO at country and regional levels, bringing its comparative advantages to enhance the collective response, whether in humanitarian emergency or development settings.	HEPR	Douglas Noble/Sarah Karmin	Q4 2025	Underway	A joint workplan was developed between UNICEF and WHO building on the MOU, UNICEF’s Operational Response Framework and WHO’s HEPR Framework. The activities included are intended to provide global tools, guidance and support to ROs and COs.	
4.c Strengthen engagement with and feedback from the inter-	EMOPS/R APS	Pete Manfield	Q4 2025	Underway	This is largely completed but could be more	

agency horizon scanning group from a PHE perspective.					detailed. There is a new quarterly horizon scan for early action with OED. UNICEF is co-chair of OCHA/IASC group 2024-2026.	
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