

Influencing for Children: Evaluation Matters



Main Report

2020 Study on Influential Evaluations in UNICEF

Commissioned by
The UNICEF Evaluation Office

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November 2020

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A full list of all those interviewed by the Study Team appears in Annex 5.

A.K. Shiva Kumar (Team Leader)

Nancy MacPherson (Team Member)

Acronyms

CSGs	child support grants
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)
EAPRO	East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office
ECARO	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
ECD	early childhood development
EISI	Evidence Information System Initiative
EO	Evaluation Office
ESARO	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
GEROS	Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank
LACRO	Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office
ROSA	Regional Office for South Asia
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WCARO	West and Central Africa Regional Office

Executive summary

Overview

Leading evaluation thinkers, scholars and practitioners across the global evaluation ecosystem have stepped up to reimagine the role of evaluation in ‘the battle of a lifetime’ for a more just and sustainable world. In doing so, they make the case for evaluation to play a leading role in generating compelling knowledge, evidence and data for critical reforms of economic, financial, social justice and health systems that are desperately needed, now more than ever, for a more just, equitable and sustainable world.

This Study on Influential Evaluations in UNICEF and the recent Development Assistance Committee (DAC)/United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) peer review of UNICEF’s evaluation function suggest that the evaluation function is well placed to be more influential in contributing to consequential social change, and by extension, to play a leadership role with early adopters in the global evaluation ecosystem.

Objectives of the study

Against the backdrop of global challenges and ongoing reflection on how best to evolve evaluation in UNICEF, the Evaluation Office (EO) commissioned the 2020 Study on Influential Evaluations with the specific objectives of analysing the extent to which UNICEF evaluations have been influential and determining the enabling or constraining factors leading to influence. The findings and recommendations of the study will be used to improve the quality and intent of evaluations in UNICEF, and to improve institutional strategies for influence.

Approach and methodology

The study design included six components, some of which were adjusted for COVID-19 restrictions: a scan of the literature on influence and quality; development and testing of a conceptual model of influence to act as a hypothesis for the study; a detailed review of UNICEF strategic documents, and databases (Evidence Information System Integration (EISI) database and the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) database); a review of 45 submissions of influential evaluations received from country evaluation specialists and the EO that resulted in 24 accepted evaluations; 82 interviews, originally to be conducted in person but adjusted to online.

Eight evaluations were selected from the submissions for in-depth case studies representing a cross-section of UNICEF regions and headquarters, sectors (early childhood development (ECD), water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and child protection including birth registration) and other areas (such as cash transfers for child support). Cases covered country-led, pilots and demonstration projects, as well as evaluations in the development and humanitarian contexts.

An Appreciative Inquiry approach was used to conduct interviews and case study analysis in a manner that sought to understand what influence means for supply and demand side stakeholders in their context, what works to achieve consequential change in their context, and the factors that led to that consequential change.

Conceptual model of evaluation influence

Based on the work of Henry and Mark¹, extensive interviews and a scan of the influence literature, the Study Team developed a propositional model of influence that posited five main determinants and the types of influence thought to be significant and consequential for UNICEF (internal and external).

The five determinants posited are:

- Context: Being contextually knowledgeable and politically savvy
- Evaluation process and product: The right fit – making the right design choices, managing for influence
- Strategic engagement and communication: Engaging and communicating strategically and dynamically
- Knowledge and learning: Using what we know for influence;
- Trust and collaboration: What it takes for people to put their lives in the hands of others.

The types of influence resulting in consequential changes are:

- External influence of evaluations: External influence refers to the influence that UNICEF evaluations have on national policy, programmes, systems, strategies and legislation as well as resource mobilization, partnerships, and evaluation culture and capacity.
- Internal influence: Internal influence refers to the influence that evaluations have on UNICEF strategy, positioning and programming, collective learning, as well as on management, leadership and governance.

Analysis

On quality: Since 2016 the overall quality of UNICEF evaluations has continued to increase and in 2018 close to 90 per cent of the evaluations were rated as satisfactory (75 per cent) or highly satisfactory (13 per cent). However, at present there is no criteria to assess strategic intent of evaluations and therefore, no ratings of the extent to which the evaluations are explicit and purposeful about strategic intent. This may reflect the fact that strategic intent is not as explicit

¹ Henry, Gary T., and Melvin M. Mark. 'Beyond Use: Understanding Evaluation's Influence on Attitudes and Actions.' *American Journal of Evaluation* 24, no. 3 (September 2003): 293–314.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/109821400302400302>.

as it could be in the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference and in the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Report Standards.²

On coverage: In 2018 the number of countries undertaking evaluations increased to 74 out of 190 countries, compared to 58 countries in 2016.

Types of evaluations conducted: Drawing on the UNICEF-GEROS Meta-Analysis 2016–2018, the Study Team noted that there are very few strategy and systems level evaluations (9 per cent in 2018) relative to the emphasis on programme evaluation (50 per cent), and that there are few humanitarian evaluations relative to humanitarian expenditures in UNICEF. There is a low number of private sector and market-based evaluations relative to the significance of private sector funding (\$1.5 billion), and the existence of a UNICEF impact investing fund. Few evaluations focused on the implications of global drivers of change, such as climate change, on UNICEF’s work and strategy. By far the majority are managed by UNICEF – very few are jointly managed with other United Nations agencies or managed externally or by national governments.

Recurring issues and themes: The Study team identified the following recurring issues and themes from the submissions and interviews that are particularly relevant for UNICEF when considering how to more intentionally conceive, plan and design influential evaluations:

- Positioning for influence is key – the need to read the context and know when and how to engage.
- Understanding UNICEF’s in-country assets is key to positioning for influence.
- The nature of influence at scale has implications for the focus of evaluation.
- Making good strategic choices of what is most important to evaluate is both an art and a science. Flexibility is key, but the risk-averse culture of UNICEF can be limiting.
- As new players emerge and resource flows change, UNICEF may no longer be the biggest and most influential player in the room. Partnerships and joint evaluations can influence scale beyond what UNICEF can do alone.
- Evaluations that are strategic, opportunistic and nimble while also producing compelling evidence are more likely to be influential.
- Evaluations of pilot projects are likely to be more influential when they are strategically positioned as part of a long-term UNICEF effort to bring about sustainable change at scale for children.
- A culture of evaluation, learning and accountability is needed to underpin and sustain influence. Single evaluations, even if influential, are not likely to sustain influence at scale or across systems.
- Formative and collaborative approaches to evaluation build in opportunities for influence along the way and build stronger buy-in to sustain influence in the longer term.

² UNICEF, *UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards*, UNICEF, June 2017.
www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/UNICEF_adapated_reporting_standards_updated_June_2017.pdf.

The analysis of the 24 submissions and the eight evaluation case studies provides strong evidence of significant influence of UNICEF evaluations.

- The types of influence most often cited are on national policies, systems, strategies and legislation; national programming; UNICEF strategy and positioning; and UNICEF programming.
- The types of influence cited the least are resource mobilization, adaptive management, leadership and governance; partnerships, advocacy and coalition building; and evaluative culture and learning.

Of the five determinants of influence, the most cited are:

- Context – being contextually knowledgeable, strategic and politically savvy.
- Evaluation process and product – the right fit, making the right design choices aligned with strategic intent, managing the process for influence.
- Engagement and strategic communications – engaging stakeholders and influential players, and communicating strategically and dynamically.
- Trust and collaboration – recognizing that trust is essential for change and investing in it. (It should be noted that even though other cases did not cite trust as critical, two cases in high conflict settings cited it as the most important determinant in achieving influence and social change).

The determinant least cited is:

- Knowledge and learning – collaborative learning, using what we know for influence, promoting public good knowledge and collective action.

Seven lessons from the case studies

The following lessons from the case studies illustrate how and why influence was achieved and point to good practice to enhance influence.

1. Evaluations tend to be more influential when they are strategic and well-timed, and when there is clarity of purpose and intent.
2. Aligning evaluation design and method with strategic intent can contribute to enhancing the influence of an evaluation's findings.
3. Influence of evaluation findings is enhanced when there is clear added-value of evaluative knowledge.
4. Co-generation of recommendations by the commissioning body, evaluators and users of evaluation enhances the potential for evaluation influence.
5. Evolving effective communication strategies by developing appropriate messages and modalities for communicating with different audiences (including at the community level) greatly enhances the potential for influence of evaluations.
6. Creating enabling conditions is necessary for UNICEF evaluation findings to translate into influence - by investing in long-term political and public support for the particular cause; generating demand for the evaluation within government, ensuring that all evaluations

led and supported by UNICEF are government-owned, and embedded within the national institutions and structures responsible for decision-making; and building strong stakeholder ownership and engagement.

7. Strong UNICEF leadership at all levels is key for evaluations to have an influence. This can be done by investing in trust-building with government and other partners, spotting the opportunity for influence, positioning the evaluation strategically as part of a larger long-term advocacy campaign, and deliberately engaging in evidence-based UNICEF policy advocacy with high level policymakers.

Key findings and recommendations

Overall, the study finds that UNICEF evaluations do solidly contribute to consequential influence at national and global levels and within UNICEF. At the same time, it finds clear signals that evaluations and the evaluation function need to evolve to be more strategic, nimble and opportunistic to respond to a changing world, evolving management needs, and to accelerate and scale their influence.

In addition, the study found that:

- The five key determinants of influence posited by the study were validated, and context – being contextually knowledgeable, strategic and politically savvy – was cited as the most important determinant of influence.
- Quality matters, but is often not the most important determinant of an evaluation’s influence.
- A more flexible range of evaluation offerings or services may help enable the evaluation function to respond to strategic and adaptive management needs and to connect with more opportunities for influence.
- There appear to be significant opportunities for a different balance between programme and project evaluations and more strategic, opportunistic evaluations of strategies, policies, systems, global challenges and new emerging areas of evaluation.

The study makes the following recommendations and offers suggestions for ways these can be achieved:

1. The EO and evaluation function within UNICEF should lever their comparative advantage and play an influential global leadership role in reimagining evaluation in post COVID-19 recovery and reform.
2. The EO should develop an evaluation influence strategy and support its use at all levels.
3. The EO should refocus the global evaluation plan to find a better balance between core evaluation commitments and opportunities for greater strategic influence.
4. The EO should continue to improve the quality of evaluations including embedding strategic intent throughout the evaluation cycle.
5. The EO should strengthen skills and new competencies required for evaluations to be strategically influential.

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1. The global context for evaluation in 2020: Unprecedented Challenges

Much is being written about the extraordinary moment in which the world finds itself. Even as this report is being written, the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are fundamentally changing the world as we know it. Coupled with the now even worse effects of inequality, racial injustice, and climate change, the evaluation field is being challenged to adapt and respond as never before.

Leading evaluation thinkers, scholars and practitioners across the global evaluation ecosystem are stepping up to reimagine the role of evaluation in ‘the battle of a lifetime’ for a more just and sustainable world. In doing so, they are making the case for the value of evaluation and its leading role in the knowledge, evidence and data for critical reforms of economic, financial, social justice and health systems to be more equitable, sustainable and resilient.³

Some global leaders have questioned whether the evaluation profession is up to the challenge given it has been slow to recognize the signals of change over the past decade, i.e. new influential players, new complex challenges, new approaches, mindsets and leadership.⁴

Even before the pandemic, in the face of the climate emergency and growing inequality, Tom Schwandt said in a 2018 keynote at the European Evaluation Society: “Post-normal evaluation can be seen, on the one hand, as a result of the failure of normal evaluation to rationalize the world and, on the other hand, as the amplification of the inevitability of and capacity for constant change which can only be managed. We will gauge the success of the future practice of evaluation in terms of whether it is resilient enough to adapt to the ontological realities of complexity, uncertainty, and contradiction. That resilience is largely an ethical matter, of evaluators

“We will gauge the success of the future practice of evaluation in terms of whether it is resilient enough to adapt to the ontological realities of complexity, uncertainty, and contradiction. That resilience is largely an ethical matter, of evaluators taking full responsibility for the choices they make in framing and bounding the evaluations they conduct.”

(Thomas Schwandt, Post Normal Evaluation, 2019)

³ Patton, Michael Quinn, ‘Evaluation Implications of the Coronavirus Emergency’, *Social Science Space*, 27 March 2020, www.socialsciencespace.com/2020/03/evaluation-implications-of-the-coronavirus-emergency.

⁴ Piciotto, Robert, *The 5th Wave: Social Impact Evaluation*, The Rockefeller Foundation, 2015, www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/The-5th-Wave-Social-Impact-Evaluation.pdf.

taking full responsibility for the choices they make in framing and bounding the evaluations they conduct with the public.”⁵

A current sample of thinking from leading blogs, articles and webinars⁶ shows a convergence of views that much of the practice as we know it will need to evolve, particularly in response to COVID-19, to reflect an increasing emphasis on thinking and working both systemically and systematically, utilizing more real-time data to inform rapid decision-making, and to make sense of ongoing complexity and uncertainty. Connecting the local to the global in terms of patterns and actions will be even more important.

“Evaluation responses to complex challenges need to be adaptive. Rather than strategies for best practice we should be looking at strategies for best fit.”

(Michael Quinn Patton, Blue Marble Evaluation: Premises and Principles, 2019)

Context matters, as we have always known, but even more so now. The need of the hour is to work for global, longer term sustainable transformation. It is important to recognize that the South and North are intertwined but that societies are very different. More informed knowledge workers and evaluation scientists are urgently needed. This is an opportunity to use the coronavirus to strengthen evaluation thinking capacities.⁷

COVID-19 requires evaluation to rewire how we predict and assess outcomes and impact, drawing on the exponential growth in transactional, human-generated data which is matched by an increase in information and analytical capacity unimaginable even a few years ago. These developments make it possible to predict, assess and

research real-time changes on people and the planet. Using data science, it is now possible for social science researchers and evaluators to collect a vastly increased range and volume of data more easily, quickly, and economically. However, researchers and evaluators have been slower than other practitioners to adopt the tools and techniques of data science that enable leveraging and combining administrative, transactional and big datasets. Satellite images, household survey data, programme administrative data, social media analytics, call-centre data, information generated through mobile phones, and internet searches (to name just a few) are becoming key sources of data for research and evaluation specialists.⁸ Significant progress has been made in

⁵ Schwandt, Thomas A., ‘Post-Normal Evaluation?’ *Evaluation* 25, no. 3 (July 2019): 317–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389019855501>.

⁶ Ofir, Zenda, *Transforming Evaluations and COVID-19, Part 3. Advice for this time*, 13 April 2020. <https://zendaofir.com/covid-19-and-transforming-evaluations-part-3/>.

⁷ Patton, Michael Quinn, ‘Evaluation Implications of the Coronavirus Emergency’.

⁸ Bamberger, Michael, Peter York and Veronica Olazabal, *Rewiring How We Measure Impact in a Post-COVID-19 World*, The Rockefeller Foundation, 4 June 2020, www.rockefellerfoundation.org/blog/rewiring-how-we-measure-impact-in-a-post-covid-19-world.

addressing associated issues of human rights, equity and privacy as evaluation innovators and early adopters move forward to embrace and manage the risks of these new approaches.⁹

In order to fill rapidly expanding and increasingly specialized evaluation gaps, **the tool kit will have to be augmented and evaluators' competencies will have to be upgraded.** Since change is happening more rapidly, evaluators will also have to become more nimble. Innovative approaches are needed, and tolerance of long reports and protracted evaluation processes is wearing thin. To meet all these expectations, evaluation will have to become embedded in social processes and management systems. The link between monitoring and evaluation must be tightened.¹⁰

Evaluation will be called upon to facilitate piloting, adaptation, and upscaling of interventions within volatile operating contexts. In turn, this will mean that evaluators will have to master social networking, crowd-sourced learning, and big data analysis. Cultural change will also be required in order to build bridges across currently segregated evaluation domains. This is a demanding agenda but, in the words of evaluation pioneer Carol Weiss, "evaluation is not a stroll on the beach".

"Make evaluation all the more useful and real-time data essential so that the evaluation value proposition reframes evaluation as an essential activity, not as a mundane bureaucratic or luxurious function when times are good. Define, conceptualize, articulate and demonstrate the essential utility of evaluation. Lay the groundwork now".¹¹

"The pandemic has served to emphasize and deepen the challenges to evaluation that have been afoot for a decade or more. The signals are clear, and early adopters and innovators are well on their way to reimagining and creating the next era of evaluation. The question is, how long will it take mainstream evaluation players to follow, or better still, lead?"

(Robert Piciotto, 2015)

⁹ MERL Tech, *Homepage*, Washington, D.C., 2019. <https://merltech.org/merl-tech-dc-2019/>.

¹⁰ Piciotto, Robert, *The 5th Wave: Social Impact Evaluation*.

¹¹ Ibid.

2. Use, influence and quality in evaluation

The evolution of thinking in evaluation about use and influence

In 1988, Carol Weiss wrote an article for the journal *Evaluation Practice* called *Evaluation for decisions: Is anybody there? Does anybody care?*¹² As one might imagine from the title, Weiss catalysed a debate that continues decades later in the evaluation community on whether evaluation is relevant to changing times or will remain in the golden era of long studies and equally long reports.

“Until we study influence pathways, we will be hard pressed to figure out how evaluation can lead to more evidence-based social change and how evaluation can be carried out to achieve more influence.”

(Gary Henry and Melvin Mark, 2003)

Adding to that momentum, Gary Henry and Melvin Mark in *Beyond Use: Understanding Evaluation’s Influence on Attitudes and Actions* (2003)¹³ joined with Karen Kirkhart (2000)¹⁴ in advocating that the field of evaluation should move beyond use toward influence. They encouraged the evaluation field to look at the contextual factors in the pathways to influence to better understand the outcomes for which an evaluator might be held accountable and those that are part of a larger theory of change but beyond an evaluator’s scope of influence.

They go on to say that viewed in this way evaluation can be understood as analogous to an intervention or a programme. Evaluation represents a change in or contribution to ongoing processes that produce consequences – good, bad, neutral, mixed, or indeterminate. From the near infinite variety of changes that can arise as a result of an evaluation, the consequences of interest need to be separated from more incidental consequences. The term ‘evaluation outcomes’ is relied on to refer to the consequences of interest. Evaluation outcomes are those that are plausibly linked to the ultimate purpose of evaluation, namely, social betterment.¹⁵ Or perhaps worded differently in 2020, betterment of people and the planet.

Henry and Mark’s writings and the energetic debate that ensued moved the field forward to examine the critical factors of influence that led to social betterment. A compelling reason to

¹² Weiss, Carol H., ‘Reports on Topic Areas: Evaluation for Decisions: Is Anybody There? Does Anybody Care?’ *Evaluation Practice* 9, no. 1 (February 1988): 5–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109821408800900101>.

¹³ Henry, Gary T. and Melvin M. Mark., ‘Beyond Use: Understanding Evaluation’s Influence on Attitudes and Actions’, *American Journal of Evaluation* 24, no. 3 (September 2003): 293–314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109821400302400302>.

¹⁴ Kirkhart, Karen E., Reconceptualizing evaluation use: An integrated theory of influence. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2000: 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.1188>.

¹⁵ Henry, Gary T. and Melvin M. Mark., ‘Beyond Use: Understanding Evaluation’s Influence on Attitudes and Actions’.

focus on influence was that while all evaluators strive to have their evaluations used, some of the consequences are direct (instrumental) but incidental to the primary social purposes of the evaluation. Others pointed to the gap in the literature on use that has generally failed to give adequate attention to the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and societal change processes through which evaluation findings and process may translate into steps toward social betterment. Yet others contended that use is inadequate as a motivation for evaluators, because it fails to provide a moral compass (House, 1995)¹⁶ and falls short of recognizing and promoting the ultimate purpose of evaluation as social betterment.

Does quality ensure influence?

While the evaluation field has moved forward in understanding the nuanced difference between instrumental use and influence that leads to consequential social betterment, questions remain on the role that quality plays. Does a high-quality evaluation automatically result in influence? Some argue that if an evaluation meets the UNEG norms and standards of independence, utility and credibility,¹⁷ and is well designed from a utilization perspective as advocated by Michael Quinn Patton, it is likely to be influential. Others argue that while quality from a methodological perspective is important for all the reasons we know (e.g. defensible evidence-based findings), quality alone does not guarantee influence.

The differences may stem from how broadly quality is interpreted. In his blog *Five ways to think about quality in evaluation*¹⁸ Jos Vaessen refers to the building blocks of quality not just as methodological rigour in meeting UNEG norms and standards, but also as enabling an evaluation culture, valuing evidence, providing incentives, knowledge, skills sets, and ensuring fit-for-purpose evaluation from a utilization perspective. This ‘whole-of-process’ approach to optimizing evaluation use points to the importance of broader organizational, cultural, behavioural and process-related aspects. The basic premise is that throughout the entire evaluation process one can improve specific aspects to optimize the likelihood of effective use of evaluations.

This approach may come the closest to closing the loop on the relationship between use, influence and quality, and to underscoring the view that evaluation quality focused mainly on high quality methodology standards alone will not ensure influence. Quality matters as Schwartz and Mayne show eloquently in their book by the same name,¹⁹ but as this study and others show, even if an evaluation is technically of high quality, if it fails to connect with strategic opportunities for change in the context in which it was conducted, it is unlikely to be influential.

¹⁶ House, Ernest R., ‘Principled evaluation: A critique of the AEA Guiding Principles’, *New Directions for Evaluation*, vol. 1995, issue 66, pp. 27–34, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.1707>.

¹⁷ United Nations Evaluation Group, *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*, UNEG, 2016, www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914.

¹⁸ Vaessen, Jos, ‘Five ways to think about quality in evaluation’, *World Bank Blog*, World Bank, 11 December 2018, <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/blog/five-ways-think-about-quality-evaluation#reference2>.

¹⁹ Schwartz, Robert and John Mayne (ed.). *Quality Matters: Seeking Confidence in Evaluating, Auditing, and Performance Reporting*. New York: Routledge, 2005. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351322447>.

It is also worth remembering that much of the above debate on use, influence and quality comes mainly from a public sector and international development perspective, yet a large portion of development finance players in the global development and evaluation ecosystem come from a market systems perspective (blended finance, social impact investing, enterprise finance).²⁰ The inquiry into use, influence and quality in evaluation in a market-based system point to other important influence factors to consider as evaluation evolves and merges its thinking and practice with market systems players. Leaders in evaluation have noted that these ‘worlds’ need to learn more from each other. The American Evaluation Association has already begun that journey by hosting the Impact Convergence Conference and Social Value International in 2016²¹ and the creation of a new thematic interest group on social impact measurement from an impact investing perspective.

Perspectives of evaluation leaders on influence in evaluation

Over the past decade, prominent evaluation leaders in the United Nations and multilateral systems have led thoughtful and provocative dialogues on what is needed to make evaluations and our evaluation profession more influential.

Here is a sample of their views:

In a 2004 World Bank (Operations Evaluation Department) publication, *Influential Evaluations: Evaluations That Improved the Performance and Impacts of Development Programs: Case Studies and Lessons Learned*,²² Patrick Grasso and colleagues found that “When conducted at the right time, and when they (evaluations) focus on key issues of concern to policy makers and managers, and when the results are presented in a user-friendly format, evaluations can provide a highly cost-effective way to improve the performance and impact of development policies, programs and projects. But evaluations that fail these criteria may produce no useful results – even when they are methodologically sound”.

“Evaluators frequently ask themselves: are we making a difference and if we are, in what way? I’ve found that I can address that by embedding influence throughout the process: from choosing what to evaluate, how to design and undertake the evaluation, to outreach and follow-up.”

(Caroline Heider, former Director General, IEG, World Bank 2017)

²⁰ Evaluating Impact Investing, *Module 9 – Standards*. www.evaluatingimpactinvesting.org/syllabus/standards.

²¹ Impact Convergence Conference, *Homepage*, 2016. <http://impactconvergence.org/>.

²² World Bank, *Influential Evaluations: Evaluations That Improved the Performance and Impacts of Development Programs*, World Bank, Operations Evaluation Department, Knowledge Programs and Evaluation, Capacity Development Group (OEDKE), Washington, D.C., 2004. https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/sites/default/files/Data/reports/influential_evaluations_eed.pdf.

Oscar Garcia, former Evaluation Director of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, points out that “For evaluations to be influential, among other issues, they must be used to address critical areas of importance to major stakeholders, be delivered in timely manner, and build on the end users’ inputs and concerns to change the conditions under which the evaluation is working.”²³

In one of her blogs when she was Director General of International Evaluation Group (IEG) at the World Bank, Caroline Heider says, “My own sense is that as evaluators we have to bring together two dimensions. The first is “coverage” that allows us to give a verdict on the health of a portfolio or an institution. The power of these evaluations, comprised of evaluations of a representative sample of individual interventions, derives from its aggregation of trend analysis, patterns, and overall assessment.”

“The other dimension is that of strategic choice, finding those game changer subjects where the evaluation can make a contribution to solving a larger problem. These are sometimes demanded by stakeholders, but many times these evaluations touch on critical issues that at least some stakeholders would rather leave uncovered. The notion of “readiness for evaluation findings” is often thought to be essential if an evaluation is to stick. That may be true, but our efforts might also be better spent on a harder topic.”²⁴

Heider goes on to say that it is important to have a clear goal of influencing change and a strategy that helps increase influence. In the case of the World Bank, it focused on:

- How IEG makes choices about its evaluation programme to ensure stakeholder voices are considered and strategic alignment is achieved;
- How we undertake our evaluations to ensure they are credible and provide for engagements that help with learning through evaluation; and
- How we share evaluation insights from evaluations to enhance learning and promote follow-up to recommendations.²⁵

UNICEF’s leadership in the United Nations system and its convening power, globally and regionally, have provided important opportunities to advance evaluation thinking and practice. The UNICEF EO is among those global evaluation leaders that continue to think deeply about how evaluation can be designed and implemented more intentionally for influence.

²³ Garcia, Oscar, A. ‘Influential Evaluations: Illustrations from Multilateral Development Organizations’, *Evaluation Matters*. www.ifad.org/documents/38714182/39747979/matter_article.pdf/b08d466c-abff-498d-9b86-c883a1011893?version=2.0.

²⁴ Heider, Caroline, ‘The Three Pillars of a Working Evaluation Function: IEG’s Experience’, *World Bank Blog*, World Bank, 18 September 2018. <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/blog/three-pillars-working-evaluation-function-iegs-experience>.

²⁵ Heider, Caroline, ‘In Conclusion...’, *World Bank Blog*, World Bank, 24 September 2018. <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/blog/conclusion>.

3. UNICEF and evaluation

UNICEF has a long and well-respected history of playing a leadership role in evaluation. Over decades of consistent commitment, it has built up a large staff capacity to commission and manage evaluations throughout the agency at country, regional and global levels. Perhaps more so than other United Nations agencies UNICEF has recognized and supported the critical role that national and local evaluation capacity play in promoting child rights and achieving better development outcomes.

The 2017 DAC/UNEG Peer Review of UNICEF²⁶ notes that “UNICEF within the United Nations, is uniquely placed in terms of (i) the extensive global reach it has in 192 countries through country programmes and National Committees, seven regional offices, a supply operation in Copenhagen and offices in Geneva, Tokyo and Brussels, (ii) its highly decentralized operations, (iii) the presence of evaluation staff in many country offices, (iv) strong research capacity and a research centre in Florence, and (v) sizeable mobilization of resources from the private sector.” No other United Nations evaluation function has this kind of presence and reach.

Of significance to this study, the DAC/UNEG Peer Review notes that “UNICEF will need to capitalize much more strategically on the comparative advantages it enjoys. An independent UNICEF evaluation function, in particular, needs to keep pace with a rapidly changing development and evaluation world which, for its sustainability and progress, requires much greater equity, better assurance of rights, and more respect for human dignity.”²⁷

The future of development will increasingly rely on generating and managing evidence and knowledge to scale effective interventions and on influencing a broad range of players and investors, well beyond those currently involved. Players with the reach, resources and potential to scale such as governments (and parliamentarians), civil society, private sector and impact investors will depend on the knowledge that independent credible evaluation and research provides.

Externally, the UNICEF EO continues to be well regarded and appreciated by the international evaluation community for its long-standing commitment to regional and national evaluation capacity development, particularly in the Global South. In addition it is recognized for the unique leadership role it played in the early development of the global development evaluation architecture (e.g. EvalPartners, African Evaluation Association, EVALSDGs, International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation, and Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation)

²⁶ Development Assistance Committee (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)/United Nations Evaluation Group, *Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of UNICEF: Final Peer Review Document 2017*, 2017, www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/UNICEF_Peer_Review_25_July.pdf.

²⁷ Ibid, Executive Summary.

as well as its contribution of multilingual books and tools on equity-focused evaluation, and the excellent webinar series that reaches thousands of practitioners globally.

The evaluation community continues to look to UNICEF to play this important role in an increasingly challenging global context, and to be a much-needed champion for evidence of why equity and inclusion matter for the promotion of child rights and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Evolution of evaluation in UNICEF

While the 2017 DAC/UNCEG Peer Review of the UNICEF evaluation function recognized the substantial strengths and depths of its achievements over the past decades, it also made a series of bold future-oriented recommendations aimed at helping UNICEF to evolve the scope, approach and capacities of its evaluation function in response to global trends and challenges.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to follow up on the implementation of the DAC/UNEG Peer Review, it is worth noting that many of the issues and recommendations related to the evolution of the function, particularly strategic positioning and leadership, are highly relevant to the focus of this study and some of the same recommendations are repeated here.

The 2017 DAC/UNEG Peer Review notes that “an independent UNICEF evaluation function, in particular, needs to keep pace with a rapidly changing development and evaluation world which, for its sustainability and progress, requires much greater equity, better assurance of rights, and more respect for human dignity.”

In particular, the DAC/UNEG Peer Review notes that “The EO has a window of opportunity now with its new Director of Evaluation to strengthen its leadership role in UNICEF’s evaluation function and strategy by optimizing the evaluation synergies across the organization, evolving and responding to the need for more rapid cycle, strategic evaluations, synthesis reviews and cross-organizational learning and accountability in addition to the ongoing evaluations requested of the EO.”²⁸

²⁸ Development Assistance Committee (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)/United Nations Evaluation Group, *Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of UNICEF: Final Peer Review Document 2017*, 2017, page xii, ES 44. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/UNICEF_Peer_Review_25_July.pdf.

Between 2016 and 2018, UNICEF conducted a yearly average of around 100 evaluations of different types, across different themes, and in different regions.²⁹ The GEROS Meta-Analysis 2016-2018 shows that progress has been made since 2016 in improving the quality of UNICEF's evaluation reports. All final UNICEF evaluation reports are assessed for overall quality by an external independent company following a set of criteria.³⁰ The percentage of evaluation reports rated as satisfactory or higher every year increased by nearly 14 percentage points from 73.5 in 2016 to 87.4 per cent in 2018. At the same time, the percentage of reports rated as fair decreased by approximately half from 25.5 per cent in 2016 to 12.6 per cent in 2018.

The picture is less clear on the shift to more strategic evaluations and synergies between evaluations.

Growing pressure to deliver influential results and impact

The demand for greater influence should be seen against the backdrop of greater pressure for accountability for results and impact in direct programme expenses (60 per cent) and the steep growth in financial contributions from a wide range of financial partners including the private sector, governments, philanthropy, and impact investing.

In 2019, UNICEF's 137 government partners, along with intergovernmental organizations and inter-organizational arrangements, contributed \$4.7 billion to the organization. Partnerships with the private sector continued to grow in significance, contributing \$1.5 billion, and partnerships with the World Bank expanded to more countries than ever with almost \$400 million in joint projects implemented by UNICEF.³¹

Ninety-seven country offices and 20 National Committees reported working with 3,101 businesses and business platforms to mobilize resources, skills and assets, secure support for advocacy on children's issues, and address business impact on children in the workplace, marketplace and community.

Financial contributions from corporate partners increased to \$201 million in 2019 – up by more than 20 per cent compared to \$167 million raised in 2018. UNICEF philanthropy partners contributed \$185 million in 2019. Contributions from major donors have doubled in the past five years.

²⁹ Annex 1 presents a short note on the wide range of evaluations conducted by UNICEF.

³⁰ GEROS, which was established in 2010, provides a holistic system to ensure good quality and credibility of evaluation reports across the decentralized organization; supports the strengthening of the evaluation function to fully meet UNEG standards; and serves as a platform for institutional learning and the use of evaluative evidence.

³¹ UNICEF, *For every child, reimagine. UNICEF Annual Report 2019*. New York: UNICEF, 2020. www.unicef.org/reports/annual-report-2019.

Table 1: Key facts, UNICEF resources and partners 2019	
Partner	Contribution (\$ million)
Donor countries and areas	4,694
Intergovernmental agencies	572
Non-Governmental organizations	42
Inter-organizational arrangements	897
Other revenues	206
TOTAL	6,411

- 137 government partners, intergovernmental organizations and inter-organizational arrangements contributed \$4.7 billion;
- Private sector contributed \$1.5 billion.

Source: UNICEF, *For every child, reimagine: UNICEF Annual Report 2019*.

4. The 2020 UNICEF Study on Influential Evaluations

Against the backdrop of global challenges and ongoing reflection on how best to evolve evaluation in UNICEF, the EO commissioned the 2020 Study on Influential Evaluations with the objectives of analysing the extent to which evaluations at UNICEF have been influential; and to determine the enabling or constraining factors leading to influence. The findings and recommendations of the study will be used to improve the quality and intent of evaluations in UNICEF, and to improve institutional strategies for influence.³²

This study builds on the 2018 study³³ on influential evaluations which explored influence in eight different UNICEF offices and programmes. The 2018 study revealed that influence was most commonly instrumental, i.e. it supported improved design and implementation of policies and programmes, and that evaluations enabled UNICEF offices to advocate with greater confidence for specific policy approaches by providing them with evidence and knowledge. In addition, the study showed multiple examples of social change, paradigm shifts in how social problems are understood and addressed, and interconnected and mutually reinforcing factors that support influence. Although limited in time and scope, the 2018 study highlighted a number of key issues

Study objectives

- Analyse the extent to which evaluations at UNICEF have been influential,
- Determine the enabling and constraining factors leading to influence.

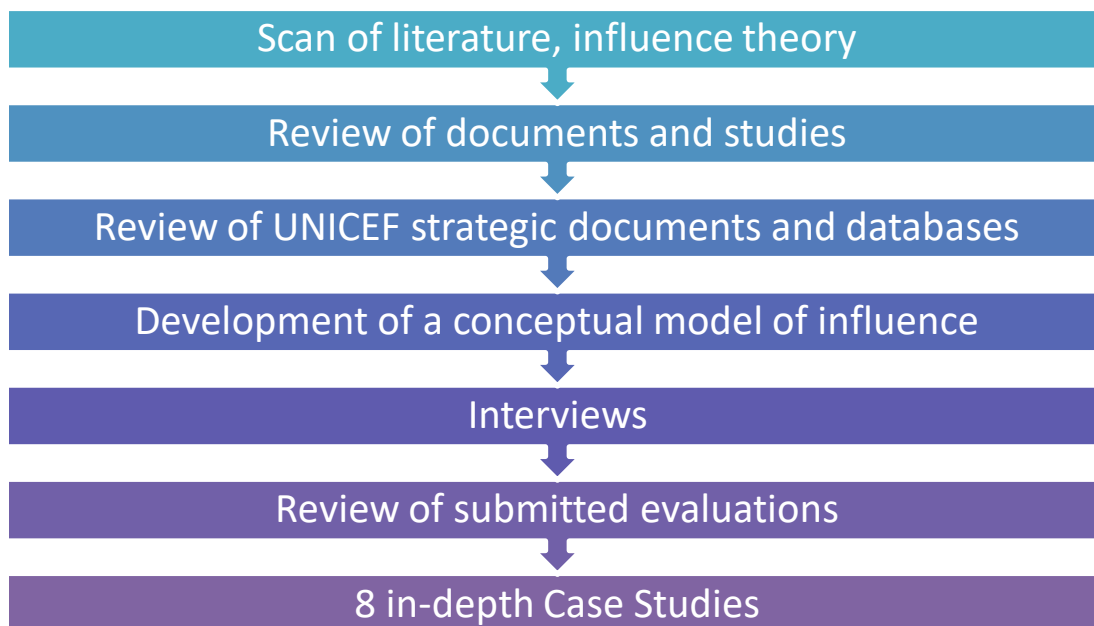
³² Annex 2 contains the Terms of Reference.

³³ UNICEF, *Influential Evaluations: A Selection of UNICEF Evaluations That Led to Learning and Change*, New York: UNICEF, 2018. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/Report_Influential_Evaluations_in_UNICEF.pdf.

for further consideration and action. The current study builds on and deepens the analysis and findings of the 2018 document.

Approach and methodology

The study design included the following seven components, some adjusted for COVID restrictions:



1. A scan of the literature on influence and quality;
2. Review of documents and studies;
3. A detailed review of UNICEF strategic documents and databases (Evidence Information System Integration (EISI) database and the GEROS database);³⁴
4. Development and testing of a conceptual model of influence to act as a hypothesis for the study, based on the literature and the influence thinking of evaluation leaders engaged in evolving the field of evaluation;
5. Interviews (82 in total) with UNICEF commissioning staff, managers of evaluation and users of evaluation (UNICEF programme staff, regional directors, and senior management, government officials, and partners);³⁵
6. A review of 45 submissions of influential evaluations received from country evaluation specialists and the EO and acceptance of 24 evaluations;
7. Eight in-depth case studies, originally to be conducted in person, adjusted to be carried out online.

³⁴ See Annex 3 for list of key documents reviewed.

³⁵ See Annex 4 for list of stakeholders interviewed.

Approach to the study

Supply and demand side perspectives – ‘wear the shoes of evaluation users’

The Study Team was asked by the Director of the Evaluation Office to ‘wear the shoes of the non-evaluators’ in order to understand the perspectives, needs and challenges of the demand side – i.e. those who request evaluations and have to act on the results to promote action for children (programme managers, regional directors, and government officials) as well as those evaluation managers who design, commission and manage evaluations in UNICEF (supply side). That insightful instruction proved to be fundamental in getting to the heart of why some evaluations are influential and others are not.

Using an Appreciative Inquiry approach

An Appreciative Inquiry approach³⁶ was used to conduct the interviews and case studies in a manner that sought to understand what influence means for supply and demand side stakeholders in their context, what works well to achieve consequential change in their context, the factors that led to that consequential change, how it happened, and ways in which UNICEF can be more intentional when planning, designing and managing evaluations for influence.

Interviews – demand side, supply side

Eighty-two interviews were held with stakeholders³⁷ – including:

- All UNICEF regional directors and senior management to ensure a full understanding of what influence means in the contextual circumstances in which UNICEF operates regionally and globally, and in which evaluations need to be influential;
- The providers of evaluation services – EO, evaluation managers, regional evaluation advisers and a few consultants);
- The internal and external users of UNICEF’s evaluation (e.g. programme managers and regional directors, government officials, and implementing partners);
- A limited number of relevant stakeholders (UNICEF, government, and partners) associated with the eight case studies (originally planned as field visits).

An initial round of interviews, document review, and a scan of the influence literature served to ground the study in the evolution of thinking of what influence means in the evaluation field and to UNICEF evaluation staff and managers. It also helped to identify internal and external factors that limit or enhance the influence of evaluations in UNICEF. This informed the development of

³⁶ Appreciative Inquiry: This approach is based on the assumption that questions and dialogue about strengths, successes, values, hopes, and dreams are themselves transformational, that human organizing and change, at its best, is a relational process of inquiry, grounded in affirmation and appreciation.

³⁷ Annex 4 contains the full list of stakeholders interviewed.

a conceptual model of influence (See Section 5) that served as a hypothesis to be further tested and refined during the study.

Submissions of influential evaluations and case study selection

Lines of inquiry for interviews

- How influence is understood from both the supply and the demand side;
- How evaluation can respond to the evolving needs of adaptive management;
- How evaluation can be more influential in complex political contexts where strategic positioning is critical to success;
- How evaluation can engage and communicate strategically, and advocate for change, learning, and action;
- How evaluation can be intentional from the beginning in conceptualizing and managing for influence.

Cases were selected from a call for submissions of influential evaluations from UNICEF regional and country offices as well as recommendations from interviews.

The call for submissions resulted in 45 submissions of influential evaluations. The Study Team undertook a two-stage review process to assess and filter the 45 submissions down to a manageable number of case studies. This resulted in 24 submissions being accepted for analysis, of which 8 were selected for in-depth case studies.

Stage 1: Filter submissions

The first step of reviewing the 45 submissions was to reduce the number to be considered for the next step. Reasons for elimination were lack of complete information; lack of substantiated ratings or explanation thereof; insufficient explanations; reference to ‘potential’ influence rather than realized influence; and lack of relevance of information to the influence cited.

A total of 24 evaluations were accepted that provided clear, compelling rationale and justification for the influence cited and a plausible correlation with the determinants of influence. The

information in these 24 submissions was used in the analysis of the study, and was the basis for the selection of the 8 case studies.

Stage 2: Select 8 case studies for in-depth review

Of the 24 accepted submissions, eight case studies were selected to purposefully reflect a mix of types of influence and contexts; and representation of all UNICEF regions as well as a cross-section of UNICEF programmatic focus (early childhood development, WASH, child protection including birth registration) and other areas that UNICEF supports (such as cash transfers for child support). Cases covered country-led, pilots and demonstration projects, as well as evaluations in the development and humanitarian contexts.

The following table shows the 24 accepted evaluations and the eight case studies selected for illustrative in-depth study. The first eight listed are those selected for in-depth case studies.

Annex 5 provides a summary of the types of influence and determinants of the 24 submissions.

The eight cases explored the types of influence and the determinants of that influence using the conceptual model. Based on Robert Yin's *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*³⁸ the case study design focused on causal and explanatory factors of influence, seeking to illustrate good practice in achieving specific types of influence that were considered particularly consequential to social change. The cases are designed to explain why and how the types of Influence were achieved (*explanatory*) and whether, and to what extent, there were causal relationships between the factors of determinants and influence (*causal*).

Due to travel restrictions resulting from COVID-19, case study data collection was modified to 3-10 virtual interviews per case, in addition to documentation analysis. Interviews focused on validating and further understanding the significant types of influence and determinants reported in the submissions and, to the extent possible, triangulating those views with UNICEF staff, government officials, and implementing partner representatives.

³⁸ The case design method is adapted from Yin, Robert K., *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, CA: Sage Publications, 2014.

Table 2: 24 accepted submissions of influential evaluations Including 8 Case Studies		
	Country/region	Evaluation
8 submissions selected for case studies		
1	Bulgaria	Evaluation of the Family for Every Child project in the Region of Shumen, Bulgaria
2	Evaluation Office	Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies
3	El Salvador	Triple “E” (Educación y desarrollo Integral de la Primera Infancia, Empoderamiento de familias y jóvenes, Entorno protector comunitario)
4	Malawi	Evaluation of the Community Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene Programme
5	Nepal	Evaluation of the National Early Childhood Development Program
6	Nigeria	Impact Evaluation of the UNICEF Supported Birth Registration Programme in Nigeria 2012–2016
7	State of Palestine	Evaluation of Family Centres as Community Level Service Delivery Mechanisms Reaching Vulnerable Children in Gaza
8	Thailand	Thailand Child Support Grant (CSG) Impact Assessment Endline Report
16 submissions analysed for types and determinants of influence		
9	Brazil	Evaluation of the Brazil–UNICEF Trilateral South-South Cooperation Programme
10	Burundi	Evaluation of the project on addressing malnutrition in Ngozi province in Burundi from May 2013 to December 2016
11	Cambodia	Evaluation of the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development and UNICEF cash transfer pilot project for pregnant women and children in Cambodia
12	Comoros	Evaluation of project on infant and young child feeding practices (ANJE) from 2016 to mid–2019
13	East Asia and Pacific region	Regional evaluation WASH: Formative evaluation of the UNICEF WASH regional and country programming strategies in the East Asia and Pacific Islands Region 2014–2017/8
14	Gambia	Summative Evaluation: Building Resilience for nutritional security in the Gambia through Social Transfers (BReST)
15	India	End line evaluation of GARIMA project in Uttar Pradesh 2013–2016
16	Kyrgyzstan	Evaluation of the State Programme on Justice for Children in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2014–2018
17	Madagascar	Impact evaluation of FIAVOTA Phase 1 emergency and recovery cash transfer in Madagascar, midline report
18	Mali	Évaluation sommative de l’approche de Programmation intégrée dans les régions de Mopti et Sikasso au Mali
19	Mexico	Evaluación de la estrategia de alimentación en las escuelas de tiempo completo
20	Namibia	Evaluation of Namibia’s community health extension workers (HEW) programme
21	Turkmenistan	Evaluation of Turkmenistan’s National Nutrition Programme for 2013–2017
22	Sao Tome and Principe	Summative Evaluation of Parental Education Program in Sao Tomé and Príncipe
23	Togo	Evaluation Sommative Du Partenariat De L’unicef – Togo Avec les Radios Pour le Changement de Comportement et L’adoption de Pratiques Favorables au Bien- Etre Des Enfants (2012–2018)
24	Zimbabwe	An Evaluation of the Small Towns WASH Programme (STWP) in Zimbabwe (2012–2018)

Limitations of the study

The impact of COVID-19: Field visits to conduct in-depth case studies could not be undertaken due to COVID-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions. The Study Team conducted online interviews with a limited number of key informants in the countries of the case studies. The availability of stakeholders was limited but adequate for an initial understanding of the changes achieved and the determinants of those changes. While the Study Team is relatively comfortable with the analysis of the types of influence and determinants reported, there is no doubt that the study would have benefited from in-person visits to more fully understand the nuances of the context and the strategies used to achieve influence.

Subjective interpretations of influence: It is inevitable that any judgement of influence will be, to some degree, a subjective interpretation. To the greatest extent possible, the Study Team triangulated influence reported with both those commissioning the evaluation and its users, including partners and government officials, and by obtaining documented evidence of consequential change (such as policy documents and new standards resulting from the evaluation). The inability of the Study Team to meet in person with evaluation managers and users in countries remains a limitation, but this cannot be mitigated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cumbersome forms: The forms that were sent, by the Study Team, to evaluation specialists from country offices to provide information on influential evaluations could have been better designed. Some found the forms cumbersome and this may have been a deterrent for those completing the forms. Nonetheless, the Study Team accepted 24 submissions that were complete and compelling and that provided a good range of illustrations of types of influence and their determinants. In future a friendlier format for submissions would be desirable.

5. Conceptual model of evaluation influence

Connecting with theory specialists in influence and use

The thinking behind the conceptual framework used in this study is based on the work of Henry and Mark in which they emphasize that some influences of evaluations are more consequential than others, and that the evaluation field needs to better understand influence pathways (how change happens) in order to more purposefully focus on the consequential changes for social betterment that evaluators can or should be held accountable for in their planning and management of evaluations.

Henry explains “... not all use automatically produces social betterment and not all forms of social betterment can be achieved by pursuing use. Social betterment means improved social conditions, the reduction of social problems, or the alleviation of human distress. For evaluation findings to contribute to social betterment, they must somehow be used.

But use is a means or process through which social betterment can occur. Use, once injected as a goal or guidepost for planning an evaluation, can begin to take on a life of its own, rather than serving as a means to an end. In this way, use can become the defining goal of evaluation and, in the process, displace and even obscure the broader purposes of social betterment, improving social conditions, and alleviating human distress and suffering.”⁴⁰

Developing and testing the model

Building on work of Henry and Mark and drawing from the study interviews, the Study Team developed a propositional model of influence that outlined the main types of influence thought to be significant and consequential for UNICEF (internal and external), and the determinants that appear to make evaluations influential or not.

The conceptual model and a description of the determinants and types of influence is presented below.

⁴⁰ Henry, Gary T., ‘Using Evaluation Findings for Policy: A Realist Perspective’, presented at 4th EES Biennial Conference: Taking evaluation to the People: Between Civil Society, Public Management and the Polity, European Evaluation Society Conference, 2000.

Figure 1: Conceptual model

DETERMINANTS OF INFLUENCE

TYPES OF INFLUENCE

CONTEXT
Being contextually knowledgeable and politically savvy

EVALUATION PROCESS AND PRODUCT
The right fit – making the right design choices, managing for influence

STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION
Engaging and communicating strategically and dynamically

KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING
Using what we know for influence: Knowledge and learning

TRUST AND COLLABORATION
What it takes for people to put their lives in the hands of others



Types of influence

Based on the analysis of the submissions and the interviews, the types of influence found to be significant within both national governments and UNICEF itself are influence on:






1. Policy, strategy, systems
2. Programming
3. Resource mobilization
4. Partnerships, advocacy, and coalition-building
5. Management, leadership, and governance
6. Evaluative culture, capacity, and learning

While these are largely self-explanatory, Annex 6 provides a detailed description of each type of influence identified in the 24 accepted submissions of influential evaluations.

Determinants of influence

From the analysis of the submissions, case studies and interviews, the Study Team placed determinants of the influence into five categories. The following table describes the five categories of determinants and what they look like in practice:

Table 3: Determinants of Influence

Determinant of influence	What this looks like in practice
 <p>CONTEXT</p> <p>Being contextually knowledgeable and politically savvy</p>	<p>A deep understanding of context – knowledge of the issues, a sense of what is possible; ability to read how to engage in the context – strategy, politics; ability to choose the right moment when to engage in a particular context – timing, line of sight on the issues that matter; mobilize strong public and public support at the highest levels of decision making; being opportunistic.</p>
 <p>EVALUATION PROCESS AND PRODUCT</p> <p>The right fit – making the right design choices, managing for influence</p>	<p>Framing and design that aligns with the context and need, knowing whether the issues are strategic or technical – what entry point for influence, knowing when a high level team is required or not necessary, knowing what degree of participatory processes is needed for influence and understanding, buy in, whether facilitation style is key to getting the right issues on the table, reading the audiences well to know what kind of product is needed; selection of credible evaluators; crisp reports.</p>
 <p>STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION</p> <p>Engaging and communicating strategically and dynamically</p>	<p>The skills and ability of UNICEF leadership and evaluation managers to engage strategically around opportunities that may or may not be in the plan; skills and ability of evaluators and managers throughout the evaluation process to strategically engage key stakeholders in understanding the context, the problem, the issues, the solutions, and to use the evaluation process to advance discussion of issues, evidence. Skills to identify champions and facilitate others in dialogue; using communication tools to engage stakeholders and to promote lessons and evidence.</p>
 <p>KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING</p> <p>Using what we know for influence: Knowledge and learning:</p>	<p>Purposefully recognizing the value of public good knowledge and evidence for social change, building on what others know in evaluation processes, collaborative learning, including synthesis of lessons and evidence in evaluation, not duplicating generation of evidence, joining up with others when appropriate, joint evaluations, promoting collective knowledge and collective action.</p>
 <p>TRUST AND COLLABORATION</p> <p>What it takes for people to put their lives in the hands of others</p>	<p>Recognizing the importance of trust in both interventions and the evaluation process, for stakeholders to engage authentically, recognizing contexts in which trust is an essential factor for successful intervention and for the engagement of evaluation, particularly high conflict areas, or high areas of vulnerability. Recognizing what is needed to build that trust – and that without it, there is no intervention or evaluation.</p>

6. Analyses across the study

The Study Team analysed the issues and themes across the data from the five main information sources for the study:

- Internal and external documents and studies – 2018 study on influential evaluations, UNICEF Meta-Analysis, DAC/UNEG 2017 Peer Review, Strategic Plan 2018–2021, Integrated Resources and Results Framework, revised evaluation policy, presentations to the UNICEF Executive Board, annual reports of the evaluation function.
- UNICEF databases – GEROS database, EISI database, including the GEROS 2016–2018 Meta-Analysis.
- Grey and peer-reviewed literature on influence theory and practice,⁴¹ blogs, keynote speeches and trends in the evolution of evaluation.⁴²
- Interviews (82) with both supply and demand side stakeholders (including case study stakeholders).
- Twenty-four accepted evaluations out of 45 submissions.
- Eight in-depth case studies.

Observations from the GEROS and EISI databases

The Study Team explored data and information from GEROS and EISI on quality, coverage and the types of UNICEF evaluations to see what the data say about issues of influence.

On quality

All final UNICEF evaluations are assessed by an external independent company using the GEROS Evaluation Quality Assurance Tool which includes nine assessment criteria to assess the quality of the various sections of an evaluation report: background, purpose, methods, findings, conclusions, recommendations, structure, principles, and executive summary. At present there is no criteria to assess strategic intent of evaluations and therefore, no ratings of the extent to which the evaluations are explicit and purposeful about strategic intent. This may reflect the fact that strategic intent is not as explicit as it could be in the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference and in the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Report Standards.⁴³

Since 2016 the overall quality of UNICEF evaluations has continued to increase and in 2018, close to 90 per cent of the evaluations were rated as satisfactory (75 per cent) or highly satisfactory (13 per cent).

⁴¹ Grey literature, peer-reviewed, published and blogs (see Annex 7 for the list of references consulted).

⁴² See Annex 3 for the complete list of documents.

⁴³ UNICEF, *UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards*, UNICEF, June 2017.

www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/UNICEF_adapated_reporting_standards_updated_June_2017.pdf.

This study, as well as the 2018 Report on Influential Evaluations and the DAC/UNEG Peer Review point to the critical importance of strategic intent in achieving influence, and the need for strategic intent to be explicit in the planning, design, execution, reporting and follow-up of UNICEF evaluations.

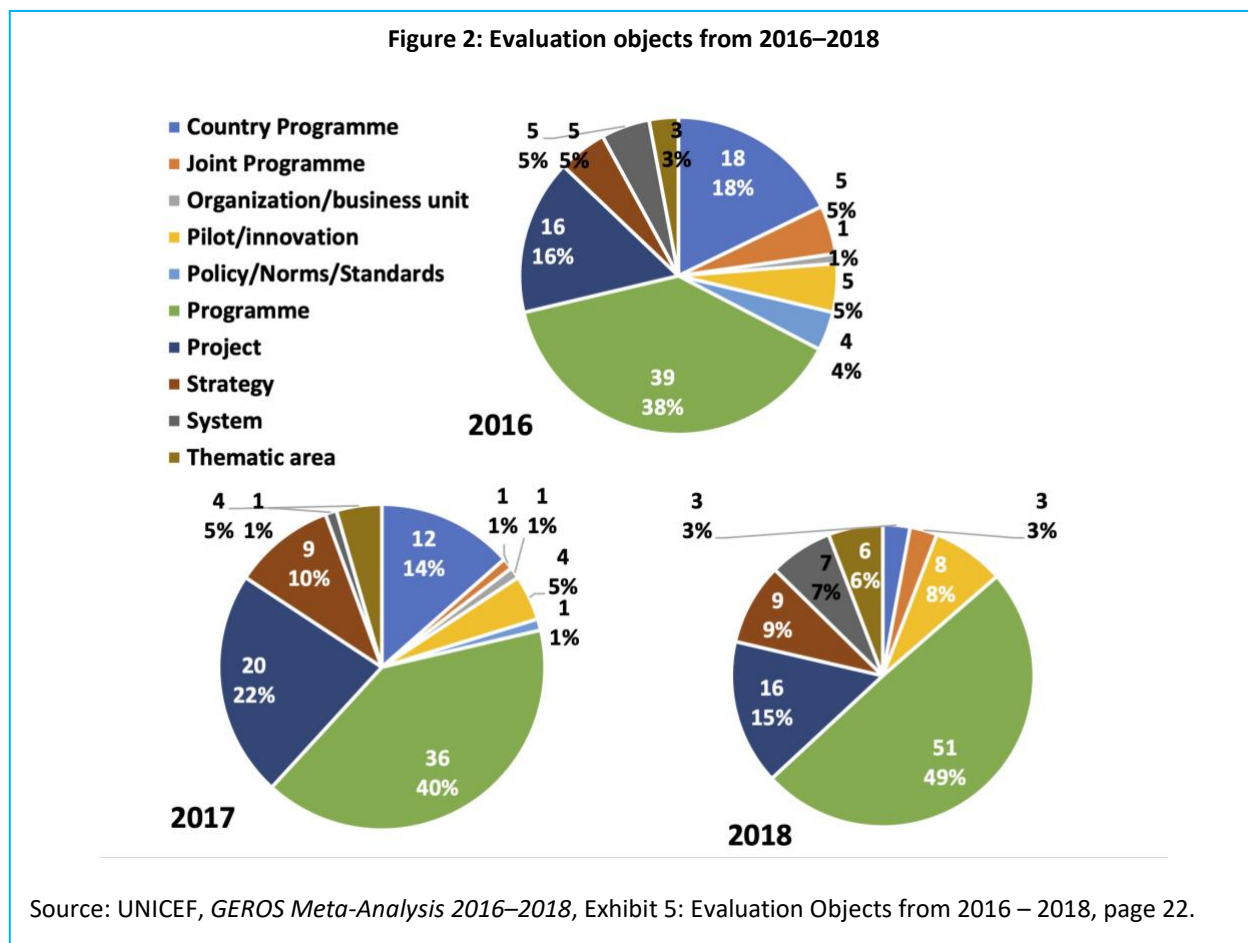
On coverage and types of evaluation

The Study Team explored the EISI database and the GEROS databases, to better understand the proportion of types of evaluations conducted relative to size of the UNICEF budget, and the influence issues emerging from the study. While this was by no means an in-depth analysis, it did yield some interesting food for thought when reflecting on the relationship between the objects of UNICEF evaluations, and the potential for greater influence.

Coverage

The number of countries undertaking evaluations has increased from 58 countries in 2016 to 74 out of 190 countries in 2018.

Types of Evaluations conducted



The UNICEF-GEROS Meta-Analysis 2016–2018⁴⁴ shows the following about the types of evaluations (*see Figure 2 above*):

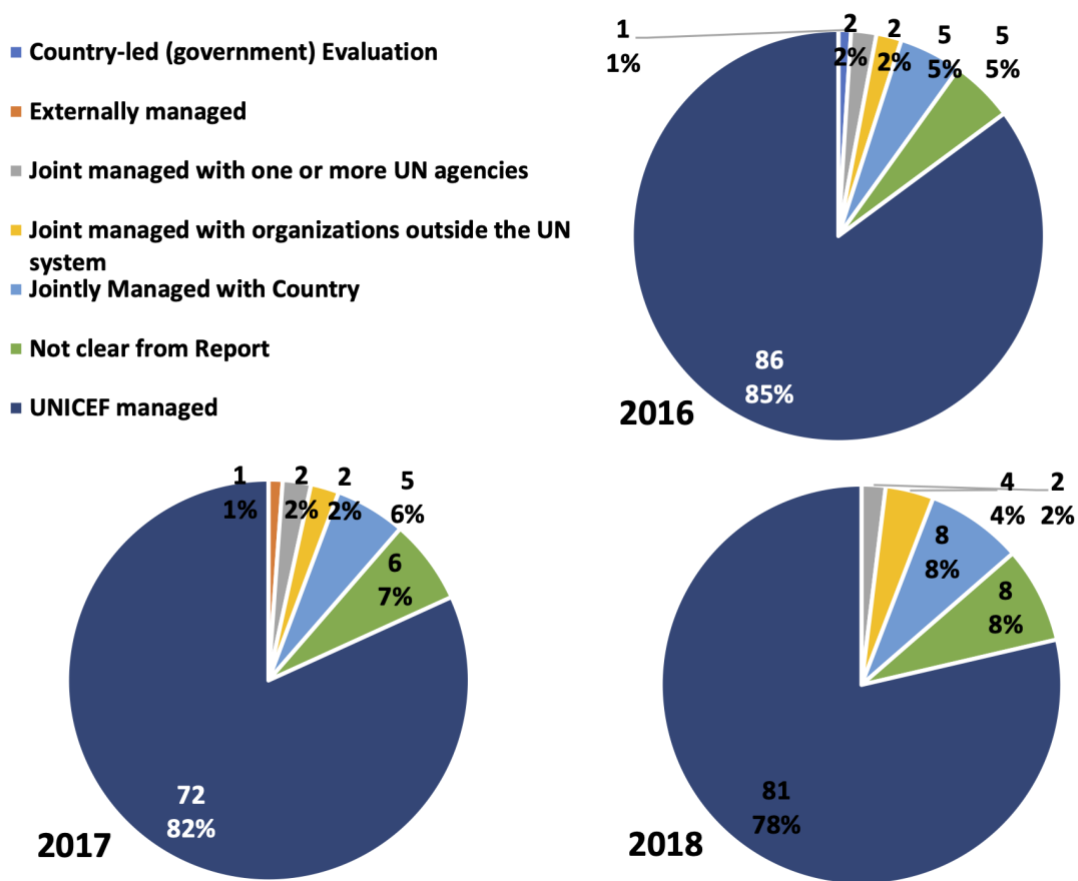
- Programmes were the most common objects evaluated, with the percentage of programme evaluations increasing to nearly half of the overall evaluation portfolio in 2018.
- Projects were the next most common objects evaluated, with a surge in project evaluations in 2017.
- Country programmes were a large portion of the portfolio in 2016 at 18 per cent but then decreased to only 3 per cent in 2018.
- Other objects of evaluation (including organizational/business units, pilots/innovation, policy/norms/standards, strategies, systems, and thematic areas) combined comprised less than half of the portfolios per year.
- However, between 2016 and 2018 there was an increase in systems evaluations by 2 per cent, pilot/innovation evaluations by 3 per cent, and strategy evaluations by 4 per cent.
- The percentage of thematic evaluations doubled from 3 to 6 per cent between 2016 and 2018. In 2018, strategy (9 per cent), pilot/innovation (9 per cent), and system (7 per cent) evaluations were the most common irregular objects evaluated.

The UNICEF-GEROS Meta-Analysis 2016–2018 shows the following about the types of management arrangements for evaluation (*see Figure 3 below*):

- Over three fourths of all evaluations were managed exclusively by UNICEF, although the percentage of UNICEF-managed evaluations decreased by 7 per cent from 85 per cent in 2016 to 78 per cent in 2018.
- The percentage of evaluations jointly managed with the national government increased slightly from 5 per cent in 2016 to 8 per cent in 2018, as did evaluations managed with organizations outside of the United Nations system (from 2 per cent in 2016 to 4 per cent in 2018).
- The percentage of evaluations jointly managed with other United Nations agencies remained the same at 2 per cent.
- Evaluations that were externally managed or led by the national government were practically non-existent or non-reported over the three years, with none in 2018.

⁴⁴ UNICEF, *GEROS Meta-Analysis 2016–2018: An Independent Review of UNICEF Evaluation Report Quality and Selected Trends from 2016–2018*, New York: UNICEF, 2018. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/GEROS_Meta-Analysis_2018.pdf.

Figure 3: Trends in evaluation management



Source: UNICEF, *GEROS Meta-Analysis 2016–2018*, Exhibit 11: Trends in evaluation management from 2016 – 2018, page 28.

The GEROS Meta-Analysis 2016–2018 provided further insights:

- Analysis of evaluations of child rights and associated advocacy and mobilization for change – issues at the core of UNICEF’s mission – revealed that few evaluations adequately address the issue of equity. Furthermore, evaluations do not commonly present disaggregated data and analysis on the reach of programmes and interventions to the most disadvantaged children.⁴⁵ This reduces the influence that evaluations can have in terms of informing policymakers about what works for whom, when and where.
- The inclusion of men and fathers as part of a conscious effort to integrate gender into evaluations remains weak.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

- The use of robust evaluation methods and the integration of cross-cutting evaluation principles (human rights, equity, gender equality, and stakeholder participation) remain the weakest. The assessment of the evaluation principles criterion received the lowest score of the GEROS criteria from 2016 to 2018.

From this analysis the Study Team noted that:

- There are very few strategy level evaluations (9 per cent in 2018) relative to the emphasis on programme evaluation (50 per cent).⁴⁶
- Humanitarian evaluations are increasing in number and coverage, but are still few compared with the relative size of UNICEF’s humanitarian expenses (50 per cent of the expenditures).⁴⁷
- Evaluations of private sector interventions, UNICEF’s impact investing fund, and market-based approaches appear to be very few relative to the size of private sector funding (\$1.5 billion), and the existence of an impact investing fund.
- Systems level evaluations make up 7 per cent of all evaluations.⁴⁸
- Pilots and innovations: 9 per cent of all evaluations seems low considering the importance of piloting, innovation, and proof of concept for scale.⁴⁹
- Few evaluations focused on the implications of global drivers of change like climate change on UNICEF’s work and strategy (perhaps this is more of a research focus or global insights?).
- There appear to be few evaluations synthesizing lessons and evidence across sectors, of portfolios of programmes (however these may also be in research databases)
- In terms of management of evaluations, by far the majority are managed by UNICEF, very few are jointly managed with other United Nations agencies or managed externally or by national governments.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

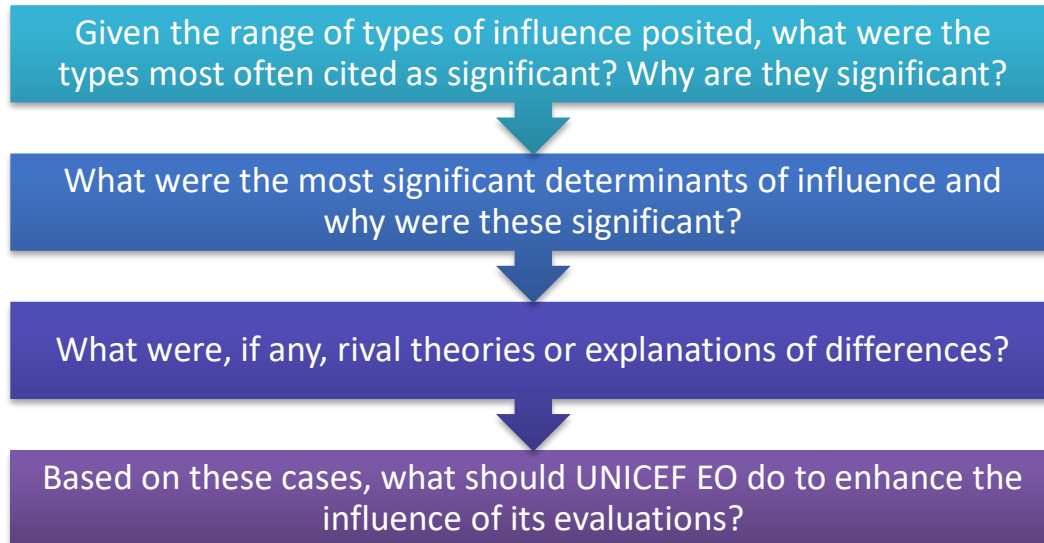
⁴⁷ According to the EISI database, humanitarian evaluations were few: 4 of 103 evaluations in 2018.

⁴⁸ UNICEF, *GEROS Meta-Analysis 2016–2018*.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Analysis across interviews, submissions and case studies:

Analysis across the submissions and case studies sought to answer the following questions:



Because of COVID-19 travel restrictions the Study Team dropped the question on rival hypotheses which would have required more in-depth and in person discussions with a wider range of stakeholders. Interviews probed to understand more about how influence was achieved, and confirmed the types of influence, as well as the determinants of that influence.

The analysis of the submissions and in-depth case studies provides strong evidence that UNICEF evaluation have significant influence.

The types of influence most often cited are:

- National policies, systems, strategies and legislation
- National programming
- UNICEF strategy and positioning
- UNICEF programming

The types of influence least cited are:

- Resource mobilization
- Adaptive management, leadership and governance
- Evaluative culture and learning
- Partnerships, advocacy and coalition building

Of the five determinants of influence, the most cited are:

- Context – being contextually knowledgeable, strategic and politically savvy
- Evaluation process and product - The right fit, making the right design choices aligned with strategic intent, managing the process for influence
- Engagement and strategic communications – Engaging stakeholders and influential players, and communicating strategically and dynamically
- Trust and collaboration – recognizing that trust is essential for change and investing in it. (It should be noted that even though other cases did not cite trust as critical, two cases in high conflict settings cited it as the most important determinant in achieving influence and social change).

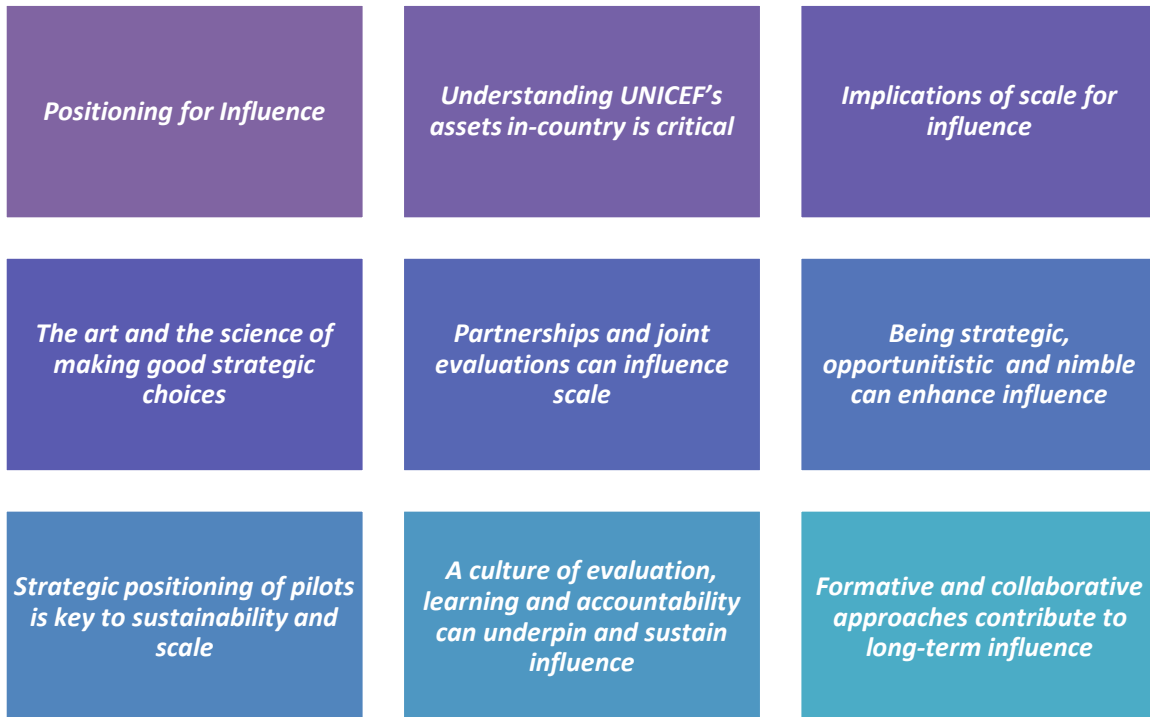
The determinant least cited is:

- Knowledge and learning: Collaborative learning, using what we know for influence, promoting public good knowledge and collective action.

‘Trust and collaboration’ was added as a determinant after interviews with stakeholders in settings of high conflict and violence in which they indicated how fundamental trust is to being able to influence programmes and policy. The importance of trust and collaboration is well known in management theory and in life in general, yet it remains somewhat invisible in evaluation rubrics.

Recurring issues and themes

The Study Team identified the following recurring issues and themes that are particularly relevant for the UNICEF evaluation function when thinking about how to more intentionally plan, design and manage influential evaluations.



Selected examples are provided below from the interviews, case studies and submissions:

- ***Positioning for influence – the need to read the context and know when and how to engage***

For many users of evaluation, particularly regional directors, senior programme managers and government officials, influence means having the political skills to read the context in which UNICEF works and know when and how to engage, how to choose the right moment to engage in a particular issue, knowing how to position evaluation for influence, and how to mobilize strong public support for evaluation findings at the highest levels of decision-making. All of the above requires political savviness in addition to technical and methodological evaluation skills.

In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF took advantage of the President’s decree declaring 2020 as the Year of Regional Development, Digitalization and Child Protection to create a conducive environment for the findings of the **evaluation of the State Programme on Justice for Children in the Kyrgyz Republic**⁵⁰ to influence the setting up of new services for children.

Being strategically positioned in **El Salvador** as part of a long-term UNICEF early childhood development effort to bring about sustainable change at scale for children enabled findings from the **evaluation of the Triple “E” (Educación y desarrollo Integral de la Primera Infancia, Empoderamiento de familias y jóvenes, Entorno protector comunitario)**⁵¹ to influence the formulation of the Territorialization Strategy for Early Childhood Care and draw attention to the need for social inclusion.

- **Understanding UNICEF’s assets in-country is key to positioning for influence**

Senior UNICEF managers spoke of the importance of understanding UNICEF’s legacy and social capital assets as key to finding the right entry point for evaluation influence. Assets they mentioned included the quality and depth of UNICEF’s relationships, reputation and trust with government, civil society organizations and other key players. The greater the assets, the greater the opportunity to be influential. A deep understanding of the political context of the country or region is key in positioning evaluation for influence, particularly in humanitarian settings where there may be an absence of equity, respect for rights, marginalization of large vulnerable populations, and a lack of trust.

A good example of leveraging the assets of a long-standing trusted relationship is seen in the significant influence of the **evaluation of the Family for Every Child project in the Region of Shumen in Bulgaria**.⁵² The evaluation was able to contribute to the deinstitutionalization of children in Bulgaria (a highly sensitive issue) in large part due to the goodwill, trust and collaboration that the Bulgaria Country Office has shared with the Government and civil society organizations on matters of child rights since 2006 when it opened.

Ensuring that the large complex high stakes **Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies**⁵³ conducted by the Evaluation Office was led by a senior, experienced team with good facilitation and strategic engagement skills, and was managed and coordinated well, influenced UNICEF’s approach to humanitarian responses in terms of coverage with equity.

⁵⁰ UNICEF, 2019 *Kyrgyzstan: Summative evaluation of implementation of the State Programme on Justice for Children in Kyrgyzstan 2014–2018*, UNICEF, 2019. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103703.html.

⁵¹ UNICEF, 2017 *El Salvador: Evaluación del programa Triple “E” (Educación y desarrollo Integral de la Primera Infancia, Empoderamiento de familias y jóvenes, Entorno protector comunitario en comunidades seleccionadas)*, UNICEF, 2017. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_102724.html.

⁵² UNICEF, 2016 *Bulgaria: Evaluation of the Family for every child project in Bulgaria*, UNICEF, 2016. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_95487.html.

⁵³ UNICEF, 2018 *Evaluation Office: Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies*, UNICEF, 2018. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103536.html.

- *The nature of influence at scale has implications for the focus of evaluation*

Programme and senior managers pointed out that influencing long-term sustainable change at scale is often about mobilizing long-term public opinion in favour of children’s causes, giving voice to child rights, and ensuring that civil society movements advocate and support long-term change. They suggested that the evaluation function may want to include evaluations that go beyond programmes and projects to look at the means by which the demand for social change is generated, sustained and scaled through social movements, networks and other means.

Although the study did not review evaluations with a focus on scale and broad mobilization, given the relevance for influencing lasting social change at scale this perspective could be incorporated into the **UNICEF SDG 3 and 4 evaluations underway in Nigeria**⁵⁴ which, by the nature of interconnected SDGs, will have to look at the broader system of actors and programmes needed to sustain change.

Building strong stakeholder ownership and community trust as well as ensuring the active participation and engagement of local communities greatly enhanced the influence of the **evaluation of Family Centres as Community Level Service Delivery Mechanisms Reaching Vulnerable Children in Gaza, State of Palestine**,⁵⁵ in mobilizing resources for continuing a much-needed Family Centre programme.

- *Making good strategic choices of what is most important to evaluate is both an art and science. Flexibility is key, but the risk-averse culture of UNICEF can be limiting*

Interviewees repeatedly noted that to make good strategic choices it is essential to understand the evolving drivers of change and new influential players relevant to UNICEF’s mandate. They pointed to the need for evaluation to use trend studies and forecasting data to anticipate opportunities for evaluation, and to have the flexibility to make strategic choices that may not necessarily feature in a multi-year evaluation plan. They stressed the importance of knowing where and when it is possible for evaluative evidence to influence change, as well as when it is not the right time to evaluate, or even futile to do so.

Regional directors noted that the potential influence of evaluation is reduced when evaluations are conducted in a risk-averse culture where failure and learning are not embraced. They cautioned against a tendency to evaluate only what programme managers know works well – which are generally easier evaluations to navigate through complex political systems and government bureaucracies. The real challenge and greater opportunity

⁵⁴ This evaluation has not been published at the time of writing the study.

⁵⁵ UNICEF, *2018 State of Palestine: Evaluation of Family Centres in Gaza*, UNICEF, 2018. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_102947.html.

for influence is to develop the skills and the support for evaluations that tackle difficult issues and what is known to be not working.

A illustrative example of making a good strategic choice is found in the **impact evaluation of the Birth Registration Programme in Nigeria**⁵⁶ that recognized the implications of low birth registration for Nigeria and Africa as a key political and socio-economic issue. The evaluators skillfully chose an approach that rigorously tested the hypothesis underlying the programme and generated compelling evidence that demonstrated to officials and community leaders that a different programme strategy and theory of change were needed to increase birth registration. This compelling evidence mobilized political support for policy changes that led to significant increases in birth registration in Nigeria.

Another relevant example is the persistent effort made by the regional director to convince the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to permit an **evaluation of a Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition Programme supported by UNICEF**.⁵⁷ The evaluation found that the programme has achieved high geographic coverage and its impact was strong, but more significantly, the evaluation helped UNICEF to considerably improve its relations with the Government as permission was granted for travel to the counties and to interview community level workers and families.

- ***As new players emerge and resource flows change, UNICEF may no longer be the biggest and most influential player in the room – partnerships and joint evaluations can influence scale beyond what UNICEF can do alone***

Interviewees referred to the importance of a mindset shift that may be needed in UNICEF from the days when UNICEF was the largest player in the room, to the current landscape where many UNICEF offices have relatively small budgets and limited capacity. Interviewees indicated that joint evaluations may be a more effective way of achieving broader influence across the ecosystem of players than multiple smaller evaluations that have limited reach and influence beyond the specific programmes they are evaluating.

An example of the UNICEF's evaluation influence is seen in joint evaluations such as the **2019 Evaluation Office Joint Evaluation of UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage**⁵⁸ in 12 of the most high-prevalence or high-burden countries. The findings and recommendations have led to UNICEF and UNFPA refining the Global Theory of Change for Phase 2, initiating actions to develop in-country monitoring tool for policy and legal frameworks, and budget allocations to child marriage-relevant activities within various sectors.

⁵⁶ UNICEF, 2018 *Nigeria: Impact Evaluation of the UNICEF Supported Birth Registration Programme in Nigeria 2012–2016*, UNICEF, 2018. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103539.html.

⁵⁷ UNICEF, 2018 *Korea: Evaluation of Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition Programme supported by UNICEF in DPR Korea 2015–2017*, UNICEF, 2018. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103314.html.

⁵⁸ UNICEF, 2019 *EO: Joint Evaluation of UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage*, UNICEF, 2019. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103712.html.

- *Evaluations that are strategic, opportunistic and nimble while also producing compelling evidence are more likely to be influential*

Both demand and supply side players reflected that while high quality evaluations are important for credibility, quality is often not the most important determinant of influence. The critical factors for demand-side users are being strategic, timely, opportunistic and nimble while, at the same time, producing compelling evidence that is pitched in a politically savvy way without compromising credibility.

For example, the Thailand Country Office’s well-planned long-term advocacy strategy around **Child Support Grants (CSGs)**⁵⁹ provided the buy-in and opportunity to partner with the Department of Children and Youth in the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security in order to commission the **CSG impact evaluation** that provided compelling and rigorous evidence that cash grants do yield tangible benefits to children. Creative dissemination of findings built public consensus and convinced the top political leadership to expand the reach of CSGs.

Another example is the evaluation of the **Early Childhood Development Program in Nepal**.⁶⁰ When the National Planning Commission requested support to commission the ECD evaluation, the Nepal Country Office readily agreed even though it had not planned for this evaluation. UNICEF seized the opportunity because it recognized an important opportunity to generate evidence to shape the new national ECD strategy for 2019–2030.

- *Evaluations of pilot projects are likely to be more influential when they are strategically positioned as part of a long-term UNICEF effort to bring about sustainable change at scale for children*

Both users and those commissioning evaluation agreed that evaluations can be influential when pilot projects are positioned as part of a long-term UNICEF advocacy strategy. For instance, the Bulgaria Country Office realized that its longstanding campaign for deinstitutionalization of children would gain traction only if a demonstration project could establish the efficacy of alternatives to the institutionalization of children. The subsequent evaluation of a demonstration project, Family for Every Child in the Shumen Region, convinced the Government of Bulgaria of the feasibility of alternatives to the institutionalization of children. This approach is now embedded in Update Action Plan for the Vision for Deinstitutionalisation of Children in Bulgaria adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2016.

⁵⁹ UNICEF, 2019 Thailand: Thailand Child Support Grant (CSG) Impact Evaluation Report, UNICEF, 2019. https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103759.html.

⁶⁰ UNICEF, 2018 Nepal: Evaluation of the National Early Childhood Development Program, UNICEF, 2018. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103315.html.

The intent behind supporting pilots is not always clear. Most tend to focus on a narrow intervention and not on the changes to the overall ecosystem needed for scale and sustainability. Sufficient thought is often not given to where resources for scaling up will come from, or how an intervention will succeed without strengthening the overall approach to social protection or institutions responsible for promoting child welfare programmes.

In Cambodia, the evaluation of the **Council for Agricultural and Rural Development and UNICEF cash transfer pilot project for pregnant women and children in Cambodia**⁶¹ was timely and appropriate to the need for evaluation findings to inform and influence the scale up of the cash transfer programme nationwide.

- ***A culture of evaluation, learning and accountability is needed to underpin and sustain influence – single evaluations, even if influential, are not likely to sustain influence at scale or across systems***

Echoing the views expressed in Jos Vaessen’s blog referred to earlier,⁶² interviewees suggested that for evaluation to have lasting influence beyond one-off successes, a culture of evaluation, learning and accountability is critical to embed in UNICEF offices, government, civil society and the private sector. Many stakeholders praised UNICEF EO’s efforts in this regard.

Findings from the **evaluation of the Small Towns WASH Programme (STWP) in Zimbabwe (2012–2018)**⁶³ enabled UNICEF to leverage its position as the only United Nations agency actively engaged and investing in the WASH sector in Zimbabwe to influence revisions to the theory of change based on a better understanding of how changes occurred (e.g. how financial sustainability led to reduced WASH-related morbidity).

Building on the cumulative knowledge and evidence from similar evaluations conducted by UNICEF in other countries and a focus on the added-value of the **evaluation of the Community Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene Programme in Malawi**⁶⁴ influenced the decision of the Malawi Country Office to learn from this evaluation to expand its strategy beyond community-led total sanitation to sanitation marketing/market-based sanitation.

⁶¹ UNICEF, 2018 *Cambodia: Evaluation of the CARD and UNICEF Cash Transfer Pilot Project for Pregnant Women and Children in Cambodia*, UNICEF, 2018. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_102924.html.

⁶² Vaessen, Jos, ‘Five ways to think about quality in evaluation’, *World Bank Blog*, World Bank, 11 December 2018. <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/blog/five-ways-think-about-quality-evaluation>.

⁶³ UNICEF, 2020 *Zimbabwe: Evaluation of the Small Towns WASH Programme (STWP) in Zimbabwe*, UNICEF, 2020. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103935.html.

⁶⁴ UNICEF, 2019 *Malawi: Evaluation of the Community Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene Programme*, UNICEF, 2019. www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103729.html.

- **Formative and collaborative approaches to evaluation build in opportunities for influence along the way, and build stronger buy-in to sustain influence in the longer term**

Many users of evaluation felt that the most influential evaluations were the ones where the evaluation managers were involved with evaluation users early and at key times throughout the process, in a formative way, to help decide what the most important opportunities for influence are, to shape the evaluation to target influence, and to learn along the way.

An example of good practice here is the formative evaluation of **UNICEF Programming in Health Systems Strengthening**⁶⁵ that was cited by senior health managers as an extremely insightful learning process for them at key points during the formative evaluation. The Evaluation Manager worked with programme staff to frame the evaluation from a health systems change perspective, and ensured that programme staff was involved at different stages throughout the evaluation including collaboratively developing and refining recommendations.

Case study examples of influence and determinants

The following table provides an overview of the influence achieved in each of the eight case studies including examples of the determinants that led to that influence.

While case study examples are used throughout the report, this table consolidates an overview of influence and determinants. The details of the case studies are found in the report titled Eight Case Studies conducted for the 2020 Study on Influential Evaluations in UNICEF.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ UNICEF, *UNICEF Programming in Health Systems Strengthening: A Formative Evaluation – Synthesis Report*, UNICEF, New York, 2019, www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/UNICEF_HealthSystemsStrengthening_report_web.pdf.

⁶⁶ UNICEF, *Influencing for Children: Evaluation Matters. 2020 Study on Influential Evaluations in UNICEF. Eight Case Studies*. UNICEF Evaluation Office, 2020.

Table 4: Eight in-depth case studies – types of influence from UNICEF evaluations and their determinants

	UNICEF Office	Title of the report	Illustration of main types of influence	Illustration of determinants
1	Bulgaria	Evaluation of the Family for Every Child project in the Region of Shumen, Bulgaria	<p>National policy: Influenced the Government’s new updated action plan for the implementation of the National Strategy Vision for Deinstitutionalisation of Children in Bulgaria.</p> <p>Strengthened UNICEF’s position in Bulgaria and enabled Bulgaria to position itself as a model country in terms of stopping the placement of children ages 0–3 in institutions.</p>	<p>Strategic engagement and communication: Strong engagement of Government, political and public support, and stakeholder ownership and engagement.</p> <p>Context: Importance of creating an enabling environment, galvanizing a number of stakeholders and marshalling political will for supporting deinstitutionalization reforms.</p>
2	Evaluation Office	Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies	<p>Strategy and programming: Influenced UNICEF’s approach to humanitarian responses in terms of coverage with equity.</p> <p>Sharpened UNICEF’s key strategic and operational decisions regarding target populations and partnerships.</p>	<p>Evaluation product and process: Clarity on the strategic intent and objectives of the evaluation.</p> <p>Knowledge and lessons: Using earlier synthesis reviews to define benchmarks for better understanding and addressing bottlenecks to improving coverage and equity of humanitarian responses.</p>
3	El Salvador	Triple “E” Evaluation (Educación y desarrollo Integral de la Primera Infancia, Empoderamiento de familias y jóvenes, Entorno protector comunitario)	<p>National strategy: Influenced the formulation of the Territorialization Strategy for Early Childhood Care and drew attention to the need for social inclusion.</p>	<p>Context: Importance of strategically positioning the evaluation of pilots as part of a long-term UNICEF effort to bring about sustainable change at scale for children.</p> <p>Evaluation product and process: Ensuring that the intent to scale up nationally is built into the design and implementation of the pilot intervention.</p>
4	Malawi	Evaluation of the Community Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene Programme	<p>Programming: Influenced the Malawi Country Office to change its strategic positioning and programming from community-led total sanitation to sanitation marketing/market-based sanitation.</p>	<p>Conducive environment for change: Awareness of the need to shift WASH approaches to a focus on market systems.</p> <p>Importance of timing of an evaluation for it to have influence.</p> <p>Knowledge and lessons: Importance of building on cumulative knowledge and evidence from similar evaluations conducted in the past by UNICEF in other countries.</p>

Table 4: Eight in-depth case studies – types of influence from UNICEF evaluations and their determinants

	UNICEF Office	Title of the report	Illustration of main types of influence	Illustration of determinants
5	Nepal	Evaluation of the National Early Childhood Development Program	National Strategy: Informing the new National ECD Strategic Plan 2019–2030	Context: Need for UNICEF to respond with agility and speed to the Government’s request for an evaluation.
6	Nigeria	Impact Evaluation of the UNICEF Supported Birth Registration Programme in Nigeria 2012–2016	National programme: Influenced critical programme theory, design, implementation and policy adoption that led to a significant increase in birth registration in Nigeria.	Context: Timely tapping of strategic opportunity by UNICEF to undertake this impact evaluation. Strategic engagement and communication: UNICEF leadership deliberately engaged in evidence-based policy advocacy with high level policymakers.
7	State of Palestine	Evaluation of Family Centres as Community Level Service Delivery Mechanisms Reaching Vulnerable Children in Gaza for the period June 2015 to October 2017	Resource mobilization: Influenced the mobilization of resources for continuing a much-needed family centre programme. Programming: Contributed to significantly improving the design, management and quality of service delivery by the family centres.	Trust and collaboration: Stakeholder ownership, building community trust, and ensuring community engagement was essential to the influence of the evaluation.
8	Thailand	Thailand Child Support Grant (CSG) Impact Assessment Endline Report	National programme: Influenced the Government’s decision to expand the Child Support Grant. Allowed UNICEF to engage with highest levels of policymakers, enhanced political commitment, and directly influenced the Government’s decision to expand the Child Support Grant. Helped position UNICEF as a leader in evidence generation and evaluation among policymakers, academia and civil society organizations in Thailand and other countries.	Context: Importance of generating demand for the evaluation within government and ensuring that it is government-owned and country-led. Strategic engagement and communication: Leveraging political support and engaging multiple stakeholders and with highest levels of policymakers. Evaluation product and process: Effective communication of evaluation findings to the right audiences using the right format.

Note: All the evaluations have had multiple influences and multiple determinants of influence. Those identified in the table are therefore not exhaustive, but illustrative of them.

Understanding the demand side of evaluation

While the Study Team found strong examples of evaluation influence as reflected in this report and strong support for the evaluation function at UNICEF, users of evaluation also provided constructive feedback on why they sometimes do not find evaluations influential. These themes reoccurred sufficiently across the extensive interviews conducted by the Study Team and were included in the study to contribute to the evaluation function's deeper understanding of the demand side of evaluation – i.e. the needs and challenges of users as well as opportunities they can provide for evaluation influence:

- ***Understanding adaptive management needs***

Users of evaluation sometimes find it to be supply driven, and suggest that it needs to be more demand driven in consultation with country level stakeholders and regional offices, taking into consideration broader context issues. They indicate that those commissioning evaluation (and evaluators) sometimes lack sufficient understanding of users' needs, particularly with respect to adaptive management, and that they are sometimes not strategic enough to help managers spot opportunities for evaluation influence in the national agenda for children.

- ***More compelling dynamic communication***

Long technical reports are not easily accessible by managers and policy level decision-makers who are looking for bigger picture strategic guidance. Users found that communication of findings is improving and voiced encouragement to continue with those improvements.

Some country-level stakeholders indicated there was little support for external partners to further communicate evaluation results and urged the Evaluation Office to consider more investments for dissemination and discussion of findings with country stakeholders.

- ***Aligning evaluations with the big picture of change***

Demand side managers indicated that programme evaluations can be narrowly focused on the technical intervention lacking a view of the bigger picture of change in the ecosystem of players and systems in which UNICEF operates. While this may be technically useful, evaluations often miss the opportunity to look beyond such aspects to major drivers of change for UNICEF's mission and work such as climate change, the influence of private sector capital flows, and new market and finance players.

Sustainability and scalability issues are sometimes inadequately addressed (particularly in pilot evaluations), yet issues of scaling, replicability, and sustainability are a major preoccupation of country and regional managers.

- ***Engaging top leadership***

There is often limited engagement of top leadership with evaluation, partly because many evaluations are not strategically focused, and partly because of limited understanding on the part of some senior managers on what evaluation can do to support them in better positioning UNICEF to promote child rights.

- ***Synergies and coordination with data, knowledge and evidence functions***

Demand side users spoke to the need for improved coordination across data, evidence, and knowledge functions – all are necessary functions if UNICEF is to know if change is happening, as well as the broader implications for policy and strategy. They felt that cumulative learning across the agency is limited and evidence of what is already known is sometimes not sufficiently synthesized and used before an evaluation is launched. UNICEF has several platforms that curate data, evidence and lessons but there is no means to integrate these with the knowledge base of the rest of the agency.

Seven lessons from the evaluation submissions on how and why influence was achieved

1. Investing in long-term political and public support and generating demand for the evaluation within government supports national ownership.
2. Evaluations tend to be more influential when they are strategic and well-timed, and when there is clarity of purpose and strategic intent.
3. Aligning evaluation design and method with strategic intent can contribute to enhancing the influence of an evaluation's findings.
4. Influence of evaluation findings is enhanced when there is clear added-value of evaluative knowledge.
5. Building strong stakeholder ownership and engagement enhances the potential for evaluation influence.
6. Evolving effective communication strategies by developing appropriate messages and modalities for communicating with different audiences (including at the community level) greatly enhances the potential for influence of evaluations.
7. Investing in trust building with government and other partners backed by strong leadership helps to position the evaluation as part of a larger long-term advocacy strategy of promoting child rights.

7. Proposed theory of change for evaluation influence in UNICEF

Based on the results of the cross-case analysis and the extensive interviews across UNICEF and partners, the Study Team saw three possible pathways for UNICEF to improve its influence and proceeded to develop a draft theory of change for evaluation influence in UNICEF as a basis for further input to the development of an influence strategy. Ideally the development of a theory of change would be done collaboratively with UNICEF evaluation staff, however with limitations imposed by COVID-19, the Study Team proceeded to develop a proposal.

The theory of change proposes that UNICEF has opportunities to improve its influence in three pathways:

1. **At individual evaluation level** – by improving the influence of evaluations one evaluation at a time –evaluation managers can choose, engage, position, and manage evaluations more intentionally for influence.
2. **At evaluation function and strategy level** – by accelerating influence institutionally through the development and use of an influence strategy to guide evaluation choices, implementation and communication across the evaluation function.
3. **At the global and United Nations system level** – by playing a key role globally and regionally in the evaluation ecosystem to make evaluation more influential in achieving global goals, tackling global challenges and in opportunities for post COVID-19 recovery.

Pathway 1: Influence one evaluation at a time

This pathway sees evaluation managers strengthening their skills, and competencies in the five determinants, understanding demand side needs, undertaking political analysis and risk assessment, and using context scans, foresight studies and other analytics to make strategic choices and position evaluation for influence. This in turn enables them to make strategic choices of evaluations and their designs, and manage and communicate evaluations to better contribute to policies, strategies and resource mobilization at all levels.

The study points out that improving influence of one evaluation, while definitely worth doing, may be limited in scale and sustainability of influence without the other two pathways to institutionalize, incentivize and accelerate influence at a larger scale.

Pathway 2 : Influence at evaluation function and strategy level

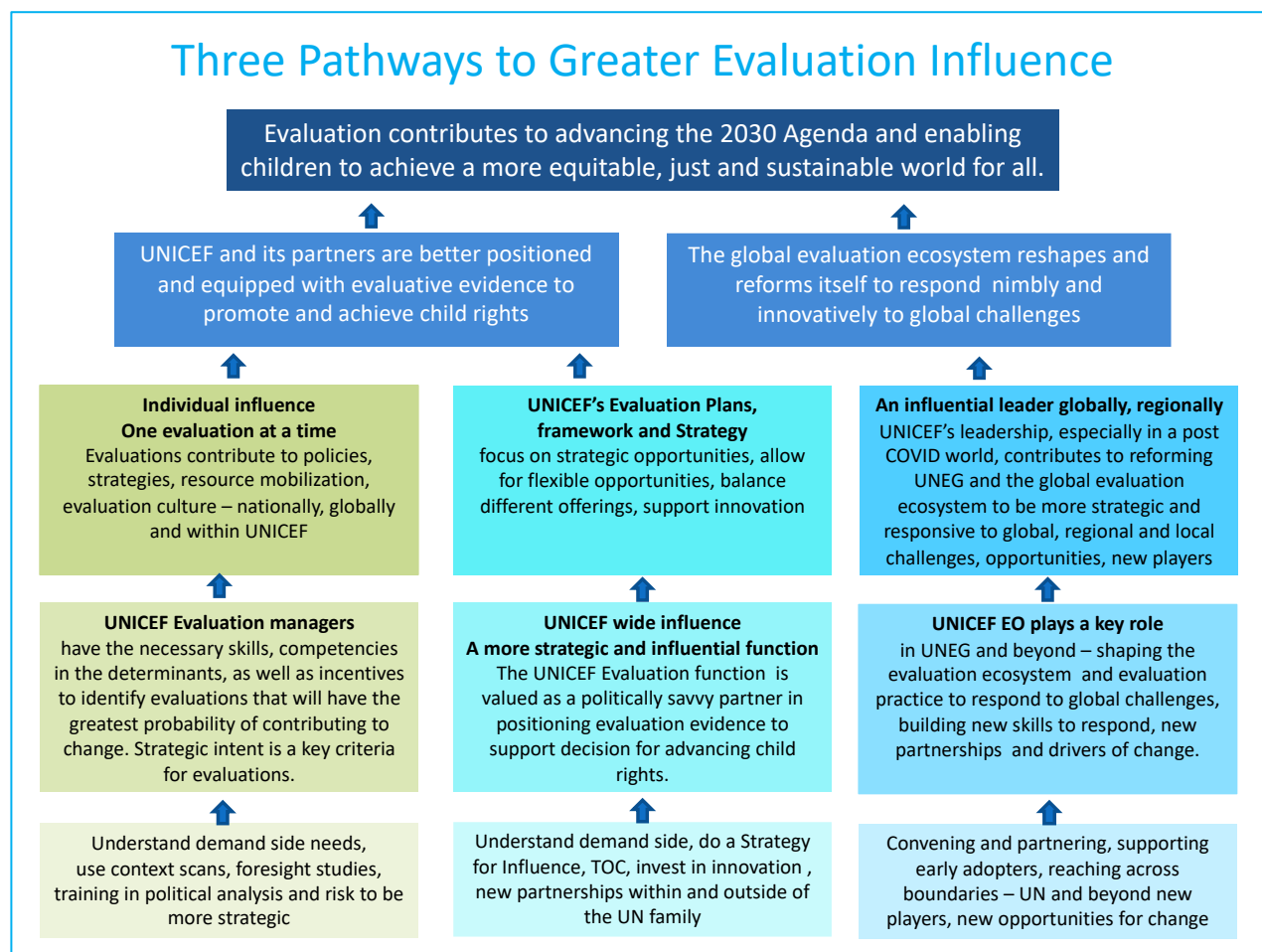
This pathway sees the UNICEF evaluation function developing an influence strategy that guides the choices in UNICEF evaluation plans and frameworks, focuses on strategic opportunities, allows for flexible opportunities and a balance of offerings, supports innovation and new partnerships within and outside of the United Nations family and leverages the goodwill and trust with governments and CSOs.

Pathway 3: Influence at global and United Nations-system level

The third pathway sees the UNICEF evaluation function becoming more influential regionally and globally, supporting early adopters, reaching across boundaries to contribute to reform of the UNEG system and shaping the evaluation ecosystem to advance the rights of children and achieve the SDGs and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This will require engaging in new partnerships beyond the United Nations system and playing a key leadership role. This pathway builds on the convening and partnering reputation of UNICEF.

The Study Team proposes that these three pathways, taken together, have the potential to improve and accelerate the influence of UNICEF’s evaluations.

Figure 4: Proposed theory of change



8. Key findings

The objectives of the study were to analyse the extent to which evaluations at UNICEF have been influential and to determine the enabling or constraining factors leading to influence. The findings and recommendations are to be used to improve the quality and intent of evaluations in UNICEF, and to improve institutional strategies for influence.⁶⁷

The key findings of the study are discussed below:

- 1. The dramatically changed global context calls for radical changes in the way the evaluation ecosystem responds to the challenges of recovery and reform. UNICEF's evaluation function is well positioned to lead, provided it adopts a strategic approach.***

At the heart of influence is the ability of an organization or field to be well-positioned to strategically respond to change. As evident from the scan of the field, there is a rapidly growing consensus of the urgent need to reimagine the role of evaluation in what is being called 'the battle of a lifetime' for a more just, equitable, sustainable and resilient world. Coupled with the now even worse effects of inequality, racial injustice, and climate change, the evaluation field is being challenged to adapt and respond as never before.

Early adopters are innovating, leading and beginning to change mindsets and practices in the transition to the next era of evaluation. As evaluation leaders note "this call to action requires evaluators to harness the opportunity of new tools, new thinking and new players, to rewire how we predict and evaluate progress and change, and to draw on the exponential growth in data, information and analytical capacity unimaginable even a few years ago."⁶⁸

While the evolution towards the next era of evaluation has been underway for the past decade, COVID-19 has accelerated the need for a more compelling value proposition for evaluation in how we use knowledge, evidence and data to influence critical reforms of economic, financial, social justice and health systems. The question is when will mainstream evaluation players step up to the challenge and add momentum and leadership to the transition?

With its long track record in evaluation, its strong reputation as an evaluation leader, its comprehensive and decentralized staff capacity, UNICEF's evaluation function is well-positioned in the United Nations system and in the global evaluation ecosystem to join the early adopters and play a leadership role in rethinking what influential evaluation looks like now in a post COVID-19 era. As noted by the 2017 DAC/UNDG Peer Review of UNICEF's

⁶⁷ Annex 2 contains the Terms of Reference.

⁶⁸ Bamberger, Michael, Peter York and Veronica Olazabal, *Rewiring How We Measure Impact in a Post-COVID-19 World*, The Rockefeller Foundation, 4 June 2020, www.rockefellerfoundation.org/blog/rewiring-how-we-measure-impact-in-a-post-covid-19-world.

evaluation function and corroborated by this study's external interviews, there is a global expectation that UNICEF will capitalize strategically on its comparative advantage and keep pace with a rapidly changing world which, for its sustainability and progress, requires much greater equity, better assurance of rights, and more respect for human dignity.

The Study Team heard similar views from external partners on the importance of UNICEF's leadership role in evaluation and the building of the evaluation field, particularly in the Global South. At the same time, the study also heard the need for UNICEF's evaluation function to take a more strategic focus to its evolution if it hopes to be more influential going forward.

2. UNICEF's evaluations have contributed to significant and consequential change at national and global levels and within UNICEF. At the same time, there are clear signs that the evaluation function needs to be more strategic, nimble and opportunistic in order to increase its influence, and play a leadership role in responding to global challenges.

The Study Team found that UNICEF evaluations are having a significant influence on national policies, programme design and implementation, resource mobilization, and UNICEF's strategy, positioning and programming.

The types of influence most often cited are:

- National policies, systems, strategies and legislation
- National programming
- UNICEF strategy and positioning
- UNICEF programming

The types of influence least cited are:

- Resource mobilization
- Adaptive management, leadership and governance
- Evaluative culture and learning
- Partnerships, advocacy and coalition-building

It is important to note here that the types of influence cited least in the submissions as significant, were the ones cited often in the demand side interviews as key to influence in the short- and medium-term, particularly influencing adaptive management in a rapidly evolving context. Partnerships, advocacy and coalition-building were also cited by demand side stakeholders as important given their responsibility for scaling and extending the reach of UNICEF's work.

The Study also found a wide range of perspectives on the influence of evaluations from demand side evaluation users, ranging from 'not influential at all', 'never look at them', to 'very influential in helping to shape programme strategies', 'very helpful in positioning evidence in a political context to influence policies and country strategies' and 'we learned a

lot and would like them to work with us more often'. This range of views signals a need to more fully understand and incorporate the needs of demand side evaluation users and implementing partners.

As discussed in Section 6, demand side users provided specific reasons as to why they did not find evaluations influential, including the need to better understand demand side needs, particularly adaptive management needs of UNICEF managers; greater strategic alignment with demand side needs in the timing and types of evaluations conducted; engaging top leadership more purposefully; and stronger synergies with other relevant data functions.

3. The five key determinants of influence posited by the study were validated, with context – being contextually knowledgeable, strategic and politically savvy – cited as the most important determinant of influence.

Across stakeholder interviews, in-depth case studies, and submissions from country offices, the Study Team validated the five key determinants posited by the study as leading to significant influence:

- ***Context*** – being contextually knowledgeable, strategic and politically savvy
- ***Evaluation process and product*** – the right fit, making the right design choices aligned with strategic intent, managing the process for influence
- ***Engagement and strategic communications*** – engaging stakeholders and influential players, and communicating strategically and dynamically
- ***Knowledge and learning*** – collaborative learning, using what we know for influence, promoting public good knowledge and collective action.
- ***Trust and collaboration*** – recognizing that trust is essential for change and investing in it.

The determinants require skills and capacities at both organizational and individual level as reflected in the recommendations of the study. Full details of the determinants are found in Annex 5 and specific examples from the case studies are found in Tables 3 and 4.

Context was cited by interviewees most often (particularly demand side users) as a key determinant. Evaluation product and process, engagement and strategic communications were the next most cited; and evaluation culture and competencies, and trust and collaboration were the least cited.

The validation of these determinants provides the EO with concrete ways to ensure that evaluations are intentionally designed for influence; staff have the requisite skills and competencies and partnerships needed to deliver influence, and an organizational strategy for influence is in place to guide evaluation choices for influence.

4. *Quality matters but is often not the most important determinant of an evaluation's influence. Integrating strategic intent criteria into quality assessments enhances influence.*

The study found that while high quality evaluations are important for credibility, quality is often not the most important determinant of influence. To many demand side users, the critical influence factors are the ability to be strategic, timely, opportunistic and nimble while, at the same time, producing compelling evidence that is pitched in a politically savvy way without compromising credibility.

The analysis of the eight case studies provides ample evidence that while quality of evaluation (interpreted as in the GEROS quality ratings) is important for credibility of findings, it is not the key factor in achieving influence. As this study and others show, even if an evaluation is of high technical quality, it is unlikely to be influential if it fails to capitalize on strategic opportunities to lever change and public action in favour of children.

While the GEROS Evaluation Quality Assurance Tool provides an excellent overview of the core elements of technical quality of UNICEF evaluations, at present there is no category to assess strategic intent of evaluations, and therefore, no ratings of the extent to which the evaluations are explicit and purposeful about strategic intent. Similarly, strategic intent is not as explicit as it could be in the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards, and the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference.

5. *A more flexible range of evaluation offerings or services may help enable the evaluation function to respond to strategic and adaptive management needs and to connect with more opportunities for influence.*

Across the interviews (supply and demand side), suggestions were made for a more flexible range of evaluation services and products such as rapid evaluations, formative evaluations and developmental evaluations. It was also suggested to offer advisory services that would allow for early stage involvement of programme and country teams in the iterative design and implementation of evaluation processes and systems level evaluations;⁶⁹ create more opportunities to act on impact and outcomes data, to course correct along the way, to influence mindsets and behaviours at individual, institutional and collective levels; and use data and evidence to position UNICEF more effectively in political contexts.

Responding to a broader range of evaluative offerings will mean ensuring a broader set of skills and competencies of evaluation staff – including systems change evaluation, market systems evaluation approaches needed for UNICEF's programmes that include a market-

⁶⁹ Of particular note, the Health Systems Strengthening Evaluation managed by the Evaluation Office was particularly appreciated by programme managers for its developmental evaluation approach and its holistic framing of systems change which is seldom achieved in individual programmatic evaluations.

based approach (such as the adoption of SanMark in Malawi) and involve new players such as impact investors through the UNICEF Venture Fund,⁷⁰ and evaluation of challenges and prizes – a commonly used form of intervention in innovation. All these require a very different set of evaluation skills than the more conventional programme evaluation training. UNICEF’s evaluation capacity building work, which is heavily focused on the public sector, will need to expand to include these new approaches to evaluation.

6. There appear to be significant opportunities for a different balance between programme and project evaluations and more strategic, opportunistic evaluations of strategies, policies, systems, global challenges and new emerging areas of evaluation.

This study, the 2018 Study on influential evaluations, and the 2017 DAC/UNDG Peer Review point to need for UNICEF evaluations to be more strategic, nimble, opportunistic and responsive to issues of global change.

The analysis of evaluation type and coverage in Section 6 revealed that programme evaluations make up the largest percentage of evaluations conducted by far. There appear to be opportunities to focus more on policy evaluations, strategy and systems level evaluations, and market-based solutions as private sector partnerships become more prominent in UNICEF contexts and development in general. Furthermore, there appear to be few evaluations focused on the implications of global drivers of change, such as climate change, on UNICEF’s work, and few cross-sectoral synthesis reviews of lessons and evidence, or portfolio evaluations of a range of programmes in a sector.

Section 6 also reveals that country coverage of evaluations from 2016–2018 is low (30–40 per cent) relative to the 190 countries in which UNICEF operates.

⁷⁰ UNICEF, *UNICEF Venture Fund*. www.unicef.org/innovation/venturefund.

9. Recommendations

The following recommendations and suggestions are made with the intent of enhancing and accelerating UNICEF's evaluation influence at all levels of the organization.



- 1. The Evaluation Office and UNICEF's evaluation function should lever its comparative advantage and play an influential global leadership role in reimagining evaluation in post COVID-19 recovery and reform.***

To respond to the urgent need for change in the evaluation ecosystem, the UNICEF EO should join together with progressive evaluation leaders and early adopters across the evaluation ecosystem (within and beyond the United Nations system) to create or further develop a vision for reimagining evaluation in a post COVID-19 recovery and reform era.

To achieve this at the level of the United Nations, it is recommended that the EO should:

- Play a key role in evolving the work of UNEG to be more forward-looking and responsive to global challenges;

- Build bridges, understanding and partnerships (where appropriate) with non-traditional influential evaluation players in innovation, market-based approaches, transformational systems change and innovative finance;
- Support the regional and country offices to play a similarly active leadership role in the evaluation ecosystem – building on UNICEF’s comparative advantage of dedicated regional and country level evaluation staff.

Evaluation of the SDGs is one example of an immediate opportunity to advance and adapt evaluation practice in response to recovery and reform agendas of a post COVID-19 era. Undertaking global scans with partners to see where evaluation can be the most influential in the current landscape of global threats is another way to strengthen global influence in evaluation practices.

2. The Evaluation Office should develop an evaluation influence strategy and support its use at all levels.

The EO should develop an evaluation influence strategy to guide strategic choices for evaluation in UNICEF at all levels and to accelerate and sustain influence.

This study offers the following suggestions for the development of the strategy:

- a) Frame the evaluation influence strategy around the three pathways of influence in the proposed theory of change which should be developed further with country and regional offices;
- b) Access and use political economy and risk analysis scans (from internal UNICEF sources and external sources) to assess UNICEF’s strategic position at country, regional and corporate levels in order to identify strategic opportunities for evaluation at all levels;
- c) Further engage with evaluation users to understand their needs and context in order to identify opportunities for influence and the types of evaluation most suited to the opportunity;
- d) Adapt regional and national evaluation strategies at the regional and country office levels to embed a focus on influence as a strategic intent of evaluation;
- e) Provide support as resources allow (i.e. funding, guidance, coaching, capacity development) to operationalize a focus on influence within ongoing plans;
- f) Discuss annually with the Regional Management Team the extent to which evaluations have been influential;
- g) Review and reflect on the evaluation influence strategy and associated evaluation plans periodically to ensure they are translating into demonstrated practice to be strategic and influential in the three pathways of influence identified in the proposed theory of change.

3. *The Evaluation Office should refocus the global evaluation plan to find a better balance between core evaluation commitments and opportunities for greater strategic influence.*

To achieve this, the EO could:

- a) Diversify the offerings of the evaluation function in the next planning cycle to include more evaluations of systems, emergent strategies and approaches relevant for UNICEF's mission, as well as incorporating key context drivers of change (for example, implications of climate change on UNICEF's mission, strategy and programmes).
- b) Maintain a margin of flexibility in evaluation plans at all levels and associated budgets to respond to unforeseen changing global drivers of change, and urgent adaptive management needs;
- c) Draw on the political analysis scans proposed to assess UNICEF's strategic positioning for influence in its seven regions and globally, and whether UNICEF evaluations address the most critical factors affecting its mission at global, regional and country levels. Use the results to further adjust evaluation plans at all levels.

Other types of evaluations and reviews to inform influence and positioning could include: the implications of market approaches on UNICEF programmes, the role of new forms of finance in scaling up, the role of social movements and collective action in advocating for the use of evaluative evidence to accelerate scaling up of UNICEF's achievements, lessons from the use of technology and innovations for rapid reviews to inform adaptive management, and evaluation of the sustainability of UNICEF's achievements, especially at the country level.

4. *The Evaluation Office should continue to improve the quality of evaluations including embedding strategic intent throughout the evaluation cycle.*

To enhance its ongoing efforts to strengthen quality of UNICEF evaluations, the EO should ensure that strategic intent is embedded throughout the evaluation cycle.

This could be done by:

- a) Embedding the concept and criteria of strategic intent in the UNICEF-UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference and the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards particularly in the sections on Evaluation Purpose, Objectives, Context, Criteria.
- b) Including strategic intent in the GEROS Quality Assurance Rating System to correspond to its inclusion in the TOR and Report Standards above.
- c) Ensuring that ongoing management of evaluations proactively keeps strategic intent at the forefront of guidance and interaction with evaluation teams and partners throughout the management process.

5. The Evaluation Office should strengthen skills and new competencies required for evaluations to be strategically influential.

- a) The EO should support and strengthen skills and competencies in the five areas of determinants of influence, including skills in understanding demand side needs (basic market research); political and context analysis skills; and risk assessment and strategic communications skills.
- b) The EO should further advance knowledge among senior management about the potential of evaluation to strengthen UNICEF's influence. This should be done at all levels through short orientation courses, regular conversations at the senior management level, team meetings and other forums.
- c) The EO should provide guidance and support to regional and country offices enabling their evaluation staff to acquire new skills and competencies to enhance the influence of evaluations as part of regular professional development of evaluation staff and managers.

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