

**Evaluation Title:** **Formative Evaluation of Early Childhood Development, Stimulation and Responsive Care**

**Region:** **New York Headquarters**

**Office:** **Programme Division**

**Evaluation Year:** **2021**

**Person-In-Charge for Follow-up to Management Response:** **Sanjay Wijesekera**

**Overall Response to the Evaluation:** *Include here Senior Management general impression on the process and outcomes of the evaluation, adequacy of evidence collected, and reasonableness of and the concurrence with findings. Were there shortfalls or limitations in the process and/outcomes? Are there any additional insights not articulated in the recommendations?*

As detailed below, all the recommendations provided from the Evaluation are agreed by the ECD Team. Efforts are already underway for many items to translate recommendations into actions. The recommendations were found to be well aligned with the existing and emerging strategic priorities of ECD programming in the new Strategic Plan (SP) 2022-2025, including the accelerated integration of ECD and Parenting Support programmes in the sectoral platforms for at-scale implementation and systematic quality assurance. Securing sustainable financial resources for ECD programming and integrated interventions will be key for both UNICEF and governments. Further, these challenges will be addressed through developing an ECD Fundraising Strategy (for UNICEF internally) and promoting ECD Public Financing (for national governments).

**Planned Use of Evaluation:** *Include here what's the process to facilitate the intended use by the intended users, focusing on how evaluation findings will affect implementation of the programme and contribute to evidence-based decision making*

ECD Team will refer to the evaluation findings to leverage the efforts to engage other Programme Groups and Divisions towards achieving the programme excellence and sustainable financial resources for ECD. The finalization of the SP and its results framework is currently underway, and this Evaluation provides a ground for effective engagement of sectors to embed ECD and Parenting Support programmes within. Secondly, this evaluation will be a key reference in the discussions with the Public Partnerships Division and Private and Fundraising Partnerships Division when exploring options to enable sustainable resource mobilization and allocations to ECD programmes.

## **UNICEF Evaluation Management Response Template**

**UNICEF Evaluation Management Response Templates** *who will edit the Management Response in the EMR Tracker: Valentina Ruta*

### **RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS 1: STRENGTHEN PROGRAMME DESIGN AND CONCEPTUALIZATION**

**Evaluation Recommendation 1.1:** *UNICEF should update its conceptualization of multisectoral ECD programming to include an explicit articulation of parents' role in accelerating results for children in the early years as well as shared results and accountabilities among sectors*

**Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree.**  
 In progress. UNICEF now has an organizational vision and strategy to elevate integrated parenting support in existing programs. This strategy has explicit reference to the early years as foundational and the need for parenting support as critical in this period. The ECD programme guidance will also be updated to include the approaches identified in the parenting strategy.

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

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Focused field engagement on organizational parenting strategy	ECD Section	ECD Specialist-Planning, Results Management and Field engagement	2024	Underway	UNICEF now has an organizational vision and strategy to elevate integrated parenting support in existing programmes. Explicit reference is made to the early years as foundational and the importance of parenting in this critical period. Within the broad mandate of that strategy, the Family Friendly Policies (FFP) initiative (to be advanced in 7-8 countries), co-led by the ECD team, will remain at the core of facilitating an enabling environment for working parents to access the resources, time, and services needed to practice responsive childcare. Field engagement for implementation of the strategy will be pursued throughout 2022-2024, across multiple sectors and platforms. Parenting support will be advanced with strengthened services for parents through the nurturing care framework. Gender-responsive and disability-inclusive parenting will also be elevated through technical support in 3-4 countries and ECD programme guidance updated to include approaches identified in the parenting strategy.	<a href="#">UNICEF organizational parenting strategy, COVID response</a>  <a href="#">Family Friendly Policies documents</a>

<p><b>Evaluation Recommendation 1.2:</b> <i>UNICEF ECD vision, including programme design and implementation processes should be aligned with the period covered by the strategic plan with focus on scaling-up and supporting governments to institutionalize, fund, monitor, and assure the fidelity of implementation of ECD interventions and practices.</i></p>						
<p><b>Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree.</b>  The institutionalization of ECD within government policies and systems has been a strategic priority in the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan. Building on achievements made over that period, the new (2022-2025) Strategic Plan will keep promoting full integration of ECD across sectors leveraging existing platforms, funds, capacity, and systems to enhance sustainability and scalability.</p>						
<p><b>If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons</b></p>						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Develop new SP results framework addressing scalability, quality assurance, and fidelity of implementation of integrated ECD services in sectoral platforms	ECD Section	Associate Director for ECD  ECD Specialist-Planning, Results Management, Field engagement	Dec 2021	Completed	The upcoming SP Results Framework 2022-2025 has been developed with indicators designed to measure countries' progress in institutionalizing ECD in sectoral policies, coordination mechanisms, and service delivery platforms - especially Primary Health Care (PHC) - to promote monitoring, quality assurance and integrated implementation at scale. Furthermore, Social Policy, Gender, Nutrition, and ECD programmes will jointly promote enabling policy environments for working parents through advocacy for Family Friendly Policies (Outcome result under Goal Area 5 “ <i>Every child, including adolescents, has access to inclusive social protection and lives free of poverty</i> ”).	<a href="#">SP Result Framework 2022-2025</a>
Update ECD Programme Guidance to address scalability, quality assurance, and fidelity of	ECD Section	ECD Specialist-Planning,	Dec 2022	Not started	Update of ECD programme guidance is anticipated in 2022 in order to reflect strategic priorities such as embedding	New ECD Programme Guidance

implementation of integrated ECD services in sectoral platforms		Results Management, Field engagement			of ECD in sectoral platforms, elevation of integrated parenting support programme, and increased focus on ECD in humanitarian contexts. This will facilitate harmonized design and implementation with built-in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure quality, fidelity of interventions and scale up.	

**RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS 2: STRENGTHENING UNICEF ECD CAPACITY AND FUNDING FOR SCALE UP**

**Evaluation Recommendation 2.1:** *UNICEF should develop in-house capacity of ECD staff/team in public finance for children at all levels of the organization.*

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

Building on the Global Resource Guide for ECD public Financing produced by the ECD and Social Policy teams in 2020, a series of technical briefs have been / are being developed and disseminated to increase capacity of UNICEF country teams, development partners and governments on (i) diagnosis and analysis of public finance issues; (ii) innovative financing and (iii) protection of ECD investments during the COVID-19 crisis and recovery period. It is expected that these will lead to informed national budget decision-making and coordination and increased mobilization of resources and delivery at-scale of ECD interventions. Joint resource mobilization efforts are also ongoing to create e-learning modules that will further support capacity building and knowledge exchange efforts, building on above-mentioned and other global resources (Guide on ECD Financing, Public Financing for Children global course, Early Childhood Education Accelerator toolkit; Guidance to embed ECD components in Primary Health Care costings).

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

<b>Actions planned</b>	<b>Responsible Office</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Implementation stage:</b> Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	<b>Actions taken</b>	<b>Supporting documents</b>
Development of a series of technical briefs on protecting ECD investments during COVID-19 crisis and recovery period, and Innovative Financing to engage internal and external partners	ECD Section	ECD Specialist – Partnership and Financing	December 2021	Underway	Building on the Global Resource Guide for ECD Public Financing (2020), two technical briefs have been developed in collaboration with the Social Policy team on sustaining ECD investments during the COVID-19 crisis and recovery period and Innovative Financing.	<a href="#">UNICEF global resource guide on public finance for children in Early Childhood Development</a>

					Wider distribution of these assets and field engagement will follow to support the implementation of key activities by COs.	Technical briefs on ECD investments during COVID-19 crisis and recovery period Innovative Financing (under development)
Develop e-learning modules to promote capacity building and knowledge exchange on Public Financing for ECD	ECD Section	ECD Specialist – Partnerships and Financing	December 2022- June 2023	Underway	Building on the Public Finance for Children course developed by the Social Policy team, an e-learning modules on ECD financing will be developed and made available to internal and external partners.	Learning modules on Public Financing for ECD (upcoming)
<b>Evaluation Recommendation 2.2:</b> <i>UNICEF should clarify its budget allocation for ECD programming (for 0 – 8 years old) across all sectors) ensuring that it is transparent and inclusive of all organizational investments and additional resources mobilized for ECD.</i>						
<b>Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree</b> There is a wider recognition that a sound fundraising strategy and targeted resource allocation mechanisms within the organization would be instrumental in securing sustainable resources to deliver ECD programming at all levels. Work has started to address those priorities, as detailed below.						
<b>If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:</b>						
<b>Actions planned</b>	<b>Responsible Office</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled</b>	<b>Actions taken</b>	<b>Supporting documents</b>
Establish and implement an ECD Resource Mobilization Strategy	ECD Section	Associate Director for ECD	Q1 2022	Underway	The ECD Section has conducted brainstorming sessions to identify key priorities, critical gaps, potential donors/ partners (internal and external) and steps towards the elaboration of a resource mobilization strategy. A consultant is being recruited for that purpose.	ECD Resource Mobilization Strategy (upcoming)

Propose resource allocation mechanisms to allow sustainable and flexible funding flow for ECD programming	ECD Section	Associate Director for ECD	31 December 2021	Underway	The resource mobilization strategy will provide insights on viable options to improve ECD resource allocation through internal and external mechanisms.	ECD Resource Mobilization Strategy (upcoming)
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**RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS 3: LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Evaluation Recommendation 3.1:** *UNICEF should continue to invest in fostering the collection of data on children's physical, cognitive, or social-emotional development through the uptake of the new ECDI2030, while promoting analysis and utilization of available data. .*

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

Technical consultations have been initiated with key partners, including WHO, in pursuit of a more comprehensive population-level child development measures, inclusive of 0-2 years. Systematic program-level monitoring tools for children's development will also be sought through technical consultation between PD and DAPM. Meanwhile, roll out of ECDI2030 will start in a number of countries.

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

<b>Actions planned</b>	<b>Responsible Office</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Implementation stage:</b> Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	<b>Actions taken</b>	<b>Supporting development of systematic program level monitoring tools for children's development documents</b>
Support WHO as the lead agency in finalization and advocacy for inclusion of global measures for tracking child development 0-2 along with existing measures on children 2-4	ECD Section	Associate Director for ECD,  ECD Specialist-Planning, Results Management, Field engagement	December 2023	Underway	Global consultations have been initiated among lead agencies, experts, and UNICEF partners. These efforts have led to agreement on the identification of a path forward to ensure measurement of children 0-2, including a series of external technical webinars and a technical consultation co-lead with WHO on measurements.	Meeting notes with WHO

Ensure robust embedding of key indicators in relevant sectors at the outcome and output levels in the UNICEF SP, and complete annual, global strategic monitoring and analysis of children's development on these key indicators	ECD Section	ECD Specialist-Planning, Results Management and Fid engagement	December 2022	Underway	The SP 2022-2025 results framework has been developed with ECD results embedded across Goal Areas and Change Strategies. Indicator methodologies are being developed in coordination with Goal Area leads to ensure effective data collection and analysis throughout the SP period (2022-2025). Data collection and analysis will be completed by the end of 2022.	<a href="#">SP Result Framework 2022-2025</a>  Global Annual Results Report (GARR) 2022-2025
ECDI2030 is a tool that measures children' physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development. UNICEF will continue to invest in supporting the countries' roll out of the ECDI2030 and its integration in data collection efforts and platforms	DAPM	Senior Adviser Statistics and Monitoring	December 2022	Underway	UNICEF will continue to invest in fostering the collection of data on children's physical, cognitive, or social-emotional development through the uptake of the new ECDI2030, while also promoting analysis and utilization of available data.	<a href="#">ECDI2030</a>
ECDI2030 disseminated and promoted among UNICEF Regional and Country Offices through a series of global technical webinars	ECD Section  DAPM – Data & Analytics	ECD Specialist-Planning, Results Management, Field engagement  Senior Adviser Statistics and Monitoring		Completed	8 Global webinars were co-facilitated by the ECD team and Data & Analytics to promote the ECDI2030 uptake. An additional number of countries will be identified for roll-out next year.	
Ensure resources for investments in tool development	ECD Section	Associate Director	December 2022	Underway	As part of the fundraising strategy, the ECD team engaged in/identified donors that have expressed interest in supporting the agenda. Concept notes will be developed accordingly. In addition, regular meetings have been set in place for the PPD director and	ECD Resource Mobilization Strategy

					ECD Principal Advisor to discuss the viable options to improve ECD resource allocation mechanisms.	
<b>Evaluation Recommendation 3.2:</b> <i>Country offices have adequate guidance to ensure that evaluation considerations are incorporated into programmes design to inform ECD programmes on parenting, early stimulation, and responsive care.</i>						
<b>Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree</b>						
<b>If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:</b> The ECD team at HQ, with support from the Evaluation Office, will continue to support regional and country office ECD specialists and focal points with the necessary tools and guidance to monitor and incorporate evaluation considerations in their ECD programme design on parenting, early stimulation and responsive care.						
<b>Actions planned</b>	<b>Responsible Office</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Implementation stage:</b> Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	<b>Actions taken</b>	<b>Supporting documents</b>
Compile section for the updated ECD Programme Guidance to include directives on inclusion of programme monitoring and evaluation design	ECD Section supported by EO	ECD Specialist-Planning, Results Management, Field engagement  Evaluation Specialist GA-2&5	Dec 2022	Not Started	Required update of ECD Programme Guidance will begin in 2022.	<a href="#">ECD Programme Guidance</a> (current document)
Global Webinars to promote the updated ECD Programme Guidance (1 per region)	ECD Section supported by EO	ECD Specialist-Planning, Results Management, Field engagement	2023	Not Started	Dissemination of updated ECD Programme Guidance through global webinars will be conducted upon release of document.	

		Evaluation Specialist GA-2&5				
Disseminate updated ECD Programme Guidance on Global Communication sites (external and internal)	ECD Section supported by EO	ECD Specialist- Planning, Results Management, Field engagement  Evaluation Specialist GA-2&5	2023	Not Started	Dissemination of updated ECD Programme Guidance through global communication sites will be implemented upon release of document.	<a href="#">Early Childhood Development</a> (external site)
Update PPPX Sections on Evaluations and on Early Childhood Development	ECD Section	ECD Specialist- Planning, Results Management, Field engagement	2021	Completed	Update of sections on Evaluations and on ECD completed	<a href="#">Integrating an ECD focus in Evaluation</a> (PPPX site)  <a href="https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/DAPM-PPPX/SitePages/ECD-(Early-Childhood-Development).aspx">https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/DAPM-PPPX/SitePages/ECD-(Early-Childhood-Development).aspx</a>