Quality review of linkages between humanitarian and development programming in the top 10 UNICEF humanitarian responses

2020 synthesis report

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **3**

ACRONYMS **6**

1. INTRODUCTION **7**

1.1 Background and objectives of the review 7
1.2 Methodology 9
1.3 Limitations 11

2. FINDINGS **13**

2.1 Understanding and internal coherence 13
2.2. Strategy, planning and programming 15
2.3 Humanitarian-development linkages: system strengthening and (government) capacity building 16
2.4 Development-humanitarian linkages: Emergency preparedness 18
2.5 Risk-Informed Programming 19
2.6 Scaling up cash transfer 21
2.7 Localization and civil society capacity building 22
2.8 Accountability to Affected Populations 22
2.9 Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding/social cohesion 24
2.10 Coordination and partnership 25
Interagency strategies 25
Convergence 26
2.11 Effectiveness, innovation, and learning 26
2.12 Funding, efficiency and operational issues 27

3. CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSAL FOR FUTURE CO QUALITY REVIEWS **31**

ANNEX 1: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE **34**

ANNEX 2: INTERVIEWS **34**

ANNEX 3: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED **36**

ANNEX 4: SMQ/FINANCIAL DATA TABLE **39**

ANNEX 5: QUALITY REVIEW OF LHD PROGRAMMING IN THE TOP 10 HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS: CO SELF-REPORT TOOL KIT AND RESEARCH GUIDANCE **39**

Executive summary

This report summarizes the findings of a review of UNICEF's 10 largest humanitarian responses, as measured in 2019 humanitarian expenditure. By synthesizing evidence from key informant interviews, survey responses, country documents and Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQ) data, it aims to assess UNICEF's progress and quality in linking humanitarian and development programming (LHD), including, where applicable, peacebuilding objectives.[1] Although it was not possible to get the same level of evidence from all 10 countries as was planned prior to the COVID-19 emergency, the research team believes the overall findings may serve as reasonably representative and instructive.

Overview

There is clear evidence of progress towards LHD goals in UNICEF's programming, particularly activities that link humanitarian response activities to longer-term development goals and system strengthening. Despite UNICEF's history of working across the humanitarian-development divide, and the widespread sense among staff that LHD is something 'we have always done,' making LHD an explicit goal in planning has made a noticeable difference in programming.

Key weaknesses remain, however, particularly in the areas of localization, accountability to affected populations (AAP), and conflict-sensitive strategies. At the field level, there remains a lack of clarity on UNICEF's role in peacebuilding. And four years after the Grand Bargain, UNICEF continues to face the challenge of how to finance resilience-oriented activities with short-term, inflexible humanitarian funds, which make up most of the resources in these contexts.

UNICEF's response to COVID-19 in these humanitarian contexts, while not as rapid as it should have been, demonstrated how LHD principles enabled staff to see opportunities and entry points for system strengthening in COVID-19 activities.

Staff have a solid understanding of LHD concepts and principles, but would benefit from additional technical and practical guidance

UNICEF staff feel they understand and appreciate the concept of linking humanitarian action with development objectives, and how it relates to UNICEF's goals in their context. They report also that the guidance from HQ and regional offices (ROs) has been helpful for laying the foundation, but many staff expressed the need for technical guidance from sectoral experts, and for more practical examples and learning of how to operationalize the principles, especially in peacebuilding, where there is considerable uncertainty and a lack of consensus about UNICEF's appropriate role.

Making LHD explicit in planning and programming holds promise for concrete action, but monitoring and measurement are not yet well-established

UNICEF staff and partners perceive a meaningful increase in LHD efforts within country programmes over the past year, which many of them attribute to explicit planning for these linkages and their incorporation into the latest country programme documents (CPDs), many just coming into effect now. For this reason, the country offices (COs) do not yet have concrete metrics for measuring and monitoring progress.

[1] Although the term 'the nexus' is international shorthand for linked programming, this report uses the term 'LHD' as per the review terms of reference and guidance from evaluation management. It is intended to be encompassing of peacebuilding objectives, where this is applicable.

UNICEF is strongest in (government) capacity building and system strengthening, and it plays a critical coordination role for LHD

When there is a stable government partner to work with, UNICEF's strengths are most evident in emergency responses that simultaneously strengthen existing systems and contribute to resilience. By virtue of having close partnerships and influence with host governments, a robust operational presence, and engagement across a wide range of actors, UNICEF also plays a 'go-to' role as a coordinator, and its partners and counterparts give it high marks for promoting a coherent vision of LHD in coordination forums and playing a leading role on LHD issues.

In protracted **refugee emergencies**, UNICEF has consistently applied the LHD principles of working towards durable solutions and sustainable benefits for host communities as well as refugee populations. Examples include climate-resilient water supply, community services, child education and vocational opportunities, all of which, to the extent they also benefit the host community and target the most vulnerable regardless of status, also enhanced social cohesion.

UNICEF has developed its capacities in risk-informed programming (RIP), say staff members, supported by elaborated technical guidance and processes to integrate a risk-informed lens into country programme design. RIP is seen as an area of solid improvement that has put the organization on a surer preparedness footing in environments that are marked by a high level and wide range of risks—although to date it is evidenced more on paper than in practice, and is stronger on natural hazards than conflict-related risks.

Main weaknesses and gap areas include AAP, localization, conflict sensitivity, and peacebuilding

In CO documents, interviews and survey responses, the top 10 humanitarian contexts show very limited evidence of meaningful action in AAP in terms of comprehensive and systematic consultation with affected populations, and in many places staff appear to conflate it with protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) or communication for development (C4D). AAP appears underdeveloped overall and weakly conceived as an element of LHD.

In some contexts, such as South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where cooperation with the host government is severely challenged, UNICEF is seeking to build the capacities of local organizations as alternative partners, but an overall strategy of civil society strengthening and localization of aid outside of government systems was not evidenced. In a case like Ethiopia, where civil society has languished under government constraints, this poses a risk in the event of worsening civil conflict.

UNICEF COS are not yet strong on conflict analysis and designing programmes in ways that are conflict sensitive. In cases where a conflict analysis is done, it is usually outsourced to external experts. Peacebuilding was also one of the weaker areas seen, illustrating overall less engagement and strategic focus by UNICEF on areas relevant to the peacebuilding side of the nexus. In general, action in this area was limited to the social cohesion side effects of certain projects, and approached in an ad hoc and opportunistic fashion rather than deliberately and strategically. In general, UNICEF has not yet reconciled its ethos of cooperation with governments with the need to protect humanitarian principles in conflict contexts.

Funding remains bifurcated

By far the biggest external obstacle cited in interviews and survey responses was insufficient funding for LHD programming, given the perennial shortage of funding for nexus activities in places where resources are limited and emergency needs must come first. The objective of mobilizing and advocating for more flexible and multiyear funding is still far from being met. UNICEF's own internal systems are not seen as a major stumbling block here, and on the contrary, many COs have been able to use workarounds and blended funding solutions to finance LHD activities and pursue longer term programming with short-term funding – though this naturally comes at some cost to efficiency.

COVID-19

While it is too early to make a comprehensive assessment of UNICEF's response to COVID-19, this review found that COs demonstrated flexibility, though not great speed, in reprogramming activities in response to new needs and providing additional support. In addition, staff identified opportunities for social system strengthening and policy improvements for children building on the pandemic response in their contexts.

Tracking progress going forward

The report concludes with a proposed methodology for a CO self-assessment on progress in LHD for future iterations of this review. The challenges in conducting this first iteration during a global Level 3 (L3) emergency made it clear that, to be useful and sustainable by UNICEF COs already strained by reporting and evaluation responsibilities in addition to the emergency response, the framework would need to be as light as possible and transparent for sharing across contexts. For this reason, it envisions the reporting as an online resource with fewer research inputs than this pilot exercise used.

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to affected populations
C4D	Communication for development
CCCs	Core Commitments for Children in humanitarian action
CO	Country office
COAR	Country Office Annual Report
CPD	Country programme document
EMOPS	Office of Emergency Programmes
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
EPP	Emergency Preparedness Platform
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
LHD	Linking humanitarian and development programming
GRIP	Guidance for Risk-Informed Programming
HAC	Humanitarian Action for Children
HQ	Headquarters
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IPC	Integrated Phase Classification
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPTP	National Poverty Targeting Program
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
PSEA	Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse
RIP	Risk-informed programming
RO	Regional office
SMQ	Strategic Monitoring Questions
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Introduction

The concept of the humanitarian-development-peace 'nexus' refers to a way of planning and programming where humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding activities do not function in isolation of each other but are mutually reinforcing. It recognizes that in addition to meeting people's immediate needs, aid should strive to reduce their vulnerability, build preparedness and resilience, strengthen the social fabric, and mitigate future risk.

UNICEF, which prefers the term 'linking humanitarian and development' (LHD) in reference to its own work, recognizes that good programming by definition will be multidimensional, so that activities typically considered (and funded) as emergency humanitarian aid will link to longer-term development needs and objectives, and conversely, that development activities consider crisis risk (including the risk of conflict and social instability) and contain elements that link to emergency preparedness and resilience. This linkage is often in the form of additional activities or extension of programming beyond what the traditional siloed programming would entail—in other words, good programming can often involve a cost.

This review examines how well UNICEF is meeting its stated goal of making these linkages more consistent and systematic in the countries currently undergoing the largest humanitarian crises. Throughout the report, the term 'LHD' refers to this goal, and 'LHD activities' to the deliberate actions by UNICEF to build this multidimensionality into its programmes.

1.1 Background and objectives of the review

UNICEF's 'Procedure on linking humanitarian and development programming' issued in May 2019, set out to facilitate the more consistent and systematic linking of humanitarian and development programming and called for regular monitoring of progress toward that goal:

> "ROs, EMOPS and PD conduct quality reviews of the top 10 major on-going humanitarian operational and programmatic responses, including L2 and L3 emergencies, to foster the integration of evidence-based, evaluation-informed intervention strategies for linking humanitarian and development responses."[2]

UNICEF's top 10 largest humanitarian responses in 2019, as defined by UNICEF's humanitarian expenditure in 2019, are listed in the table below.

[2] UNICEF, 'UNICEF Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming', PD/PROCEDURE/2019/001, 2019.

Table 1: Top 10 ongoing humanitarian responses, 2019

Country	Humanitarian expenditure (US$)
Yemen (L3)	526,083,570
Lebanon	253,317,640
South Sudan	169,019,270
Turkey	162,358,893
DRC (L3)	152,981,691
Syria (L3)	118,688,115
Bangladesh	110,281,193
Iraq	100,269,167
Nigeria	92,860,872
Ethiopia	90,824,601

Source: UNICEF Vision

For the first iteration of this review, UNICEF commissioned an external researcher from the independent research group Humanitarian Outcomes to help design and coordinate the research programme and assist COs in gathering evidence. The research objectives included: assessing current LHD practices; identifying opportunities to strengthen and expand LHD; identifying risks and constraints to LHD; and developing methodologies for CO self-assessments for future reviews. The 'top 10 review' proceeded in parallel with the 'Formative evaluation implementation of UNICEF's procedure on linking humanitarian action and development programming', also undertaken by Humanitarian Outcomes, and findings from each exercise have informed the other.

Table 2: Research questions

Understanding and internal coherence	How do staff members understand the goals of linking relief and development? Is there a clear and consistent understanding across contexts? To what extent is guidance on LHD well communicated, commonly understood and accepted?
Strategy, planning and programming	How and to what extent is LHD planning and programming informed by UNICEF's key programme and operational strategies of localization, risk-informed programming (RIP), AAP, scaling up cash transfer, emergency preparedness, interagency strategies and flexible funding?
	What further opportunities exist in the context to advance LHD objectives in planning and programming?
Coordination and partnership	How well do UNICEF's implementing partners and other agencies understand and support UNICEF's LHD objectives? How has this been communicated in the context?
	How is the CO collaborating externally around LHD? Does it play a leading role in coordinating and convening joint analysis, planning, and programming efforts around LHD?
Effectiveness, innovation, and learning	What are the chief constraints – political, organizational, or principled – to implementing LHD in the context? In conflict-affected contexts, how has LHD been shaped by conflict-sensitive programming principles?
	What examples of good practice and innovative programming in LHD can be found in the context? Do they have potential for replication and/or scaling up?
	To what extent is the CO currently monitoring progress on LHD?
Efficiency and operational issues	What are the efficiency issues related to internal systems or additional transaction costs associated with LHD initiatives? Can a self-review instrument support this process without adding undue burden?

1.2 Methodology

To collect evidence on the above questions, the research approach was designed around three primary tools:

- an online survey instrument for UNICEF staff, partners, and counterparts;
- key informant interviews (KIIs) at the country level
- systematic review of relevant documents
- a review of SMQ response data.

The COs in each of UNICEF's top 10 humanitarian responses designated focal points for the review, who supported the research by identifying interviewees, disseminating the survey and providing additional materials, including examples of AAP data, where it existed. (Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the review faced constraints and was considerably limited compared to what was originally intended, as described in the following section).

Online survey. The survey questionnaire comprised 24 mostly close-ended questions on UNICEF's engagement on LHD issues for the specific country contacts of the respondents *(see Annex 1 for details)*. It was put online on 17 June in Arabic, English, French, and Spanish. At the time of writing, the survey is still open and to date has received 253 complete responses across 8 of the 10 country contexts.

KIIs. Requested delays due to COVID-19 meant that interviews were still ongoing at the time of writing and are expected to continue through September. The findings presented in this report

integrate notes from remote interviews with 54 individuals including (primarily) UNICEF CO staff, UN agency counterparts, NGO partners, and government representatives *(see Annex 2 for the list of people interviewed)*. Interviews were conducted on a not-for-attribution basis and, in most places where they are quoted throughout the paper, interviewees' names and COs are not identified.

Document review. The team compiled and systematically reviewed the core CO documents (situation reports, situation analyses, CO annual reports (COARs), Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) reports, and CPDs) from 2018 to 2020[3] to identify evidence of action by UNICEF in the following areas relevant to the nexus:

- RIP (working toward resilience/preparedness for potential emergencies)
- capacity building (of government systems and/or civil society for independent action)
- geographical convergence for a multisectoral concentration on the most vulnerable
- peacebuilding/durable solutions (if applicable)
- AAP
- conflict sensitivity and humanitarian principles.

For each area, the documents were scored on a scale of 0-3 for strength of evidence of action:
0 – Not found
1 - Weakly evidenced (terms used but no concrete examples given)
2 - Moderately evidenced (more elaborated references to the area in programming)
3 - Strongly evidenced (direct illustration of programme implementation of this nexus goal).

SMQ response data. With support from EMOPS staff, senior management team (SMT) responses from the 10 countries were compiled and filtered for questions relevant to LHD, which together with financial data informed basic background information and pattern analysis interview (*see Annex 3 for the individual questions and responses by country*).

Financial data. Using data downloaded from UNICEF's Vision system, the funding analysis looked at expenditures for the top 10 countries and all other UNICEF countries in 2019.

UNICEF's financial tracking differentiates emergency funding (ORE) from its regular resources (RR and ORR), which can also be used in part for humanitarian activities. To more accurately reflect the composition of country funding portfolios that contain elements of both development and humanitarian elements, it uses a Humanitarian Marker in the form of a 4-point rating scale that indicates the extent to which the programme encompasses humanitarian programming: "none", "marginal", "significant" and "principal."

The analysis used the humanitarian marker to calculate each country's total humanitarian spend, using the below formula:

Expenditure tag	% humanitarian
ORE (All)	100%
ORR&RR Principal	100%
ORR&RR Significant	70%
ORR&RR Marginal	25%

[3] With the exception of some CPDs that were just ending at the time of the review (Yemen 2012 and DRC 2013)

1.3 Limitations

At the outset of the review, focal points in each CO were given a menu of options for their engagement in the process, ranging from a mostly externally-led programme of research, to one that was mostly CO-led, where CO staff would conduct all or most of the KIIs and undertake the document review. The reason for this was to allow the review to be as CO-led as possible from the onset, as well as to get feedback for future iterations on what worked and what did not. With the onset of the COVID-19 global emergency, it became clear that most COs were overstretched with vital programming responsibilities, and were struggling to provide the basic level of support. One CO (Bangladesh) requested a full delay until September. Three others (DRC, Nigeria and Yemen) were unable to elicit interviews and survey responses. Finally, due to travel restrictions, no field visits could take place for the review. Despite these challenges, several focal points managed to provide critical supports to the review, making this report possible.

For all these reasons the findings should be read with caution, as certain countries are more represented in the evidence base than others. The table below indicates the status of evidence for each country as of this writing.

Table 3: Status of research components per country, 2 October 2020

Country	Survey responses (target: 50)	KIIs completed (target: 5)	CO core documents	SMQ data	Financial data
Yemen (L3)	0	1	✓	✓	✓
Lebanon	25	6	✓	✓	✓
South Sudan	61	6	✓	✓	✓
Turkey	17	11	✓	✓	✓
DRC (L3)	0	1	✓	✓	✓
Syria (L3)	48	4	✓	✓	✓
Bangladesh	24	5	✓	✓	✓
Iraq	59	5	✓	✓	✓
Nigeria	14	3	✓	✓	✓
Ethiopia	40	13	✓	✓	✓
TOTALS	288	54			

Additionally, the terms of reference had called for an analysis of AAP data to identify affected people's perspectives relevant to LHD. The review explored whether the U-report mechanisms or either platform could be used explicitly for the purpose, but the lack of standardized mechanism across the 10 countries precluded this, and using an external polling platform (i.e. remote telecoms surveys of affected populations) was not supported by a budget. Instead, the review team requested examples of data from AAP mechanisms or initiatives in each participating country and reviewed them for useful evidence. The materials were found to be so disparate and distantly related to the subject of this research that they were not useful for incorporating in the findings.

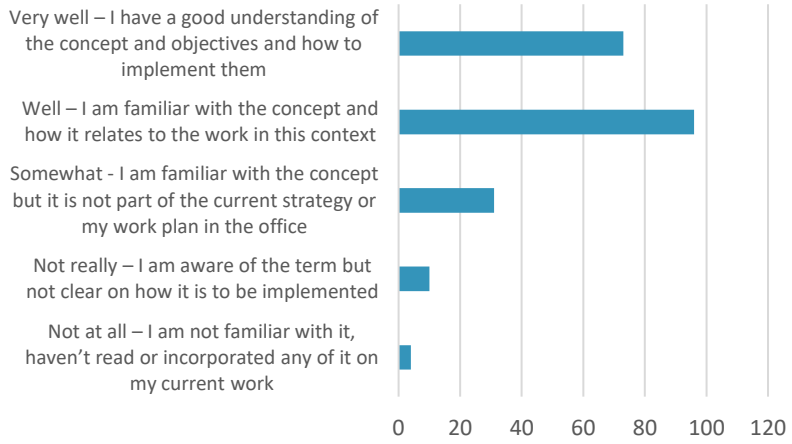
Despite these limitations, the emerging findings in this report are supported by additional research and global interviews carried out for the larger formative evaluation, and potentially offer useful insights for the organization as it pursues LHD programming and plans for future iterations of the top 10 review.

1 Findings

2.1 Understanding and internal coherence

The concept of linking humanitarian action and development objectives is highly salient among UNICEF staff and COs. Of those interviewed, many report having been involved in the thinking around the development of UNICEF's 'Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming'.[4] Others, while admitting they did not know the specifics of the procedure, nonetheless emphasize that they felt well versed in the principles of LHD and saw it as integral to UNICEF's work *(see Figure 1)*.

Figure 1: How well do you understand the LHD concept and objectives? (UNICEF staff)



Many said the procedure served 'as a reinforcement for what we were doing already.' And that its value comes specifically in helping to systematize activities so the objectives of LHD could be more deliberately structured, planned and implemented. Although a few interviewees considered it merely 'a repackaging' of what UNICEF is already doing, more staffers felt that having LHD goals made explicit in the new CPDs was a significant change that enabled real progress in terms of concrete programming. In several cases, interviewees pointed to the recently completed or initiated CPD as an example of thoughtful consideration and clear articulation of LHD in programme planning.

A review of the more recent CPDs found examples of explicit references to LHD. For example, the Programme Priorities and Partnerships section of DRC's 2020 CPD spoke of:

> "Building on past experience, region-specific approaches will be tailored to address disparities experienced by children in specific provinces through strengthening coordination and convergence between humanitarian and development interventions within the triple nexus agenda (humanitarian-development-peace) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo."

And the WASH section of Ethiopia's 2020 CPD included the following:

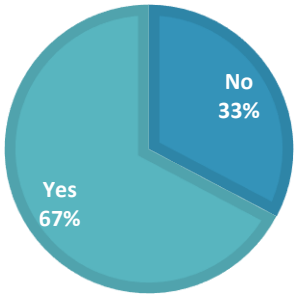
[4] Ibid.

> "System and capacity development strategies will link development, humanitarian and social cohesion objectives by emphasising equity and accountability in local ownership…Capacity will be developed, including through innovations, for professional, cost-effective management and maintenance of rural and urban services, aiming to overcome accountability and sustainability barriers and to serve host, refugee and other populations."

When asked about the quality and sufficiency of the guidance they received from HQ and their RO, interviewees responded mostly positively. One remarked that they appreciated the guidance note used in the CPD process and other helpful materials they received, "but more importantly, there was closer involvement of the regional advisor", which was especially valuable to planning.

One indication of the prevalence of LHD thinking at the country level is the majority of staff who reported having explicit LHD responsibilities and activities or objectives in their job descriptions *(see Figure 2)*.

Figure 2: Do job descriptions contain specific LHD responsibilities and activities or objectives?



Some were of the opinion that guidance on LHD should be systematically promoted and institutionalized, such that every new UNICEF hire would receive it automatically as part of on-boarding. This would appear to be an important recommendation, as many UNICEF staff consulted for this review tended to have spent many years with the organization, and having already observed and understood the concepts of LHD, may not fully realize that this knowledge may not be shared by new entrants. Moreover, they may not be aware that they themselves are unfamiliar with the latest thinking on LHD and newer commitments under its rubric, such as AAP and conflict sensitivity. As one said, "The longer you have been with UNICEF, the less you rely on specific guidance." Both new and old staff could therefore benefit from additional guidance

Interviewees recommended that it would be especially helpful to provide concrete case examples in real life programming stories as the best way of communicating the concept and making it comprehensible. "We use terms too much – need to make it real, make it pragmatic", said one. Another noted, "There's much still to be done. The nexus is still being treated as an abstract concept. We need to operationalize it."

In addition to providing concrete examples and narratives, CO staff also expressed the need for additional guidance from sectoral experts on how to identify opportunities in specific technical programming for advancing LHD. The inclusion of the LHD commitments in the newly revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) could be instrumental here, as the CCCs

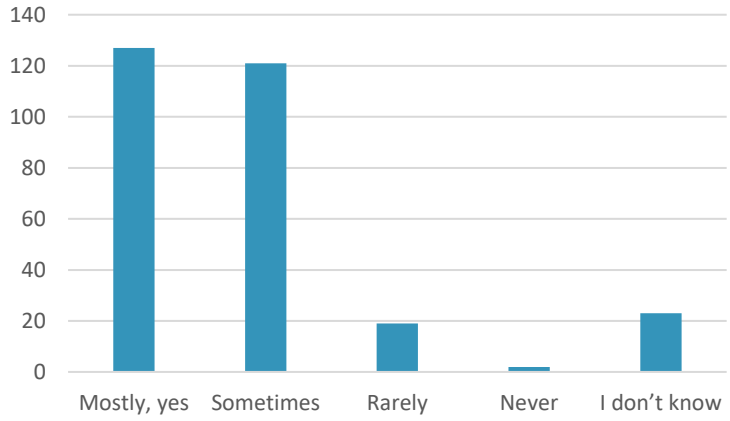
are the cornerstone of UNICEF planning and programming in humanitarian contexts.[5] The revised CCCs include an LHD section under each sectoral section that provides sector-specific principles and guidance for optimizing linkages between humanitarian and development. There is no separate section with LHD guidance for peacebuilding/social cohesion however (though these are referenced several times throughout the documents). This is relevant because interviewees mentioned a particular gap in guidance as for peacebuilding activities, where they felt much less confident. "This is much newer to us" said one, "and especially now, with the threat of armed conflict looming in Lebanon, it would be extremely helpful to us."

2.2. Strategy, planning and programming

Interviews, survey responses, and the most recent CPDs reveal that LHD objectives have been increasingly incorporated into planning and programme design in recent years, even in those settings where staff insisted 'the nexus is obvious' or 'goes without saying'. The majority of survey respondents answered 'mostly, yes' or 'sometimes' to the question of whether UNICEF programmes and projects are designed with LHD objectives *(see Figure 3)*. Moreover, most reported seeing a meaningful increase of LHD activities in their particular context in the past year *(see Figure 4)*.

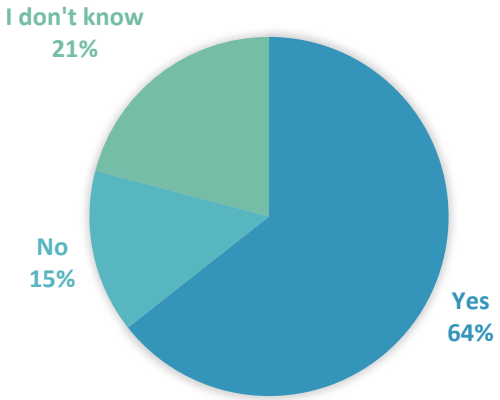
This section highlights findings under different areas of LHD going from strongest to weakest in terms of UNICEF's progress in implementing them.

Figure 3: Are UNICEF programmes and projects designed with LHD objectives?



[5] The benchmark reads, "All COs, with the support of ROs/HQ, design and implement risk-informed and conflict-sensitive humanitarian programmes that build and strengthen national and local capacities and systems from the start of humanitarian action to reduce needs, vulnerabilities of and risks to affected populations; and contribute to social cohesion and peace, where relevant and feasible" UNICEF, Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, October 2020,

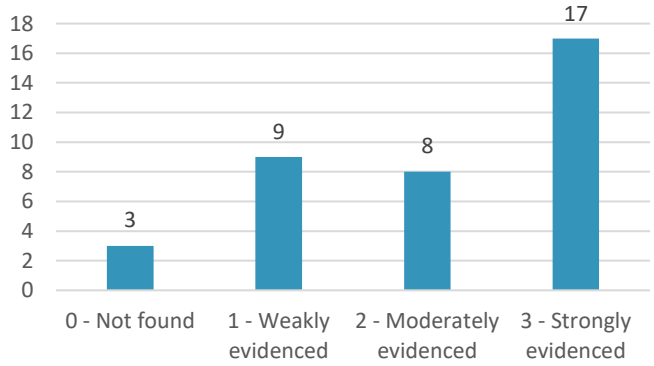
Figure 4: Have LHD activities or the degree of linkage increased meaningfully in your context over the past year?



2.3 Humanitarian-development linkages: system strengthening and (government) capacity building

Interviewees and survey respondents emphasized the system-strengthening aspect of UNICEF's humanitarian work, which was also strongly evidenced in the review of country documents *(see Figure 5)*.

Figure 5: Capacity building: Evidence of action in CO documents



The primary target for UNICEF's capacity building has been government and public sector entities. Thanks to its close and long-running working relationships with government partners, UNICEF is extremely well positioned to effect policy change, system strengthening, and national capacity building in areas affecting children and families. Expanding, equipping, and training up cadres of government health extension workers and social workers is one primary way that UNICEF builds the capacity of governments to provide important public services, and this was evidenced in nearly all countries to varying extents, depending on existing government capacity and—in the case of

Syria—political limitations. In Syria and to some extent South Sudan, capacity building efforts are by necessity more likely to target UNICEF's civil society and INGO partners.

Box 1: Capacity building examples from CO documents

"UNICEF facilitated development of a roadmap for the Optimization of the Health Extension programme (OHEP)...Through OHEP, the Government intends to double the number of Health Extension Workers (HEWs) per health post from an average of two to four, increasing the number of rural HEWs from 32,000 to 64,000"

- Ethiopia (2019 COAR)

"UNICEF provided funding and technical support to the Civil Surgeon's Office to support host community children and women by mainstreaming nutrition services into the health system; building the capacity of service providers on IYCF; and providing inpatient SAM treatment. This capacity building support was aimed at putting in place a coordination mechanism between the different elements of the justice system to facilitate diversion and improve monitoring of children in contact with the law."

- Bangladesh (2019 SitAn)

"In 2019, the gains of 2017 and 2018 were consolidated in the areas of promoting community-based participatory approaches and essential family practices, as well as building government capacity, which played a key role in the Ebola response by improving community trust. At least 3,266 community animation units (CACs) in 27 health zones in North Kivu and Ituri were established for the response to the Ebola outbreak, bringing the total number of community structure to 56,890 in 22 out of the DRC' s 26 provinces. …In response to the polio outbreak, the contribution of community workers was crucial in reducing the number of children not reached by vaccination teams."

- DRC (2019 SitRep)

UNICEF also helps build capacity through direct technical assistance and policy guidance for its government partners. For instance, in Ethiopia, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health in launching the National Food and Nutrition Policy by the Minister of Health, which ensured that people in need would receive a "minimum package of services" including nutrition, sanitation, agriculture and social protection. UNICEF Ethiopia also supported the adoption of national policies that integrated refugees. In South Sudan, UNICEF supported the development of a national education curriculum. Through such policy inputs, UNICEF can make a lasting impact that is codified in national law or policy, help standardize and formalize emergency preparedness and resilience measures, and help bridge the divide between humanitarian and development by extending the inputs for refugees or displaced populations to the wider community.

In refugee settings such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Lebanon and Turkey, many inputs to assist on a humanitarian response footing were dual-purposed to bolster the community at large – for instance:

- a newly built hospital serving both Rohingya refugees and local Bangladeshis for Covid-19 and other respiratory illnesses;
- permanent school structures in Ethiopia;
- community service centres in Turkey; and
- remote learning and vocational opportunities in Lebanon, among many other examples.

The closeness with government also poses risks, however. In Ethiopia, UNICEF's close working relationship to the government affords it entry points for policy advocacy and access to structures that can scale to meet needs for millions of people, but also constrains its ability to act and be perceived as an independent actor in the country. This has limited UNICEF's action in building the capacity of civil society organizations, over which the government exercises rigid control, and presents a risk for future humanitarian action should civil conflict conditions suddenly escalate.

In longstanding refugee situations such as Lebanon, host government relations can pose a different kind of problem. The government is reluctant to include the refugees into their own social systems, unless it is one hundred per cent supported by international aid, for fear of it leading to a permanent integration and absorbing the burden of absorbing the population. This impedes linkages to longer term solutions and system strengthening. At the same time, UNICEF's donors are opposed to using their humanitarian contributions to support the government to address the needs of newly poor Lebanese. They see the economic crisis as the government's fault, and want to see political changes first. As a UNICEF Lebanon interviewee said, "We are already working in the nexus, but the problem is we are trapped there."

2.4 Development-humanitarian linkages: Emergency preparedness

Emergency preparedness is a central feature of LHD, and requires UNICEF to build both its own capacity to shift rapidly to emergency programming as needs arise, as well as preparedness capacities within national systems and key partners.

UNICEF's ability to work with and through government systems positions it very well to quickly scale-up humanitarian response when there is a need to pivot from a more development-oriented setting. As one interviewee said, "We are able to shift quickly because we have existing programmes in both spheres", and it is the pre-existing structures that allow for effective emergency response.

This flexibility, however, was not the universal experience in top 10 countries (or in the wider formative evaluation) where staffers report the difficulty in shifting mindsets and operational gears from a development programme to an emergency response. Global agencies like UNICEF are notoriously big ships to turn, and the speed of response will default to the slowest operational element, whether recruitment, procurement, contracting or disbursement of funds to partners. Many interviewees spoke of an "emergency mindset," where speed is prioritized. In Nigeria, UNICEF, like many other actors, was slow to transition from a development to an emergency footing when the conflict escalated in the Northeast. One interviewee described the initial attitude as "trying to do a development program in an emergency context," when what was needed instead was "to use the humanitarian programming and imperative to do development." Preparedness and ability to pivot for emergencies is key, as is using the funding and attention that can come with a crisis as an opportunity to make deeper development progress for the country: "Get the children into school [with emergency resources] first, and then build the education system-strengthening on top of that."

Box 3: Preparedness examples

"In response to South Sudan's susceptibility to EVD [Ebola virus disease], UNICEF is supporting the Government with Ebola preparedness and operational readiness activities. UNICEF with MoH and the World Health Organization (WHO) supported the training of 43 national rapid response team (RRT) members selected from MoH and partners. Sixty tents were prepositioned to establish temporary and semi-permanent isolation facilities, holding units and screening at points of entry. UNICEF supported the printing and distribution of EVD SOPs and community posters, and EVD vaccination of 2,997 (99.9 per cent) targeted health workers. Through partners, UNICEF completed the prepositioning and distribution of infection prevention and control WASH supplies in 70 of 110 health facilities across EVD high risk locations. Water supply and sanitation facilities were repaired or rehabilitated in 12 additional health care facilities and approximately 1 million people reached through hygiene promotion and EVD messaging."

- South Sudan (2019 COAR)

"UNICEF also provided direct technical support to the National Disaster Risk Management Commission to conduct multi-agency seasonal assessments and prepare contingency and response plans."
- *Ethiopia (2019 HAC)*

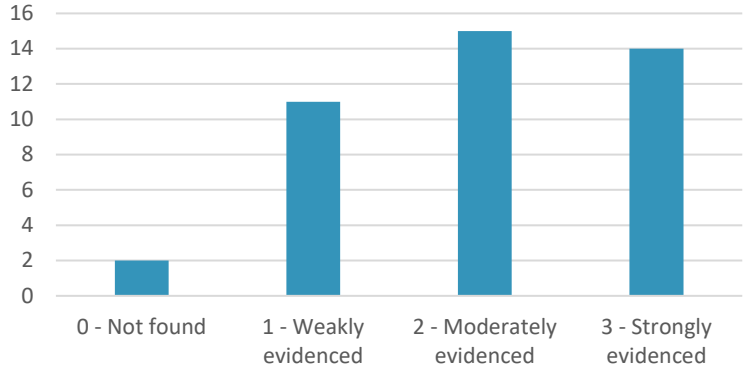
In the Covid-19 response, UNICEF did not receive uniformly high marks on the speed of response. When COVID-19 cases began mounting in these settings, and ensuing lockdowns disrupted programming and basic services, UNICEF's implementing partners began asking for additional support and permission to reprogram funding to meet emergent needs. Compared to other UN agencies, UNICEF was reportedly relatively quick to agree, and provided partners with additional hygiene kits and other WASH inputs, educational and psychosocial materials for children, and support for remote learning solutions, but in many cases these decisions and supports took at least a month to materialize on the ground. Because humanitarian emergencies often require new partnerships with NGOs, in places where UNICEF is accustomed to working mostly with governments they must be prepared to move at a faster speed than usual to sign contracts and get funds to these NGO partners so they can start working quickly. According to one UNICEF staffer interviewed, "Some of the field offices don't understand the core humanitarian principles and CCC's [Core Commitments for Children in humanitarian action] in the way that they should, because they been in such a development and government partnership orientation. This limits our ability to respond fast." Another spoke more bluntly: "We are too slow. Operations is a nightmare in every country I've worked in. Things take too long and people are too relaxed when we should be in emergency mode. We should be doing much better as UNICEF."

While many interviewees mentioned education being the sector most dramatically affected by the pandemic, with school closures, COVID-19 disruptions affect all sectors. Said one, "It doesn't mean that you need to change your programming necessarily, you just need to focus on different aspects and certain activities. People still need access to water, education, protection, and we need to understand how provision of services has been affected by COVID-19 and intervene there."

2.5 Risk-Informed Programming

Solid progress was seen in integrating UNICEF's commitment to RIP, particularly in the strategic planning stages. Apart from Yemen and DRC (who were just transition to new 5-year Country Programmes at the time of this research), all other countries in the top 10 have undergone a risk analysis with a focus on children in the past three years, according to the SMQ responses. Staff expressed the sense they have benefited from these comprehensive review of risks as part of the country programme design process, supported by the standardized guidance on risk informed programming (GRIP), plus annual updates to the emergency preparedness plan (EPP), and more scenario-based contingency planning generally that aims to foster resilience and the ability to withstand sudden shocks and maintain continuity of services. "We are more risk-informed with the new CPD. A lot of effort was made with the last plan to ensure that our plans are informed by other work that we do. The past two years have laid a good foundation."

Figure 6: RIP: Evidence of action in CO documents



It is likely, however, that the high marks given to RIP were more relevant to the more easily foreseeable crises, such as cyclical droughts and floods, than to more complex risks involving conflict and political fragility. The Ethiopia documents, for example, failed to anticipate the political events in November that appear at the time of this writing to have Ethiopia's federal government at the brink of launching a civil war against the Tigray People's Liberation Front in the Northwest. Accordingly, the more extreme the environment, the less the benefit of RIP efforts was felt. In places like Syria and DRC, staff felt that nearly every possible risk was being realized in their context nearly all the time, and as a result, they don't experience a dramatic added value from the RIP process. As one said, "Before the CPD process started, there was training of staff on risk analysis but I haven't seen it applied."

The current global pandemic was also not anticipated in any country risk analysis or scenario planning—still less the subsidiary risks that Covid-19 has brought to hard won gains in areas like education and immunization. RIP is still new and, according to some interviewees, still unproven in practice, so more time may be needed to truly assess its value.

Box 4: Risk-informed programming examples

"High- and medium-risk countries received timely support to carry out integrated and resilience-focused humanitarian programming and key preparedness actions to mitigate risks and implement scaled-up emergency response. For instance, this includes investing in building the capacities of local partners and national systems for enhanced resilience and sustainability of services within the framework of the Grand Bargain commitments."

- MENA (2020 HAC)

"The research study titled 'Generation El-Nino: The long-term impact on children's well-being' was recognized as one of the 12 best research papers by UNICEF's global Office of Research in Innocenti. It led to important recommendations, including the development of a comprehensive strategy for building children's resilience across sectors and strengthening institutional and strategic foundations for child-sensitive disaster risk management."

- Ethiopia (2018 COAR)

"Risk-informed emergency preparedness was strengthened through a dedicated UNICEF workshop on risk-informed programming in early 2019, based on existing Emergency Preparedness Platform (EPP) scenarios: armed conflict, natural disaster, election-related violence and epidemics. At the end of 2019, the office decided to review the EPP to include civil unrest, acknowledging the shifting context in central and southern Iraq in the final quarter of the year."

- Iraq (2018 COAR)

Finally, access to good information is essential for RIP, and a key challenge for UNICEF is lacking or limited data in a country where there is little capacity for it (e.g. South Sudan and DRC) or government constraints (e.g. Ethiopia and Syria). This is especially difficult in the area of security risk and conflict analysis, where such information is highly sensitive. Other evaluations have noted this dilemma and recommended that UNICEF seek partners and external resources to develop systems for more sophisticated risk analysis and forecasting.

2.6 Scaling up cash transfer

In countries where well-established social safety nets exist (in the top 10 this includes Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Nigeria, Turkey, and Yemen), cash transfer networks were cited as extremely effective tools for LHD. In the case of emergencies, these mechanisms can be expanded to cover additional beneficiaries and topped up to meet new levels of need, and scaled back once crisis conditions have abated.

Governments that seek to expand their social safety nets for emergent needs benefit from the expertise that UNICEF, with its dual mandate has acquired in humanitarian cash transfer programming, and this in turn gives UNICEF leverage to strengthen social protection with enhanced emergency preparedness capacity for the future, and meet the needs of refugees or other crisis-affected groups that many not have been covered previously. A commenter noted this "cross fertilization" of skills and experience across the humanitarian and development realms in cash as a prime example of LHD in action.

In Ethiopia, UNICEF and other aid actors can use the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), the second largest in Africa, established in 2005. In the 2014–2015 drought, the PSNP delivered early assistance to people in the Somali Regional State, and was again one of the first tools reached for in the COVID-19 outbreak.[6] In Syria, "UNICEF is the only one doing cash at scale" and is trying to revive a government initiative to build a social safety net that was started and abandoned eight years ago. The world's largest social safety net is in Turkey – the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) funded mainly by the EU and implemented by the Turkish Red Crescent. UNICEF's conditional cash transfer for education, which serves both 600,000 refugee children and vulnerable Turkish children, uses the same network. And in Lebanon, the National Poverty Targeting Program (NPTP) provides cash assistance to vulnerable people, and has been topped up and expanded by 25,000 families in response to recent needs.

UNICEF interviewees in Nigeria can report on efforts in cash-based programming in nutrition (i.e. vouchers and mobile money), and plans to support cash-based programming through four UNICEF sectors for the emergency in the North East, but quickly add that "It is not to scale." Tight restrictions by the Nigerian government have constrained cash programming for all aid actors, but UNICEF is working toward expanding the practice. One staffer noted, "Humanitarian cash transfer training was just completed here, and now we are setting up agreements with providers, so we are getting ready to build better delivery system."

The early underperformance of UNICEF cash programming in the Nigeria example shows how operational implementation can often lag behind UNICEF's noted pioneering role in shock-responsive cash and social protection. A forthcoming evaluation of UNICEF cash and social

[6] Levine, Simon and Sida, Lewis, *Multi-year Humanitarian Funding: A thematic evaluation*, Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute, London, 2019.

protection programming also notes weak operational capacities and coordination with other agencies in this space.

2.7 Localization and civil society capacity building

Although there is evidence in the CO documents that UNICEF has intentionally sought to increase its partnerships and build capacity for its national NGO partners, overall it did not come through strongly as a major area of action.

In one setting, staff referred to it as a sub-optimal alternative to working with a strong government partner ("We don't think we will see a stable government in the next few years that we can invest our energies into, so we are focused on civil society."). Recent external evaluations and media articles have noted the lack of significant increases by UN agencies in capacity building and direct funding for local organizations generally.

Current and former NGO partners interviewed for this review spoke positively about UNICEF for the most part, and at least one credited it with helping to directly build its organizational capacity. In South Sudan, UNICEF supported a local partner to co-chair a subsector in the state they were working, and to represent South Sudanese NGOs in an international forum in Geneva. At the same time, they note that they experience the same issues with UNICEF as UNICEF experiences with its own donors – lack of flexibility, cumbersome reporting requirements, and short funding timeframes, all of which hinder LHD objectives in programming. Said one, "UNICEF as a donor is not more flexible than donor governments. On the contrary, they are a bit more prescriptive – they push down donor restrictions onto us and give us very little room. For example, for COVID they tendered a multisector, multi-region PCA [programme cooperation agreement] and we were very interested, but found out that we had to do exactly what and where UNICEF directed, so we had to say no. If they had been more flexible we would have gone in on it."

Finally, in contexts like Ethiopia and Turkey, it was felt that UNICEF had little scope – and little support or tolerance from government partners – for a deliberate strategy to build the capacity of non-governmental civil society organisations.

2.8 Accountability to Affected Populations

It is difficult to find evidence that UNICEF's strategic planning and programming reflect the broad consultation and participation of affected populations. Beyond various community and project-based feedback mechanisms and complaint hotlines, and discrete projects such as the 'Social Accountability for Healthcare Quality Improvement Study' commissioned by UNICEF in April 2019, AAP is underdeveloped.[7] Globally, UNICEF has no mechanism to systematically and comprehensively gather and reflect the views of affected people for its country strategies.

UNICEF has recognized this gap and is currently in the third year of a strategy to scale up AAP systematically across country programmes and in organizational procedures and guidelines. A draft progress report on this initiative notes that, "The 2018 SMQ, which included AAP questions for the first time, show that only 5% of Country Offices indicated that they have systematic feedback and complaint mechanisms across several programmes...[C]hallenges include lack of guidance, lack of

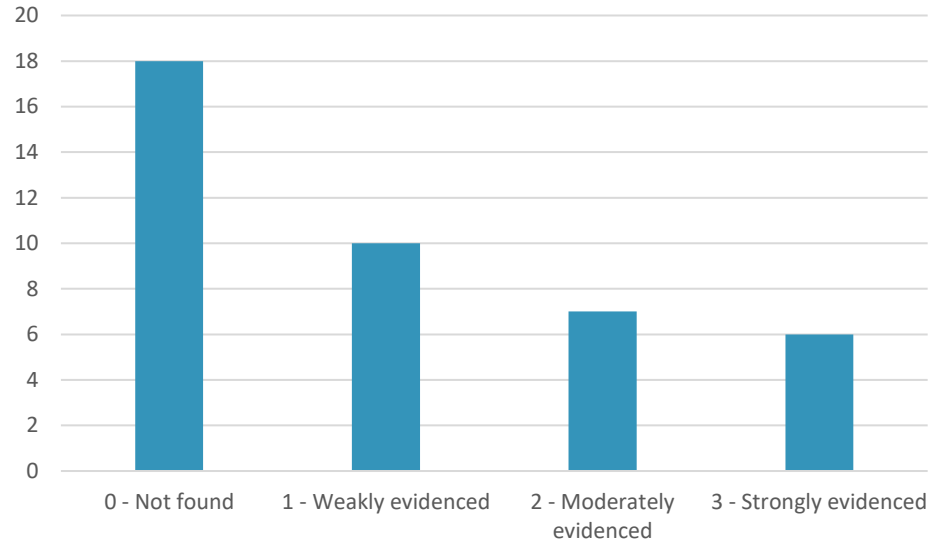
[7] Pieterse, Pieternella, 'Draft Social Accountability for Healthcare Quality Improvement Study', UNICEF, 2019.

capacity and knowledge of staff, lack of contractual needs in PCAs, and lack of capacity to analyze large amount of data generated by feedback mechanisms."[8]

AAP was weakly evidenced or not found in a majority of country documents reviewed, corresponding to interview findings that showed no comprehensive or systematic consultation with affected populations in the UNICEF countries reviewed. Evidence of AAP was weaker in the top 10 humanitarian response contexts than it was in a broader sample of UNICEF countries.

U-Report, UNICEF's digital surveying and information platform has promise as a potent AAP tool, and is beginning to be used incrementally by some country offices for specific purposes, as seen in the CO documents of DRC, Iraq, Nigeria, and Bangladesh. At present, however, it remains underdeveloped and underutilized, and is comparable in cost to established external remote survey providers (such as GeoPoll or Viamo, to name two).

Figure 7: AAP: Evidence of action in country documents



Speaking with staff members, one finds AAP is often conflated with PSEA or C4D. There is little indication that the evidence and inputs that UNICEF draws on to design programmes contain direct input from affected populations. As one interviewee explained, the CO works on two-year rolling workplans, so can make adjustments or course corrections as they learn from populations, but "As of now, there is no evidence to look at in terms of AAP." Another remarked "There is no strategic push from UNICEF on AAP."

"AAP is very weak here" said another. "We're good at putting children and affected people at the centre of our programming in a way, but we don't actually consult with communities, women and children. This is a fail. We think we're so experienced in knowing what they need, that we don't reach out and listen."

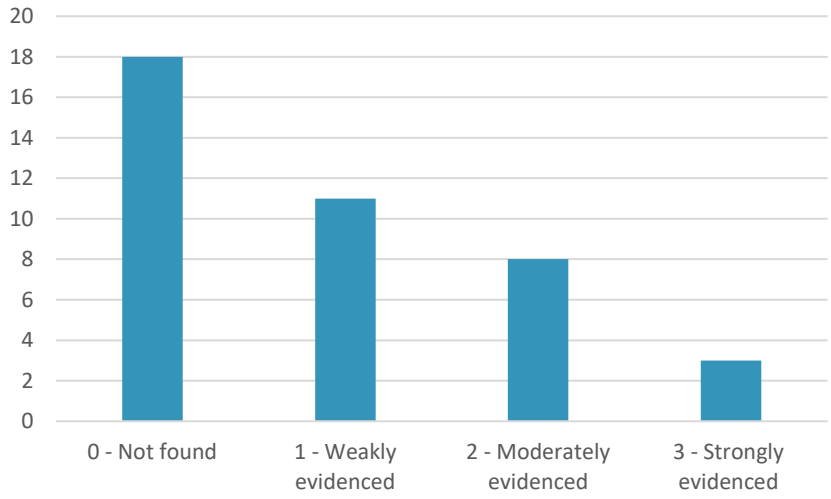
[8] UNICEF (internal) 'Strengthening country support on AAP', Draft: 11 June 2019

2.9 Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding/social cohesion

Peacebuilding and conflict-sensitivity were two of the least articulated and understood aspects of LHD. Evidence of programming specifically related to the procedure's directive to "Where appropriate, address the causes of conflict and violence through appropriate peacebuilding approaches" was mostly not found in the country documents. Other evaluations, and interviews with staff, revealed activities that could be counted toward peacebuilding (typically referred to by UNICEF and their government partners as 'social cohesion' efforts, to avoid political sensitivity) are undertaken by UNICEF in an opportunistic as opposed to strategic fashion. An exception was South Sudan, where UNICEF is supporting reintegration efforts in conflict-affected areas within a peacebuilding framework.

As mentioned earlier, CO staff identified peacebuilding as a marked gap in advancing the goals of LHD within UNICEF. A few interviewees expressed confusion that the peacebuilding element seemed to have "… dropped off the procedure, apart from the call for conflict analysis."
In general, staff felt that "There's not enough guidance on peacebuilding, how this is done proactively through programming."

Figure 8: Peacebuilding: Evidence of action in country documents

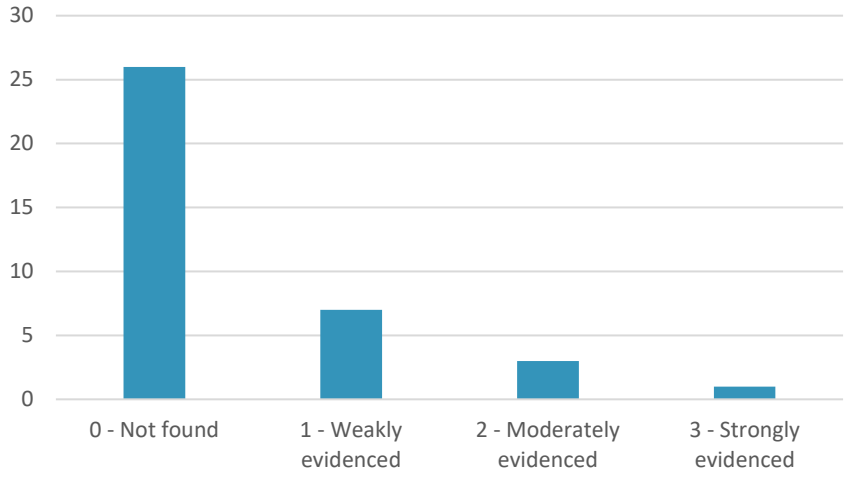


The fact that peacebuilding-oriented activities must often be downplayed in country plans and programme documents due to political sensitivities around the term might result in some significant UNICEF successes in this area being obscured. In Turkey, for instance, UNICEF facilitated the integration of all Syrian refugee children into the public school system, where they are now receiving an equivalent state education, and this was cited by many as a profound benefit to social cohesion. Such successes can be seen in other countries as well; however, social cohesion benefits do not appear to be based on the same depth of understanding and strategic planning that underpins UNICEF's work in humanitarian and development programming, but instead are viewed as salutary side effects.

In terms of conflict sensitivity, although a slight majority (six) of the top 10 humanitarian response COs reported having undertaken a conflict analysis in the past 24 months according to the SMQ, this area did not come through as a point of strength. In most cases they outsourced the analysis to external experts; the areas of conflict analysis and peacebuilding are less familiar to UNICEF and less represented in staff profiles. Given that the bulk of UNICEF expenditure each year goes to

protracted armed conflict situations that have been ongoing for several years (or decades), it would seem appropriate to make a deliberate effort to grow the experience profile of the organization in this area and approach it more strategically.

Figure 9: Conflict sensitivity: Evidence of action in country documents



2.10 Coordination and partnership

Interagency strategies

There is broad consensus among UNICEF staff, donors, partners and counterparts that UNICEF's already strong position as a coordinator in these contexts serves it well to advance LHD objectives. In a typical statement, one donor said "UNICEF is unique in that they straddle this divide in a way that other UN agencies do not. They are in a good position to bridge gaps."

UNICEF takes advantage of its relatively large operational presence on the ground in these contexts (compared to some other UN agencies) and its leadership or co-leadership of multiple sectors to promote interagency strategies for resilience and system-strengthening.

Survey responses from UNICEF staff implied that this coordination can be challenging. Respondents ranked coordination with both development and humanitarian partners high on the list of obstacles to LHD programming. As one interviewee said, "For the nexus you need all on board, and the more you're aligned, the better the results. Meeting each other at a common point between our different systems and priorities is not always easy."

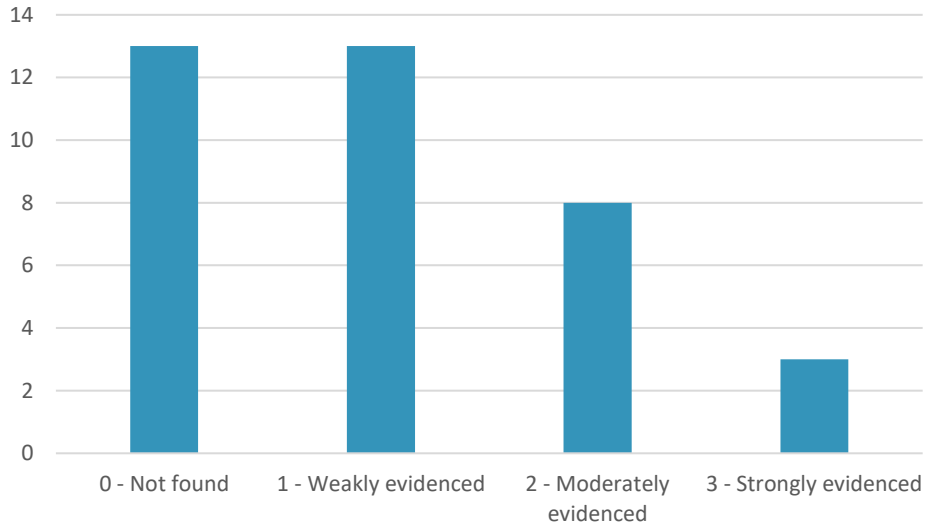
Although largely positive the external interviews did contain points of criticism. It general, these had to do with UNICEF being so large and spread out across sectors, that partners and counterpoints felt that there were "several UNICEFs, not one". Donors and partners alike expressed similar sentiments about occasionally getting mixed messages between different UNICEF senior staffers in a context speaking from different sectoral silos, often leading to ambiguity about plans and procedures. "It would be better if they were more unified", said one.

Convergence

Included among the objectives for LHD, and one directly relevant to coordination and interagency strategies, is the concept of convergence of programming around the most vulnerable segments of the population, in both a geographical and multisectoral sense.[9]

There is evidence that UNICEF is beginning to work deliberately towards convergence in some areas, though it is still weak compared to other types of LHD activities. For example, convergence was much less evidenced in the core country documents. In part, this may be because the term itself is not always used in reporting on this type of programming, but it is also likely that as a relatively new strategy it is not yet being employed in a systematic way, or taken hold in many country programmes. However, the top 10 humanitarian response contacts saw more examples of this convergence in the core country documents than their counterparts in other responses, in accordance with humanitarian principles to focus on the most in need.

Figure 10: Convergence: Evidence of action in country documents



2.11 Effectiveness, innovation, and learning

Because explicit LHD programming is still a relatively new feature in CPDs, coupled with the overall challenges of operating in contexts of extreme humanitarian need, it means there has not been a great deal of concrete evidence of innovation and learning in this area to date in the top 10 humanitarian responses. However, certain examples were offered by interviewees as either innovative or opportunity-maximizing regarding LHD, both in regular programming and in the response to COVID-19.

Durable solutions in WASH was one of most cited of these examples, as UNICEF, responding to drought shocks, increasingly seeks to construct sustainable water supply systems through mapping

[9] "Convergence of different sectoral programmes in geographical areas for populations of greatest vulnerability and lowest capacity." UNICEF Executive Board, 'Update on UNICEF Humanitarian Action with a Focus on Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming', UNICEF/2019/EB/3, February 2019.

climate-resilient groundwater sources and conducting deep well drilling aided by satellite imagery, which optimizes the chances of finding sustainable water sources. At the same time, these resilient WASH solutions often benefit social cohesion goals as well, as in the community-based WASH projects, host populations benefit equally alongside the refugees or IDPs who triggered the initial emergency response.

Several interviewees spoke of identifying new 'opportunities' in the midst of COVID-19, in particular regarding policy influence with government. The pandemic, they said, is an unprecedented situation which entailed 'a lot of learning by doing,' and both UNICEF and external interviewees noted that UNICEF was more flexible than other agencies and were supported by a good amount of guidance from headquarters about how to repurpose their resources for channelling into government-led COVID-19 response initiatives.

In some top 10 contexts, UNICEF is using the exigencies of COVID-19 to influence government policies and practices for the longer-term benefit of children, particularly in child protection. Using lessons from Ebola, UNICEF has intervened to prevent the separation of children from parents in treatment centres, and to prevent children from being examined without an adult relative present. With the closure of many facilities for infection control, UNICEF sees an opportunity to promote the deinstitutionalization and alternative care solutions to orphanages that have long been a part of its child protection priorities. As one interviewee remarked, "COVID-19 gave us more resources for these things as well as more space to advocate with the government."

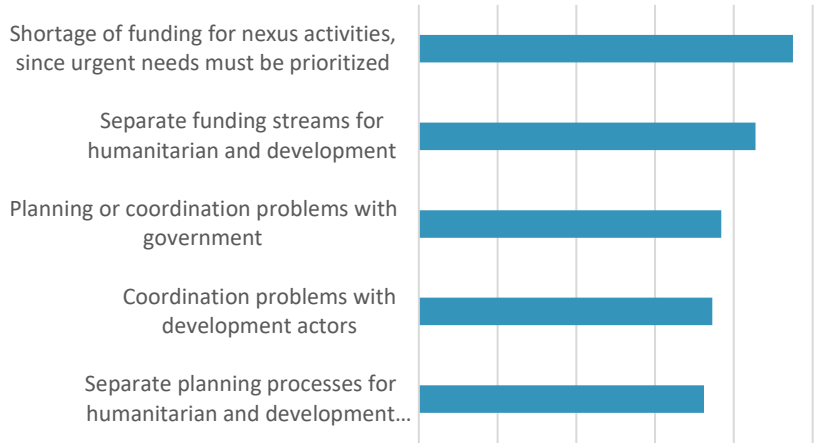
The review failed to find any concrete examples of data pertaining to LHD being shared with governments and counterparts, with the exception of return on investment studies for resilience. The subject of LHD remains in many places very much at the centre of discussions, and interviewees agree that this should, and needs to be, supported by more hard data and learnings in the future.

2.12 Funding, efficiency and operational issues

The need for UNICEF to "intensify advocacy for innovative, predictable and flexible multi-year financing," as noted in the Procedure is still pressing, and no evidence was found of significant progress in this area for the top 10 countries

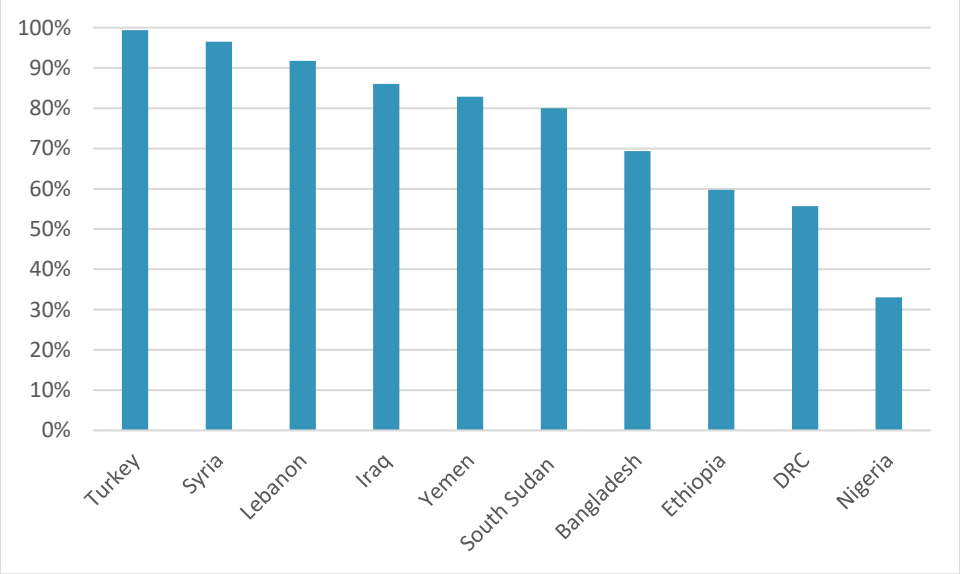
Interviewees and survey respondents broadly agreed that the most significant challenge to implementing LHD was insufficient funding, in particular the multiyear funding necessary for longer-term development and resilience objectives *(see Figure 11)*. It is a long-standing funding dilemma that in humanitarian contexts, where there is a limited pool of financial resources, the demands of frequent emergencies compete with needs for durable solutions that require longer timeframes. Although instances of multiyear funding have increased, most international contributions in the top 10 humanitarian response contexts are project-based grants with a duration of 12 months or less. These short timelines inevitably constrain what UNICEF can implement with its partner organizations. Said one INGO interviewee in Iraq, "[LHD] is explicit in [UNICEF's communication], and in the strategic documents that they share with partners, but in all my five years partnering with UNICEF I never signed a single project that was longer than six months."

Figure 11: Biggest obstacles to LHD: Survey responses



As interviewees emphasized, relatively very little of UNICEF's resources are currently made available for programming in the nexus. Apart from DRC, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Bangladesh, which have large development programmes ongoing, the total spend of most of the top 10 humanitarian countries is more than three quarters, and for Turkey, Syria and Lebanon it is upward of 90 percent.

Figure 12: Percent humanitarian expenditure in top 10 countries, 201910



The paucity of flexible funding for LHD, especially in largest, conflict-driven emergencies, suggests that UNICEF has been unsuccessful in mobilizing more flexible funding from donors for LHD-oriented programming, and also has not reprogrammed unearmarked funds (RR) for the purpose.

10

Because the greater part of donor funding UNICEF receives is siloed in development or emergency channels, funding LHD typically requires either adding crisis modifiers to development funding or including rehabilitation/resilience-oriented activities under humanitarian funding. Because humanitarian funding is the most inflexible in terms of activities and timeframes countries with the highest percentages of humanitarian spend have the least amount of leeway. In countries like Syria and Lebanon, where donors are adamant about not providing resources to the existing governments, UNICEF faces constant push back from donors to its efforts to strengthen systems and work toward longer-term solutions.

One interviewee spoke of many countries facing a Catch-22, where they can't access World Bank and other IFI funding, while at the same time the percentage of unearmarked funding is "very small to negligible."

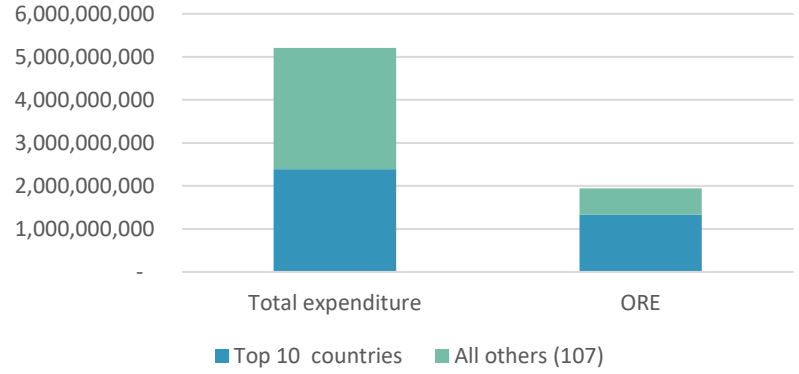
Other interviewees remarked:

- "UNICEF could push harder to enable flexibility and to develop mechanisms to allow it. It needs staff to be less protective of fiefdoms and more willing to allow re-allocation and flexibility."
- "70% of UNICEF's resources are spent in conflict-affected countries, so this should be better resourced."
- "No core resources are dedicated to this function, we have to raise funds separately. "
- "We receive a tiny amount of RR from HQ that we try to use for LHD, but can't get very far with that."

Beyond the constraints set by donors, crisis countries are further hampered in accessing flexible by HQ allocations. The top 10 humanitarian countries accounted for $1.9B in ORE (69% of total ORE) of which organizational overheads contribute to RR, but their share of RR was only $229M, or 22% of organization's total RR. Across all countries in 2019, only $69.4M of RR (or 7%) was used "principally" for humanitarian. In the top 10 countries, this percentage was double, but still low (14%)

UNICEF funding is concentrated in a relatively small number of countries experiencing conflict driven humanitarian crises. Out of the 117 countries where UNICEF has programmes, the top 10 emergency countries accounted for 69% of ORE and almost half (46%) of *total* country-based expenditure.

Figure 13: Total country-based expenditure, 2019



Overall, staff members did not see UNICEF's own administrative systems or internal capacities as a major hindrance to LHD, nor did they speak of new transaction costs associated with implementing LHD objectives. On the contrary, most transaction costs mentioned were those related to traditional humanitarian funding structures, with their rigid requirements and onerous reporting burdens. While some have become adept at workarounds and navigating the two different funding streams, they say nonetheless that "Running two parallel systems is heavy and not efficient. We spend enormous amounts of money on information managers doing double reporting – HRP [humanitarian response plan], all the donors. Now, with COVID, it's a new process."

Some staff in the top 10 humanitarian response contexts describe the large amounts of humanitarian funding as both an opportunity and a curse. An opportunity because, in the words of one interviewee, "With a surge of funding you can accomplish a lot, and if you design your programmes with long-term view, it can help development." Seizing this opportunity requires, "gymnastics" in financing said another, and some staff lamented feeling like "we are beggars". In the countries that raise huge amounts of 'other resources–emergency' (ORE) find themselves with very little in the way of flexible resources to counterbalance it, and some staffers feel this imbalance needs to be addressed with UNICEF HQ as well as with donors. "[Funding is] not sufficient. We get a lot of funding for the HRP, but not for longer-term work. There's no flexibility, no wiggle room, no space for innovation."

2 Conclusions and proposal for future CO quality reviews

In many ways, UNICEF is uniquely suited to realize the goals of LHD in practice. Multi-mandated, multi-sectoral and partnering with actors across public, private and civil sectors, UNICEF's holistic approach of pursuing goals for children allows for (and demands) that it span the institutional divides between emergency response and development aid for the sake of better and more sustainable outcomes.

At the same time, the breadth of UNICEF activities and objectives also makes linkage difficult. Because the time, attention, and scope of expertise of any one person is limited, the solution that typically emerges is specialization; thus large organizations naturally tend to form internal divisions and silos that can work against big picture, integrative thinking. Long conscious of this dilemma and not wanting to be 'two UNICEFs,' the organization has sought to bridge the divides in its internal structures. However, the international architecture for funding and coordination is still largely bifurcated between the relief and development spheres, and this reinforces the difficulty.

UNICEF's adoption of the Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming in 2019 was a recognition that longstanding institutional understanding and acceptance of the concept of LHD within UNICEF is by itself not enough to surmount these obstacles. Instead, deliberate action and concrete measures were needed "to better institutionalize and systematize linkages…" And while not all staff appear to be of the same opinion about where UNICEF is or needs to go in terms of realizing LHD (there are still a fair number who treat the topic as "old wine in new bottles"), the document kicked off a process by which meaningful progress could potentially be made and measured.

While it is still early days, and metrics for outcomes are still in process of being developed, in the top 10 humanitarian responses, this review found anecdotal and documentary evidence of progress and good practice in LHD within projects and sectoral programming. UNICEF accomplished this by leveraging its **key strengths** in:

- **Government partnerships**, including critical policy input made possible through longstanding relationships, consultations and technical assistance at the ministerial level;
- **Interagency coordination leadership** roles, though which UNICEF can promote LHD and influence the work of partners and sectors; and
- C**apacity-building for critical public sector services**, such as vaccinators, social workers, and health workers. These cadres of extension workers—like the social safety nets for cash transfer—represent important scalable and flexible tools to respond to changing needs that UNICEF has appropriately emphasized.

These strengths were reflected in successful examples of UNICEF using humanitarian programming to strengthen national systems and capacities, influence policy, extend benefits to host communities and enhance social cohesion.

The review also found areas of **weaknesses and gaps**:

- **Conflict analysis** and **conflict-sensitive programming** remain underdeveloped within UNICEF, and advancements in risk-informed programming have not extended to the risks of man-made crises.,

- **UNICEF's role in peacebuilding** has been the subject of rigorous analysis, assessment, and new thinking at the global level, but at the country level it is not yet approached strategically and is where staff feel least knowledgeable in terms of planning and programming.
- **Localization,** meaning strategic approach to improving partnerships and building the capacity of local civil partners, did not come through strongly as an area of emphasis or major progress to date.
- **Accountability to affected populations** lacks an overall strategic focus and systemic approach, and is evidenced only in small-scale, piecemeal efforts. The fact that this review could find no comparable AAP data across countries to mine for this analysis indicates the need for investment in wider surveying of affected populations as a standard practice in UNICEF.

The Formative Evaluation of UNICEF Work to Link Humanitarian and Development Programming, undertaken in conjunction with and informed by this review, includes a set of detailed recommendations for the organization, which are inclusive of the top-10 humanitarian response countries.

In addition to contributing to those recommendations, this initial top-10 review was tasked to propose a methodology and process for future iterations, as called for in the procedure, which the COs would fully own and lead for each top 10 country. The objectives for these self-reports would be to:

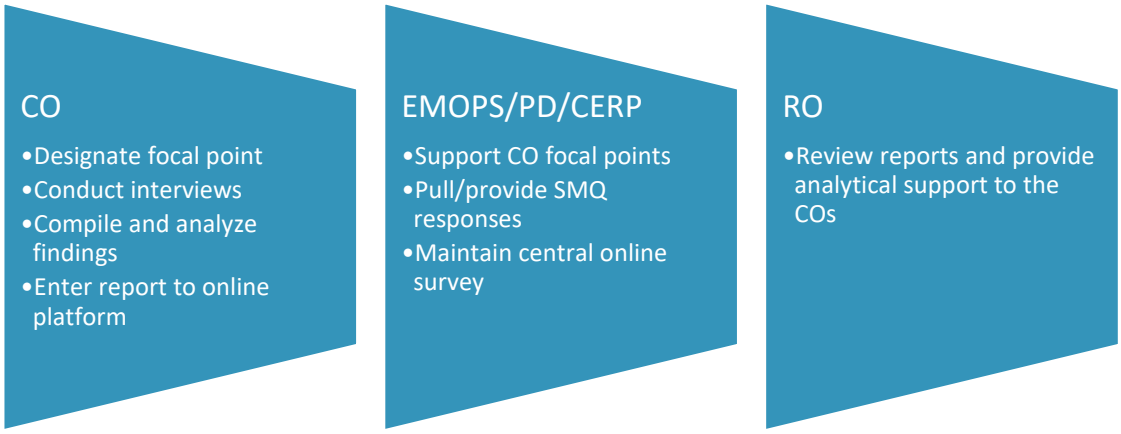
- track progress from baseline and previous reports.
- identify and target areas needing improvement.
- highlight achievements and innovations.
- share good practices and practical examples across sectors, countries and regions.
- reflect on the country programme through an LHD lens.

As a pilot exercise, the review was simultaneously field testing its own approach and tools, and consulting with HQ colleagues and CO focal points, to assess what had the best Return on Investment (RoI) in terms of yielding useful findings. It is important that the approach be administratively light, since CO staff, who are already stretched thin in humanitarian crisis contexts, have limited bandwidth for additional reporting.

In addition, for the future reviews to add value beyond a country-based exercise, the format envisioned is a web-based product as a component of a new online platform. CO staff will add their findings and good practice examples directly to the site which will also aggregate and visualize the (anonymized) survey data for all countries, allowing for users to track and compare different countries' results to each other and against a baseline.

It was found that of the four evidence components used in the pilot review, the CO document review had lowest RoI in terms of useful findings for time spent, and the survey had the highest. The revised methodology (attached as Annex 5) would include 1) a shortened and simplified online survey questionnaire that will still be able to make use of the baseline established in this iteration; 2) an interview template and guidance for KIIs designed to specifically probe gap areas; and 3) a shortened matrix for the filtered SMQ questions/responses. The CO would undertake analysis of findings from those components, supported by the RO and EMOPS as needed.

Figure 14: Proposed roles in future top 10 review process



Suggested templates and research guidance are attached as Annex 5. The researcher will work with EMOPs to finalize tools and help design the digital reporting platform. It is hoped that the format proposed for the subsequent reviews spur direct engagement of staff with the LHD issue area and facilitate peer-to-peer learning by having an open and transparent platform.

Despite being an old idea, the practice of identifying, innovating and implementing deliberate and measurable actions to link the spheres of humanitarian and development action is still relatively new in the international arena. By endeavoring to make it concrete wherever possible, UNICEF is helping to effect and solidify the mindset shift that many say is needed.

Annex 1: Survey questionnaire

[PDF]

Annex 2: Interviews

Surname	Name	Title	Affiliation	Country
Ahmed	Ismail	Assistant Governor, Dohuk	Government	Iraq
Al-Musawi	Husam	Chief of Field Office Baghdad [Programming/coordination]	UNICEF	Iraq
Ambrosini	Miriam	Country Representative	TDH Italy	Iraq
Amyot	Annick	Lead Analyst	Canada	Ethiopia
Ban	Hyun Hee	Chief, Social Policy, Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation	UNICEF	South Sudan
Beigbeder	Edouard	Representative	UNICEF	DRC
Brown	Edward	Country Director	World Vision	Ethiopia
Budak	Adalet	Head of Humanitarian and Social Development Department, GAP Regional Development Administration	Government	Turkey
Clark	Trevor	Chief of Field Operations and Emergency	UNICEF	Ethiopia
Duamelle	Philippe	Representative	UNICEF	Turkey
Eikeland	Elin	Head of Cooperation	Norway	South Sudan
Equiza	Fran	Representative	UNICEF	Syria
Erkmen	Husseyin	Deputy Mayor, Kilis Municipality	Government	Turkey
Gendron	Typhaine		UNICEF	DRC
Goyol	Kitka	Chief of WASH	UNICEF	Ethiopia
Haiplik	Brenda	Chief of Education	UNICEF	Turkey
Hassan	Bashir Said	Child Protection Subcluster Coordinator	Save the Children	South Sudan
Hawkins	Peter	Representative	UNICEF	Nigeria
Heissler	Karin	Chief of Child Protection	UNICEF	Ethiopia
Hicyilmaz	Merve	Youth Programme Coordinator, Ministry of Youth and Sports	Government	Turkey
Janssen	Corien		IRC	Ethiopia
Islam	Safiqul	Director of Education	BRAC	Bangladesh
Islam	Ziaul		ICDDRB	Bangladesh
Karanja	Simon	Nutrition sector coordinator	UNICEF	Nigeria
Kavlak	Ibrahim Vurgun	Director General	Association for Solidarity with	Turkey

			Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM)	
Khodr	Adele	Representative	UNICEF	Ethiopia
Kuuyuor	Titus	Senior Resilience Advisor	UNDP	Ethiopia
Leger	Felix	Technical Assistant- Health and Education	ECHO	Turkey
Mahdi	Khouloud	Deputy Water Sector Coordinator	ACF	Lebanon
Massey	Emma	Lead - DFID HARRIS programme	DFID	South Sudan
Mawji	Shairose	Chief, Field Services	UNICEF	Bangladesh
Mendonca	Veera	Deputy Representative	UNICEF	Bangladesh
Muryango	Georgette	Finance Specialist	UNICEF	Iraq
Mutiso	Joyce	Child Protection Sub Sector Coordinator	UNICEF	Nigeria
Nabi	Idrees	Executive Director	Board of Relief and Humanitarian Affairs (BRHA), Dohuk	Iraq
Neves	Rita	Child Protection Specialist	UNICEF	Turkey
Nixon	Opiyo	Chief of Field Office in Somali region	UNICEF	Ethiopia
Otieno	Elizabeth	Assistant Director	CINA	South Sudan
Owens	Amy	Programme Manager and Policy Advisor	DFID	Lebanon
Özertürk	Onur Kutay	Deputy Programme Coordinator	Turkish Red Crescent	Turkey
Ramadhan	Hamida	Representative	UNICEF	Iraq
Rishani	Karim	UNICEF No Lost Generation Office	UNICEF	Lebanon
Robins	Ann	Health Specialist	UNICEF	Ethiopia
Servadei	Michele	Deputy Representative - Program	UNICEF	Ethiopia
Shahyar	Sarah	Chief of Social Policy	UNICEF	Syria
Sugi Mita	Michiru	Chief of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation	UNICEF	Syria
Suley	Andrea	Deputy Representative - Programmes	UNICEF	South Sudan
Tabbal	George	Chief of WASH	UNICEF	Syria
Thapalia	Sharada	Finance/admin Manager	UNICEF	Ethiopia
Vandenent	Maya	Chief of Health Section	UNICEF	Bangladesh
van de Wiel	Lieke	Deputy Representative	UNICEF	Syria
Vinci	Vincenzo	Social Policy Specialist	UNICEF	Ethiopia
Warney	Violet	Deputy Representative	UNICEF	Lebanon
Zicherman	Nona	Deputy Representative	UNICEF	Turkey

Annex 3: Documents reviewed

General

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Annex 4: SMQ/financial data table

[Excel ODS document]

Annex 5: Quality Review of LHD Programming in the top 10 humanitarian contexts: CO self-report tool kit and research guidance

[MS Word PDF document and PowerPoint PDF summary]