

**CASE STUDY REPORT**

**EVALUATION OF UNICEF  
CONTRIBUTION TO TEACHING AND  
LEARNING**

**Case Study: South Sudan**

**May 2023**

unite for  
children



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## **Evaluation of UNICEF contribution to teaching and learning Case Study: South Sudan**

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The case study, as part of the global evaluation exercise, was conducted by a team of external consultants from Cambridge Education – Mott MacDonald Group comprising Stuart John, Jake Ross, Ira Sangar, Kaylie Miller, Anne Njogu, Kate Martin, Sevilay Bicici and Robina Shaheen. The full exercise was managed by Tami Aritomi of the UNICEF Evaluation Office, who provided continuous support to help improve the quality and utility of this case study, as part of the global evaluation. Overall supervision was provided by Denis Jobin, chief of portfolio in the Evaluation Office. Special acknowledgement is given to Kathleen Letshabo, who contributed to the quality review, and Dalma Rivero, Geeta Dey and Celeste Lebowitz for their continued administrative support.

## Acronyms

AET	Africa Education Trust
EiE	Education in emergencies
ESC19RP	Education Section COVID-19 Response Plan
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
MoGEI	Ministry of General Education and Instruction
NEC	National Emergency Committee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organisation

# Executive summary

## Introduction

This case study is one of seven case studies conducted within the global evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to improved teaching and learning. The overall objective of the global evaluation was to determine to what extent and how successfully UNICEF activities and outputs at the global, regional and country levels contributed to the following outcomes: (1) strong evidence and resource base provided for the education sector's response to COVID-19; (2) education solutions are evidence-based, cross-sectoral and partnership-based; (3) children continue to learn while schools are closed; (4) marginalized children are reached, and their needs are addressed; (5) children are safe and protected during school reopening; and (6) in-school learning is reinstated. The global evaluation was carried out between February 2022 and March 2023, covering UNICEF activities and documents generated between March 2020 and December 2021.

The main purpose of the case study was to produce in-depth analysis to further inform the global evaluation, as well as to derive lessons learned to advise the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office about possible activities and to better position UNICEF to improve its performance in support of teaching and learning efforts.

The South Sudan case study was guided by the questions from the global evaluation, based on three specific objectives: Objective 1: to examine the role of UNICEF in building the knowledge, research and global public goods required to mount an effective education response to the COVID-19 pandemic; Objective 2: to examine the extent to which UNICEF-supported strategies were deployed effectively to enhance government initiatives for continuity of learning during school closures and to reinstate safe and equitable in-school learning opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic; and Objective 3: to examine the extent to which UNICEF Education teams used the existing frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools to mount an effective education response to COVID-19, and whether adjustments are being made to enhance preparedness for future disruptions of a similar scale. Conducted over the same time period, the case study follows the same utilization-focused evaluation approach and methodology as the one used in the global evaluation and a similar in-depth data collection method to assess the evidence.

Over 60 internal documents were reviewed, complemented by 8 interviews conducted with key country informants (4 UNICEF South Sudan Country Office staff, 3 government officials and 1 implementing partner). Evidence was triangulated using information from a global online survey administered between September and October 2022 to contextualize the analysis. Active participation of reference group members and UNICEF South Sudan Country Office staff gave the triangulation process an additional layer of validity. The conclusions and lessons are summarized below.

## Conclusions

### **Objective 1: Building the evidence and resource base for the education response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

Conclusion 1: With support from UNICEF Headquarters and the UNICEF East and Southern Africa Regional Office, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office led efforts to gather evidence, as well as to leverage and coordinate inputs from in-country partners to support the Government of South Sudan to design a well-grounded education sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This response was coherent and cross-sectoral, further strengthening the relationship with government partners.

### **Objective 2: Reopening schools and reinstating face-to-face learning**

Conclusion 2: The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office successfully secured funding, technical assistance and service delivery support for home-based learning during school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the underdeveloped infrastructure limited the possibility of offering more home-based learning options and reaching the most vulnerable children.

Conclusion 3: The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office was highly successful in advocating for and coordinating with its vast network of education sector implementing partners to support Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) efforts to reinstate in-school learning. However, despite open intentions to be inclusive, limited evidence was found that confirmed school returns or the assessment of learning losses among vulnerable girls and children with disabilities.

### **Objective 3: UNICEF preparedness frameworks and readiness to handle similar future crises**

Conclusion 4: The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office leveraged its presence in the field, the established education in emergencies (EiE) programme and capacity, and its role as the Education Cluster co-lead for emergency response programming to support the government's response to COVID-19 in the areas of strategic planning, monitoring protocols and mainstreaming, service delivery and systems-strengthening. However, little evidence was found of preparation or adjustments to revise preparedness plans for future emergencies of the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Lessons learned**

Lesson 1: The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office should continue exploring different options to expand learning options to support the government's EiE efforts, using existing EiE resources and capacity but also developing low-technology remedial options for marginalized children, including children with disabilities and out-of-school children, given the country's infrastructure limitations.

# 1.0 Introduction and background

## 1.1. Introduction

Even before the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, a global learning crisis was in effect, due to the limited progress made towards achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. The COVID-19 pandemic has, however, caused the largest disruption to education in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries. School closures, which recurred with successive waves of COVID-19, affected 19 in every 20 students.

During the COVID-19 emergency, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) worked to support the priorities of national governments in close coordination with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Global Team and country teams, humanitarian agencies and civil society partners. Its objectives were to protect children, their families and teachers from exposure to COVID-19, to minimize the impacts of public health measures, to address the immediate socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic, and to increase access to and the provision of basic social services.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, had guided UNICEF work on education as a priority, as described in Goal Area 2. Its theory of change was developed assuming that the economic, political and social environment would remain stable. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, this key assumption ceased to hold true. Although a revised theory of change was not developed explicitly for the UNICEF response to COVID-19, the overarching goal of UNICEF, and the goals of its education programme, remained relevant. The three key change strategies of Goal Area 2’s theory of change included in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 – namely, global partnerships and public goods, systems-strengthening and service delivery – remained relevant following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This case study report presents an in-depth analysis of the work done by the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office during the period from March 2020 to December 2021, assessing the UNICEF education response to COVID-19. This exercise was designed to gather in-depth evidence to inform the global evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to improved teaching and learning. Guided by its mandate to provide inclusive and equitable education and learning opportunities to girls and boys, including the most marginalized, this evaluation aimed to determine to what extent and how successfully UNICEF activities and outputs at the global, regional and country levels contributed to the following outcomes:

- Strong evidence and resource base provided for the education response
- Education solutions are evidence-based, cross-sectoral and partnership-based
- Children continue to learn while schools are closed
- Marginalized children are reached, and their needs are addressed
- Children are safe and protected during school reopening
- In-school learning is reinstated.

## 1.2. South Sudan country context

Since its independence in 2011, South Sudan has been vulnerable to natural disasters, including floods, droughts and extreme weather events. The situation is perpetually worsened by economic crises, political instability and subnational conflicts. The combination of crises has resulted in extremely high food insecurity levels, and displacement of 4 million people – 1.7 million internally displaced and 2.2 million refugees. In 2021, 8.3 million people out of a total population of 13.2 million needed humanitarian support. Extreme food and nutrition insecurity in the 10 most at-risk counties further exacerbated the situation of disadvantaged groups.

In 2020, South Sudan was also one of the poorest countries in the world, with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of US\$230. Economic and political stability are highly dependent on oil markets, which account for 70 per cent of GDP and 90 per cent of public revenues. The reliance on oil left South Sudan exposed to economic shocks from fluctuations in global oil prices, and other disruptions in global markets.

The macroeconomic situation had devastating impacts on the economic well-being of households. Decreasing purchasing power of the people, coupled with natural disasters, violence and conflict in the country, resulted in extreme poverty and food insecurity. South Sudan was also placed very low on the Human Development Index (HDI), ranking 185th out of 189 countries in 2020. Multidimensional poverty is particularly high, with 9 out of 10 people in South Sudan affected.

The low HDI was directly linked to the scarcity of budgetary allocations to sectors such as health care and education. Public financial management was just as weak as social sector expenditures were inadequate. The proportion of the government budget allocated to education, health care and the social and humanitarian pillar was just 9 per cent in fiscal year (FY) 2019/20, rising to 14 per cent in FY 2020/21. Although the proportion of the budget allocated to health care increased to 10 per cent in FY 2021/22, this was still short of international and local commitments.

Women and children, especially girls, were and continue to be disproportionately affected by natural and political economy crises. Out of 8.3 million people needing humanitarian support in 2021, 4.5 million were children. Conflict, instability and resource constraints undermined attempts at robust institution-building. Although the challenges around poor infrastructure and low teaching and learning outcomes pre-dated the pandemic, they were exacerbated by the disruptive effects of COVID-19.

## 1.3. COVID-19 and the education sector in South Sudan

School closures represented a huge challenge for the government to maintain and continue an already struggling education sector. School closures due to COVID-19 continued for 14 months, from March 2020 to May 2021. Schools first reopened for grades primary 8 and secondary 4 in February 2021, and later for all grades by May 2021. The combination of school closures, continued conflict and climate-related disasters contributed to an increase in the number of out-of-school children from 2.2 million in 2016 to 2.8 million in 2021. Further economic hardship created additional barriers for parents to ensure their children's return to school. These barriers created even greater challenges for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

School closures were correlated with increases in child protection-related incidents, including child labour and sexual and gender-based violence, as protection services generally located

within schools were disrupted. School closures were also likely to adversely impact the already high levels of learning poverty, especially among girls. Evidence across all states shows that families turned to child labour to augment household income during school closures. Children, especially girls, helped their parents with domestic and/or farm work. Releasing children from such work once schools reopened was a difficult decision for families facing economic hardship.

#### 1.4. UNICEF response to COVID-19 in the education sector in South Sudan

**Global partnerships and public goods:** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office benefited from the efforts of existing global partnerships to mobilize emergency funding for countries, facilitate the development of frameworks, guides and tools, and jointly plan and monitor the education response with implementing partners. With support from these partnerships, countries participated in national, regional and global surveys to assess the impact of the pandemic on education systems and learning, and shared knowledge resources on best practices and lessons learned through webinars, data trackers and reports.<sup>1</sup> UNICEF South Sudan, as co-lead of the Education Cluster with Save the Children, continued providing technical leadership for education in emergencies (EiE), and coordinated education EiE responses in inter-agency humanitarian responses.

**Systems-strengthening:** Throughout the pandemic, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office demonstrated its ability to promote synergy and alignment across emergency and development programmes. UNICEF Education staff collaborated with colleagues in other sectors, such as Health, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Child Protection, and played a central role in supporting governments to plan for safe school reopening. The Country Office continued to operate in a very volatile programming environment in South Sudan. While the national security situation generally improved in 2021, subnational insecurity was a major challenge and led to the suspension of some programmes, such as the continuous professional development of unqualified teachers in Magwi, Eastern Equatoria State and Abyei administrative areas, and the training of the Board of Governors in other states.

The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office's work to enhance the capacity of government staff remained a key priority, with 91 officials attending training on sector coordination. During the period of the evaluation, newly trained master trainers were preparing to roll out teacher training to 6,400 unqualified teachers, beginning in the first quarter of 2022. UNICEF South Sudan strengthened support to early learning and school readiness by training 102 caregivers on parenting education (34 per cent of whom were female). Also, 954 early childhood development kits were distributed to support early learning of children aged 3–5 years, while UNICEF continued its support to strengthen education data and financial systems by conducting the annual education census, a public expenditure review and a public expenditure tracking survey to support increased and effective use of funds.

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF global leadership for the education response to the COVID-19 pandemic was achieved through diverse partnerships at a scale unprecedented in its history. The World Health Organization (WHO) was the primary partner on health matters, and all the technical guidance on combating the spread of COVID-19 and protecting children was anchored in the growing evidence endorsed by WHO. UNICEF partnered with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank as the Global Education Coalition, to mount a coordinated global response which included commissioning a mapping of potential impacts of COVID-19 on education, developing resources such as the framework for reopening schools, and identifying strategic priorities for global thinking and national responses. Additionally, UNICEF worked with donor partners such as GPE, Education Cannot Wait, the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development and others to support country offices with emergency funding allocations.

**Service delivery:** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office supported the development of inclusive home-based learning materials and radio lessons for students and teachers; the distribution of workbooks, radios and other learning supplies through its in-country partners; the adaptation of the Safe School Reopening Framework to the South Sudan country context; and preparations for safe school reopening. The Country Office also led community mobilization efforts and awareness campaigns, encouraging children to return to school, and to follow recommended health and hygiene practices to prevent the spread of infection. A total of 7 million individuals (2.9 million female) were reached across South Sudan with life-saving messages via mass media, including partnering with over 40 radio stations, and by community engagement through house-to-house visits, street announcements and community meetings, including within pastoralist communities, while providing an opportunity for community feedback to promote positive social and behaviour change.

The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office realigned and repurposed ongoing programmes to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure continuity of services. It supported several measures to achieve continuity of health-care service delivery, including training 3,300 health-care and community workers in infection prevention and control measures; provision of medical personal protective equipment; and distribution of 560,000 face masks for vulnerable people.

UNICEF South Sudan supported the Ministry of Health to prepare for the introduction of a COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX). Also, the UNICEF COVID-19 response strategy embedded cash transfers for vulnerable households in line with the United Nations socioeconomic response plan for COVID-19. It also launched a WASH voucher project targeting vulnerable households, reaching 12,110 children, to access hygiene materials for COVID-19 prevention, while 661 children who were affected by floods and displacements benefited from unconditional cash transfers. Supporting the health-care needs of students, teachers and their community members had critical positive knock-on effects on the education system at large.

## 2.0 Purpose, objectives and scope

### 2.1. Purpose of the case study

The overall purpose of this case study is to provide in-depth analysis to build a robust evidence base for the global evaluation<sup>2</sup> and to derive lessons that can inform new programme activities by the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office. The case study also aims to inform necessary adjustments in the education strategic planning process and bring about alignment and coherence with any changes in national priorities and needs. This will help better position UNICEF to improve its performance in support of teaching and learning efforts in South Sudan.

### 2.2. Objectives of the case study

This case study follows the same three objectives as the global evaluation, namely:

- Objective 1: To examine the role of UNICEF in building the knowledge, research and global public goods required to mount an effective education response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Objective 2: To examine the extent to which UNICEF-supported strategies were deployed effectively to enhance government initiatives for continuity of learning during school closures and to reinstate safe and equitable in-school learning opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Objective 3: To examine the extent to which UNICEF Education teams used the existing frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools to mount an effective education response to COVID-19, and whether adjustments are being made to enhance preparedness for future disruptions of a similar scale.

### 2.3. Scope of the case study

The case study for the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office covers the period from March 2020 until the end of 2021, while its thematic focus is aligned with the three themes described in the objectives. Stakeholders included individuals and institutions who contributed to, collaborated with or supported UNICEF efforts in the education sector in South Sudan, including UNICEF South Sudan Country Office staff, and government and non-government local partners.

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<sup>2</sup> The global evaluation serves two main purposes: to enhance organizational learning and to strengthen organizational accountability. The evaluation is situated in the context of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and Every Child Learns: UNICEF Education Strategy 2019–2030. The implementation period for the education strategy began less than 12 months before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to an immediate and significant change of direction for UNICEF in much of its work to support children's learning. The three key change strategies (global partnerships and public goods, systems-strengthening, and service delivery) included in the theory of change for Goal Area 2 of the strategic plan remained relevant, however.

## 3.0 Case study approach and methodology

### 3.1. Case study approach and methods

This case study follows a methodological design consistent with the one used for the global evaluation, using the same evaluation questions and evaluation criteria for the data collection and data analysis processes. As in the associated global evaluation, this case study adopts a utilization-focused and participatory approach, involving key users throughout the evaluation.

Primary stakeholders from the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office were engaged in validating findings and recommendations. This design allowed stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the UNICEF contribution to improved teaching and learning, to increase learning, ownership and the likelihood of using evidence to inform future decisions. This section presents the questions guiding this case study (see Table 1) and a summary of the approach and methodology. A detailed description of the evaluation questions, approach and methodology deployed in the global evaluation is presented as Annex A.

Table 1. Questions guiding the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office case study

<b>Objective 1:</b> To examine the role of UNICEF in building the knowledge, research and global public goods required to mount an effective education response to the COVID-19 pandemic
1.1 What has been the role and contribution of UNICEF in building the data, knowledge and tools for understanding and addressing the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector?
1.2 To what extent have UNICEF Education teams worked across sectors coherently and efficiently to develop evidence-based solutions to address the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector?
1.3 To what extent has UNICEF mobilized and worked with external partners coherently and efficiently to develop evidence-based solutions to address the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector?
<b>Objective 2:</b> To examine the extent to which UNICEF-supported strategies were deployed effectively to enhance government initiatives for continuity of learning during school closures and to reinstate safe and equitable in-school learning opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic
2.1 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to promote home-based learning?
2.2 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance children's safety, well-being and protection during the reopening of schools?
2.3 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to reinstate in-school learning?
2.4 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to introduce reformed teaching, learning and assessment practices?
2.5 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported governments during the COVID-19 pandemic to target and reach different groups of marginalized children and adapt programmes to their learning needs?
2.6 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives to recover learning lost during the COVID-19 pandemic?
<b>Objective 3:</b> To examine the extent to which UNICEF Education teams used the existing frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools to mount an effective education response to COVID-19, and whether adjustments are being made to enhance preparedness for future disruptions of a similar scale
3.1 In what ways, and how successfully, did UNICEF Education teams deploy the existing education in emergencies (EiE) frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools in the education sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic?
3.2 In what ways, and how comprehensively, has UNICEF adapted the education in emergencies (EiE) frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools to prepare UNICEF education programmes in different contexts for future global public health emergencies?

A mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis was used. Eight remote interviews were conducted with key country informants between July and August 2022, including four UNICEF South Sudan Country Office staff, three government officials and one implementing partner representative from a civil society organization. Over 60 internal UNICEF South Sudan Country Office documents were also reviewed. Evidence was triangulated using information from a global online survey administered between September and October 2022 to contextualize the analysis.

The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office case study was one of seven case studies used to inform the global evaluation report, to compare which strategies, processes and activities worked well, why, how, for whom and in what type of geographical contexts, to tackle the type of problems that target groups faced. All country case studies were designed to leverage both contextual and institutional knowledge from within each of the countries. These studies produced comparative evidence and in-depth insights into strategies and activities adopted to respond to the COVID-19 crisis in diverse contexts. Although the country sample selection was designed to capture the diversity of countries where UNICEF works, it was not designed to be representative of all UNICEF education programmes, hence the discrete findings are not necessarily generalizable beyond the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office.

## 4.0 Case study findings and conclusions

### 4.1. Objective 1: Building the evidence and resource base for the education response to the COVID-19 pandemic

**Conclusion 1:** With support from UNICEF Headquarters and the UNICEF East and Southern Africa Regional Office, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office led efforts to gather evidence, as well as to leverage and coordinate inputs from in-country partners to support the Government of South Sudan to design a well-grounded education sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This response was coherent and cross-sectoral, further strengthening the relationship with government partners.

**Question 1.1: What has been the role and contribution of UNICEF in building the data, knowledge and tools for understanding and addressing the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector (within the case study country, plus any contributions to regional and global levels)?**

**Finding 1.1.1** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office contributed to the production of evidence and the development of guidelines and plans to address the negative effects of COVID-19 in the education sector by providing funding and technical support to the national education sector's COVID-19 response plan, with support from UNICEF Headquarters and the UNICEF East and Southern Africa Regional Office, and as co-lead of the Education Cluster for EiE.

The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office was the primary leading partner for the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) and the co-lead of the Education Cluster for EiE in South Sudan. UNICEF South Sudan played a critical role in building data, knowledge and tools for understanding and addressing the negative effects of the pandemic, as it is deeply embedded in multiple structures at the national and decentralized level involving government, donor, United Nations and non-governmental partners.

Due to South Sudan's context of fragility and protracted crisis, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office has played a critical role as co-lead of the Education Cluster to coordinate the EiE response in the country. During the COVID-19 pandemic response, the Country Office strengthened its support by sharing information, triangulating data, backstopping during critical periods and providing a critical eye to the products of the Education Cluster (e.g., assessment reports, evaluation tools, mass communication documents and training tools). These studies were critical to understand the effects of COVID-19 on the education sector, the roles of key actors, needs for the future and financial gaps.

Building on its education sector coordination responsibilities, its strong relationship with government and in-country partners, and global funding and resources to support the development of a pandemic response plan, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office made critical contributions at every stage to promote public awareness and safety. In addition, UNICEF South Sudan advocated for the continuation of learning at home and reinstating safe in-school learning from the onset of the pandemic through the stages of school closures to their reopening. The following are key UNICEF South Sudan Country Office contributions to the pandemic response:

- In early 2020, as part of the National Emergency Committee (NEC), UNICEF provided technical and strategic support to the MoGEI in the development and implementation of the Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan (ESC19RP), covering both immediate

response interventions as well as longer-term support that will build the resilience of children, communities, the education system and infrastructure that is critical for learning continuity.

- The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office and the UNICEF East and Southern Africa Regional Office organized and facilitated high-level meetings between the MoGEI and the Ministry of Health to advise on a coherent and multisectoral approach in the development of the ESC19R. Additionally, the Regional Office supported the Country Office to adapt UNICEF global material to the South Sudanese context.
- Following the development of the ESC19RP, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office acted as the grant agent for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Under the GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window, US\$7 million was distributed across country offices to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the education sector for the period July 2020 to November 2021.
- Clear and easy-to-understand guidelines, policies and Standard Operating Procedures for school closure and reopening were developed with the support and leadership of the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office. Primary examples were the School Reopening Plan and the Guidelines for Safe School Reopening, based on global UNICEF and UNESCO guidelines.

**Finding 1.1.2** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office used its vast network of community mobilizers and media partners to build knowledge and spread awareness regarding health and hygiene to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Through its evidence-based communication for development (C4D) programming via community mobilizers, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office reportedly reached more than 7.5 million people with life-saving messages, promoting demand for services and addressing harmful social norms in 2020. Hygiene promotion activities were accelerated in 2021, reaching almost 3 million people, exceeding the target by 30 per cent.

UNICEF South Sudan also promoted the importance of COVID-19 vaccination across the country via 30 radio networks, and activated all its partners to spread consistent and coherent hygiene-related information across schools and communities to decrease the spread of the virus and keep children protected.<sup>3</sup>

**Question 1.2: To what extent have UNICEF Education teams worked across sectors coherently and efficiently to develop evidence-based solutions to address the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector?**

**Finding 1.2.1** There were high levels of coherence in developing evidence-based solutions between the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office's Education, WASH and other teams during the school reopening phase after an initial period of fragmented work when schools first closed.

The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office worked with a high level of coherence during the school reopening phase, to ensure an effective multisectoral response. Several initiatives were launched to pool technical and financial resources across sectors to deliver safe, healthy and inclusive approaches to teaching and learning for school reopening. This resulted in guidance materials and programme design and monitoring tools being developed collaboratively by multiple teams,

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, South Sudan, 'Country Office Annual Report 2021: South Sudan', UNICEF, Juba, 2022.

most significantly the Safe School Reopening Guidelines and the GPE- and European Union-funded programme strategies and delivery.

Additionally, the coherent and efficient cross-sectoral work of the Education and WASH teams contributed to reductions in costs and increased effectiveness. For example, the joint large-scale assessment of WASH facilities in schools led to the service delivery initiative to install boreholes and gender-separate toilets in selected schools across the country. Other examples of effective collaboration between the Education and WASH teams include hygiene management in schools, the development of guidelines and plans for disinfecting all schools, the procurement and distribution of face masks, and strategies to synergize the re-establishment of hygiene clubs in schools.

Led by senior management, regular cross-sectoral meetings were held to ensure collaboration and coordination, more regularly at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, although with greater frequency at the start of the pandemic, meetings and working groups were set up on an ad hoc basis, resulting in fragmented solutions. Few response initiatives were successfully integrated into existing larger programming plans. Limited communication was reported with regional offices and headquarters that could have supported or guided more comprehensive cross-sectoral programming and planning.

**Question 1.3: To what extent has UNICEF mobilized and worked with external partners coherently and efficiently to develop evidence-based solutions to address the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector?**

**Finding 1.3.1** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office worked with the government to deliver coordinated, evidence-based and multisectoral solutions to address the negative effects of COVID-19 on the education sector, overcoming some collaboration challenges that existed prior to the pandemic.

As the primary partner for the MoGEI for response planning, implementation and coordination, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office played a prominent role in two key government-led task forces: (1) the COVID-19 National Task Force, headed by the Vice-President and responsible for planning and overseeing the nationwide response to COVID-19 in all sectors; and (2) the NEC for the ESC19R, chaired by the Undersecretary of the MoGEI.<sup>4</sup>

The NEC was tasked with monitoring the closure of schools across the country; proposing ways to support learning during closures; coordinating the actions of partners of the MoGEI's response to COVID-19; and mobilizing teachers to combat the pandemic in their communities. Under the NEC, the MoGEI created several technical working groups to develop resources, plan and coordinate the response plan activities. The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office participated in the Distance Learning and School Reopening working groups.

UNICEF South Sudan also played a key role as part of existing EiE structures. UNICEF co-led the South Sudan Education Cluster, with the mandate to strengthen the response to emergencies and ensure clear leadership and accountability. The Education Cluster comprises 46 partners, including all the key donors, United Nations organizations, the MoGEI, and national and

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<sup>4</sup> The primary focus areas of the ESC19RP were to prevent the spread of the disease, to restore access to safe learning opportunities, psychosocial support, WASH in schools and other life-saving and protection interventions, and to create awareness on COVID-19 among both learners and teachers. The ESC19RP also served as a guiding strategy document for all actors and interventions in the education section from the beginning of 2020 to the end of 2021.

international non-governmental organizations. It is an essential national structure in South Sudan, which has been experiencing protracted crises since its independence in 2013. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Education Cluster played a key role in the decentralized implementation of initiatives and dissemination of information. UNICEF was also the Grant Agent on behalf of the MoGEI for GPE COVID-19 funding, and a member of the Local Education Group that provided strategic direction to GPE COVID-19 programming.

**Finding 1.3.2** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office coherently mobilized and worked with new external partners to develop evidence-based solutions for distance learning via radio that added technical complementarity and broader reach to the implementation capacity on the ground.

The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office mobilized and worked coherently with the Africa Education Trust (AET) to enhance the quality and reach of the most significant distance learning initiative, the radio-based Education on Air. Considered a 'non-traditional' UNICEF and MoGEI partner, this renewed partnership was established in August 2020 to develop high-quality distance learning solutions while schools were closed.

Under this partnership, the quality of existing lessons, training methods and outreach strategies were reviewed. The review found that the original lessons were information heavy, with difficult language, not engaging for children, and not properly aligned with the new curriculum in terms of the content and methodology. AET, in partnership with the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office and the MoGEI, put a much clearer focus on the national curriculum and aligned it with its learning outcomes. It also developed a new scope and sequence of lessons aligned with the new curriculum for the different grades and subjects, through weekly editorial sessions with the script writers to develop and practise the lessons before they went on air. In addition, it developed guidance on how to engage learners with songs, games and the use of common objects. Teachers were also trained to deliver the revised radio lessons.

To improve the quality of Education on Air, AET worked closely with the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office and the MoGEI to ensure cohesion, bringing together key technical partners to ensure the success of the intervention, from the design to the implementation stages. The intervention benefited from a vast network of UNICEF South Sudan's internal and implementing partners' capacity. This network included stakeholders at central and decentralized levels, critical to identify high-quality teachers and bring together various actors from all over the country to deliver the programme.

To expand access to radio-based education during the lockdown in 2020, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office established new partnerships with media companies such as the South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation (SSBC), Radio Miraya, Zain and MTN. These partnerships were repurposed to support COVID-19 education needs. For example, Radio Miraya, the United Nations radio station in South Sudan, used primarily for broadcasting national current events and news programmes prior to the pandemic, represents a good example of increased cooperation between United Nations agencies.<sup>5</sup> This collaboration resulted in government school lessons being delivered via Radio Miraya to ensure greater reach across the country. The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office's Education team played the role of focal point for establishing and maintaining these partnerships and ensuring alignment in delivering programmes across different radio stations and media.

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<sup>5</sup> Radio Miraya is owned and run by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

**Finding 1.3.3** Delays in contracting AET and a lack of clarity around complex UNICEF reporting requirements prevented the process to develop evidence-based solutions for the radio-based education programme from running more efficiently.

There was an urgent need to improve the existing Education on Air initiative and roll out high-quality lessons to facilitate home-based learning as soon as schools closed in March 2020. The emergency context of the pandemic required the rapid mobilization of a technical partner to revise and roll out the new programme as soon as possible. Contracting requirements and long processing periods delayed the production of lessons, resulting in children receiving low-quality learning, not aligned with the new curriculum, for over six months.

#### **4.2. Objective 2: Reopening schools and reinstating face-to-face learning**

**Conclusion 2:** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office successfully secured funding, technical assistance and service delivery support for home-based learning during school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the underdeveloped infrastructure limited the possibility of offering more home-based learning options and reaching the most vulnerable children.

**Conclusion 3:** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office was highly successful in advocating for and coordinating with its vast network of education sector implementing partners to support the MoGEI's efforts to reinstate in-school learning. However, despite open intentions to be inclusive, limited evidence was found that confirmed school returns or the assessment of learning losses among vulnerable girls and children with disabilities.

**Question 2.1: In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to promote home-based learning?**

**Finding 2.1.1** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office provided essential funding, technical assistance and service delivery support to the MoGEI's Education on Air initiative to promote home-based learning via radio during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the impact of these lessons on children's learning outcomes is unknown.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, children in South Sudan faced limited access to learning. When schools closed, children also faced the widespread lack of parental support and guidance necessary to continue home-based learning, seriously undermining growth in knowledge, skills and attitudes. Additionally, limited options for online learning and low-tech assisted learning opportunities in the country deprived children of constructive engagement at home.

The main home-based learning initiative offered by the MoGEI was Education on Air, delivered via radio. The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office supported the government to secure funding from various donors, and ensured that high-quality radio lessons were developed through a technical partner (AET). Efforts also included identifying and training teachers,<sup>6</sup> and ensuring the engagement of media organizations<sup>7</sup> and the commitment of radio stations servicing hard-to-reach areas. UNICEF South Sudan also supported the MoGEI to print or procure and distribute

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6 As part of these efforts, 40 teachers (nine female and 31 male teachers) were trained on radio lesson preparation and how to deliver live radio broadcasts, which resulted in the production of 460 radio lessons for all subjects and grades. The teachers were drawn from all levels of basic education, including 3 early childhood development, 19 primary and 18 secondary teachers. UNICEF was also responsible for providing logistical support for the teachers during a nation-wide lockdown so that they could be trained safely

7 Partnerships with four media organizations were established to increase the reach of the radio lessons. 32,000 radios were also provided by UNICEF for children without access to technology.

learning supplies such as exercise books, pens, pencils and old curriculum textbooks to complement radio-based learning, which reached 921,935 children and young people.

Although low-tech solutions, such as radio broadcasts used during the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, have been shown to have some impact on sustaining a connection with learning, they are less likely to compensate for the loss of access to schools or teachers. Limited evidence was found on the effectiveness of the Education on Air programme at the time of the evaluation.

**Question 2.2: In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance children’s safety, well-being and protection during the reopening of schools?**

**Finding 2.2.1** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office was instrumental in supporting the MoGEI in strengthening WASH initiatives in schools by adapting evidence-based global guidelines and funding to ensure children’s safety, well-being and protection to prepare for the reopening of schools.

Based on the global framework developed by UNICEF and UNESCO, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office supported the MoGEI with the development of Safe School Reopening Guidelines and Safe School Operations Guidelines, and associated planning and monitoring. The guidelines focused on bringing children back to school and also covered provisions for tailored services to meet their learning, health, psychosocial and other well-being needs. Alongside these, Standard Operating Procedures on COVID-19 infection prevention for schools were also published by the MoGEI with support from the UNICEF South Sudan Education, WASH and Health teams.

UNICEF South Sudan Education and WASH teams also undertook a joint assessment of existing WASH facilities to assess the needs of schools. This assessment informed and mobilized critical funding to support the implementation of these guidelines for the building of WASH facilities. Additionally, it informed of the need to provide protective equipment in targeted schools, as well as materials and contractor services for undertaking WASH construction.

The joint assessment also informed the planning of gender-separate toilets in 20 schools, and boreholes in 87 schools were constructed between 2020 and 2021, surpassing the target of 80 schools during the planning stage. An additional 192 boreholes were rehabilitated, reaching a total of 43,500 students with safe drinking-water and sanitation facilities. UNICEF was instrumental in sourcing more affordable costs of borehole drilling by establishing long-term agreements with borehole drilling companies, while seven additional companies were contracted by the MoGEI.

Prior to schools reopening, UNICEF South Sudan Country Office implementing partners provided support to disinfect schools across the country. Since the reopening in May 2021, the Country Office has procured and distributed WASH supplies, including 20,000 buckets with taps, 5,468 hand-washing stations, cartons of soap, 20-litre containers for carrying water, 2,000 thermometers and 1,735,000 reusable face masks, for all children and teaching staff in over 6,000 schools. In addition, to monitor and sustain good WASH practices, hygiene clubs were re-established, and training was provided to children in schools to help the school administration ensure school facilities are maintained and clean.

**Question 2.3: In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to reinstate in-school learning?**

**Finding 2.3.1** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office's advocacy and awareness-raising efforts were designed to create an enabling environment for the government to reinstate in-school learning.

Using emerging evidence that children contracted COVID-19 at relatively lower rates than adults, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office advocated and drove consensus among all key partners in the COVID-19 National Task Force<sup>8</sup> to secure the safe reopening of schools. A partial and phased reopening of schools was completed eight months after schools were closed. UNICEF South Sudan rolled out an extensive awareness-raising campaign to encourage partners, children and teachers to return to school.

UNICEF South Sudan used mass media to raise concerns about the potential learning losses and the developmental and well-being risks inherent in prolonged school closures, and to build confidence and support for safe school reopening. It disseminated key messages, released national and local-level press reports, and made statements on national and community-based media platforms.

**Finding 2.3.2** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office supported the government to reinstate in-school learning through strategic planning and by streamlining the delivery of critical services such as textbooks and hygiene kits.

As a technical partner to the MoGEI, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office provided strategic advice in planning for reinstating in-school learning. First, the Country Office worked with the MoGEI to adjust the school calendar from January–December to May–March. Second, lessons were delivered in shifts to adhere to physical distancing requirements that were instituted to prevent overcrowding in classrooms. Third, UNICEF mobilized the Curriculum Foundation as a technical partner to revise and condense the curriculum for the non-examination grades that would be receiving fewer months of instruction.

Additionally, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office supplied printed textbooks for the new curriculum even when schools were closed. This activity started prior to the pandemic, although in limited quantities, with most children having to share textbooks. To avoid any delays in the availability of new school textbooks when schools reopened, UNICEF South Sudan printed and distributed 1.9 million textbooks during this period.

Another significant service delivery initiative supported by GPE funding was menstrual hygiene management. In 2021, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office worked with partners to strengthen the enabling environment for girls' return to school. They provided menstrual hygiene kits, supported female role models and established girls' clubs. A total of 158,943 menstrual hygiene kits were distributed to support the health, re-enrolment and regular attendance of 136,171 adolescent girls. Hygiene clubs and hygiene kits had been funded separately by different donor programmes prior to COVID-19. In 2021, UNICEF South Sudan coordinated and streamlined these donor funds, to ensure alignment and efficiency in supporting the government's efforts to re-instate in-school learning.

**Question 2.4: In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to introduce reformed teaching, learning and assessment practices?**

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<sup>8</sup> Headed by the Vice-President, the COVID-19 National Task Force was responsible for providing strategic leadership and advice on COVID-19, planning and overseeing the nationwide response to COVID-19 across all sectors. Its membership comprised officials from government departments and development partners.

**Finding 2.4.1** There is limited evidence that reformed practices were introduced to address the negative effects of the pandemic, outside regular, planned teacher professional development and training programming.

According to the 2020 UNICEF South Sudan Country Office Annual Report, 3,053 teachers (586 female) completed a UNICEF-supported in-service continuous professional development programme. An additional 8,790 teachers (2,637 female) were trained on basic pedagogy and learner methodologies. There is no evidence of pre-service and in-service teacher training methods being revised with regards to the particular teaching pedagogies and assessment methods needed to cope with the unique conditions due to the pandemic.

**Question 2.5: In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported governments during the COVID-19 pandemic to target and reach different groups of marginalized children and adapt programmes to their learning needs?**

**Finding 2.5.1** Despite clear intentions to be inclusive, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office's COVID-19 education response had significant gaps in reaching and addressing the needs of different marginalized children, largely due to limitations of underdeveloped infrastructure in the country.

Planning and strategy documents show a clear intention to be inclusive in UNICEF South Sudan Country Office and government COVID-19 response initiatives. For example, the MoGEI guidelines for school reopening states that there must be proactive registration of and continued learning for pregnant and nursing learners without any discrimination. Also, there were instructions for the immediate enrolment of children with learning and functional disabilities. However, no data are available on the enrolment of pregnant learners or children with disabilities to indicate whether these guidelines were implemented effectively to ensure that vulnerable children did not drop out.

Due to the extremely underdeveloped infrastructure in South Sudan, radio was the only viable way to deliver distance learning. Even so, radio networks do not exist across the entire country. This meant that children in parts of the country were completely isolated from any distance learning opportunities. Other distance learning methods were even less successful in reaching the most marginalized children. In 2021, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office identified the urgent need to improve the approach to reach the most vulnerable – specifically, pastoralist communities, children with disabilities, children in hard-to-reach areas, and girls at risk of child marriage.

**Question 2.6: In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives to recover learning lost during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

**Finding 2.6.1** There is little or no evidence of UNICEF support to government initiatives to recover learning lost during the pandemic.

During the time scope of this evaluation, no assessment was undertaken to measure the learning losses of children in South Sudan. There is also little information available on targeted remedial or catch-up activities being implemented. The only positive practice reported in 2021 was the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office's continuation of the radio distance learning programme, to complement the ongoing formal provision of education in schools. It is hoped that this blended form of learning will provide additional support to children to combat the inevitable learning losses and continue to reach out-of-school children.

### 4.3. Objective 3: UNICEF preparedness frameworks and readiness to handle similar future crises

**Conclusion 4:** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office leveraged its presence in the field, its established EiE programme and capacity, and its role as the Education Cluster co-lead for emergency response programming to support the government's response to COVID-19 in the areas of strategic planning, monitoring protocols and mainstreaming, service delivery and systems-strengthening. However, little evidence was found of preparation or adjustments to revise preparedness plans for future emergencies of the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Question 3.1: In what ways, and how successfully, did UNICEF Education teams deploy the existing EiE frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools in the education sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic?**

**Finding 3.1.1** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office deployed existing EiE frameworks, infrastructure, capacity and tools to provide systems-strengthening support in the education sector response to COVID-19, leveraging its established role as the Education Cluster co-lead for emergency response programming.

The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office had a large humanitarian operation in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with two main priorities within the Education team: EiE and systems-strengthening. In South Sudan, the humanitarian response covers the entire country (10 states and the 3 administrative areas), with the Country Office working within a context of protracted crisis, due to violent conflict erupting periodically since 2013.

The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office's established EiE operation was extremely beneficial in supporting the government's COVID-19 response. Regular EiE programming activities entail the delivery of strategic education interventions to an average of over 500,000 girls and boys annually through a network of non-governmental organizations and in partnership with state and county education authorities. These interventions range from early childhood education to secondary level. In addition, UNICEF South Sudan's EiE team supports basic education in formal learning spaces, increasingly championing non-formal education for children in pastoralist communities (especially in cattle camps).<sup>9</sup>

Through its existing EiE structures, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office continued to deliver education services in the humanitarian sector during the pandemic, providing EiE services and supplies to 948,428 children (435,121 girls) in humanitarian situations in conflict-affected areas in 2021. In addition, it trained 3,245 teachers (617 women) on conflict-sensitive, learner-centred pedagogy. A total of 64,208 individuals (20,587 girls, 21,730 boys and 11,376 women) living in high-risk mine areas were reached with crucial life-saving explosive ordnance risk education.

As co-lead of the Education Cluster, with Save the Children, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office ensured alignment to avoid duplication. The Education Cluster was the key EiE sector coordination mechanism that engaged with all the humanitarian partners, working with the government to design plans for distance learning, COVID-19 prevention in schools and community awareness. UNICEF South Sudan supported the efficient mobilization of funds, collaborative and consultative response planning, and synergized delivery of services through all

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office has supported the MoGEI to develop accelerated curricula, tools and methodologies, leveraged partnerships with other organizations such as UNESCO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and rolled out alternative learning programmes that have enabled young people to access formal education and skills courses.

the phases of the pandemic. In addition, to sustain these efforts and build the capacity of the government, UNICEF trained 91 MoGEI officials on sector coordination in 2020.

**Finding 3.1.2** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office deployed existing EiE frameworks, infrastructure, capacity and tools to provide service delivery support, as well as monitoring of response plans, protocols and guidelines to inform the education sector's response to COVID-19.

Overall, the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office quickly adapted existing EiE frameworks and tools to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also supported the Ministry of Health's efforts to repurpose 2019 Ebola protocols to respond to COVID-19. Its leadership in supporting risk communication, social mobilization and community engagement efforts, as well as WASH/infection prevention and control, contributed to the development of the MoGEI's COVID-19 response plan.

The decentralized infrastructure of UNICEF in South Sudan proved to be extremely useful during the pandemic for distributing learning materials when schools were closed. This infrastructure includes 10 UNICEF EiE field offices, subnational structures and 42 Education Cluster partner organizations, as well as the capacity to manage emergency supplies. The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office had managed the core pipeline of education supplies for EiE and stored emergency supplies in warehouses even prior to the pandemic. It used its capacity to procure locally and internationally, and to efficiently distribute supplies, including learning kits, recreation kits, dignity kits and WASH materials, to schools in a timely manner, enabling millions of schoolchildren to access and enjoy learning in relatively safe environments.

Existing EiE frameworks and tools such as the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the Humanitarian Needs Overview provided the background information for the HRP and helped understand the needs of children in an emergency context, to plan for the response. Additionally, the monitoring and reporting 5W ('Who, What, Where, When and for Whom') tool was used to capture critical information from all cluster actors, reporting on what they were doing, including on new initiatives and those that had been expanded.

## 5.0 Lessons learned and possible follow-up actions

**Lesson 1:** The UNICEF South Sudan Country Office should continue exploring different options to expand learning opportunities to support the government's EiE efforts, using existing EiE resources and capacity but also developing low-technology remedial options for marginalized children, including children with disabilities and out-of-school children, given the country's infrastructure limitations.

Expanding the range of learning tools will allow UNICEF South Sudan to support the government to respond to global emergencies similar to the COVID-19 pandemic, and continue supporting children living in areas experiencing protracted crises. Possible activities include the following:

- Learning from the experience of delivering home-based learning initiatives in all 10 states of South Sudan during the COVID-19 pandemic, expand the options of distance learning materials and tools, particularly non- or low-technology (printed materials, radio and SMS), but also high-technology (television, online, smartphones) solutions.
- Build the capacity of government personnel and structures to develop distance learning content and resources for ongoing EiE initiatives and future crises, with greater focus on targeting vulnerable children, such as girls, children with disabilities, and out-of-school children in need of non-formal education opportunities.

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# Annex A: Evaluation questions, approach, and methodology

## A.1. Evaluation questions

**Objective 1:** To examine the role of UNICEF in building the knowledge, research, and global public goods required to mount an effective education response to the COVID-19 pandemic

**Theme 1:** Building the evidence and resource base for the education response to the COVID-19 pandemic

**OECD-DAC criteria:** coherence and efficiency

### ToR Evaluation Questions

1.1 What is the role and contribution of UNICEF in building the knowledge and tools for combating COVID-19 in the education sector?

1.2 To what extent did UNICEF Education teams work coherently and efficiently across different sectors to develop evidence-based education solutions to combat COVID-19 disruptions?

1.3 To what extent did UNICEF mobilize and work coherently and efficiently with external partners to develop evidence-based education solutions to combat COVID-19 disruptions?

### Final Evaluation Questions

1.1 What has been the role and contribution of UNICEF in building the data, knowledge and tools for understanding and addressing the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector?

1.2 To what extent have UNICEF Education teams worked across sectors coherently and efficiently to develop evidence-based solutions to address the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector?

1.3 To what extent has UNICEF mobilized and worked with external partners coherently and efficiently to develop evidence-based solutions to address the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector?

**Objective 2:** To examine the extent to which UNICEF-supported strategies were deployed effectively to enhance government initiatives for continuity of learning during school closures and to reinstate safe and equitable in-school learning opportunities during in the COVID-19 pandemic

**Theme 2:** Reopening schools and reinstating face-to-face learning

**OECD-DAC criteria:** relevance and effectiveness

### ToR Evaluation Questions

2.1 How successful were UNICEF-supported education strategies to promote home-based learning and to address the needs of children in a range of contexts?

2.2 How successful were UNICEF-supported education strategies in enhancing children's safety and protection during re-opening of schools?

2.3 How successful were UNICEF-supported education strategies in reinstating in-school learning and reforming teaching, learning and assessment practices in the context of COVID-19?

### Final Evaluation Questions

2.1 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to promote home-based learning?

2.2 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance children's safety, wellbeing and protection during the re-opening of schools?

2.3 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to reinstate in-school learning?

2.4 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to introduce reformed teaching, learning and assessment practices?

2.4 How successful were UNICEF-supported strategies in targeting and reaching the different groups of marginalized children and tailoring programmes to their learning needs?

2.5 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported governments during the COVID-19 pandemic to target and reach different groups of marginalized children and adapt programmes to their learning needs?

2.5 What are the key defining characteristics of countries schools that were successful in keep schools open and recovering lost learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2.6 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives to recover learning lost during the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Objective 3:** To examine the extent to which UNICEF Education teams utilized the existing frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools to mount an effective education response to COVID-19, and whether adjustments are being made to enhance preparedness for future disruptions of a similar scale

**Theme 3:** UNICEF preparedness frameworks, readiness to handle similar future crises

**OECD-DAC criteria:** relevance and effectiveness

### ToR Evaluation Questions

3.1 How successful were Education teams in deploying the existing EIE infrastructure, capacities and tools in the education sector response to COVID-19?

3.2 Are the necessary adjustments being made to the education in emergency frameworks, infrastructure, capacities, and tools to prepare UNICEF education programmes in different contexts for future global public health emergencies?

### Final Evaluation Questions

3.1 In what ways, and how successfully, did UNICEF Education teams deploy the existing education-in-emergency (EIE) frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools in the education sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

3.2 In what ways, and how comprehensively, has UNICEF adapted the education-in-emergency (EIE) frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools to prepare UNICEF education programmes in different contexts for future global public health emergencies?

The evaluation assessed against the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and coherence. Each of these is defined below:

- **Relevance:** assess whether the intervention did the right things. It is the extent to which the intervention objectives and design responded to beneficiaries' global, country and partner/institution needs, policies and priorities, and continued to do so as circumstances changed.
- **Efficiency:** how well the resources were used. It is the extent to which the intervention delivered results in an economic and timely way. This evaluation only focused on timeliness.
- **Effectiveness:** extent to which the intervention achieved its objectives and results, including any differential results across groups.
- **Coherence:** compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution and the extent to which other interventions supported or undermined the intervention. Internal coherence addressed the synergies and interlinkages between the intervention and other interventions carried out by UNICEF, as well as the consistency of the intervention with the relevant international norms and standards to which UNICEF adhered. External coherence considered the consistency of the intervention with other actors' interventions in the same context. This included complementarity, harmonisation and co-ordination with others, and the extent to which the intervention added value while avoiding duplication of effort.

## A.2. Evaluation approach

The evaluation used a utilisation-focused and participatory approach, involving key users throughout the evaluation. In particular, primary stakeholders were engaged in validating the findings and recommendations. This approach allowed stakeholders to gain a better understanding of UNICEF contribution to improved teaching and learning thereby increasing ownership and the probability of using the evaluation findings and recommendations to inform their future decisions.

The evaluation adopted a theory-based design, combined with comparative case studies. It was non-experimental and used mixed methods. With an overarching theory-based evaluation design the evaluation predominantly used qualitative research to assess the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, and efficiency of UNICEF COVID response in the education sector.

Using case studies, via selection of specific countries as cases, we were able to compare and contrast which types of strategies, and activities worked well, why, how, for whom, in what type of geographical contexts and in tackling the type of problems that target groups faced. By developing country-based case studies, the evaluation was able to obtain in-depth insights into strategies and activities adopted for responding to the COVID crisis in “natural real-life [and diverse] contexts”. Country-based case studies were designed to leverage both contextual and institutional knowledge from within each of the countries. The case studies provided in-depth analyses of each country and helped to understand the extent to which interventions were aligned to needs of target groups, and the effects of the support, under specific conditions.

The evaluation developed seven unique case studies, using specifically designed selection criteria. In selecting the countries, the evaluation used “literal replication” as a method of case selection which means that the same type of results was predicted for each of the cases, although using diverse interventions in differing contexts. The case study countries varied in terms of contexts, barriers, interventions, structures and geographical location. Variation along

these dimensions provided the greatest coverage and best chance of identifying patterns of difference or similarity, in terms of the extent to which UNICEF strategies and interventions were effective and contributed to delivering results. Due to the low number of case studies conducted, as compared to the scale of the COVID response globally, it is unlikely that the findings can be generalized more broadly. For this reason, they were supplemented by data collected via online survey, desk review, interviews, and analysis of secondary data to incorporate evidence from around the globe.

Whilst each of the geographic case studies differed in terms of context and partners, they enabled similar themes to be explored across the selected contexts. This means the case studies had both geographic and thematic focus. Efforts were made to select themes that allowed a specific topic to be explored in more depth across number of contexts. While geographic case studies functioned as stand-alone studies for each country, the thematic aspects focused on a topic, which enabled analysis and comparison across countries.

#### **A.2.1. Case study countries sampling selection**

The sample selection design for the seven country case studies is presented in table A.1, using three essential and nine additional criteria. The specific characteristics for each of the select seven countries is presented in table A.2. The selected case studies provided a broad and diverse profile of countries where UNICEF works on education programming.

**Table A1: Case study country selection criteria**

<b>Country Selection Criteria</b>	<b>Assessment Method</b>	<b>Sources</b>
<b>Essential criteria</b>		
Availability and interest of UNICEF CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High: high interest and availability to take an active part sharing secondary documentation and identifying and engaging stakeholders for all primary data collection methods: include in sample</li> <li>- Medium: moderate interest and availability to take part sharing secondary documentation and identifying and engaging stakeholders for partial primary data collection methods: include in sample</li> <li>- Low: no indication of interest nor availability to spend time on either document sharing or stakeholder engagement or both: exclude from sample</li> </ul>	Consultation with UNICEF HQ Education team and Reference Group Follow-up consultation with UNICEF country office
Availability of quality data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (include in sample)</li> <li>- No (exclude from sample)</li> </ul>	Consultation with UNICEF HQ and country offices
Within the top 20 countries in UNICEF expenditure on education programming in 2020 and/or 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (include in sample)</li> <li>- No (exclude from sample)</li> </ul>	Global Annual Results Report – Goal Area 2 for 2020 and 2019
<b>Additional criteria</b>		
Country within a UNICEF regional classification	Countries from a diverse range of UNICEF regions but not necessarily all	UNICEF website
Economic status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- low income</li> <li>- lower-middle income</li> <li>- higher-middle income</li> </ul>	World Bank classification on website
Population size	Diverse range of countries from large to small population sizes	World Bank data from 2020
Fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (eligible for inclusion)</li> <li>- No (eligible for inclusion)</li> </ul>	World Bank classification on website
GPE funded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (eligible for inclusion)</li> <li>- No (eligible for inclusion)</li> </ul>	GPE website
Progress towards SDG 4.1.1 (b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (eligible for inclusion)</li> <li>- No (eligible for inclusion)</li> </ul>	Most recent UIS data
UNICEF spending on education programming in country (in millions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (eligible for inclusion)</li> <li>- No (eligible for inclusion)</li> </ul>	UNICEF 2020 Annual Results Report
Human Development Index Ranking (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (eligible for inclusion)</li> <li>- No (eligible for inclusion)</li> </ul>	UNDP website
Information on school closure and reopening durations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (eligible for inclusion)</li> <li>- No (eligible for inclusion)</li> </ul>	COVID-19 Global Education Recovery Tracker

**Table A2: Selected case study countries**

Country	Compulsory criteria			Additional criteria								
	Inter est	Data qual.	Top 20 expendi ture.	RO	Econ. status	Pop. size (2020 millions)	FCAS	GPE funded	Progress SDG 4.1.1(b)	Educ spending (in mill.)	HDI ranking	School closure source:
Bangladesh	TBC	TBC	Y	SA	lower-middle	164	N	Y	Maths: 47.3%, Reading: 52.6%	43	133	all schools closed on March 18, 2019 Hybrid model began for all grades except pre-primary in November 2021 Current status unknown
Jordan	Y	Y	Y	MEN A	upper-middle	29	Y	Y	Maths: N/A, Reading: N/A	27	102	Frequent school closures and reopening in 2021. No data after Sep 2021
Lebanon	TBC	TBC	Y	MEN A	upper-middle	6	Y	N	Maths: 26.8 %, Reading: N/A	172	92	No data for 2019 or 2020 Feb - March 2021 school closure April - Jun 2021 hybrid Jun - Nov 2021 open
Nigeria	TBC	TBC	Y	WCA	lower-middle	206	Y	Y	Maths: N/A, Reading: N/A	43	161	Feb - Aug 2021 hybrid Sep - Oct 2021 closed Nov 2021 Hybrid
South Sudan	TBC	TBC	Y	ESA	low	11	Y	Y	Maths: N/A, Reading: N/A	31	185	Feb - May 2021 hybrid Jun - Nov 2021 open
Mongolia	Y	Y	N	EAP	lower-middle	3.27	N	Y	Maths: N/A Reading: N/A	tbc	99	Apr - Aug 2021 closed Sep 2021 – Jan 2022 hybrid Feb 2022 Open
Venezuela	TBC	TBC	Y	LAC	upper-middle	28.00	N	N	Maths: N/A, Reading: N/A	14	113	Mar – Sep 2021 remote Nov – Dec 2021 open Dec – Jan 22 closed Jan – Feb 22 open

### A.3. Data collection methods and sampling

This evaluation used a mixed-method approach to address the evaluation questions. Both primary and secondary data were collected to address the evaluation questions.

**Primary data collection** included individual and group interviews as well as an online survey. Interviews were carried out with UNICEF staff and key informants from strategic partners at the regional and global levels (69 key informant interviews conducted July–October 2022). The online survey was used to gather data from UNICEF Chiefs of Education from UNICEF country offices (74 country offices responded to the survey, which was conducted September–October 2022, signaling a 56 per cent response rate). A sample of seven countries was selected for in-depth data collection and in-depth comparative analyses: Bangladesh, Jordan, Lebanon, Mongolia, Nigeria, South Sudan and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**Secondary data collection** included a desk review of relevant documentation and data sets from all levels at which UNICEF operates (global, regional and country) and, in particular, from the seven countries selected from in-depth analyses. A total of 338 documents were reviewed, 52 per cent of which were country-level documents, with regional-level documents (related to all seven regions where UNICEF works) and global-level documents accounting for 20 per cent each.

#### A.3.1 Primary data collection

Primary data collection for the global evaluation was conducted between end July to beginning October 2022. Primary data collection was used to follow up specific areas of enquiry identified through the analysis of the secondary data and documentation. The list of key informants interviewed for this case study are listed in table A3. Interviews were conducted between July 27 and August 22, 2022.

**Table A3: List of key informants, South Sudan case study**

Organisation / institution	Key Respondent Information	
	Position	Name
UNICEF CO	Chief of Education	Wongani Grace Taulo
UNICEF CO	Education Specialist	Paulino Kenyi Kamba
UNICEF CO	Education in Emergency Specialist	Muhammad Riaz
UNICEF CO	WASH Specialist	Rose Tawil
Ministry of General Education and Instruction	Director General of Basic Edu	David Lowela
Ministry of General Education and Instruction	Director General Planning	George Mogga
Ministry of General Education and Instruction	Director General Gender	Ester Akumu
African Education Trust	Program Coordinator for South Sudan	Jonathan Coxall

A global online survey was administered for completion by UNICEF Chiefs of Education from across UNICEF network of country offices. These were particularly valuable for certain evaluation questions that required information from many country contexts to be adequately addressed. This included evaluation questions related to, for example, interventions deployed for home-based learning, recovering learning lost during the COVID-19 pandemic and where

Education teams deployed the existing EIE infrastructure, capacities, and tools in the education sector response to COVID-19.

### A.3.2. Secondary data collection

The secondary data was collected predominantly from online sources (organization websites and online libraries) that were authentic and verifiable. Two members of the evaluation team had access to the UNICEF intranet and scanned the database for any relevant documentation that may not have been in the public domain. The evaluation team also made direct requests to people within UNICEF and key stakeholder organizations to share relevant documentation and data sets. UNICEF Education Team also compiled a set of relevant data and documentation for review. The list of secondary data sources is included in table A4.

**Table A4: Secondary data sources**

Level	Source
Global & Regional	UNICEF publications – strategies, reports, case studies, evaluations, and data sets UNICEF internal monitoring data sets Publications and data sets from technical and delivery partners such as UNESCO, UIS, WHO etc. Publications, webinars, and data sets from global initiatives UNICEF is a part of such as the Global Education Coalition, and GEC Publications and data sets from donors such as World Bank, GPE, ECW, FCDO etc.
Country	In addition to the above sources that may have had information on the seven target case study countries, secondary data was also collected from the following sources: Government documents, publications, and data sets in the public domain Publications and data sets from UNICEF in-country partners such as NGOs/ INGOs, other Donors and UN agencies and the private sector

The following criteria was applied to the process of collecting documents:

- Documents in English, French or Spanish
- Documents and data sets published between March 2020 and December 2021
- Documents with the focus on UNICEF Goal Area 2 – education teaching and learning

### A.4. Data analysis

As the primary and secondary data analyses were undertaken, the evaluation team generated a set of robust evaluation statements that answered each evaluation question based on the evidence collected. These statements were tested, elaborated on, and refined through an iterative process as the analysis progressed. The statements also included assessments of the quality of the evidence base. Once the data analysis was completed in full, the evaluation statements were developed into evaluation narratives that provided nuanced answers to each evaluation question. These narratives also included assessments of the overall strength of evidence available for each evaluation question.

The analytical framework used to guide the analysis process was based on the evaluation questions. The methods of analysis included:

- Thematic analysis: A coding framework based on the evaluation questions was developed and data collected from the document review, interviews, group interviews and survey were coded and analysed. Developing and using a coding framework helped to ensure consistency across the Evaluation Team, therefore providing greater reliability of results.

- The evaluation team used Dedoose, an online and cross-platform app for analysing qualitative data, whether text-based or other data including photos, audio, and videos. All qualitative data collected was uploaded on Dedoose and entire documents or sections were tagged as per pre-defined categorisations linked to the evaluation questions. This allowed for real time collaboration within the evaluation team. It also helped to identify where gaps existed in evidence. It was used directly to write the evaluation report and maintain proximity to the evidence base as evaluation questions were addressed.
- Triangulation, using multiple data sources, was used to corroborate findings and deepen understanding to construct a rich, rigorous, and comprehensive account against the evaluation questions being addressed. In addition, triangulation was used to check for consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods.

### A.5. Ethical considerations

The evaluation adheres to the required international norms and standards for evaluations. These include the 'UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation' (as updated by the United Nations Evaluation Group in June 2020), which encompass four guiding principles: integrity, accountability, respect and beneficence. The required norms and standards also include the 2021 'UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis'.<sup>7</sup> The following were ethical considerations guiding the evaluation:

- Respect for the command and operational capability - remained committed to respect the terms of reference; the additional instructions made at the start of the mission as well as advice received during the performance of the contract.
- Confidentiality: Beyond the transparency that was required in all participatory processes of consultation and communication of results with all stakeholders, the confidentiality of strategic, technical and financial data collected was secured.
- Close collaboration and communication: A highly participatory approach was critical to the success of this evaluation. Regular remote communication via email and the Microsoft Teams platform was scheduled, with the team of external consultants who worked under the supervision of the Evaluation Office evaluation manager.
- Efficient and dynamic management: Among the team of external consultants, the evaluation education experts were attentive to establishing a precise and rigorous management framework, together with a flexible timetable.
- Ethical behaviour: The team of external consultants, interviewed staff, and implementing partners, including government and civil society organization partners, were required to always comply with the highest standards of ethical behaviour in all respects and as reflected in UNICEF mandatory ethics policy and training. A zero-tolerance policy was executed around issues of fraud, bribery, corruption, child and adult safeguarding, and abuse, exploitation and harassment.

### A.6. Evaluation users and uses

The primary audience for the evaluation included UNICEF South Sudan country office staff responsible for the design and implementation of education programmes, the coordination of education responses in emergencies and monitoring of learning; and staff from other sections who collaborate and coordinate with education programme teams. Findings and lessons learned from the evaluation should be used to inform changes in UNICEF education sector

programmatic plans; approaches to support government partners and work with other implementing partners ; and to ensure preparedness for future emergencies.

The secondary audiences of the evaluation included government officials as duty bearers; children as right holders and beneficiaries of education programmes, their parents/guardians and school communities. Additional users of this evaluation are key country-level implementing partners ; and whenever relevant, other donor agencies such as the World Bank, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNESCO, Inter-Agency for Education in Emergencies (INEE), Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and other strategic education sector partners.

## Annex B. Evaluation framework

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data/Information sources	Data collection methods
<p>Objective 1: To examine role of UNICEF in building the knowledge, research, and global public goods required to mount an effective education response to the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p>Theme 1: Building the evidence and resource base for the education response to the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p>OECD-DAC criteria: coherence and efficiency</p>				
<p>1.1 What has been the role and contribution of UNICEF in building the data, knowledge, and tools for understanding and addressing the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector?</p>	<p>Evidence of UNICEF contribution to building the data, knowledge, and tools for understanding and addressing the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector.</p>	<p>Statement of UNICEF role at global, regional, and country level</p> <p>#/type of evidence and tools developed by UNICEF or in collaboration with other organisations</p>	<p>UNICEF Staff: HQ and regional UNICEF teams with a remit for creating or communicating data, evidence, research, and tools, as well as country office teams, including education, involved in using the tools and knowledge created by HQ/RO as well as creating their own.</p> <p>Partners at HQ, CO (including governments), RO: that UNICEF has worked with who can speak about UNICEF role and contribution</p> <p>Documents: produced documenting design, response, progress, lists of data/tools/evidence produced</p>	<p>Document review (programme and other documents from HQ, RO and CO)</p> <p>Interviews (UNICEF staff and partners at HQ, RO, CO). At CO also includes government personnel</p> <p>Online Survey (UNICEF staff and partners at HQ, RO, CO)</p>
<p>1.2 To what extent have UNICEF Education teams worked across sectors coherently and efficiently to develop evidence-based solutions to address the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector?</p>	<p>Coherence: Evidence of co-working/authoring, complementarity, alignments and non-duplications between UNICEF Education teams, other sector teams within UNICEF and (at country-level only) government departments or agencies outside of education at the design stage of solutions</p> <p>Evidence of alignment with the wider policy frameworks and with other interventions in</p>	<p>#/type of staff working on the response</p> <p># of staff reporting collaborating during response</p> <p>Difference in timing between planned and implementation of activities</p>	<p>UNICEF Staff: including education teams at HQ, RO, CO, and teams from other sectors with UNICEF to develop evidence-based solutions</p> <p>Documents: detailing evidence-based solutions developed, workplans, human and financial resources</p>	<p>Document review (programme and other documents, workplans, financial and staffing information)</p> <p>Interviews (UNICEF Staff at HQ, RO, CO including education and other sector teams)</p> <p>Online survey (UNICEF staff at HQ, RO, CO including education and other sector teams)</p>

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data/Information sources	Data collection methods
	<p>the same operating context, how harmonised and complementary these activities were, and if duplication of effort and activities occurred.</p> <p>Efficiency: Evidence of volume of solutions developed as well as the speed and timeliness of their development.</p>			
<p>1.3 To what extent has UNICEF mobilized and worked with external partners coherently and efficiently to develop evidence-based solutions to address the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector?</p>	<p>Coherence: Evidence of co-working/authoring, complementarity, alignments, and non-duplications between UNICEF Education teams and relevant external (technical) partners at the design stage of solutions</p> <p>Efficiency: Evidence of volume of solutions developed as well as the speed and timeliness of their development.</p>	<p>Difference in timing between planned and implementation of activities</p> <p># of partnerships developed</p> <p># of joint working groups</p> <p>Type of collaborate solutions developed</p> <p># of countries with collaborative programmes</p>	<p>UNICEF Staff: at HQ, RO, CO who may have been involved in working with and mobilising partners to develop evidence-based solutions</p> <p>External partners: at HQ, RO, CO that UNICEF mobilised and worked with to develop evidence-based solutions</p> <p>Documents: detailing information about the partners, ways of working and work carried out by working with them.</p>	<p>Document review (MOUs/partnership agreements, progress reports)</p> <p>Interviews (UNICEF staff and partners at HQ, RO, CO)</p> <p>Online survey (UNICEF staff and partners at HQ, RO, CO)</p>
<p>Objective 2: To examine the extent to which UNICEF-supported strategies were deployed effectively to enhance government initiatives for continuity of learning during school closures and to reinstate safe and equitable in-school learning opportunities during in the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p>Theme 2: Reopening schools and reinstating face-to-face learning</p> <p>OECD-DAC criteria: relevance and effectiveness</p>				

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data/Information sources	Data collection methods
2.1 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to promote home-based learning?	Evidence of extent to which UNICEF was instrumental (1) in home-based learning happening at all, (2) whether that support was instrumental in improving the home-based learning initiatives in terms of quantity, reach or quality.	List /type of education strategies used to promote home-based learning # of countries, schools, children using home-based learning strategies Amount/type of support to households for home learning	Government staff: national, subnational government ministries/departments. UNICEF CO staff, partners at CO level: involved in working with government entities within countries RO staff: involved in working with Gov at CO level or supporting CO to work with government Documents detailing support provided to government entities as well as progress made etc. in relation to home based learning.	Document review (design and implementation documents, strategies, plans, resourcing, progress reports for home learning Interviews (government personnel, UNICEF staff and partners at CO, RO) Online survey (UNICEF staff and partners at RO, CO) U- Report (young people and communities)
2.2 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance children's safety, wellbeing, and protection during the re-opening of schools?	Evidence of extent to which UNICEF was instrumental in strengthening the protection, wellbeing, and safety of children through the three phases of school re-opening (prior to re-opening, in the re-opening process and with schools re-opened).	List /type of education strategies used to enhance children's safety and protection during re-opening of schools # of countries with safety and protection protocols and plans	Government staff: national, subnational government ministries/departments. UNICEF CO staff, partners at CO level: involved in working with government entities within country RO staff: involved in working with Gov at CO level or supporting CO to work with government Documents detailing support provided to government entities as well as progress made etc. in relation to children's safety, wellbeing, and protection during the re-opening of schools.	Document review (protection protocols, strategies, plans, progress reports, resourcing, in relation to children's safety, wellbeing, protection) Interviews (government personnel, UNICEF staff and partners at CO, RO) Online survey (UNICEF staff and partners at RO, CO) U- Report (young people and communities)
2.3 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to reinstate in-school learning?	Evidence of the extent to which UNICEF was instrumental in (1) schools opening sooner than would otherwise have been the case and (2) schools operating in "business as usual" ways and levels	List /type of education strategies used to re-instate in-school learning # of countries, schools, teachers using UNICEF supported education strategies to re-instate in-school learning Incidences of changes reported in teaching, learning and assessment	Government staff: national, subnational government ministries/departments. UNICEF CO staff, partners at CO level: involved in working with government entities within country RO staff: involved in working with Gov at CO level or supporting CO to work with government Documents: detailing support provided to government entities as well as progress made etc. in relation to reinstating in-school learning.	Document review (strategies, plans, progress reports, resourcing, in relation to reinstating school learning) Interviews (government personnel, UNICEF staff and partners at CO, RO)

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data/Information sources	Data collection methods
	quicker or more completely than would otherwise have been the case (e.g. through addressing any obstacles experienced by teachers, such as vaccinations, unpaid wages, provision of PPE or handwashing facilities).	practices after reinstatement of in school learning # of countries reporting change in teaching, learning and assessment practices after reinstatement of in school learning		Online survey (UNICEF staff and partners at RO, CO) U- Report (young people and communities)
2.4 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to introduce reformed teaching, learning and assessment practices?	Evidence of the extent to which UNICEF was instrumental in schools and teachers using reformed teaching, learning and/or assessment practices designed to address the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's education, such as lost learning across all children or among particular groups of children.	# of countries reporting reforming teaching, learning and assessment practices to address the negative effects of COVID-19 # of countries reporting using teaching, learning and assessment practices to address the negative effects of COVID-19	Government staff: national, subnational government ministries/departments. UNICEF CO staff, partners at CO level: involved in working with government entities within country RO staff: involved in working with Gov at CO level or supporting CO to work with government Documents: detailing support provided to government entities as well as progress made etc. in relation to reformed teaching, learning and assessment practices.	Document review (strategies, plans, progress reports, resourcing, in relation to reformed teaching, learning and assessment practices, reports of classroom/school assessments, monitoring visits) Interviews (government personnel, UNICEF staff and partners at CO, RO) Online survey (UNICEF staff and partners at RO, CO) U- Report (young people and communities)
2.5 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported governments during the COVID-19 pandemic to target and reach different groups of marginalized children and adapt	Evidence of the extent to which UNICEF was instrumental in the initiatives to identify and reach (provide for learning needs) children in particular the most marginalised groups, e.g. girls,	Type of targeting strategies used by UNICEF to identify and reach marginalized children disaggregated by group #/type of needs assessments conducted # of programmes designed based on results from needs assessment	Government staff: national, subnational government ministries/departments. UNICEF CO staff, partners at CO level involved in working with government entities within country RO staff: involved in working with Gov at CO level or supporting CO to work with government Documents: detailing government entities at national/subnational level, CO/RO UNICEF staff and CO partners identifying target groups, identifying their needs	Interviews (government personnel, UNICEF staff and partners at CO, RO) Online survey (UNICEF staff and partners at RO, CO) Document review (targeting strategies, reports of identified groups)

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data/Information sources	Data collection methods
programmes to their learning needs?	children with disabilities, refugees, minority ethnic/language groups Evidence of whether particular groups of children were omitted or not sufficiently targeted through UNICEF supported interventions.		and/or tailoring the approach and support provided to different groups of marginalized children.	and those reached/not reached)
2.6 In what ways, and how successfully, has UNICEF supported government initiatives to recover learning lost during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Evidence of design and implementation of initiatives to recover lost learning (including assessing the extent of learning lost and progress to recover this)		Government staff: national, subnational government ministries/departments. UNICEF CO staff, partners at CO level: involved in working with government entities within country RO staff: involved in working with Gov at CO level or supporting CO to work with government Documents: detailing support provided to government entities as well as progress made etc. in relation to initiatives to recover learning Secondary education data pre post covid (if available)	Document review (strategies, plans, design documents, progress reports, assessments) Interviews (government personnel, UNICEF staff and partners at CO, RO) Online survey (UNICEF staff and partners at RO, CO). U-Report Analysis of secondary education data pre post covid (if available)
<p>Objective 3: To examine the extent to which UNICEF Education teams utilized the existing frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools to mount an effective education response to COVID-19, and whether adjustments are being made to enhance preparedness for future disruptions of a similar scale</p> <p>Theme 3: UNICEF preparedness frameworks, readiness to handle similar future crises</p> <p>OECD-DAC criteria: relevance and effectiveness</p>				
3.1 In what ways, and how successfully, did UNICEF Education teams deploy the existing education-in-emergency (EIE) frameworks, infrastructure, capacities, and tools in the education	Evidence of extent to which the frameworks, infrastructure, capacities, and tools (FICT) were 1) used in their intended way and to their full extent and	# of staff reporting using existing EIE infrastructure, capacities and tools	UNICEF staff: at HQ, regional and country levels Documents: detailing the education team's use of selected, key EIE frameworks, infrastructure, capacities, and tools in the COVID response work.	Document review (EIE tools, frameworks, reports) Interviews (UNICEF staff at CO, RO, HQ) Online survey (UNICEF staff HQ, RO, CO)

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data/Information sources	Data collection methods
sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic?	2) used in all circumstances when their use was or would have been appropriate.			
3.2 In what ways, and how comprehensively, has UNICEF adapted the education-in-emergency (EIE) frameworks, infrastructure, capacities, and tools to prepare UNICEF education programmes in different contexts for future global public health emergencies?	Evidence of adaptations to EIE frameworks, infrastructure, capacities, and tools informed by lessons learnt from experience of the COVID-19 pandemic / Evidence of appropriate processes and/or structures in place for the reflection and adaptations to EIE frameworks, infrastructure, capacities, and tools informed by lessons learnt from experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.	Examples of changes initiated in preparation of future emergency responses	UNICEF staff at HQ, regional and country levels. Documents: including plans, policies, strategies, processes, working group TORs, regarding actual or planned changes to these frameworks, infrastructure, capacities, and tools and/or processes/structures in place for reflection and lesson learning from the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.	Document review (revised EIE tools, frameworks, reports) Interviews (UNICEF staff at CO, RO, HQ) Online survey (UNICEF staff HQ, RO, CO)

# Annex C: Primary data collection tools: Case study

## C.1. UNICEF CO Chief of education and other senior education staff

1. Overall, how would you describe UNICEF role overall in regard to supporting children's education during the pandemic? What difference has UNICEF support made?
2. Which activities/initiatives would you highlight as being especially impactful or important? (Probe: why that/those? What impact?)

### **Joint working with the RO and HQ**

3. How would you describe the support you received from HQ and the RO for constructing and delivery of the education response to COVID-19?

(Probes:

- What forms did the support take?
  - What was particularly helpful? What was less helpful? (Prompt: data, research, reports, webinars, EIE specialists, guidance, frameworks)
  - Did you feel this was timely/were there any delays and what was the effect of any delays?
  - What were the challenges and how were these overcome?
  - What did/did you not achieve as a result of working with them?
  - What worked well and what didn't and why?
4. In hindsight what would you have done differently/ What could be improved going forward in terms of working with teams at RO/CO to develop solutions in response to education emergency?
  5. Was there more or less/better or worse collaboration during the pandemic than before? And if so, why was this and what, if any, might be the long-term effects of this?

### **Different specialist UNICEF teams working together for COVID-19 response in the education sector.**

6. Please tell me about how the Education Team worked together with other sections/teams within UNICEF for the COVID response (i.e., when preparing for the response, during the response and up till now).

(Probes:

- Which sections/teams/persons did you work with, why and when?
  - Did you feel this was timely/were there any delays and what was the effect of any delays?
  - What were the challenges in joint working and how were these overcome?
  - What did you achieve as a result of working with them/what did you not achieve?
  - What worked well whilst working across sections/team and what didn't work well and why? (e.g., ways of working, coordination, timeliness, adequate resources/expertise)?
7. In hindsight what would you have done differently/ What could be improved going forward in terms of working with other UNICEF teams/sections to develop and implement education emergency response solutions/interventions during a public health emergency?

### **Work with external partners**

I would like to ask about how UNICEF worked with its external partners for the education response to COVID-19.

8. Which organisations (ask for specific teams/sections) did you partner with, when and what for?

(Probes:

- Were these partners already working with UNICEF (on education and prior to COVID-19) or were they new specifically mobilized for the COVID-19 response in education?

- How did UNICEF mobilize partners (new and old) for the COVID-19 response? Who was involved in mobilizing them? Any challenges faced, how were these challenges overcome?
  - Was mobilization of partners timely? Were there any delays and if so effect of these delays?
  - Why did UNICEF partner with these external organizations/what did it want to achieve by doing so and what are the implications of having these partners for the future? (e.g. avoid duplications, achieve complementarity)
  - What were roles and responsibilities of UNICEF and partners and how did these partnerships complement UNICEF work? Did this avoid duplications/increase complementarity?
  - Can you give examples of work undertaken in partnership with external partners (e.g., solutions developed to address negative effects of COVID-19 in education)?
  - What was the value of working jointly?
9. In hindsight what would you have done differently/ What could be improved going forward in terms of working with teams at RO/CO to develop solutions in response to education emergency?
10. Was there more or less/better or worse collaboration during the pandemic than before? And if so, why was this and what, if any, might be the long-term effects of this?

### **To conclude**

11. Finally, what are the main lessons you would take away from the past two years? Where has UNICEF been successful and why? How has UNICEF been less successful and why? How can UNICEF improve – whether at country, regional or HQ level – to respond better in future crises?

## **C.2. UNICEF CO Education in Emergency**

[Re EQ3.1] I would like to ask about how UNICEF Education teams deployed the existing education-in-emergency (EIE) frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and extent to which it was successful in doing this.

1. Please describe the education-in-emergency (EIE) frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools (that existed pre-COVID-19)
2. Did UNICEF Education Teams utilise existing frameworks and tools developed by UNICEF for (pre-COVID-19) EIE contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic (what, how, when, where)? Were there any delays?
3. How did UNICEF deploy existing EIE organizational, financial, delivery, and coordination infrastructures and capacities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? Did this differ across regions, COs, at HQ?
4. To what extent was UNICEF successful in doing so? (Give examples of success)
5. How did Education teams work with EIE teams at HQ, RO, CO? What were the successes, challenges? How were these overcome? (Delays, duplication, complementarity)
6. What was achieved as a result of deploying existing EIE structures etc.? (What was HQ, RO, CO able to do as a result /or couldn't do without?)

[Re EQ 3.2] I would like to ask about how UNICEF has adapted the existing education-in-emergency (EIE) frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools to better prepare for future global public health, and how comprehensively it has done this.

7. To what extent has UNICEF, as a result of the COVID-19 response, adapted/changed/ developed more (EIE) frameworks, infrastructure, capacities and tools? Examples, who was involved, and why these changes? Are these for global use or specific to contexts?
8. How comprehensive have these changes been? (with examples)
9. What does UNICEF aim to achieve with new/adapted EIE frameworks, tools etc.?
10. At what stage of adaptation/development is UNICEF at and what are the next steps to test/use these?
11. What challenges have there been/or are foreseen/how have these been overcome?

12. Are there lessons to be learned from having used the EIE frameworks etc.? Have these lessons been documented and shared?

### C.3. UNICEF CO Other education staff

1. Before we speak about some specific examples of UNICEF initiatives and activities, how would you describe UNICEF role overall regarding supporting children's education during the pandemic? What difference has UNICEF support made?

#### **I would like now to ask specifically about [initiative/activity].**

2. This is my understanding of this initiative/activity: outline UNICEF work]. Is that also your understanding? Would you like to add to or correct anything I have said?
3. How was UNICEF support complementary to or in support of the government's strategy and work?
4. What difference did UNICEF support make? (Probe: Why was it needed? What would have happened without UNICEF? How did it lead to change, for example in strategy, direction, approach, thinking about how to respond, outcomes for children, teachers and communities (if known, and where can evidence of those outcomes be found)?)
5. Were there any challenges? If so, how were these overcome?
6. To what extent did UNICEF work with other agencies? How well (or badly) did that go?
7. To what extent did you draw on support or resources (such as data, frameworks, tools, training etc.) from other parts of UNICEF at HQ and regional level in developing or implementing this initiative/activity? (Probe: Which parts of the organisation? Which resources? What difference did it make?)
8. To what extent did the Education team work with other specialists and teams in UNICEF? (Probe: Which teams/specialists? What difference did it make?)
9. How could UNICEF support to the government have been improved? What lessons could UNICEF learn for the future?

*[Repeat questions 2-9 for another of UNICEF initiatives/activities to contribute to the education response during the pandemic. Realistically you might get through 2 initiatives in one hour so pick the 2 most significant ones. Capture responses for the other initiatives in the same text boxes above by clearly titling the different initiatives for which the answer is being provided.]*

10. Because of time constraints, I have selected only some of your initiatives during the pandemic. Are there any other activities or initiatives that you would want to highlight in which UNICEF has supported the government's education response during the pandemic? If so, what are they and how have they made a difference?

#### **To conclude**

11. Finally, what are the main lessons you would take away from the past two years? Where has UNICEF been successful and why? How has UNICEF been less successful and why? How can UNICEF improve – whether at country, regional or HQ level – to respond better in future crises?

### C.4. UNICEF CO DAPM staff

**I would like to ask about the data, knowledge and tools** that were developed by UNICEF (at HQ/RO/CO) for understanding and addressing the negative effects of COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector.

1. What tools did UNICEF develop, for understanding and responding to COVID-19 (in relation to education)? When were these developed, what were these used for and by whom?
2. What data did UNICEF collect, or contribute towards collecting, for understanding and responding to COVID-19 (in relation to education)? When was this collected, what was it used for and by whom?
3. What other knowledge products did UNICEF develop, for understanding and responding to COVID-19 (in relation to education such as reports, webinars)? When were these developed, what were these used for and by whom?

4. Did UNICEF provide any support to other partner organisations (e.g., WB, UNESCO, OECD) for developing data, tools, knowledge products (e.g., reports, webinars etc.)? What was this support, for whom, when and for what purpose)? (i.e., provided technical support, financial support, coordination)
5. Did you experience any challenges in developing data, tools and knowledge products and how were these overcome (including for supporting/working with partners)?
6. What could have been done differently and what can be improved for the future (for building data, knowledge and tools to respond to public health emergency - in relation to education)?

### C.5. Government Entities

We understand that during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 UNICEF supported the government of [country] in the following ways:

*(Read out a list of these activities, as specific as possible, perhaps structured around the list of generic activities below)*

- Promoting home-based learning
- Enhancing children's safety, wellbeing and protection during the re-opening of schools
- Reinstating in-school learning
- Targeting and reaching different groups of marginalized children and adapt programmes to their learning needs
- Recovering learning lost during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Introducing reformed teaching, learning and assessment practices
- Carrying out research, collecting data, producing reports, guidance and frameworks, running webinars and other learning opportunities

1. Before we speak about some of UNICEF specific initiatives and activities to support you, how would you describe UNICEF role overall in regard to supporting children's education during the pandemic? How important has their role been? What difference has their support made?
2. I would like now to ask specifically about [initiative/activity].
3. This is my understanding of UNICEF role: [outline UNICEF work]. Is that also your understanding? Would you like to add to or correct anything I have said?
4. How was UNICEF support complementary to the government's strategy and work? Was there any duplication with what government or any other agencies were doing?
5. What was the effect of this support? (Probe: What was achieved as a result? How successful was UNICEF in providing support in above areas?)
6. (If relevant) How well (or badly) did UNICEF work with other agencies?
7. Were you aware of UNICEF staff with different expertise working together with their education colleagues on this initiative? If so, what are your observations about this and what difference did it make, do you think?
8. What were the challenges faced and how were these overcome?
9. How could UNICEF support to the government have been improved? What lessons could UNICEF learn for the future?

*[Repeat questions 2-8 for another of UNICEF initiatives/activities to contribute to the education response during the pandemic. Realistically you might get through 2 initiatives in one hour so pick the 2 most significant ones. Capture responses for the other initiatives in the same text boxes above by clearly titling the different initiatives for which the answer is being provided.]*

10. Are there any other ways in which UNICEF has supported the government's education response during the pandemic? If so, what are they and how have they been helpful?
11. UNICEF, especially in the global and regional headquarters, have produced lots of data, reports, guidance, frameworks and learning opportunities for understanding and addressing the negative

effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector. Did your government use any of these? Probe: If yes, how did you use these data, reports etc.? What was the effect of this? What did you achieve?

12. Finally, UNICEF would like to learn and improve their work. Are there any examples of what did not work well and should be avoided in the future? Do you have any recommendations for UNICEF on how they work with and support governments in future crises?