



## Terms of Reference for an Individual Consultant Evaluation Office

### Baseline Assessment of UNICEF Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) Implementation

TITLE	Consultant for Baseline Assessment of UNICEF Environmental and Social Safeguards Implementation
RECRUITING OFFICE	Evaluation Office
LOCATION	Home-based
TRAVEL	None
DURATION OF CONTRACT	100 days (estimated), spread over a period of 5-6 months, starting in October 2022

#### 1. Introduction

The UNICEF Evaluation Office located in New York headquarters (HQ) provides global leadership and oversight of the evaluation function in the organization. As such, it manages independent, corporate evaluations and evaluation syntheses, provides technical assistance and quality assurance for evaluations commissioned at the decentralized level (country and regional offices, as well as other divisions in HQ offices), develops evaluation methods, and reports to the UNICEF Executive Board.<sup>1</sup> In addition to its core work on global-level evaluations, the Evaluation Office also works to meet the evidence needs of the organization through targeted and strategic assessments of priority areas.

Goal Area 4 of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025 (Every child lives in a safe and clean environment) clearly describes the organization's commitment to climate change and environmental issues, both to achieve its internal goals and as a member of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). The organization's strategic positioning and global engagement on climate change and environmental action, risk prevention, resilience and climate security are reflected in its commitment to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the 2015 Paris Agreement; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015—2030; and the 2019 UNICEF Climate and Environmental Sustainability Strategy.<sup>2</sup> Climate change and environmental degradation have particularly harmful effects on children, especially those who are most vulnerable.

*A UNICEF priority to demonstrate this commitment is ensuring social and environmental safeguards (ESS) in its programming and operations.* UNICEF recognizes that environmental and social sustainability is the right thing to do, reinforcing UNICEF's commitment to sustainability, given its importance to children and the global commitment to SDGs. These safeguards are intended to ensure that UNICEF interventions do not result in harm to communities and/or their environments and that UNICEF meets its obligations and accountabilities towards the populations it serves.

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF (2021), [UNICEF Evaluation](#).

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF (2019), [An Environment Fit for Children: UNICEF's Approach to Climate Change](#).

UNICEF is at the final stages of developing its own ESS procedures. Thus, implementation of ESS standards and procedures to date have been using donor standards, and as a result, the experience has been uneven. In order to better understand, scale up and improve UNICEF's capacity and systems in this area, the Evaluation Office will conduct a baseline assessment of ESS implementation at country level, ensuring a broad and representative range of programming environments and contexts are considered. As UNICEF is in the final stages of finalizing its standards and implementing a procedure, this assessment will be a critical baseline to understand where the organization currently stands on ESS, how to scale up the practice in the future and what support is required for this scale-up. It will be the first such assessment undertaken. The Evaluation Office seeks a consultant to carry out this work in 2022-2023.

## 2. Background

ESS systems are put in place to identify and assess the environmental and social risks of an activity or project, categorize these risks, and implement measures to address them – including amending or cancelling an activity or implementing and monitoring mitigation measures. Not implementing ESS carries significant programmatic risks, which is why they are increasingly a donor requirement and a growing organizational priority.

Robust environmental and social standards and safeguards, and related accountability mechanisms (e.g. grievance mechanisms) are aimed at ensuring that development and humanitarian actors are held to the principles they proclaim and that interventions do not result in inadvertent harm to people and the environment. Considering that unanticipated impacts and conflict may still arise despite good planning and best intentions, accountability mechanisms need to be in place to receive and respond to grievances from people affected by UNICEF projects and programmes. Therefore, it is essential that UNICEF implement environmental and social standards (ESS) and procedures to fulfill its goals of realizing the rights of all children.

### UNICEF structure and frameworks

UNICEF has been scaling-up its efforts to integrate climate and environmental aspects into its programming and to increase its contribution to social and environmental sustainability, given the importance of these issues to children and the global commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2019, UNICEF developed its Climate and Environmental Sustainability Strategy<sup>3</sup> which is structured around four pillars: (i) make children a focus of environmental strategies, (ii) empower children as agents of change, (iii) protect children from impacts, (iv) reduce emissions and pollution. Efforts to address environmental and social safeguards have been anchored in these commitments, but also go beyond them to address cross-cutting potential impacts of UNICEF programming.

In 2012, the United Nations Environment Management Group (UN EMG) developed the *Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System* and conducted an inter-agency consultative process on the framework. It developed a "Model Approach" with the aim of harmonizing efforts among UN entities to outline key requirements and processes for safeguard policies.<sup>4</sup>

In 2021 the Chief Executives' Board endorsed the UN System-wide Strategy for Sustainability Management (2020-2030)<sup>5</sup> that envisions the UN as a leader in integrating environmental and social sustainability across all its functions. UNICEF built upon these efforts and designed its Strategic Framework on Environmental

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<sup>3</sup> UNICEF (2019), [An Environment Fit for Children](#).

<sup>4</sup> UN Environment Management Group (2019), [Moving towards a Common Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN Programming](#). For a wider overview see also UN Environment Management Group (undated), [Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN System \(ESS\)](#).

<sup>5</sup> CEB (2021). [Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System 2020-2030](#).

Sustainability for Children (2016-2017) issued in 2015 to be consistent with the UN EMG Framework. The UNICEF framework committed the agency to significant strengthening of policy, programmes, advocacy, research, and engagement on environmental sustainability to deliver better results for children, especially the most disadvantaged.

The 2022-2025 UNICEF Strategic Plan elevated ESS to an organization-wide commitment, with a dedicated indicator for country offices to report on ESS implementation under the “decentralized and empowered internal governance and oversight” enabler.<sup>6</sup> As UNICEF’s own systems are currently in development, offices have used other ESS procedures – namely those of donors and the World Bank – to meet these standards. In 2021, 26% (33 out of 128) country offices reported application of environmental and/or social standards to their projects and programming.

Priority 2 of the UNICEF Strategic Framework on Environmental Sustainability for Children committed the organization to the piloting and rolling out of a set of social and environmental standards. UNICEF built upon good practices and drawn on lessons learned from the Model Approach in addition to the policies and guidelines of other entities in the UN system (such as UNDP, UNIDO, UNEP), as well as other international development banks (such as World Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) to develop its own Social and Environmental Sustainability Standards and Procedures (SESSP). The objectives of these standards are to: (i) strengthen the quality of programming by ensuring a principled approach; (ii) avoid adverse impacts to people and the environment; (iii) minimize, mitigate, and manage adverse impacts where avoidance is not possible; (iv) strengthen UNICEF and partner capacities for managing social and environmental risks; and (v) ensure full and effective stakeholder engagement, including through a mechanism to respond to complaints from project-affected people

It lists eight standards intended to be taken into account at the project/programme entry point:

- SES 1: Labour and Working Conditions
- SES 2: Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention
- SES 3: Community Health, Safety and Security
- SES 4: Land Acquisition/Displacement and Involuntary Resettlement
- SES 5: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Management
- SES 6: Indigenous Peoples
- SES 7: Cultural Heritage
- SES 8: Climate Change and Disaster Risks

The procedures detail specific requirements for each standard as well as implementation procedures. Further guidance is provided by three supplemental documents: 1) the Social and Environmental Screening Notes for Donor Proposals (SESN), 2) High/moderate risks projects implementation guidance and 3) Accountability and Grievance Mechanism Guidance. Projects deemed medium or risk require a full social and environmental impact assessment (SEIA) and social and environmental management plan (SEMP); an Implementation Guide for High Risk and Moderate Risk Projects provides additional guidance on these processes.

Because these procedures have not yet been rolled out, this assessment will examine implementation of ESS using other (usually donor) procedures. However, this learning will provide inputs into the finalization, rollout and implementation of the SESSP and related guidance.

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<sup>6</sup> E3.6. Percentage of country offices applying: (a) disability inclusive (b) environmental and social standards in UNICEF programmes in line with UNICEF/United Nations standards (QCPR)

As ESS is an organization-wide responsibility, the work to scale up and mainstream ESS falls under the Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring Division’s Programme Effectiveness Section. Substantive support for ESS is provided by other Programme Group sections – particularly the Climate, Environment, Energy and Disaster Risk Reduction (CEED) team and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) unit.

### 3. Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this assessment is to understand the degree of implementation and provide organizational learning on the current status of ESS application, and to provide evidence on areas of support needed for further scale up of ESS. It is intended to provide a snapshot against which implementation will be measured in the future, both through monitoring systems and future assessments. The assessment methodology is intended to be replicated annually throughout the phased rollout process to ensure that ESS implementation is continuing at the required pace as set in the Strategic Plan targets and milestones for ESS application and meeting its objectives of ensuring the “do no harm” principle. The assessment has the following objectives:

1. To assess and report on the current status of UNICEF implementation of ESS, including:
  - a. the degree of practice/implementation
  - b. the range of tools used
  - c. engagement of partners
2. To identify bottlenecks and facilitators for ESS implementation
3. To extract lessons learned for SESSP roll-out, including positive examples of where ESS has reduced risk
4. To assess staff and manager awareness, attitudes and motivations regarding ESS and its implementation
5. To assess readiness and preparedness for ESS implementation
6. To understand gaps and needs identify additional tools and support required

The primary intended audiences for this assessment are:

1. UNICEF senior management, who hold ultimate responsibility for ensuring that projects and programming reduce and mitigate potential environmental and social impacts;
2. UNICEF staff and partners engaged in ESS implementation across all programming;

Secondary audiences include

1. The UNICEF Executive Board and UNICEF donors
2. Communities served by UNICEF projects and programming; and
3. All UNICEF staff (operations and programming)

### 4. Assessment approach and scope

The assessment is, as noted above, intended to present a baseline of ESS implementation and is not a full evaluation. Therefore while UNEG norms and standards do not apply, the assessment will nonetheless adhere to principles from these norms and standards and adopt high levels of rigor and independence, while fulfilling its primary learning and utilization focus. It will be a light-touch exercise with full documentation of its methods for future replication, as the assessment is intended as a baseline against which future implementation status will be measured.

The assessment is **global** in scope and covers all UNICEF offices at HQ, regional and country levels. The assessment will not focus on guidance development and roll-out and other support given to implementation, although these areas will likely be reviewed in future evaluative work. The **temporal scope** covers the period of 2018-2022.

**Table 1: Assessment scope**

Variable	In-scope
Timeframe	2018-2022
Levels	Headquarters, Regional and Country Offices
Organizational unit(s)	All HQ units (DAPM and WASH/CEED as primary clients), 7 Regional Offices and all Country Offices
Geographic	Global
Programme context	Both development and humanitarian settings with consideration of HD nexus.

## 5. Assessment criteria and key questions

The ESS assessment intends to answer the following key questions. Indicative indicators and sub-questions are noted where relevant.

### 1. To what extent have UNICEF offices implemented ESS procedures (of any type)?

- a. Number of countries and/or offices where any ESS procedures have been implemented since 2018
- b. The driving factors/actors for ESS implementation (e.g. UNICEF office, donors, others)
- c. ESS implementation numbers and percentages by:
  - i. Sector
  - ii. Region
  - iii. Operating context (e.g. emergency, development, urban, rural)
  - iv. Type of ESS (ie World Bank, KfW, USAID ....)
  - v. Type of tools implemented (e.g. ESIA, ESMP, etc) and degree/stage of implementation
  - vi. Persons responsible for implementation (e.g. UNICEF staff, individual consultant, institutional contract, partner, contractor)

### 2. How have ESS procedures been implemented?

- a. Number of countries that have indicated projects with a high and medium level of risks related to ESS, and number of these in which procedures/mitigation measures were identified
- b. Number of countries that have taken action to mitigate identified risks
- c. Number of countries that have established environmental and social grievance mechanisms
- d. Extent to which grievance mechanisms are a) used and b) followed up
- e. Number of countries in which monitoring and reporting mechanisms for ESS mitigation measure are established and used
- f. Extent to which implementing partners and communities were involved in implementation
- g. Level of accountabilities/responsibilities of staff and management for implementation

### 3. What are the key constraints and facilitators to ESS implementation?

- a. What factors have facilitated ESS implementation where present? What good practices exist that can be replicated?
- b. What are some of the existing constraints to ESS implementation and where are the key gaps?
- c. What is the level of awareness among UNICEF staff and management of ESS?
- d. What is the level of managerial and staff attitudes towards ESS?

### 4. What are the lessons learned and needs identified to scale up ESS across the organization?

- a. What are lessons learned from cases in which ESS was implemented, and what are examples of where ESS has reduced risk?

- b. To what extent is UNICEF positioned to roll-out and scale up ESS?
- c. To what extent are existing resources and support sufficient to support ESS implementation, and what additional support is needed?
- d. What are the organizational needs and additional support required to implement ESS and promote their utilization across UNICEF?
- e. What lessons can be learned from the implementation of other organizational requirements such as the PSEA procedure?

## 6. Proposed methods

The assessment will employ mixed methods in a phased approach, outlined below.

- **Data and document review:** the first step will be a review of reporting against the SMQ to obtain an initial assessment of which COs have reported implementing ESS procedures since 2021. This will be supplemented by a review of country programme documents and annual reports, using natural language processing (NLP), to determine implementation before 2021. The document review will also allow for an initial mapping of implementation by country, region, sector and context.
- **Key informant interviews and focus group discussions:** interviews with a select number of internal key informants at the HQ, regional and country level to provide context and background on facilitating and hindering factors
- **Country-level survey:** an online survey for management and ESS focal points in all UNICEF offices. The survey may incorporate adapted elements of the Climate and Environment Readiness Assessment<sup>7</sup> to assess UNICEF positioning, approach, technical capacity, partnerships and resources to implement ESS.
- **Secondary document review:** Review of ESS documentation (SIEAs, SEMPAs) and budget commitments to further validate and assess levels of adherence to ESS procedures and determine good practices for future learning.

## 7. Institutional and management arrangements

The assessment will be led by the UNICEF Evaluation Office, under the management of the Evaluation Specialist and the supervision of the Senior Evaluation Specialist. The evaluation will be conducted by a lead consultant.

The role of the **Evaluation Specialist** is:

- Safeguard the independence of the exercise and ensure quality;
- Manage all contractual aspects and approve all payments based on the completion of the work and UNICEF's satisfaction with its quality;
- Facilitate access to data as well as communications and meetings between the consultant and UNICEF stakeholders;
- Provide technical support to the consultant provide inputs and take final decisions regarding the scope, design, methodology, and content of the assessment
- Provide a first quality review of all assessment tools and deliverables presented by the consultant; one to two rounds of comments are to be expected from the evaluation manager depending on the quality of the first draft;
- Produce the final version before copy-editing and layout and co-lead the authorship of the final deliverables if necessary.

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<sup>7</sup> [Climate and Environment Readiness Assessment](#), UNICEF, 2020

The role of the **Consultant** is as follows:

- Lead the assessment process, including work planning
- Manage the process and outputs in timely manner as specified in the position TOR
- Collect and analyze reports and information as specified in the TOR and communicate with the Evaluation Office at regular intervals
- Produce draft assessment as per the TOR, Evaluation Office and reference group inputs, as well as coordinating drafting inputs from others. The consultant will lead the authorship of the report and work closely with the UNICEF Evaluation Office's evaluation manager responsible for reviewing and finalizing the evaluation report for publication.
- Finalize assessment report to the standards specified in the TOR.
- Ensure the comprehensiveness and quality of all data collected and analyzed and deliverables before submission to the UNICEF Evaluation Office, by reviewing and harmonizing their format and content. A detailed comment matrix will accompany all versions of the key deliverables, describing whether and how earlier comments received have been incorporated, and when they have not been fully included, providing an appropriate justification
- Participate, design and facilitate the interim and final workshops in coordination with the EO.

An assessment reference group (RG) will be comprised of key internal stakeholders involved in ESS guidance and implementation, with representatives from the HQ and regional levels, and covering CEED, WASH, DAPM and selected PG staff as needed. The role of the reference group is to provide validation, review and inputs for key deliverables and to participate in the interim and final workshops. Reference group members will also coordinate provision of required documents and facilitate interviews with staff within their entities.

The role of the **Reference Group** includes the following:

- Provide comments on the draft terms of reference for the assessment
- Participate in key meetings (remotely or in-person) with the consultant and EO during the assessment period
- Facilitate the communication and coordination between their respective section/division/areas of influence and the consultant, and assist the consultant and EO in accessing relevant literature and documentation
- Review all key deliverables and provide advice and comments in a timely manner
- Provide inputs to the recommendations development process.
- Advise on and support the implementation of the communication and dissemination plan, including by suggesting/supporting relevant dissemination events.

## 8. Ethics

The assessment is to be conducted in accordance with UNICEF and UNEG ethics guidelines. It will not require an independent ethical review. However, consultants are invited to identify anticipated ethical issues throughout the evaluation project as well as the measures and methods adopted to mitigate them.

Relevant guidance from the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and UNICEF are available online: [UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation](#), and the [UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research](#). Consultants will also be asked to sign a number of individual statements/commitments on ethical standards for evaluations and on protection and sexual exploitation and abuse.

## 9. UNICEF quality assurance standards and processes for evaluations

The Evaluation Office will provide quality assurance on all assessment tools and documents based on [UNEG](#) and [UNICEF](#) norms, standards, processes and tools. The consultant will be familiarized with these and is expected to observe them during the entire evaluation process.

## 10. Expected deliverables, dissemination and utilization

The expected deliverables from this exercise will be:

- 1) a draft inception report, containing the detailed approach, final questions, and draft data collection tools, as well as a detailed work plan;
- 2) a final inception report;
- 3) a draft assessment report, with jointly developed recommendations. The final report should follow the UNICEF formatting and guidelines;
- 4) a set of tools to be used in future ESS assessments;
- 5) a final assessment report and executive summary;
- 6) a PPT presentation containing the key findings and recommendations.

All reports will be in Microsoft Office Word format, while all presentations will be in Microsoft Office PowerPoint. No PDF or hard copy will be submitted by the evaluation team. The use of reader-friendly techniques such as bullet points, tables, graphs, photos, videos embedded in presentations and reports, and other visualization methods is encouraged. All data collected, documentation gathered, and photos/videos taken and analyses produced for the purpose of the evaluation are to be made available to UNICEF in the appropriate format. Graphs and maps must be in editable format for layout purposes. The use of annexes is required for the evaluation tools, for all secondary information that is not directly related to the evaluation findings, as well as for any long technical documentation intended to a specific audience. PowerPoint presentations must include notes below each slide to make them easy to understand for people who could not attend the meeting.

All documentation must be in professional level standard English and in compliance with [UNICEF Style Book 2015](#) and [UNICEF Brand Toolkit 2012](#). All key deliverables (including draft versions submitted to UNICEF) must be language-edited by a native speaker and good writer. All key deliverables will be made available on the UNICEF website and widely disseminated to all target audiences. The final assessment report will be copy-edited by a professional service provider contracted by the Evaluation Office.

The final assessment report will be circulated to all participating offices and key partners and will be posted on the UNEG, UNICEF and ALNAP websites. Summary materials will be distributed via WASH/CEED and evaluation<sup>8</sup> networks. The Evaluation Office has primary responsibility for dissemination.

With its utilization focus, the exercise is intended to provide a baseline against which future roll-out and implementation of ESS initiatives will be planned, designed and measured. It may provide a basis on which future targets may be set. The CEED team will develop a schedule for which future assessments will take place, and the current assessment will develop a suite of tools to be adapted and replicated. The reference group, UNICEF EO and CEED will develop follow-up mechanisms to track recommendation implementation.

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<sup>8</sup> Including UNEG, ALNAP EvalSDGs, EvalPartners and others

## 11. Composition of the assessment team

The assessment will be led and conducted by a home-based consultant. Additional support will be provided by Evaluation Office staff.

The consultant must possess the following qualifications:

- Advanced university degree (Master or equivalent) in monitoring, evaluation, international development, social sciences, or related fields.
- At least 7 years of relevant professional work experience in international development related to research/evaluation and environment/climate issues.
- Skills in developing assessment frameworks, and reviewing and analyzing a high number of documents
- Qualitative and quantitative research and evaluation experience, including skills in interviewing, document analysis and survey analysis as well as ability to synthesis and analyze large sets of information.
- Strong written and oral communication skills, and ability to collaborate with various people/teams
- Computer literacy in Word, Excel and PowerPoint
- Solid organizational skills; ability to work rapidly without compromising on rigour and quality
- Fluency in English a must; good knowledge of French desired.

The consultant will be provided additional capacity from the Evaluation Office for specific data collection and analysis tasks.

## 12. Timeline and project management

The exercise will be conducted by an individual consultant, under the management of the GA 4 and Institutional Effectiveness teams in the UNICEF Evaluation Office. Additional capacity will be provided to the extent possible by a team member from the UNICEF Evaluation Office. Quality assurance will be provided by the Evaluation Office and reference group at key junctures. A project timeline is below, and a more detailed timeline for the assessment portion will be developed during the inception phase.

The level of effort is 100 days (estimated) over a period of 6 months (max 21 days/month) starting in October 2022.

**Table 2: Timeline**

Time	Milestones
Jun 2022	TOR drafted
Aug 2022	TOR finalized
Sept 2022	Recruitment and contract
Oct-Nov 2022	Draft inception report
Nov-Dec 2022	Final inception report
Jan 2023	Draft assessment report
Feb 2023	Final assessment report
Mar-May 2023	Dissemination and final workshop/webinar

**Payment:** Payments will be made to the consultant in 2 tranches: 50% upon successful completion and delivery of the final inception report, and 50% upon completion and delivery of the final assessment report.