



Global Evaluation Evidence Synthesis: Evidence of UNICEF achievements for children from 2018-2022 evaluations

What do evaluations tell us about UNICEF's progress in helping children and adolescents worldwide?

In today's fast-changing world, it is important for UNICEF to understand its effectiveness in helping children and adolescents. Every year, **UNICEF carries out around 150 evaluations** of its programmes, policies, and strategies to find out what is working, what is not, and why. This helps ensure accountability, improve performance, and learn from both successes and challenges.

In 2023, UNICEF's Evaluation Office, in partnership with Newcastle University, produced the first Global Evaluation Evidence Synthesis (GEES). This report focuses on evaluations from 2018 to 2022 to **summarize UNICEF's main successes and areas in need of improvement**. It also identifies factors that helped or hindered progress and shares important lessons learned. The report offers suggestions on how UNICEF can improve its policies, programmes, and the way it measures progress.

The GEES covers the period from 2018 to 2022, which matches the goals set out in UNICEF's Strategic Plans for [2018-2021](#) and [2022-2025](#). These plans aim to make sure all children's rights are met and help reach the global goals set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

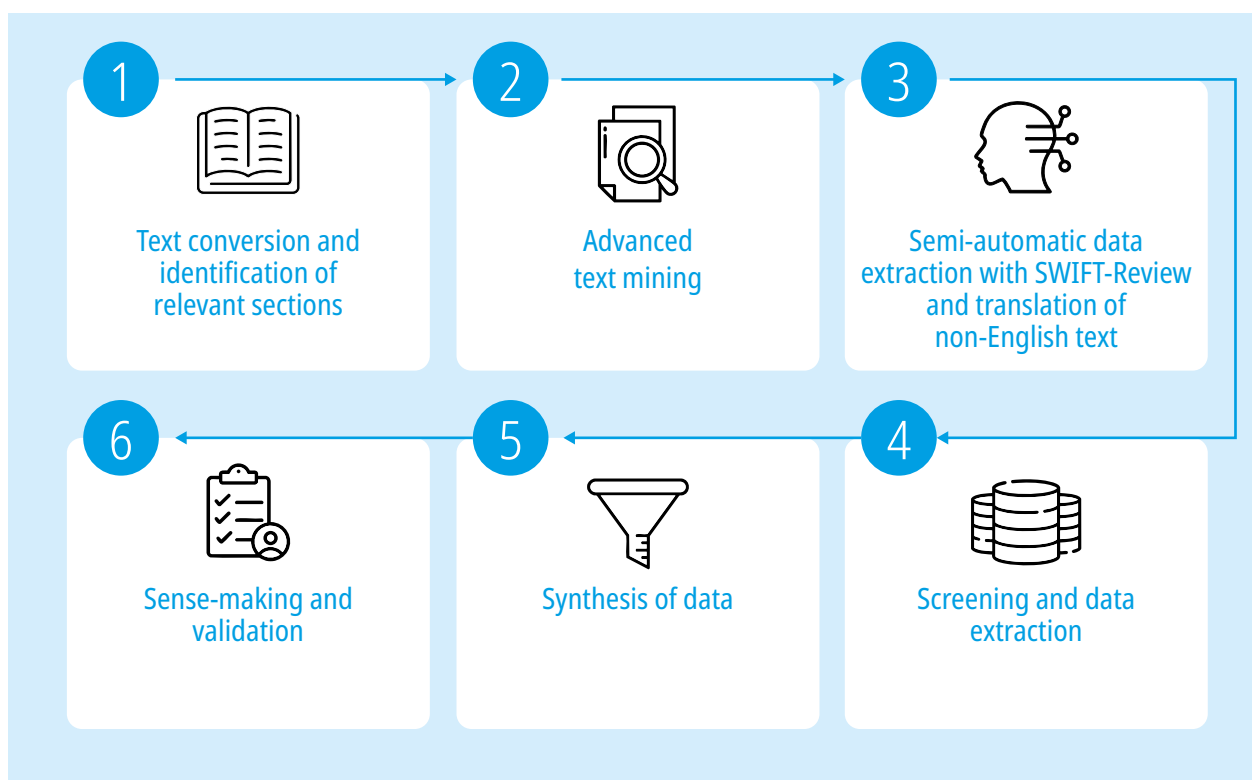
The main question the GEES tries to answer is:

“ **What do the evaluations show about UNICEF’s progress in helping children and adolescents reach their full potential?** ”

UNICEF and partners can utilise the findings from the GEES to make informed decisions, enhance planning, and develop more effective future programmes for children. In addition, the report can be leveraged to pinpoint and address evidence gaps, enhancing the quality and focus of future evaluation planning.

Data collection methods and analysis

The GEES used an innovative approach to analyze **631 UNICEF evaluation reports**, covering global, regional, and country levels from 2018 to 2022. Only evaluations rated as “satisfactory” or better were included. These publicly available evaluations encompassed a range of evaluation typologies, including impact, humanitarian, and institutional effectiveness evaluations. UNICEF’s [Integrated Results and Resources Framework](#) was used to organize the results based on UNICEF’s Strategic Plans for 2018-2021 and 2022-2025. Of the 631 reports, 275 provided useful evidence, with 42 per cent offering quantitative data and 58 per cent qualitative insights. Interviews with UNICEF experts helped validate the findings. An [interactive map](#) of the evaluation results was also created.



Conclusions



Goal Area 1

Health and Nutrition

UNICEF made significant progress in ensuring children and adolescents survive and thrive. Success was driven by health education, community engagement, and increased government staff capacity. Improved infrastructure, such as better health centers, was also crucial. However, challenges such as geographic and language barriers hindered outreach to remote areas, and there were issues with data quality, which affected programme evaluation. Coordination among stakeholders was often delayed due to poor communication, and cash transfers helped communities access health services.



Goal Area 2

Education

In education, financial support, particularly cash transfers, played a key role in helping children access schooling. However, adjustments in cash payments should be made to match inflation and unintended effects, such as the potential disqualification from free school meals. UNICEF successfully advocated for increased government spending on education, although its direct impact was difficult to measure. Infrastructure improvements and teacher training, especially for women, boosted school enrolment. Barriers, such as low awareness of programmes and gaps in data, also limited their effectiveness.



Goal Area 3

Child Protection

In child protection, UNICEF supported both victims and perpetrators of crime. Key services like child advocacy centers and family protection units were vital, but training for government officials, such as judges and police, was necessary to improve the treatment of offenders. Programmes raised awareness about

children's rights, which helped reduce vulnerabilities, especially when government support was strong. However, insufficient resources and limited support systems hindered implementation. Additionally, the lack of baseline data and ineffective assessment practices were challenges that impacted programme outcomes. There was also a need for new approaches to address harmful cultural beliefs.



Goal Area 4

Water, Sanitation, and Environment

In this area, UNICEF achieved positive results, particularly from community-led sanitation programmes. These programmes encouraged communities to build and maintain their own latrines. UNICEF also provided menstrual products, rebuilt water supply systems, and worked with local governments on disaster risk reduction strategies. However, some decisions did not align well with long-term goals, and certain programmes were more focused on emergencies rather than long-term community needs. Another issue was the lack of good monitoring tools to track progress. Financial support was helpful but requires better targeting and planning for long-term success.



Goal Area 5

Social Protection and Poverty

UNICEF successfully brought together various partners to make better decisions about public spending and improve public finance management. However, some programmes were limited by a lack of funding or dependence on a single donor. To improve sustainability, UNICEF should seek more private sector contributions. More attention is also needed on helping marginalized groups. A key issue was the insufficient training and low motivation of social workers, which led to programmes ending prematurely. Lastly, the lack of follow-up and baseline data made it difficult to accurately measure success.

Recommendations



Focus on Children's Rights

UNICEF should continue to prioritize children's voices and rights in all decisions, ensuring they are at the centre of every programme and policy.



Encourage Collaboration

UNICEF should promote working together across different sectors to create more effective programmes that meet the diverse needs of children and communities.



Improve Communication

Better internal and external communication will help ensure that everyone is working together efficiently, improving coordination and impact.



Optimize Programmes

Programmes should be better tailored to meet the needs of communities, with clear plans for long-term success and sustainability, so that communities can take ownership.



Enhance Data Collection

UNICEF needs to improve its data collection systems to better track programmes and make informed decisions. Transparency and accountability should be emphasized.



Encourage Innovation

UNICEF should become more open to taking risks and trying new ideas to stay flexible and responsive to changing challenges.









Strengthen Evaluation and Accountability

Clear accountability measures should be put in place to track the success of programmes and ensure recommendations from evaluations are acted on. Regular follow-up would help improve programmes over time.

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