



# Transforming programming: Evaluation of the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Policy and Gender Action Plans (GAP 2 and GAP 3)

# Transforming programming: Evaluation of the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Policy and Gender Action Plans (GAP 2 and GAP 3)

© United Nations Children’s Fund, New York, 2024  
United Nations Children’s Fund  
Three United Nations Plaza  
New York, New York 10017

October 2024

The purpose of publishing evaluation reports produced by the UNICEF Evaluation Office is to fulfil a corporate commitment to transparency through the publication of all completed evaluations. The reports are designed to stimulate a free exchange of ideas among those interested in the topic and to assure those supporting the work of UNICEF that it rigorously examines its strategies, results, and overall effectiveness.

The contents of the report do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNICEF.

The text has not been edited to official publication standards and UNICEF accepts no responsibility for error.

The designations in this publication do not imply an opinion on the legal status of any country or territory, or of its authorities, or the delimitation of frontiers.

The copyright for this report is held by the United Nations Children’s Fund. Permission is required to reprint/reproduce/photocopy or in any other way to cite or quote from this report in written form. UNICEF has a formal permission policy that requires a written request to be submitted. For non-commercial uses, the permission will normally be granted free of charge. Please write to the Evaluation Office at the address below to initiate a permission request.

Please cite the work as follows: UNICEF. 2024. *“Transforming Programming: Evaluation of the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan (GAP 2 and GAP 3)”* UNICEF Evaluation Office, New York.

For further information, please contact:

## **Evaluation Office**

United Nations Children’s Fund  
Three United Nations Plaza  
New York, New York 10017  
[evalhelp@unicef.org](mailto:evalhelp@unicef.org)

**EVALUATION MANAGEMENT TEAM (from UNICEF Evaluation Office)**

<b>Erica Mattellone</b>	Senior Evaluation Specialist and Team Lead for Institutional Effectiveness (Evaluation Manager)
<b>Barsha Pradhan</b>	Evaluation Specialist
<b>Nabamallika Dehingia</b>	Data Scientist
<b>Kyra Variyava</b>	Evaluation Intern

**EVALUATION TEAM (from Social Development Direct)**

<b>Celine Mazars</b>	Team Leader
<b>Alix Clark</b>	Deputy Team Leader
<b>Emma Haegeman</b>	Deputy Team Leader
<b>Florianne Gaillardin</b>	Senior Gender Consultant
<b>Sonal Zaveri</b>	Senior Gender Consultant
<b>Lucia Soldà</b>	Researcher
<b>Hanna Smit</b>	Researcher
<b>Valeria Miglio</b>	Researcher
<b>Isadora Brizolara</b>	Project Manager
<b>Jo Feather</b>	Quality Assurer
<b>Emma Grant</b>	Quality Assurer
<b>Diana Magdy</b>	National Consultant Egypt
<b>Emma Rotondo</b>	National Consultant Peru
<b>Lovely Jeba</b>	National Consultant Bangladesh
<b>Maphie Makambo</b>	National Consultant Democratic Republic of the Congo
<b>Minja Damjanovic</b>	National Consultant Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>Unaiti Costa</b>	National Consultant Mozambique

**EVALUATION FOCAL POINTS**

Focal points served as points of contact for coordination matters related to the implementation of the evaluation, such as providing access to information and key informants and supporting the coordination of data collection.

<b>Benoit Conti</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Gender Unit, UNICEF
<b>Satvika Chalasani</b>	Senior Gender Specialist, Gender Unit, UNICEF

**EVALUATION REFERENCE GROUP**

The Evaluation Reference Group supported the evaluation in an advisory capacity, providing feedback and technical input on the evaluation's progress and ensuring guidance and transparency. The group consisted of UNICEF colleagues from all organizational levels as well as external experts.

<b>Chernor Bah</b>	Minister of Information and Civic Education, Government of Sierra Leone
<b>Gladys Acosta Vargas</b>	Formerly UNICEF, UN Women, Chairperson of Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, Independent, based in Peru
<b>Gopal Mitra</b>	Global Lead on Disability, UNICEF Headquarters
<b>Jonathan Lewis</b>	Deputy Regional Director, UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office

<b>Kathleen Sherwin</b>	Chief, Strategy and Engagement Officer, Plan International
<b>Lauren Rumble</b>	Associate Director, Gender Equality, UNICEF Headquarters
<b>Leyla Sherafi</b>	Chief of Gender ad interim, UN Population Fund
<b>Lucie Cluver</b>	Professor of Child and Family Social Work, Oxford and University of Cape Town
<b>Nankali Maksud</b>	Senior Advisor, Child Protection, UNICEF Headquarters
<b>Noala Skinner</b>	Deputy Regional Director, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
<b>Ramya Subrahmanian</b>	Chief of Child Protection and Gender, UNICEF Innocenti
<b>Rosa Bransky</b>	CEO, We are Purposeful
<b>Shreyasi Jha</b>	Regional Gender and Adolescent Advisor, UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office
<b>Silvia Danailov</b>	Representative, UNICEF Senegal
<b>Silvia Grandi</b>	Deputy Director of the Evaluation, Global Affairs Canada
<b>Takudzwa Kanyangarara</b>	Gender and Development Manager, UNICEF Nigeria
<b>Theresa Hwang</b>	Deputy Director, Gender Equality, Gates Foundation

### YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP

The Youth Advisory Group supported the evaluation in an advisory capacity and brought youth and fresh perspectives into the evaluation and its process. The group consisted of youth who volunteered to support the Evaluation Office in conducting this exercise.

<b>Alliyah Logan</b>	Bachelors in Women and Gender Studies (currently pursuing), member of Global Girl Leader Advisory Group, US
<b>Ana Cobano Cuesta</b>	Master's in International Security, at Sciences Po (PSIA), France
<b>Batool Albakouni</b>	Bachelor's in Political Science, University of Damascus, Syria
<b>Etasha Donthi</b>	Undergraduate student at University of California, Berkeley, US
<b>Hani Rukh E Qamar</b>	Masters of Sciences in Epidemiology McGill University, Canada
<b>Jehan Idsassi</b>	Student in the Science and Technology Program at Eleanor Roosevelt High School, US
<b>Madeleine Jennifer Ndzana Eloundou</b>	Master's in Political Science with a specialization in International Cooperation (currently pursuing), Sorbonne Paris North University), France
<b>Paati Purohit</b>	Master's Gender and Development (currently pursuing) University of Sussex, UK
<b>Rondell Trim</b>	Bachelor of Sciences of Economics with Public Sector Management, University of West Indies, Barbados
<b>Ryan McEnergy Timothy</b>	Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Agronomy, University of Zimbabwe
<b>Wijdane El Faizi</b>	Master's in Political Science, Mohamed VI Polytechnic University, member of Global Girl Leader Advisory Group, Morocco
<b>Yiannis Stamatoniolos</b>	Undergraduate in Law School (currently pursuing) University of Athens, Greece



## Acknowledgments

Commissioned by the UNICEF Evaluation Office, this evaluation was managed by Erica Mattellone and Barsha Pradhan, with valuable support from Nabamallika Dehingia and Kyra Variyava throughout the process. Special thanks to Geeta Dey and Celeste Lebowitz for their indispensable administrative and communication support. We also acknowledge Alvina Lim, who edited the report, and Elena Panetti, who designed its layout with care and creativity.

The evaluation approach was designed and implemented by a dedicated team of evaluation and gender experts from Social Development Direct, who also authored this report. The team included Celine Mazars, Emma Haegeman, Alix Clark, Sonal Zaveri, Florianne Gaillardin, Lucia Soldà, Hanna Smit, Valeria Miglio, Diana Magdy, Emma Rotondo, Lovely Jeba, Maphie Makambo, Minja Damjanovic, and Unaiti Costa. Jo Feather and Emma Grant provided exceptional quality assurance, while Isadora Brizolara offered essential administrative support. We sincerely thank them for their hard work, resourcefulness, and commitment to a solution-oriented and candid approach, as well as their flexibility to adapt throughout the process.

The evaluation was conducted in close collaboration with the gender team in the UNICEF Programme Group at Headquarters and regional gender advisors, who contributed their dedication and expertise during this 12-month journey. We thank Lauren Rumble and Satvika Chalasani, in particular, for their commitment to using evidence to inform gender programming.

We are deeply grateful to the external experts who served on the Evaluation Reference Group, providing insightful feedback and thoughtful guidance. These experts include Cherner Bah (Government of Sierra Leone), Gladys Acosta Vargas (formerly UNICEF and UN Women, Chairperson of CEDAW), Kathleen Sherwin (Plan International), Leyla Sherafi (UNFPA), Lucie Cluver (Oxford University and University of Cape Town), Rosa Bransky (Purposeful), Silvia Grandi (Global Affairs Canada), and Theresa Hwang (Gates Foundation). We also extend our gratitude to our UNICEF colleagues who participated in the Evaluation Reference Group, including Gopal Mitra, Jonathan Lewis, Lauren Rumble, Nankali Maksud, Noala Skinner, Ramya Subrahmanian, Shreyasi Jha, Silvia Danailov, and Takudzwa Kanyangarara.

For the first time in a global evaluation at UNICEF, we had the privilege of collaborating with a remarkable group of young people who contributed to this evaluation. They include Alliyah Logan, Ana Cobano Cuesta, Batool Albakouni, Etasha Donthi, Hani Rukh E Qamar, Jehan Idsassi, Madeleine Jennifer Ndzana Eloundou, Paati Purohit, Rondell Trim, Ryan McEnergy Timothy, Wijdane El Faizi, and Yiannis Stamatonikolos.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to the many UNICEF colleagues and partners who participated as interviewees, survey respondents or in case studies. Their openness in sharing experiences and suggestions has been the foundation of this evaluation. Lastly, we would also like to recognize the incredible pool of gender activists across UNICEF who, inspired by the Gender Strategy and Gender Action Plans, have championed gender equality with dedication and resilience. From Cairo to Dhaka, Kinshasa to Lima, Maputo to Naypyidaw, Sarajevo to Suva, and New York, these advocates have worked tirelessly in solidarity with women, girls, and marginalized communities. Engaging with them has been a privilege – we have learned, laughed, and grown together. UNICEF should be commended for fostering this vibrant and committed community, whose efforts give us hope for a more equitable future.

## Preface

While significant steps have been taken towards advancing gender equality, compounding challenges posed by escalating global crises ranging from climate change, civil and ethnic conflicts to pandemics have further widened gender inequality gaps. These realities highlight the urgency of addressing systemic causes of gender disparity to secure transformative results. Acknowledging this, UNICEF remains committed to championing the rights of women and girls as part of the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other gender equality related targets.

Through the implementation of the Gender Policy (2021-2030) and Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2 (2018-2021) and GAP 3 (2022-2025), UNICEF has charted an ambitious vision for ensuring gender-transformative results for all children, adolescents and women. Reasserting itself as a learning organization, the UNICEF Evaluation Office (EO) in collaboration with Social Development Direct (SDDirect) initiated an evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy and plans in order to better understand how UNICEF can integrate these findings to progress towards gender equality.

This report presents the key insights derived from the evaluation process. The evaluation found that the GAP frameworks and Gender Policy have established robust foundations and transformative visions towards achieving gender equality, and this momentum should be sustained through a GAP 4 and the new Strategic Plan (2026-2029). There is still insufficient clarity among staff members in operationalizing the action plan for gender-transformative results across various contexts and inconsistency in accountability mechanisms to ensure the adherence to global guidance, especially at the country office (CO) level. While there is strong gender architecture at the headquarter (HQ) level, there is a need to strengthen institutional enablers at the regional and country levels. Programming modalities demand reformation for effective partnerships with civil society organizations (CSOs) led by women and adolescents. UNICEF can utilize the findings of the evaluation to learn how to leverage the scale of its programmes and its multi-sectoral positioning to continue to promote gender equality in its agenda.

The recommendations offer insights for development of GAP 4 and the new Strategic Plan, and emphasizes the need to focus on building capacities and clarity of staff, a review of recruitment, parity and workplace policies and simplifying processes to achieve meaningful partnerships with girl- and women-led CSOs. This evaluation stands against the backdrop of a global stage that is in need of advancement in gender equality and we hope that the findings and recommendations from this evaluation will support UNICEF in driving this progress.



**Robert McCouch**  
**Director of Evaluation, UNICEF**



# Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations	xii
Glossary	xiv
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>xvi</b>
<b>① Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>② Background</b>	<b>3</b>
Context of the evaluation.....	3
Purpose, objectives and scope .....	4
<b>③ Evaluation methodology</b>	<b>6</b>
Evaluation design and approach .....	6
Limitations and mitigation measures .....	12
<b>④ Evaluation findings</b>	<b>14</b>
EQ1 – Gender conceptual and policy frameworks.....	14
EQ2 – Gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers .....	21
EQ3 – Programmatic results.....	46
<b>⑤ Conclusions and lessons learned</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>⑥ Recommendations</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>List of annexes</b>	<b>90</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES, BOXES, TABLES

<b>Figure 1.</b> Gender continuum .....	7	<b>Figure 18.</b> Goal Area 3, Total expenditure and proportion of gender equality expenditure in USD, 2018-2023 .....	56
<b>Figure 2.</b> Overview of sources of evidence .....	9	<b>Figure 19.</b> Indicator 3.1.2 on number of mothers, fathers and caregivers reached through parenting programmes through UNICEF-supported programmes (WHO), 2021-2023.....	58
<b>Figure 3.</b> Gender as a key element in UNICEF Strategic Plan .....	17	<b>Figure 20.</b> Indicator 3.3.2 on number of people engaged through community platforms in reflective dialogue towards eliminating discriminatory social and gender norms and harmful practices that affect girls and women, through UNICEF-supported programmes, 2018-2023 .....	59
<b>Figure 4.</b> Gender Action Plan Theory of Change .....	19	<b>Figure 21.</b> Examples of other gender-responsive and gender equality programmes and approaches within UNICEF's child protection portfolio .....	60
<b>Figure 5.</b> Institutional enablers .....	22	<b>Figure 22.</b> Goal Area 4, Total expenditure and proportion of gender equality expenditure in USD, 2018-2023 .....	61
<b>Figure 6.</b> Percentage of COs meeting GAP Standard .....	23	<b>Figure 23.</b> Indicator 4.1.6 on number of women and adolescent girls reached whose menstrual health and hygiene needs are addressed through UNICEF-supported programmes [adolescents aged 15-19 years], 2021-2023 .....	61
<b>Figure 7.</b> Gender equality expenditure out of total UNICEF expenditure .....	29	<b>Figure 24.</b> Examples of other gender-responsive and gender equality programmes and approaches within UNICEF's WASH portfolio....	63
<b>Figure 8.</b> Score for staff and culture statements (strongly agree and agree), by gender.....	45	<b>Figure 25.</b> Goal Area 5, Total expenditure and proportion of gender equality expenditure in USD, 2018-2023 .....	64
<b>Figure 9.</b> Average progress towards the achievement of GAP 3 output indicators (vs 2023 milestone) and outcome (vs 2025 target), by Goal Area .....	48	<b>Figure 26.</b> Indicator 5.5 on number of countries taking action to support care work through family-friendly policies .....	65
<b>Figure 10.</b> Total expenditure and proportion of gender transformative with gender equality expenditure by Goal Area in USD, 2023 .....	49	<b>Figure 27.</b> Indicator 5.2.2 on number of countries with social protection programmes that are gender-responsive or lead to transformative gender equality results .....	65
<b>Figure 12.</b> Indicator 1.20 on percentage of pregnant women who benefit from gender-responsive programmes for the prevention of anaemia [adolescents aged 15-19 years] .....	50	<b>Figure 28.</b> Examples of other gender-responsive and gender equality programmes and approaches within UNICEF's social protection portfolio .....	67
<b>Figure 11.</b> Goal Area 1, Total expenditure and proportion of gender equality expenditure in USD, 2018-2023 .....	50	<b>Figure 29.</b> Internal and external enabling and hindering factors .....	76
<b>Figure 13.</b> Examples of gender-responsive and gender equality programming for transformative results programmes and approaches within UNICEF health portfolio .....	52		
<b>Figure 14.</b> Goal Area 2, Total expenditure and proportion of gender equality expenditure in USD, 2018-2023 .....	53		
<b>Figure 15.</b> Indicator 2.1.1 on percentage of countries with inclusive and gender-equitable system for access to learning opportunities ....	53		
<b>Figure 16.</b> Indicator 2.1.4 on number of out-of-school children who accessed education through UNICEF-supported programmes, 2018-2023 ...	54		
<b>Figure 17.</b> Examples of gender-responsive and gender equality programmes and approaches within UNICEF education portfolio .....	55		

<b>Box 1.</b> UNICEF vision in the Gender Policy 2021-2030.....	18	<b>Table 1.</b> Evaluation’s primary data sample (Source: Evaluation Team).....	10
<b>Box 2.</b> Integration of GPR and gender analysis in programme design.....	25	<b>Table 2.</b> Overview of the gender equality approaches adopted in GAP 2 and GAP 3 (Source: Evaluation team).....	47
<b>Box 3.</b> Integrated Outbreak Analytics in DRC: An innovative practice .....	26	<b>Table 3.</b> Examples of promising interventions. ....	71
<b>Box 4.</b> Partnering with grassroots organizations to reach vulnerable girls in humanitarian contexts: Example of Myanmar .....	35	<b>Table 4.</b> Main progress achieved by the GAPs over time .....	81
<b>Box 5.</b> UNICEF formal and informal collaboration gender with other UN agencies on gender: examples from country case studies .....	37		
<b>Box 6.</b> Developing accountabilities for gender equality: example from the comparative study..	40		
<b>Box 7.</b> Education section’s approach to gender .....	52		
<b>Box 8.</b> Child protection section’s approach to gender .....	56		
<b>Box 9.</b> Example of UNICEF’s emergency supply packages for adolescent .....	68		
<b>Box 10.</b> UNICEF’s partnership with Karama and the Wa’ed Network of adolescent girls .....	70		
<b>Box 11.</b> The IT Girls initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina.....	72		

# Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>ADAP</b>	Adolescent Development and Participation	<b>ESAR</b>	Eastern and Southern Africa Region
<b>CCC</b>	Core Commitments for Children	<b>ESARO</b>	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	<b>EQ</b>	Evaluation Question
<b>CMT</b>	Country Management Team	<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>CO</b>	Country Office	<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>COAR</b>	Country Office Annual Report	<b>GAC</b>	Global Affairs Canada
<b>CPD</b>	Country Programme Document	<b>GAP</b>	Gender Action Plan
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child	<b>GBViE</b>	Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies
<b>CSI</b>	Core Standard Indicator	<b>GEM</b>	Gender Equality Marker
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization	<b>GESI</b>	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
<b>DAPM</b>	Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring	<b>GPR</b>	Gender Programme Review
<b>DEI</b>	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>DFAM</b>	Division of Financial and Administrative Management	<b>HPV</b>	Human Papilloma Virus
<b>DHR</b>	Division of Human Resources	<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters
<b>DNH</b>	Do No Harm	<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>DPC</b>	Division of People and Culture	<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo	<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>EAPR</b>	East Asia and the Pacific Region	<b>LACR</b>	Latin America and Caribbean Region
<b>EAPRO</b>	East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office	<b>LGBTQI+</b>	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer/Questioning Intersex and more
<b>ECARO</b>	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office	<b>MENAR</b>	Middle East and North Africa Region
<b>EDGE</b>	Economic Dividends for Gender Equality	<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>EMOPS</b>	Office of Emergency Programmes	<b>MHH</b>	Menstrual Health and Hygiene
<b>ERG</b>	Evaluation Reference Group	<b>MHM</b>	Menstrual Hygiene Management
<b>EO</b>	Evaluation Office	<b>MOPAN</b>	Multilateral Organizational Performance Assessment
		<b>NLP</b>	Natural Language Processing

<b>OIAI</b>	Office of Internal Audit and Investigations
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OR</b>	Other Resources
<b>ORE</b>	Other Resources Emergency
<b>PER</b>	Performance Evaluation Review
<b>PG</b>	Programme Group
<b>PSEAH</b>	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
<b>RO</b>	Regional Office
<b>ROSA</b>	Regional Office for South Asia
<b>RR</b>	Regular Resources
<b>SAR</b>	South Asia Region
<b>SBC</b>	Social Behaviour Change
<b>SBCC</b>	Social and Behavioural Change Communication
<b>SDDirect</b>	Social Development Direct
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SEM</b>	Social Ecological Model
<b>SOGIESC</b>	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics
<b>SQ</b>	Sub-question
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

<b>STEM</b>	Science Technology Engineering Mathematics
<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluation Group
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNGEI</b>	United National Girls' Education Initiative
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UN-SWAP</b>	UN System-wide Action Plan
<b>VAC</b>	Violence Against Children
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence Against Women and Girls
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WCAR</b>	West and Central Africa Region
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WLO</b>	Women Led Organization
<b>WRO</b>	Women's Rights Organization
<b>YAG</b>	Youth Advisory Group

# Glossary<sup>1</sup>

<b>Do No Harm</b>	Do no harm is an approach that ensures communities and individuals are not negatively affected by an intervention, and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result.
<b>Gender equality</b>	The concept that women and men, girls and boys, have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potential, human rights and dignity and for contributing to (and benefiting from) economic, social, cultural and political development. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Gender discriminatory</b>	Favours either gender leading to deepening of gender inequalities. This causes harm.
<b>Gender unaware</b>	Institutions, programmes and/or strategies fail to acknowledge the role of gender or exclusion which perpetuates status quo or potentially worsens inequalities.
<b>Gender-sensitive</b>	Gender is considered and an approach is adopted that addresses the practical, and basic needs of women, girls and structurally marginalized groups.
<b>Gender-responsive</b>	Identifies and addresses different needs of girls and boys, women and men, promoting equal outcomes for all.
<b>Gender equality for transformative results</b>	Explicitly seeks to redress gender inequalities, remove structural barriers and empower disadvantaged groups. The root causes of gender inequality are addressed, and positive norms are promoted.
<b>Intersectionality</b>	The intentional effort to address multiple constraints or deprivations that will achieve a greater impact than just reducing one vulnerability. <sup>3</sup>
<b>Gender mainstreaming/ gender integration</b>	A strategy to accelerate progress on women's and girls' rights and equality in relation to men and boys. This is the chosen approach of the United Nations system and international community toward implementation of women's and girls' rights, as a sub-set of human rights to which the United Nations dedicates itself. Gender equality is the goal. Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for girls and boys and men and women of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of girls, women, boys and men an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes so that they benefit from equality, and inequality is not perpetuated. <sup>4</sup>

<b>Social ecological model</b>	Children and adolescent's optimal development and well-being are contingent upon interacting biological and environmental/contextual factors including family, community, sociocultural, economic, political, and legal influences, and the services and structures that surround them, all affecting their development through the life course. These factors have been articulated through various frameworks – child development theories, social ecological models and studies of children's resilience in the face of adversity – all of which emphasize that children, adolescents and families bring their own skills, assets and resources for coping with challenges. The social ecological model illustrates the importance of networks of people and structures that surround a child or adolescent, safeguarding their well-being and sense of agency, and supporting their optimal development. <sup>5</sup>
<b>Social inclusion</b>	This is the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to development opportunities. These barriers may be formal (such as written laws on spousal property), or informal (such as time girls spend carrying water instead of attending school). Social inclusion is about evening the playing field by making the 'rules of the game' fairer and ensuring all groups in society are engaged and supported to participate and benefit.



## Executive summary

### Introduction

#### **Gender equality remains at the front and centre of the international development agenda.**

UNICEF has a key role in this agenda, as one of the major United Nations (UN) agencies, and with a unique contribution owing to its focus on children and adolescents and diverse partnerships. The Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2 (2018-2021) and GAP 3 (2022-2025) and the Gender Policy (2021-2030) commit UNICEF to an ambitious vision for gender equality and the empowerment of all children, adolescents, and women. Ambitious objectives go hand-in-hand with a determination to learn. As such, the UNICEF Evaluation Office, in partnership with the gender team in the Programme Group (PG), contracted Social Development Direct (SDDirect) in November 2023 to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the implementation, and the results achieved through the Gender Policy and the GAPs from 2018 to 2023, including progress made by the organization in 2024.

**The purpose of the evaluation was to use the findings and recommendations to inform a possible new GAP or an alternative form of strategic document to inform the next Strategic Plan.**

This evaluation also aimed to strengthen the integration of gender equality across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus agenda, where further evidence and action is needed. The findings and recommendations are of interest both to policymakers and programme staff at UNICEF headquarters (HQ) in PG and the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), as well as the Division of Data Analytics, Planning and Monitoring (DAPM), the newly created Division of People and Culture (DPC), the Office of Internal Audit and Investigation (OIAI), the Legal Office, the Office of the Executive Director and UNICEF leadership more broadly, including at the regional and country levels.

**The specific objectives of the evaluation were to assess the relevance and coherence of the current Gender Policy and GAPs to support gender equality and adolescent girls' empowerment from the point of view of UNICEF's mandate and the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP); to assess the coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability in implementing the gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers of the GAPs; and to determine the extent to which UNICEF meets programmatic results on gender equality across the five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan.**

The evaluation covered the evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability and had three main evaluation questions:

- ▶ To what extent are the current Gender Policy and the GAP 3 conceptual framework well-designed, relevant, and coherent to respond to the various needs of all children, adolescents and women, national government priorities, UNICEF normative framework (i.e., Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs), and the organization's commitments to the UN-SWAP on gender equality?
- ▶ How well are the gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers of the GAPs implemented across UNICEF policies, practices, systems, organizational commitments and accountability mechanisms at all levels?
- ▶ To what extent have UNICEF programmatic results for gender equality throughout the life course been met across all five Goal Areas, particularly to advance adolescent girls' leadership and well-being, in both development and humanitarian settings?

## Methodology

**This was a mixed method, theory-based evaluation** involving the participatory development of a Theory of Change (ToC), an extensive review of secondary evidence (468 documents manually and through natural language processing (NLP)); eight country case studies involving a diverse set of 518 internal and external stakeholders (including 303 women, 183 men, 33 prefer not to say / data not available); key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) at the global and regional level with 64 people (including 12 women, 8 men, 44 people prefer not to say / data not available); an all staff survey (884 responses out of 17,656 staff); and a comparative analysis looking at differing approaches to the integration of gender across similar organizations: Global Affairs Canada, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

**The evaluation faced some limitations** including limited data and the absence of a baseline and limited impact evaluations of programmes. In addition, the evaluation team were unable to speak to advisors across the different sections and cross-cutting areas to the same extent (e.g., there was less input from those working on climate change and humanitarian response). To mitigate these limitations, the evaluation collected and analysed a large body of qualitative and quantitative evidence to provide an indicative picture of the progress made in each Goal Area. There were also challenges analysing GAP Standard Index data, and programmatic indicators because of a change in framework. At country level, the team experienced challenges in the availability, and occasionally relevance of informants, as well as insecurity in some locations. The evaluation team was able to adapt their approach and secure participation from all stakeholder groups envisaged in the design, surpassing the targeted number in most categories.

## Key findings

**While the GAP and Gender Policy were both relevant to the context at the time they were developed, new challenges have emerged.** A poly-crisis, including climate change, health emergencies, conflict and demographic shifts, the slow progress on Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) and the rise in anti-gender ideologies, has exacerbated existing challenges and surfaced new ones. In addition, whilst the GAP is anchored in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, which gives traction to the gender agenda, there is still "competition for bandwidth" between the change strategies and cross-cutting themes and insufficient consideration for, and articulation of, intersectionality.

**UNICEF Gender Policy establishes a long-term vision for gender equality, to which the GAP broadly aligns, but UNICEF's mandate on gender equality is inconsistent across the different normative guidance.** This contributes to different understandings about gender equality and how women's rights contribute to children's rights. Further, while the GAP is designed to support the operationalization of the Gender Policy, it does not establish sufficient accountabilities and implementation procedures to ensure it is consistently operationalized. There could also be greater consideration of working in humanitarian contexts and the CCCs and sectoral policies.

**Gender equality programming for transformative results is increasingly integrated in planning** and a growing number of COs have contextualized GAPs, although their use is limited by a lack of alignment with sectoral plans. Gender analysis and research are increasingly conducted, although the quality and usage are variable, and there is a gap between the generation of research from interventions piloted and its use to scale up interventions.

**The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of gender institutional enablers has been strengthened, while programmatic M&E is less ambitious in documenting the contribution to gender equality programming for transformative results**, and the monitoring system is primarily geared toward upward accountability.

**UNICEF is not meeting its overall target on financial resources for gender and the distribution of funds is skewed towards emergency programming**, with gaps in funding for organizational capacity and some of the Goal Areas. Gender resources tracking has improved with better systems in place, but these are considered complex to use and not implemented consistently.

**While promising results have been achieved in setting up a solid gender architecture, the integration of gender equality could be strengthened.** For example, while UNICEF has continued to develop trainings on gender equality, the roll-out of these is not moving at pace and there are some gaps in the scope and content in terms of addressing individual values, attitudes and biases, and providing specific sectoral guidance.

**UNICEF has an increasing number of partnerships with women's and girls' organizations, but less so with grassroots organizations.** Grassroots organizations wanting more ambitious and meaningful partnerships with UNICEF face significant barriers. To leverage this collaboration, UNICEF has invested in strengthening its partners' capacity for gender equality and advocacy, but these efforts have been insufficient to achieve sustainable results.

**There is a lack of clarity regarding UNICEF's comparative advantage in gender equality.** UNICEF has established joint programmes with other UN agencies to promote gender equality, however this lack of understanding creates the risk of missed opportunities for collaboration or duplication of efforts at the country level.

**UNICEF's large programme footprint puts it in a strong position to advocate more strongly for girls and child rights.** UNICEF has established partnerships with national governments and strengthened the capacity of national actors to ensure sustainable gender equality programming for transformative results.

**There is consistent leadership promoting the GAP, and wider recognition that gender is everyone's responsibility, but a lack of formal accountability measures means not everyone puts this responsibility into practice.** Senior leadership has been instrumental in raising the profile of the GAP but may need to be consolidated especially at middle management level. Gender is also increasingly perceived as the responsibility of everyone, but in practice, wider staff ownership is limited by a lack of formal and precise accountabilities for gender beyond gender-focused staff.

**There has been increased emphasis on improving gender equality within the workplace, but there is scope to improve.** While gender parity is achieved at HQ, there remain discrepancies in different staff categories. UNICEF recruitment policy tends to consider parity in isolation from the broader goal of improving gender equality in the workplace. UNICEF staffing policy has become more intentional in considering gender equality, benefiting staff overall and steps have been taken to address issues of culture, but there is scope to improve these policies, as well as ensuring a more systematic roll-out.

**Indicators on GAP programming and expenditure show there has been progress in integrating gender across the Goal Areas, with different levels of investment.** In general, the approach to gender integration adopted is more responsive than transformative, with transformative programming found more in Goal Area 3 (child protection). UNICEF gender equality expenditure has increased but expenditure in all but one Goal Area (Goal Area 3) remains lower than UN-SWAP's recommendation. Overall results are primarily achieved by gender-focused programmes.

## BOX

## GENDER EQUALITY ACROSS THE FIVE GOAL AREAS



**Goal Area 1 - Every child including adolescents survives and thrives with access to nutritious diets, quality health care, nurturing practices and essential supplies: Programming focuses primarily on interventions that are gender-sensitive or -responsive such as improved access and uptake of services by women and girls.** Many of the programmes target women based on their biological and gendered roles, and there is limited engagement with boys and men.



**Goal Area 2 - Every child, including adolescents, learns and acquires skills for the future: Results appear uneven but with notable country level achievements in upstream system level change, as well as with marginalized and out-of-school adolescent girls. A comprehensive strategy promoting gender equality has also been developed, however, its implementation is constrained by limited gender expertise** within the education sector at the CO level and within national education departments. This has led to missed opportunities for addressing harmful gender and social norms at scale.



**Goal Area 3 - Every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful behaviors: The child protection section has adopted a more strategic and evidence-based approach to gender integration and there is a significant opportunity for more transformative work.** UNICEF focus on prevention of violence has also grown over time. However, UNICEF needs to address the quality of programming. Joint child protection programmes have shown positive results in policy change but their approach to gender equality programming for transformative results could be strengthened.



**Goal Area 4 - Every child including adolescents has access to water, sanitation and hygiene and lives in a safe and sustainable climate and environment: UNICEF's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) strategy sets out an ambition for more gender equality programming work, however, current programme and policy interventions are mostly gender-sensitive or -responsive** focusing on improved access and uptake of services.



**Goal Area 5 - Every child including adolescents has access to inclusive social protection and lives free from poverty: An increase in dedicated resources, gender-related evidence and expertise have contributed to good progress on gender integration.** As a result of these investments, UNICEF has seen significant results in the uptake and integration of gender in social protection. More could be done to ensure systematic integration of gender across the COs, and to move beyond gender-responsive programming when/where possible.

**UNICEF efforts to mainstream gender in the humanitarian sector and its climate change work are reflected by the increased guidance in place,** increased gender analysis, disaggregation of data and the involvement of women's and girls' organizations. However, the ambitions set have not fully materialized, partly because of insufficient gender technical expertise.

**GAP 3 priorities on adolescent girls have gained momentum and a growing number of programmes are working with young girls.**

UNICEF has successfully used its comparative advantage to support individual change among adolescent girls and strengthen youth and adolescent girl networks and mobilization. Wider changes to social norms across the social ecological model (SEM) have generally been slower, or on a smaller scale. Girls may experience greater risks of backlash and stigma if they are not supported by their surrounding community.

**UNICEF ambition for transformative programming has created an impetus to go beyond gender-sensitive programming. However, several factors limit the agency's ability to sustainably transform social and gender norms,** including the depth of gender analysis, existing programming modalities, and staff's limited understanding of gender equality.

**Internally, work and impact have been enabled but hindering factors prevent systematic progress.** Thanks to strong and committed leadership on gender equality; buy-in and motivation from a growing pool of staff; accountability mechanisms to ensure gender is everyone's business; gender analysis; and monitoring, communicating and discussing gender results during annual plan review, there has been significant progress. However, hindering factors including insufficient quality of (intersectional) gender analysis to guide transformative programming; a limited understanding of what gender equality programming entails; and lack of operational guidance prohibit all teams and offices from improving the integration of gender. Other relevant factors are the short-term nature of interventions; cumbersome processes to partner with small organizations; quality challenges regarding programme design and monitoring, lesson learning, and the limited leverage of gender staff.

**There are several external enabling and hindering factors.** Enabling factors include working with governments that are supportive of gender equality and having meaningful partnerships with women-led and youth-led organizations. The use of digital technology to engage with hard-to-reach or mobile communities can also be impactful. Conversely, hindering factors include remoteness and limited accessibility (e.g., in conflict settings); high mobility; conservative governments and a restrictive environment for CSOs to do rights-based work.

## Conclusions

Several overarching conclusions have emerged from the analysis undertaken for the evaluation.

**Conclusion 1: UNICEF is on the right trajectory and momentum should be harnessed through a GAP 4 and a new Strategic Plan that focus on the operationalization of UNICEF transformative ambitions on gender equality by addressing challenges related to the institutional enablers including:**

- ▶ Strengthening accountabilities across a continuum ranging from the individual staff-level to HQ, regional offices (ROs) and COs across sectors.
- ▶ Reforming UNICEF programming and partnership modalities.
- ▶ Strengthening accountabilities on gender expenditure and measures of outcome level gender results.

Whilst the GAPs have established a solid foundation to promote gender equality and progress has been made, gender is not yet fully embedded within the organization. UNICEF needs to better respond to the current context and contribute to gender equality results at scale. Various accountability mechanisms for gender exist, through M&E systems, benchmarking and the gender architecture, but there is insufficient accountability at the country and individual level, especially amongst senior and middle management at CO level and across sectors. In addition, more needs to be done to strengthen the architecture at the regional and country level. The GAP M&E system has improved and contributes to strengthening accountability and benchmarking; however, the indicators are not relevant to inform and monitor the implementation of gender equality interventions. The distribution of financial resources focuses insufficiently on the core capacity of the organization, and

programmatic areas with the bigger budget shares also having a lesser proportion of gender equality expenditure, reflecting a missed opportunity to leverage UNICEF status and achieve results at scale.

**UNICEF programmes are increasingly gender-responsive and pay attention to the needs of women and girls** (although more can be done to take an intersectional approach to support women and girls in all their diversity, e.g., girls with disabilities). UNICEF is effective at delivering interventions focused on the empowerment and leadership of young people (adolescent girls in particular) but is still not as effective on gender equality, which requires tackling the root causes of gender inequality and working across the SEM. UNICEF is delivering good results on gender to different degrees across the Goal Areas but **to move the needle and achieve transformative results, and go to scale, programming modalities need to be reformed and meaningful partnerships with CSOs need to be prioritized** (especially women-led and girl-led organizations).

**Conclusion 2: UNICEF has established a bold gender equality vision with GAP 3**, and the Gender Policy, supported and promoted by leadership and a pool of high quality, committed gender staff and champions. **But UNICEF ambitions on gender equality are not universally owned and understood** and the GAP expectation that “gender is the responsibility of all” is not yet a reality and many staff do not know yet how to operationalize the work on gender. **Capacity remains the main “Achilles heel”** but the appetite for learning on gender should be harnessed by UNICEF to ensure that the “ambition is translated into practice”.

**Conclusion 3: The current definition of gender equality is not consistent across guiding documents and among staff**, which leaves room for personal interpretation and hampers operationalization and broad-based buy-in.

**Now, how can UNICEF leverage its comparative advantage to meaningfully contribute to gender equality through programmatic priorities?**

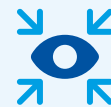
- ▶ **By building on the momentum around young girls**, while developing a **more explicit narrative placing gender equality as central to children’s rights and** clearly delineating its comparative advantage vis-à-vis UNFPA.
- ▶ **By emphasizing the gender socialization approach** which is well-aligned to UNICEF’s unique focus on children and adolescents and

lends itself to working along the SEM. This would resolve the pertinent question on “involving boys” and give further impetus to parenting interventions.

- ▶ **By leveraging the scale of its programmes and multisectoral positioning** through the Goal Areas, as UNICEF’s multisectoral mandate is particularly suited to tackle the root causes of gender inequality. This would require **strengthening gender equality mainstreaming** efforts, including in humanitarian programmes.

**Conclusion 4: UNICEF is a better workplace than it used to be for women due to efforts to address gender imbalances in staffing and the workplace, and the growing number of “gender activists”.** Measures to ensure parity, however, are not always applied as intended and more needs to be done to ensure women’s well-being in the workplace, including on prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH). The recruitment of young staff that are passionate about gender equality has brought new energy to the organization using the Gender Policy and the GAP as a rallying point. This is encouraging for the future.





## Recommendations



**Recommendation 1: Update the vision for gender equality, refer to it consistently, and ensure alignment between the GAP 4 and the new Strategic Plan, and all policy frameworks across goal areas and in the humanitarian sector.**

**UNICEF mandate:** UNICEF should update its vision in the new Strategic Plan with a more explicit narrative placing gender equality and women’s rights as central to the attainment of children’s rights and how they are linked. The GAP 4 should elaborate on this, while also referencing the relevant human rights frameworks (e.g., CRC, the new UNICEF Child Rights Framework for Action, CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration). UNICEF should also ensure alignment between the updated vision of the new Strategic Plan, Gender Policy, GAP 4 programmatic priorities and sectoral strategies, including on intersectionality, and cross-reference the GAP and the CCCs more explicitly.





The new Strategic Plan should clearly outline results for gender equality.

	<b>Priority:</b> Very high
	<b>Timeframe:</b> Within six months, while GAP 4 is prepared
	<b>Responsible Units:</b> Gender team in PG, in collaboration with Goal Areas Directors, the EMOPS, and ROs, under the leadership of the PG Director
	<b>Cost implications:</b> Staff time







**Recommendation 2: Develop a GAP 4 that is more explicit on “how to” operationalize it at all levels, and implement programmes for gender equality.**

**GAP 4 and contextualization:** UNICEF should develop a new GAP that sets out a guiding framework and priorities for programmatic and institutional results on gender equality, followed by operationalization guidelines in key areas. These guidelines should include a menu of gender equality options that could be implemented under each programmatic priority or Goal Area, including cross-cutting issues. Guidance on the development of national GAPs should also be developed, as well as how to link them to gender programme reviews and country programme document (CPD) reviews. Senior-level management meetings at HQ, regional and country levels, and in emergencies, should include gender priorities for management reflection and action regularly.





	<b>Priority:</b> Very high
	<b>Timeframe:</b> Within six months, when GAP 4 is prepared
	<b>Responsible Units:</b> Gender team in PG in collaboration with the Division of Finance and Administrative Management (DFAM), ROs and COs, under the leadership of the PG Director
	<b>Cost implications:</b> Staff time

**Accountabilities and gender architecture:**





UNICEF should strengthen accountabilities to implement the GAP among senior and middle management across sectors at HQ, regional and country levels. This can be done by: updating job descriptions and performance evaluation reviews; ensuring that gender specialists report to the country representative or deputy representative; appointing sectoral gender specialists embedded in sections; ensuring that gender focal points attend country management team (CMT) meetings and that gender working groups include staff from across sections and operations and are chaired by the country representative or deputy representative; and appointing gender specialists based on merit and context, not just on budget (i.e.. country offices demonstrating increasing gender results and portfolios or proving that the context warrants a specialist should be prioritized).

	<b>Priority:</b> Very high
	<b>Timeframe:</b> Within six months, while GAP 4 is prepared
	<b>Responsible Units:</b> Division of People and Culture (DPC), in collaboration with the gender team in PG, ROs and COs
	<b>Cost implications:</b> Re-purposing and/or upgrading some posts, with new funding in country offices





**Financing:** UNICEF should strengthen support to country offices to use expenditure tracking more effectively; incentivize country office senior management to spend at least 15 per cent of unearmarked funding for gender equality programming work; ensure that 15 per cent of gender equality expenditure is reached across Goal Areas; emphasize achievements towards increasing levels of integrated expenses; and track and report on regular resources dedicated to strengthening internal capacity on gender at headquarters.

	<b>Priority:</b> Very high
	<b>Timeframe:</b> Within the next twelve months, while GAP 4 is prepared
	<b>Responsible Units:</b> DFAM, in collaboration with the gender team in PG, and DAPM
	<b>Cost implications:</b> Staff time




**Programming modalities:** UNICEF should encourage country offices to develop gender equality programmes that align with the CPD cycle and last approximately five years, as well as align UNICEF gender programming processes to “gold programming standards”, as recommended by the new UNICEF Country Programme Planning Guidance, to ensure that the incremental steps towards gender equality programming for transformative results are clear and reflected in M&E frameworks. The participatory development of the theory of change is also a pivotal step in motivating and mobilizing staff on gender equality programming.

	<b>Priority:</b> High
	<b>Timeframe:</b> Within the next twelve months, while GAP 4 is prepared
	<b>Responsible Units:</b> DAPM, ROs and COs, with the gender team in PG and regional gender advisers
	<b>Cost implications:</b> Staff time, with some costs saving in the long-run





**M&E:** UNICEF should ensure that impact and outcome level targets, and core standard indicators across Goal Areas better capture change at the outcome level; and consider using progress markers or shifting towards indicators that aim to capture contributions towards systemic change.

	<b>Priority:</b> High
	<b>Timeframe:</b> Within six months, while GAP 4 is prepared
	<b>Responsible Units:</b> Gender team in PG, in collaboration with DAPM
	<b>Cost implications:</b> Staff time

**Partnerships:** UNICEF should invest in the institutional capacity of civil society organizations working on gender, and revise partnership procedures to enable working more with small CSOs, especially women- and girl-led organizations.

	<b>Priority:</b> High
	<b>Timeframe:</b> Within the next twelve months
	<b>Responsible Units:</b> Legal office working with DFAM, DAPM and the gender team in PG
	<b>Cost implications:</b> Staff time

**Gender analysis:** UNICEF should make gender programme reviews mandatory in every CPD, conduct robust gender analysis of all sector portfolios, and ensure that they are reviewed on a regular basis to inform programming, as well as deepen the quality of analysis to focus more on barriers and power.

	<b>Priority:</b> High
	<b>Timeframe:</b> Within the next twelve months, while GAP 4 is prepared
	<b>Responsible Units:</b> Gender team in PG, in coordination with DAPM, and regional gender advisers and regional chiefs of programme and planning
	<b>Cost implications:</b> Staff time



**Recommendation 3: Train, motivate and hold staff accountable for the operationalization of gender integration across all sectors.**

**Technical staff capacities:** UNICEF should develop a gender equality capacity strengthening plan and roll out training (in person as well as online) that is more utilization-focused, more practical, supports peer learning, is tailored for different sectors, and touches on intersectionality. Training should also address personal and organizational biases, attitudes and norms, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

	<b>Priority:</b> High
	<b>Timeframe:</b> Within a year
	<b>Responsible Units:</b> Learning and development team within DPC, working with the gender team
	<b>Cost implications:</b> Staff and consultants' time where needed



**Recommendation 4: Review recruitment, parity and workplace well-being policies, procedures, and practices in line with UNICEF vision for gender equality.**

**Human resources:** UNICEF should review and update policies and address the existing practice of recruiting male staff when the 70 per cent threshold is reached, as well as make sure that recruitment processes ask about personal values to ensure they align with UNICEF values.

	<b>Priority:</b> High
	<b>Timeframe:</b> Within a year
	<b>Responsible Units:</b> DPC, regional chiefs of human resources, and regional gender advisers, in collaboration with the gender team
	<b>Cost implications:</b> Staff time

**Workplace culture:** UNICEF should provide better support to women, including those with children and create more safe spaces. Develop clearer PSEAH, reporting mechanisms and speed up the management of cases by OIAI. Gender gap surveys and the well-being of women should be monitored more regularly.

	<b>Priority:</b> High
	<b>Timeframe:</b> Within a year
	<b>Responsible Units:</b> DPC, OIAI, regional chiefs of human resources, gender specialists and PSEAH specialists in ROs and COs, in collaboration with the gender team
	<b>Cost implications:</b> Staff time



# 1

## Introduction

### **Gender equality remains at the front and centre of the international development agenda.**

Despite important progress since the adoption of the 1995 gender equality and women's rights landmark document, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, no country is fully on track to meet all the gender equality targets under SDG 5; a challenge evident in many of the indicators across the Gender Development Index. Movement for change requires leadership from national and local governments, with support from organizations of all sizes, from grassroots women's rights organizations (WROs) to large UN agencies and partners.

### **UNICEF has a key role in this agenda, as the biggest organization within the UN system.**

Guided by the CRC, UNICEF brings to the movement for gender equality its focus on children and adolescents (especially adolescent girls); diverse partnerships; systems strengthening for improved services; and work in the social norms arena. UNICEF's mandate, ambition and expertise, underpinned by its experience, footprint and resources, are huge assets in the realization of the SDGs and other gender equality related international targets.

### **Ambitious objectives go hand-in-hand with a determination to learn.**

UNICEF 'bolder and more ambitious vision for gender equality and the empowerment of all children, adolescents, and women'<sup>6</sup> will only be achievable if the organization is able to scrutinize, learn and adapt its approaches and programmes over the course of the decade. As such, the UNICEF Evaluation Office (EO) contracted [Social Development Direct](#)<sup>7</sup> (SDDirect) in November 2023 to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the implementation, and the results achieved through the new Gender Policy for 2021-2030 and the Gender Action Plans (GAPs) for 2018-2021 and 2022-2025 since the last evaluation<sup>8</sup> concluded in 2019.

### **The purpose of the evaluation was to fulfil UNICEF learning and accountability needs to measure progress toward gender equality.**

This noble agenda frames this important and forward-looking evaluation, which has a clear and practical application, as its findings and recommendations will help inform a possible new GAP or an alternative form of strategic document that will inform the next Strategic Plan. More broadly, this evaluation aimed to strengthen the integration of gender equality across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus agenda, where further evidence and action is needed as girls and women continue to experience more severe hardship during emergency and humanitarian situations.

**This global, strategic evaluation presents findings and recommendations that are of interest both to policymakers and programme staff at headquarters (HQ) in the Programme Group (PG) and the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), as well as the Division of Data Analytics, Planning and Monitoring (DAPM), the newly created Division of People and Culture (DPC), the Office of Internal Audit and Investigation (OIAI), the Legal Office, the Office of the Executive Director and UNICEF leadership, including the Executive Director, as well as Regional Offices (ROs) and Country Offices (COs) overseeing or managing multiple programmes and partnerships across the Goal Areas.** Understanding the progress made by the organization at these different levels with respect to its GAPs and assessing the coherence and relevance of the Gender Policy, are critical steppingstones on UNICEF's pathway to achieving its vision. Celebrating good practice, identifying progress and highlighting areas needing additional attention are all elements in this learning journey, to which we hope this evaluation is a helpful contribution.

**This report is structured in six sections.** Following this introduction, Section 2 provides the background including key elements of the Gender Policy and GAPs, the context of the evaluation, as well as the purpose, objectives and scope. Section 3 presents the evaluation methodology used. Section 4 presents the findings for each evaluation question and Section 5 presents the conclusions derived from the findings. Section 6 contains the recommendations. The report is also supplemented by 16 annexes which are included in a separate document.



## 2

## Background

### Context of the evaluation

UNICEF efforts to promote gender equality are driven by the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), as well as the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development and the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (VAC). In emergencies, UNICEF work is informed by the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action (revised in 2020), which promotes gender equality in all humanitarian actions.

As a participating entity of the UN-SWAP on gender equality and women's empowerment, UNICEF annually reports on the 17 common performance indicators. UNICEF contributes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, SDG 5, to achieve gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls, with a focus on target 5.1 on ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere and 5.2 on ending all forms of violence against and exploitation of women and girls.

Gender equality was explicitly integrated as a cross-cutting issue in the UNICEF Strategic Plan (2006-2009) and the UNICEF Policy<sup>9</sup> on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Girls and Women in 2010. The first GAP (2014-2017) aligned with the

Strategic Plan (2014-2017) It focused on a dual track approach, with mainstreaming and targeted priorities and sought to improve the effectiveness of the integration of gender within UNICEF systems, by capturing and benchmarking results and performance related to capacity and system strengthening, resources and partnerships, and recommended interconnected programming to improve the well-being of adolescent girls.

GAP 2 (2018-2021) and GAP 3 (2022-2025) were subsequently developed, and, following the principal recommendation of the evaluation of GAPS 1 and 2 in 2019, UNICEF developed the Gender Policy 2021-2030. The Policy "commits UNICEF to a bolder and more ambitious vision for gender equality and the empowerment of all children, adolescents, and women." It explicitly articulates the organization's gender equality ambitions to "work actively to remove the underlying structural barriers – such as harmful social norms and gendered power systems – that perpetuate inequalities". It acknowledges gender diversity, proposes to uplift adolescent girls' rights and deepen partnerships with women's and girls' rights organizations by 2030.

Gender equality is a key theme in UNICEF work. It is a cross-cutting focus, a core principle, and a change strategy (gender-transformative programming) within the Strategic Plan for 2022–2025.

Since the development of GAP 2 in 2019, it has become apparent that the situation of women, girls and children is not improving as fast as envisaged in the SDG targets. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected women and girls disproportionately. At the same time, the world witnesses a backlash against women's rights, with an increasing number of countries introducing gender discriminatory laws, which are making it increasingly difficult to engage in transformative gender work – a challenge that many international organizations are grappling with. Women and girls also experience the greatest impacts of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses unique threats to their livelihoods, health, and safety.

In parallel, increased evidence on how to tackle gender norms and a growing consensus on the need to adopt gender equality approaches in programming and work with women-, girl-, and youth-led organizations to ensure sustainable structural changes are facilitating the work. In this context, the UN has reaffirmed the need to accelerate efforts to achieve gender equality through the Decade of Action towards the 2030 Agenda. The UN Reform accompanies this new impetus.

## Purpose, objectives and scope

### Purpose

**This evaluation is global and strategic in nature, spanning UNICEF work at global, regional and country levels,** with primary data collected in eight countries located in the seven regions in which UNICEF operates. Its purpose is to assess the extent to which UNICEF has integrated gender equality concerns in its normative guidance frameworks, within the institution and through its programmes because of the new Gender Policy and the GAP 2 and GAP 3. It is an opportunity to identify good practices and lessons learned to help UNICEF deepen its work on gender moving forward. Findings and recommendations, that were co-created with UNICEF, will be used to inform a possible new GAP or an alternative form of a strategic document and build stronger accountability for gender within the organization.

**The evaluation is part of the plan for global evaluations attached to the Strategic Plan,** and its findings will be presented to UNICEF Executive Board in February 2025. The EO has ensured the independence, impartiality and credibility of the evaluation process as per UNICEF Evaluation Policy (2023).

### Objectives

The specific objectives of the evaluation are as follows:

- ▶ To assess the relevance and coherence of the current Gender Policy and the GAPs to support gender equality and adolescent girls' empowerment from the point of view of UNICEF mandate (i.e., CRC, CEDAW, CRDP, CCCs) and the organization's commitments to the UN-SWAP, as captured in the Strategic Plan in development and humanitarian settings. The recommendations will help reimagine the current GAP framework and ToC and inform its implementation.
- ▶ To assess the coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability in implementing the gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers of the GAPs across UNICEF policies, practices, systems, programming processes, organizational commitments, and accountability mechanisms. The recommendations will help strengthen organizational arrangements to create an enabling environment for the GAP.
- ▶ To determine the extent to which UNICEF meets the programmatic results set for all children, adolescents and women on gender equality across the five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan and in both development and humanitarian settings.

### Scope

The evaluation covers the implementation of the Gender Policy and the GAPs across UNICEF, covering the performance and results of UNICEF support for gender equality along the triple nexus from 2018 to 2023, including progress made in 2024.<sup>10</sup> The evaluation builds on the previous formative evaluation published in 2019 and assesses the previous GAP 2, the current GAP 3, and the Gender Policy 2021-2030. The evaluation also follows up on the UN-SWAP to assess equal representation and capacity for implementing gender equality across the organization (staff, management, gender specialists, and the gender team in PG) to deepen understanding of areas for further improvement.

The evaluation covers the following components:

- ▶ **Gender policy and GAPs conceptual framework:** This component analyses the current Gender Policy, the GAPs conceptual framework and the ToC and how it is rendered into work across regions to reflect evolving gender realities, particularly concerning gender and social norms. The evaluation examines the strategic positioning of gender in UNICEF's Strategic Plan as a cross-cutting programme and a change strategy. It draws comparisons with gender strategies and gender action plans with other comparable organizations.
- ▶ **Institutional enablers and their implementation:** This component analyses the extent to which UNICEF policies, practices, and systems are enabling the advancement of gender equality. It assesses how the GAP is implemented, including programming processes, monitoring systems, financial resources, leadership and accountability, at the HQ, regional and country level. This evaluation component examines how UNICEF is nurturing and leveraging partnerships with governments, feminist organizations and networks led by women, girls and young people, raising their voices as change agents and partners in programming and advocacy. The evaluation also assesses efforts to embed a gender perspective within national systems and structures and the absorption of UNICEF gender-related initiatives by partners. UNICEF institutional enablers for gender equality are benchmarked against those of other UN organizations to identify good practice and areas for further improvement.
- ▶ **Programmatic results and integration of gender equality across programmes:** This component takes stock of the implemented programmes and assesses progress on the outputs and the contribution to programmatic outcomes as defined in the GAPs, based on an analysis of primary data. In particular, the evaluation assesses the extent to which UNICEF has mainstreamed gender equality across its five Goal Areas, looks at results for adolescent girls and discusses existing progress towards changing norms. The evaluation also considers the integration of gender equality within the humanitarian, development and peace nexus agenda.

The evaluation does not measure attribution but instead focuses on UNICEF contribution to the outcome- and impact-level results, as defined in the section below.

## Users

The main stakeholders<sup>11</sup> for the delivery of the GAP are:

- ▶ Primary duty bearers such as ministries at country level; other UN agencies (UNFPA, UN Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Food Programme (WFP)); donors; non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and CSOs at different levels, the private sector; research institutes and universities.
- ▶ Secondary duty bearers such as NGOs/CSOs including gender focused and others who are sub-contracted by government or UNICEF.
- ▶ Rights holders such as communities engaged in implementing projects of UNICEF and adolescents.

A sample of these stakeholders were consulted during this evaluation (*see section 3*).

Beyond the UNICEF gender team in PG, the primary users of this evaluation are UNICEF management and employees at HQ, including the new DPC, ROs and CO levels. Other secondary users include the Executive Board, other UN agencies, governments, donors, partner organizations within and outside the UN, women-led and girl-led organizations and young people.



# 3

## Evaluation methodology

### Evaluation design and approach

**The evaluation adopted a theory-based approach**, guided by an overarching ToC (see Annex 2). The ToC was developed and refined through participatory workshops with UNICEF during the inception phase and directly informed the contents of the evaluation matrix (Annex 3). The evaluation attempts to validate the achievement of GAP 2 and GAP 3 outputs and outcomes along the results chain, emphasizing the causal pathways along the ToC and how results have been achieved. Importantly, this evaluation also tests the assumptions along the different pathways of change.

**The evaluation was guided by appreciative inquiry**<sup>12</sup>. This approach was adapted by the evaluation to inform learnings on what has worked well in the implementation the GAPs and the Gender Policy.

**A participatory approach was embedded throughout the evaluation, ensuring the meaningful engagement of key stakeholders**, outlined below:

- ▶ **Evaluation Office (EO)** – In delivering this assignment, the evaluation team has coordinated closely with UNICEF EO. Two members of the EO were embedded in the team to provide access to key information and stakeholders, and support with the use of natural language processing (NLP) to analyse large amounts of organizational data (see section 4.1.3).

- ▶ **Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)** – The evaluation relied on an ERG to ensure ownership of the research and provide expert advice and inputs to the evaluation team. The ERG was consulted during inception and on the interim report. The comments received informed the final version of both documents. This evaluation report will also be presented and discussed with the ERG.

- ▶ **Youth Advisory Group (YAG)** – The EO established for the first time a YAG to facilitate active youth engagement and ensure that the voices, experience, and priorities of adolescent girls and boys are reflected in the evaluation. The YAG is made up of 12 members aged 18-25 years, representing 10 countries.<sup>13</sup> The YAG was engaged at the inception, data collection and reporting stages, to receive feedback and develop youth-friendly dissemination products.

More information on the composition of the ERG and YAG, and their respective responsibilities, can be found in Annexes 4 and 5.

**Guiding principles for this evaluation include a focus on utilization, feminist research principles and the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) human-rights based approach.** The assessment was driven by a commitment to ensuring that its findings directly inform decision-making and improved programming, with a view to benefitting rights holders, in particular adolescent girls and young women, and

adolescent boys and young men, and strengthening the integration of gender within UNICEF structures and systems. Throughout the evaluation, the team prioritized reaching a diverse range of stakeholders and rights-holders and aimed to disaggregate the data by at minimum sex and age, and where safe, disability status and other identity.<sup>14</sup>

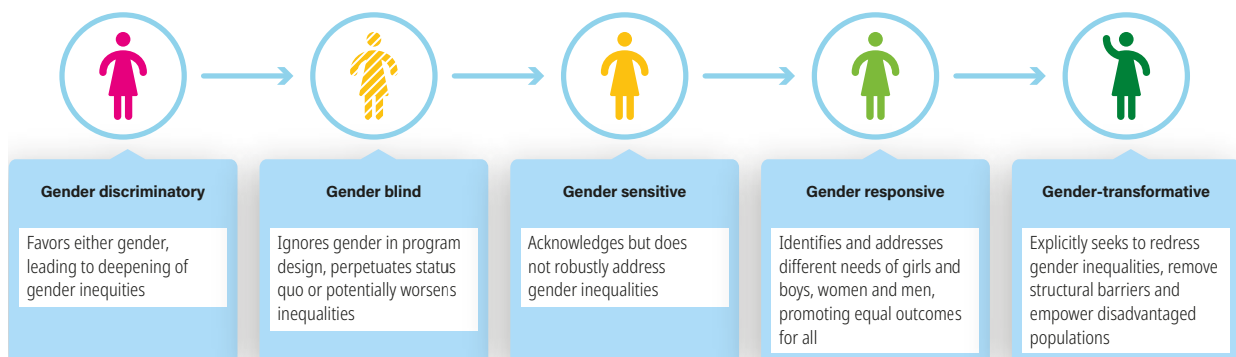
**The evaluation was guided by a commitment to ethical principles and safeguarding** such as the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (2008), UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection And Analysis, World Health Organization's ethical research guidance, UNICEF Ethical Guidelines and Standards for Research and Evaluation and Ethical Research Involving Children (2013), and UNICEF Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation (2019).

In line with the principles of accountability and Do No Harm (DNH), the principles translated into several practical measures to ensure confidentiality, informed consent, data protection, reduction of direct and indirect risks to interviewees, safe and meaningful participation, independence, impartiality, credibility, avoidance of conflicts of interest, and accountability. All the evaluation team received an induction on SDDirect's Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults (Safeguarding) Policy and Ethical Policy<sup>15</sup>.

The evaluation also received approval from the International Review Board for data collection.

**The evaluation used the UNICEF gender integration continuum<sup>16</sup>** to reflect on the progress made on gender both institutionally and programmatically at different levels. Gender sensitivity is about meeting minimum standards to ensure DNH principles are adhered to, and that gender stereotypes are not perpetuated or exploited, and gender equality is about tackling structural barriers and norms that cause inequality, discrimination and exclusion of people based on their gender.

**Figure 1.** Gender continuum



**Source:** GAP 3.0 general slide deck

**The evaluation team also referred to the socio ecological model (SEM),<sup>17</sup>** which is a model used by UNICEF, to help assess whether an approach, intervention of programme is transformative and to what degree (e.g., does the intervention go beyond the individual level to address barriers at the family, community, culture and policy and systems level?). Please see an example of the model used by UNICEF in Annex 6.

## Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation covered the evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation team also drew on UNICEF definition of impact.<sup>18</sup>

The evaluation questions (EQs) are presented below. The evaluation matrix, including the sub-questions, assumptions, indicators and main data collection and analysis methods, is included in Annex3.

**EQ1:** To what extent are the current Gender Policy and the GAP 3 conceptual framework well-designed, relevant, and coherent to respond to the various needs of all children, adolescents and women, national government priorities, UNICEF normative framework (i.e., CRC, CEDAW, CRPD, CCC) and the organization's commitments to the UN-SWAP on gender equality?

**EQ2:** How well are the gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers of the GAPs implemented across UNICEF policies, practices, systems, organizational commitments and accountability mechanisms at all levels?

**EQ3:** To what extent have UNICEF programmatic results for gender equality throughout the life course been met across all five Goal Areas, particularly to advance adolescent girls' leadership and well-being, in both development and humanitarian settings?

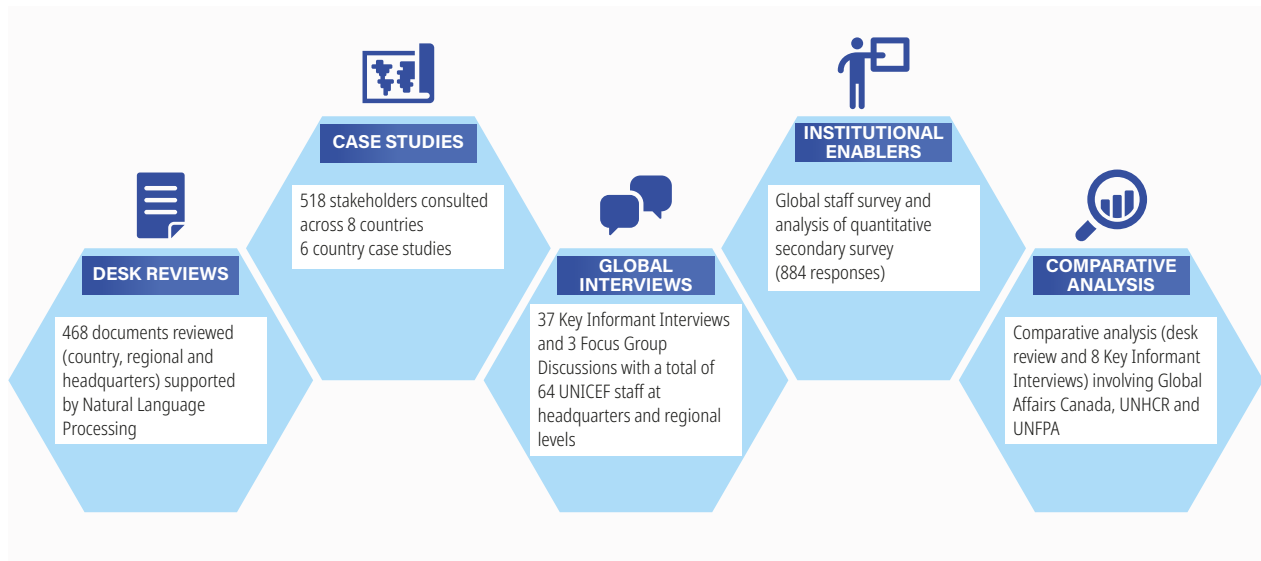
## Data collection and analysis

**The evaluation applied a participatory and mixed-method approach**, drawing on both primary and secondary data to respond to the evaluation questions. The methodology comprised of three sequenced phases, outlined below, and resulted in the production of several deliverables (an inception report, an interim report, six case study reports, a comparative analysis report, a final evaluation report, and dissemination products).

- ▶ **Phase one: Analysis of global data and evidence.** The initial phase of the evaluation adopted a global focus to assess the implementation of the institutional enablers and programmatic results and identify emerging trends through secondary data analysis (see section 2.2).
- ▶ **Phase two: Primary data collection.** This phase focused on collecting primary data through: (i) a staff survey and KIIs with HQ and regional staff to explore organizational and operational themes; (ii) a comparative study involving three different organizations to identify good practices and practical ways to respond to some of the challenges experienced in UNICEF of integrating gender; (iii) six in-person country case studies and two remote supplementary case studies (see paragraph below).
- ▶ **Phase three: Synthesis and report writing.** This final phase focused on analysis and triangulation both across and within categories of data sources (global data, case countries findings, survey, comparative analysis) to contribute to the overall findings, conclusions and recommendations (see sections 5, 6, 7).

The approach and evidence base guiding these key phases is described in more detail in the following sub-sections.

This evaluation is grounded in a wide range of data and evidence that are described in the snapshot presented in *Figure 2* and in more detail in the following paragraphs.

**Figure 2.** Overview of sources of evidence

Source: Evaluation Team

## Secondary data collection

### Document review

**The evaluation team reviewed a total of 468 documents: 137 UNICEF documents with a global and regional focus, as well as 331 documents focused on case study countries.** Documents were coded thematically against an Excel matrix, aligned with the evaluation questions.

**The evaluation relied on NLP to support the synthesis of large volumes of qualitative documents.** NLP analysis was used to extract data from 376 country programme documents (2015-2023), 27,644 output statements of progress (2018-2023), 904 evaluation reports (2018-2024), and 2,500 qualitative comments from the evaluation staff survey using a combination of keyword searches and supervised machine learning models. Additional details on the methodology guiding the NLP analysis are included in Annex 9, and a full bibliography is included in Annex 13.

### Data review

The analysis of quantitative secondary data contributed to identifying global trends across both the institutional enablers of the GAP and gender equality results across Goal Areas. Data sources reviewed as part of the evaluation include the GAP Standard Index (including nine indicators in GAP 2, and 29 indicators in GAP 3) to measure GAP institutional enablers for COs<sup>19</sup>; financial data on programme expenditure for the years 2019-2023<sup>20</sup> to draw trends in gender expenditure and in gender equality programming for transformative results expenditure, whilst also looking at expenditure by Goal Areas, gender equality marker (GEM) scores, and donors; and existing survey data sets including the global staff survey data (2020-2022), the pulse check on workplace culture survey data (2021-2023), and the survey conducted as part of the Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE) certification process (2022).<sup>21</sup>

## Primary data collection

The evaluation collected primary data through country case studies, an all-staff survey, KIIs and FGDs with HQ and regional-level stakeholders, and

a comparative exercise. These evidence pieces are described in more detail in the sub-sections below. *Table 1* provides an overview of the primary data sample achieved by the evaluation.

**Table 1.** Evaluation's primary data sample (Source: Evaluation Team)

		Women	Men	Gender diverse	Prefer not to say / Data unavailable	Total
Global interviews		12	8	0	44	64
Staff survey		476	332	7	67	883
Comparative analysis		0	0	0	8	8
Country case studies	Democratic Republic of the Congo	79	55	0	0	134
	Egypt	45	33	0	28	106
	Bangladesh	40	40	0	0	80
	Mozambique	18	8	0	0	26
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	54	20	0	1	74
	Peru	64	26	0	0	90
Supplementary case studies	Fiji	2	0	0	1	3
	Myanmar	1	1		3	5
<b>Total primary data sample</b>		<b>780</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>1,458</b>

### Survey

**The evaluation team developed an all-staff survey which was disseminated by the EO to all UNICEF employees** (a total of 17,656 staff). It was made available in the five official UN languages<sup>22</sup> and piloted for accessibility (including for screen reader use) and by several UNICEF staff. The survey was disseminated to all UNICEF employees (a total of 17,656 staff) and received 884 responses, corresponding to a 5 per cent response rate, and surpassing a statistically significant sample size. The confidence interval is 99 per cent. **The survey collected data on the views of staff on the implementation of GAP institutional enablers** and investigated the contribution of these enablers to improving UNICEF organizational culture and its programmatic results on gender equality, as well as enquiring about the challenges respondents encounter in their day-to-day work on gender equality and their suggestions for improvements.

### KIIs

**In total, 37 KIIs and three FGDs took place with a total of 64 UNICEF staff at HQ, regional and country level.** This included 48 HQ staff, 14 regional staff, and two staff from COs participants included 12 women and eight men. Demographic data is unavailable for the remaining 44 participants. Respondents were sampled purposively using a key stakeholder list provided by the UNICEF EO, complemented by a snowballing approach. Discussions were semi-structured and followed a topic guide exploring evaluation questions and emerging findings from the data review and survey.

## Comparative analysis

**A comparative analysis was conducted with a sample of UN and non-UN organizations**, aimed at comparing differing approaches to the integration of gender across similar organizations to draw out lessons and good practice examples to inform the evaluation recommendations. This analysis focused on four themes: gender architecture, gender expertise across the organization, investment in gender equality, and strong and accountable leadership. These topics were prioritized based on the emerging issues identified through the interim report and validated in discussion with the gender team.

**Global Affairs Canada (GAC), UNFPA and UNHCR were selected for this analysis. The study used a qualitative approach, drawing on both primary and secondary sources**, including eight KIIs and a desk review of key documentation shared by UNICEF and participating organizations.

## Case studies

**Countries identified as case study opportunities were selected using an appreciative inquiry approach**, which focuses on strengths, identifying examples of COs that have created institutional changes in gender-focused work, or countries that have strong gender equality programming practices and results. This helped to capture learning about what works, across different contexts. Additional details on the criteria-based approach guiding the selection of case studies are included in Annex 7.

**The case studies adopted a mixed method approach, drawing on both primary and secondary data sources.** A total of 320 documents were reviewed<sup>23</sup>. This review was complemented by in-person KIIs with UNICEF staff, other UN agencies and UNICEF partners (e.g., women's networks, government and other civil society), as well as FGDs with adolescent girls involved in UNICEF programmes or governance, using participatory methods such as role play, storyboarding and story collection (see sample in *Table 1* and list of interviewees in Annex 8). Finally, two single-sex participatory workshop were held with staff in most countries to examine perception around gender in the workplace and programming.

**Qualitative and quantitative findings were analysed and triangulated and informed the development of standalone case study reports.**

Qualitative data was analysed thematically using a coding framework aligned to the evaluation matrix, and adding thematic codes as trends were identified during analysis. A virtual validation workshop was held with each CO to present the findings and co-create recommendations.

## Supplementary case studies

**To complement the appreciative inquiry approach, the evaluation team conducted remote data collection with two countries (Fiji, within the Pacific Multi-Country Office, and Myanmar) that did not meet the country case study selection criteria.** The purpose of this data collection was to supplement the data collected through the in-depth case studies, to get a wider view of CO experiences of implementing the GAP in challenging contexts (e.g., heavily impacted by climate change), the relevance of the GAP and enabling and hindering factors. Data collection in these two countries consisted of eight KIIs (three in Fiji and five in Myanmar) and a light-touch desk review of 11 documents.

## Sampling strategy

Key informants for global interviews were identified through purposive sampling informed by a stakeholder list provided by the EO. Respondents were identified across key organizational units and divisions, including PG; EMOPS; the former Division of Human Resources now known as DPC; DAPM; DFAM; the Global Office of Research and Foresight (GORAF, known as Innocenti); and staff at the regional level .

Country case studies were selected based on an appreciative inquiry approach<sup>24</sup>. Key informants were selected based on a stakeholder mapping, programme documents, and initial consultations with UNICEF COs and ROs, complemented by snowball sampling. In-country data collection targeted UNICEF CO staff, other UN agencies, implementing partners (including women's and girls' networks and other civil society partners), government stakeholders, and donors.

Documents were requested from UNICEF HQ, ROs, and COs at the start of the data collection period. Additional documents were signposted by survey respondents and interviewees. The evaluation team reviewed the documents and identified those relevant to the key categories outlined in the evaluation matrix. Key document categories reviewed include global and regional gender and adolescent strategies; global, regional, and local sector strategies and plans; CPDs; and activity reports.

## Analysis and synthesis

Documents reviewed were coded thematically against a coding matrix aligned with evaluation questions and assumptions. KIIs and FGDs at HQ, regional, and country level were analysed thematically using a coding framework aligned with the evaluation questions and interview topic guides. Additional thematic codes were added as trends were identified. Coding was conducted using Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software. Survey response data was reviewed using descriptive and sub-group analysis in Excel. The analysis stage of the evaluation focused on triangulating these sources of data to answer the evaluation questions, test the ToC assumptions, and understand the contribution of UNICEF to the outcomes articulated in the ToC.

The synthesis process was informed by a series of participatory analysis and validation workshops, including: an **in-person internal analysis workshop** with evaluation team members and a member of the UNICEF EO, to analyse and triangulate the findings of the various data collection workstreams and identify the headline findings under each evaluation question, prior to the drafting of the final report and a **recommendation co-creation workshop** with the evaluation team, the EO, the gender team, ERG, YAG, and key stakeholders in various units and divisions.

## Limitations and mitigation measures

The evaluation faced several limitations both by design and in practice, with appropriate mitigations implemented where possible. Limitations experienced by the country evaluation teams varied, but with some repeated issues arising. These are summarized below:

- ▶ **There were limitations in documenting results achieved in programmes. It is important to highlight that this evaluation is a strategic, global evaluation so the evaluation team could only provide a limited account of what is being delivered and achieved under each Goal Area.** In addition, the scope of the evaluation does not enable a comprehensive review of impact. These limitations are documented in the interim report and include inconsistent use of sex-disaggregated data in indicators; a focus on activity and output level data; and the absence of baseline and impact evaluations. In addition, the evaluation team were unable to speak to advisors across the different sections and cross-cutting areas to the same extent e.g. there was less input from those working on climate change and humanitarian response. To mitigate these limitations, the evaluation collected and analysed a large body of qualitative and quantitative evidence, at the different levels of the organization and outside, which help to provide an indicative picture of the progress made in each Goal Area.<sup>25</sup>
- ▶ **There were challenges analysing GAP Standard Index data, and programmatic indicators.** Trend analysis on GAP Standard Index was made more difficult by the change of framework between GAP 2 and GAP 3 although comparison was possible for a subset of indicators. GAP Standard Index data trends at criteria level were therefore calculated by aligning indicators and criteria between GAP 2 and GAP 3 Standards, where possible, and calculating the average across indicators within each criterion. The overall GAP Standard trend is an average of all the criteria. Similarly, GAP programmatic indicators, which are a subset of the Strategic Plan results framework, may have changed – or new ones introduced – with the current Strategic Plan. As a result, it was not possible to extract trend data in all cases. Data is also missing for several GAP indicators.

▶ **Primary data collection in humanitarian and fragile contexts was not possible**, which limits the extent to which results in humanitarian and nexus contexts could be assessed. This is linked to the impossibility to travel in those zones, due to the insecurity / fragility (e.g., the humanitarian zone in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), areas affected by cyclone in Bangladesh, conflict areas of Mozambique). To mitigate against the absence of data from affected communities, the teams extended the timelines (e.g., Bangladesh), adapted their data collection geographies (e.g., DRC), or attempted to fill gaps using secondary data.

▶ **The team faced difficulties in securing interviews with (various) donors, government stakeholders, certain UN agencies** (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, DRC, Mozambique, Peru). Teams mitigated these limitations by attempting to find alternative informants including from other agencies.

Despite these limitations, the evaluation team was able to secure participation from all stakeholder groups envisaged in the case study design, surpassing the targeted number in most categories. Strong participation and documentation made available by the COs meant that the case studies were informed by a strong evidence base.



# 4

## Evaluation findings

### EQ1 – Gender conceptual and policy frameworks

**To what extent are the current Gender Policy and the GAP 3 conceptual framework well-designed, relevant, and coherent to respond to the various needs of all children, adolescents and women, national government priorities, UNICEF normative framework (i.e., CRC, CEDAW, CRPD, CCC) and the organization’s commitments to the UN-SWAP on gender equality?**

#### In summary

The GAP has been flexible enough to be used in diverse contexts, respond to the needs of children, and align to different government priorities, but it lacks specificity on addressing the intersectional needs of some children and young people (including those living in humanitarian contexts) and responding to the rollback of women’s rights. While the GAP and the Gender Policy were relevant to the context at the time they were developed, the current context, characterized by a poly-crisis, the slow progress on SDG 5, and the rise in anti-gender ideologies, has exacerbated existing challenges and surfaced new ones that are not adequately addressed in the documents, such as on climate change. The GAP is anchored in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, which gives traction to the gender agenda, but there is still “competition for bandwidth” between the various change strategies and cross-cutting themes at implementation level, and insufficient consideration for, and articulation of, intersectionality. The Gender Policy establishes a long-term vision for gender equality, to which the GAP aligns, to some extent, but UNICEF mandate on gender equality is not consistently presented across the different normative guidance. This contributes to different understandings amongst staff about gender equality and how women rights contribute to children rights. The GAP is designed to support the operationalization of the Gender Policy but does not establish sufficient accountabilities and implementation procedures to ensure it is consistently operationalized. The GAP is also well aligned to the UN-SWAP, which confirms that UNICEF is a role model in the establishment of high standards for measurement. Finally, there could be greater contextualization and consideration of working in humanitarian contexts, and a stronger cross referencing in sectoral policies.

## SQ1.1 Relevance

To what extent are the current Gender Policy and GAP 3 informed by evidence and relevant to the various gender realities and needs of all children, adolescents and women across regions, particularly concerning gender and social norms? (relevance)

**Finding 1: While the GAP and Gender Policy are informed by a wide range of evidence and were relevant to the context at the time they were developed, the current context, characterized by a poly-crisis, the slow progress on SDG 5 and the rise in anti-gender ideologies, has exacerbated a number of challenges that were not anticipated at the time and therefore not adequately addressed in the documents.**

**A robust evidence base was deployed in the development of both GAP 2 and GAP 3, both theoretical and operational.** A situation analysis paper was written as well as eleven papers, to serve as background to GAP 3 concerning the key topics on which UNICEF should focus<sup>26</sup>, providing theoretical foundations to solidly embed the gender equality programming for transformative results agenda<sup>27</sup>. In addition, a thorough consultation process was reported for the development of GAP 3 (to a greater extent than for the design of GAP 2), involving consultations with ROs and COs to “ground truth” the documents and ensure ownership and synchronicity across UNICEF decentralized structures<sup>28</sup>. The Gender Policy is grounded in overarching normative documents and experiences gained from the previous GAPs.

**Although the 2019 GAP evaluation found that GAP 2 2018-2021 was relevant to the context in 2018, GAP 3 was published in 2021, against the backdrop of a changing landscape.** As such, GAP 3 has been largely delivered in the context of the gendered effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the broader UN push for accelerating progress on SDG 5 and the Global Acceleration Plan developed as part of the UN decade for Action on Gender Equality.<sup>29</sup>

**The gender realities of 2024 are different from those in 2018, and the call for ‘building back better’ after the pandemic has not been delivered.** Between 2019 and 2022, nearly 40 per cent of countries, home to over one billion women and girls in 2022, stagnated or even declined on gender equality.<sup>30</sup> Given that 74 per cent of the SDG targets are directly linked to, or significantly reliant on gender equality, this poses a threat to the achievement of the

entire 2030 Agenda. Rising economic inequality and nationalist anti-democratic governments are linked to rising conservatism, which has reinvigorated patriarchy and framed feminism, gender, and sexual diversity concepts and language as threats to the family unit and to child protection. The shrinking civic space for women goes hand-in-hand with the growth of well-funded anti-gender movements. These negative trends have all been significantly exacerbated since the GAP 3 was published in 2021, despite some progress on children’s rights, such as on primary education enrollment, female genital mutilation (FGM), and child marriage.

**The current context is also defined by the poly-crisis<sup>31</sup> affecting all UNICEF areas of work, further underlining the need to scale up efforts to promote gender equality.** This has been well conceptualized and reflected upon by UNICEF in preparation for the next Strategic Plan.<sup>32</sup> This poly-crisis comprises:

- ▶ Climate change, which impacts health, nutrition and education and WASH;
- ▶ Health emergencies and pandemic preparedness deficiencies, with strain placed on health systems caused by COVID-19, which impacts access to education, nutrition and protection;
- ▶ A care crisis (increasing the burden of care of women and unpaid care work);
- ▶ Conflict and humanitarian crises, with the number of countries in violent conflict increasing and 450 million children (one in six) living in a conflict zone and 89.3 million people forcibly displaced at the end of 2021 (including 41 per cent of children) with insufficient protection services and lack of access to education; and
- ▶ Demographic shifts, leading to increased migration, which impact social welfare policies.

In parallel, overall funding for development programming has decreased and more donor funds tend to be spent on humanitarian operations: 65 per cent of UNICEF work is now concentrated in humanitarian and fragile contexts.

**Finding 2: The GAP is flexible enough to be used in diverse contexts, respond to the needs of children, and align to different government priorities, but lacks specificity on addressing the intersectional needs of some children and young people (including those living in humanitarian contexts) and responding to the rollback of women's rights.**

**Most of the COs visited during this evaluation confirmed that the GAP was relevant, regardless of their context.** While rooted in an agency-wide gender equality vision, its language allows for some flexibility in interpretation, it is not prescriptive in its application and allows the COs to decide how far they can or cannot move the needle on gender, which facilitates engagement with government. Most of the COs reported in KIIs using the GAP as an overall framework from which they could select the elements that are pertinent to them for programming. It was also viewed as a useful tool to support advocacy for gender equality, both internally and externally.

**However, in two of the country case studies, stakeholders felt that the GAP was not sufficiently explicit on how to respond to the growing anti-gender movement and infringements on women rights.** Some COs and HQ respondents feel there is insufficient guidance on how to respond to the specific needs of children with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. Whilst sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) concerns are embedded in the Gender Policy, they do not feature with an equivalent prominence in the GAP programming guidance (they are only referred to in the principles section). This is largely linked to a UN system-wide lack of clarity and hesitation on this topic, due to political sensitivities both at the HQ level and in-country. In addition, the specific needs and interests of girls and boys living in humanitarian contexts, children on the move and children with disabilities are not adequately reflected in the GAP (see sub-question 1.2).

## SQ1.2 Coherence

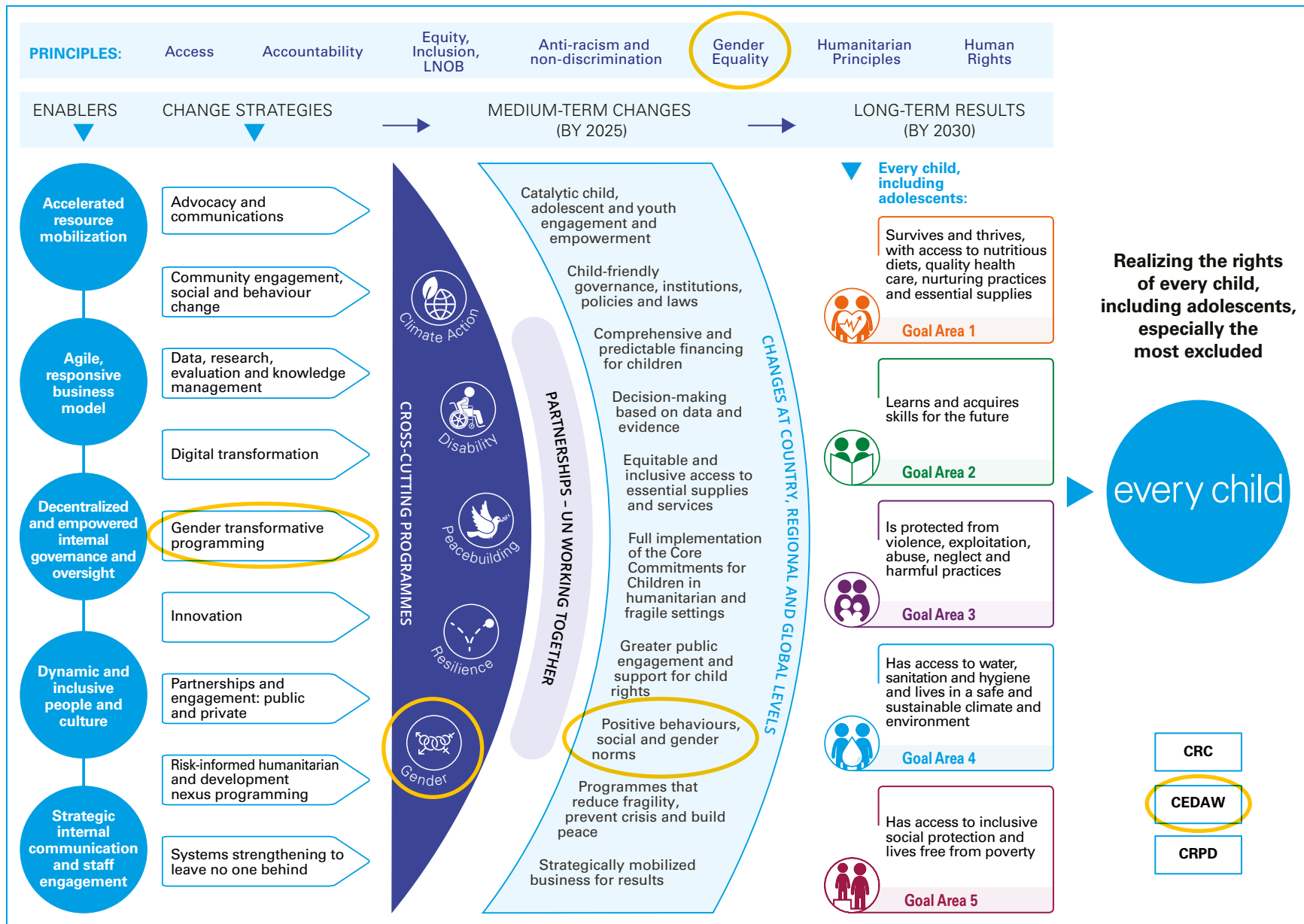
How well does the GAP and Gender Policy align to UNICEF's normative framework, the organization's commitments to UN-SWAP and respond to partner government priorities to advance gender equality and equitably promote the rights of all children, adolescents and women in development and humanitarian settings?

**Finding 3: The GAP is anchored in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, which gives traction to the gender agenda, but there is still "competition for bandwidth"<sup>33</sup> between the various change strategies and cross-cutting themes at implementation level, and insufficient consideration for, and articulation of, intersectionality.**

### Gender features clearly in the Strategic Plan.

In *Figure 3*, gender (highlighted in yellow circles) features as a change strategy, a cross-cutting programme (with climate action, disability, peace building, resilience) and a medium-term change (positive behaviours, social and gender norms) and as a principle.

**Figure 3.** Gender as a key element in UNICEF Strategic Plan



Source: UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025: Renewed ambition towards 2030

**The GAP is presented as an off shoot of the Strategic Plan.** There is full alignment, as the GAP indicators are included in the Strategic Plan, and the timing of both plans align. The Strategic Plan has thus provided an impetus to tackle gender within the organization, presented as a “trailblazing” cross-cutting issue. Stakeholders interviewed at HQ view the GAP as a model that other cross-cutting themes could follow.

**However, gender is one of a plethora of priorities in the Strategic Plan.** The latter has a total of 19 “strategic elements” to consider between the enablers, the change strategies and cross-cutting programmes. This translates into “competition for bandwidth”<sup>34</sup> at the CO level and “framework fatigue”, something flagged by many staff interviewed across the country case studies, who shared that they find it **challenging to work on all the different cross-cutting issues in parallel**, and they do not have sufficient guidance. Furthermore, some respondents questioned the coexistence of the cross-cutting domains identified in the Strategic Plan, flagging that gender and disability (which relate to identities which can experience structural marginalization) are not the same level as climate action, peace building and resilience (that relate to groups of people living in specific contexts and requiring specific programming), which creates confusion when trying to operationalize the integration of these domains.

**UNICEF staff also reported challenges in addressing intersectionality.** Intersectionality<sup>35</sup> is mentioned in both the Gender Policy and Strategic Plan but it is less evident in the GAP and insufficient guidance is provided on how to operationalize the approach<sup>36</sup>. The UNICEF Evaluability Assessment in 2023 highlighted that UNICEF is “not sufficiently ready at a conceptual, measurement, operational or programme experience level” to implement an intersectional approach, despite it being positioned as a “critical driver of success for the Strategic Plan”<sup>37</sup>. This challenge is common to other organizations, including those involved in the comparative analysis conducted as part of this evaluation. The evaluation of the UN System’s Capacity to Deliver on Gender Equality,<sup>38</sup> also highlighted that there was “a misunderstanding around the term “intersectionality” which inadvertently led to programmes adding a series of divisible “lenses” (gender, age, disability, among others) to the analysis of the overall population”<sup>39</sup> – a misunderstanding observed by some staff interviewed for this evaluation. This challenge has consequences on how data is disaggregated; gender

analyses are undertaken to support programme design; and in delivery (as mentioned later in EQ2 and EQ3).

### BOX 1

#### UNICEF vision in the Gender Policy 2021-2030

“UNICEF works for a world in which all nations, institutions, communities, families, and individuals value and care for children and adolescents of all gender identities, gender expressions, sexual orientations, and sex characteristics as equals; and where countries not only prioritize investments to promote and protect the rights of all children, adolescents, and women, but also actively work to transform harmful gender norms; mitigate the impacts of harmful masculinities on all children and adolescents; promote equality in relationships, opportunities, and power structures; and support the development of all children, adolescents, and women to their fullest potential.”

**Finding 4: The Gender Policy establishes a long-term vision for gender equality, to which the GAP aligns, to some extent, but UNICEF’s mandate on gender equality is not consistently presented across the different sectoral normative guidance. This contributes to different understandings amongst staff about gender equality and how women’s rights contribute to children’s rights.**

The Gender Policy was developed as a response to the 2019 GAP evaluation, with a view to establish a long-term vision and “clear statement of aspiration”<sup>40</sup> on how to advance gender equality. The long-term vision established for gender equality in the Gender Policy is presented in Box 1.

Further, the Gender Policy establishes “the added value, strategic and comparative advantage” of UNICEF in “advancing transformational change toward gender equality”<sup>41</sup> in four key areas: i) partnerships, including with government, CSOs and research; ii) adolescent girls; iii) “positive gender socialization”, to “support the development and expansion of positive equitable norms during childhood and adolescence”, which involves engaging with parents, community leaders and boys and men; iv) gender equality in humanitarian action, with a transformative ambition. This framing, rooted in the SEM<sup>42</sup> and using an intersectional lens,<sup>43</sup> as well as the reference to CEDAW in the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and to women’s rights in the 1996 mission statement<sup>44</sup>

seem to position the gender equality transformative agenda and women’s rights very firmly in UNICEF’s mandate.

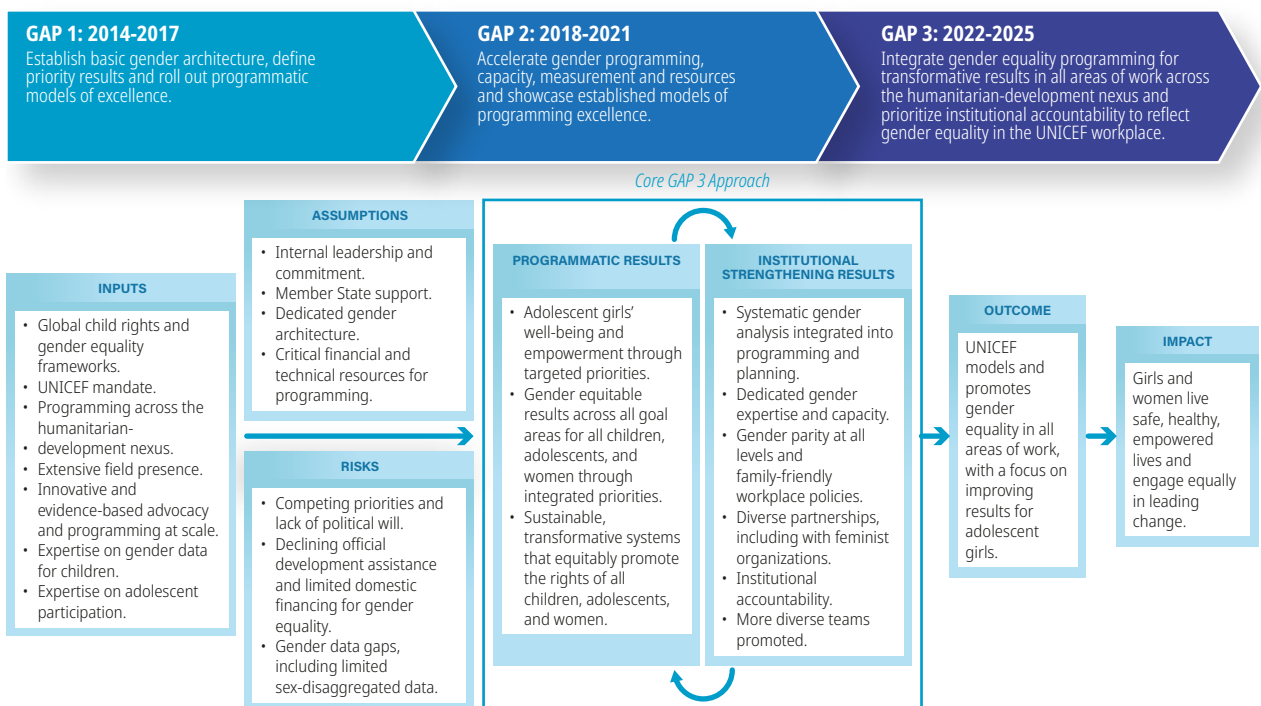
**However, there are key areas of divergence between the GAP and Gender Policy, as well as some omissions that generate tensions for the agency in practice.** First, the vision of the Gender Policy is not reproduced as such in the GAP and not owned and referred to by most of the staff interviewed. Secondly, the Gender Policy’s four-pronged framing is not evident in the GAP either, which is structured around the twin track “life course” and “adolescent girls” approach rather than “positive gender socialization” which is how it is articulated in the Gender Policy.<sup>45</sup> In addition, the GAP ToC (Figure 4) is not framed around the four areas of comparative advantage outlined in the Gender Policy, nor are the latter referred to by the staff in interviews.

Finally, the definition proposed in the Gender Policy could provide clearer articulation on how addressing gender equality will help UNICEF to realize its sectoral goals, whereas the GAP does do this in the life course sections.

Some internal inconsistency within the GAP itself is also evident: the GAP’s opening focus is on all children, by stating that “Gender equality is essential to realizing the mandate of UNICEF to uphold the rights of all children”, while the impact statement in the GAP ToC graphic refers to “girls and women’s lives”.

In addition, **UNICEF’s comparative advantage within the UN system on gender is not sufficiently well articulated in any of the documents, although this was a recommendation of the previous evaluation.** This constitutes a barrier to gender equality, which requires joint and concerted efforts between the UN and other organizations.

**Figure 4.** Gender Action Plan Theory of Change



**Source:** Gender Action Plan 2022-2025

**Finally, there is great variability in the way people articulate how gender equality is promoted within the child rights agenda.**

On the one hand, the gender-neutrality of the CRC is used as an argument by some staff to justify the limited consideration they give to gender because “they work for all children<sup>46</sup>”, both girls and boys. On the other hand, the child rights angle is considered by others to open doors to engaging with governments on gender, as an important aspect of the human rights agenda. In the same vein, some respondents stressed that the focus on children can also put UNICEF in a strong position to counter the anti-gender and anti-sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) movement, which often uses the protection of children and family to curtail SRHR and women’s rights more broadly. In this sense, UNICEF could provide a positive counter-narrative to promote working on gender equality as essential to the fulfilment of the CRC commitments, and the realization of the anti-discrimination clause of the second article of the CRC, which mentions the need to “take appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child’s parents, legal guardians, or family members<sup>47</sup>”.

**The different ways UNICEF defines its added value on gender has significant consequences,**

as it leaves the precise determination of how to work on gender at the discretion of individual staff, leadership or donors. This evaluation found that staff interpret gender equality in various ways, largely depending on their own personal bias, attitudes, and values. It also found that the degree to which programmes integrate gender is often dependent on the priorities and demands of the donors. GAC was quoted several times as having had a great influence on the level of gender integration within UNICEF (see EQ 2 below). This issue is largely linked to a broader UN systemic issue, that was analysed in the independent review of the UN system’s capacity to deliver on gender equality, namely the lack of ‘common and well accepted definition and understanding of gender equality’ within the UN system, which “makes priority settings very challenging” and leads to “skewed priorities<sup>48</sup>”.

**Finding 5: The GAP is designed to support the operationalization of the Gender Policy but does not have sufficient implementation procedures to ensure it is consistently operationalized.**

**The 2019 GAP evaluation saw the “hybrid nature”<sup>49</sup> of the previous GAP (neither a policy nor a true action plan), as a hampering factor limiting implementation.** It did not recommend a GAP 3, but rather a gender policy and an implementation plan, in the form of “a robust results framework including clear, timebound and measurable gender-equality targets”.<sup>50</sup> However, GAP 3 is perceived by the staff as very similar to GAP 2,<sup>51</sup> despite clearer gender equality programming ambitions, and an expansion of gender integration within Goal Areas.

Respondents from COs reported that the main change they saw between GAP 2 and GAP 3 was the more structured M&E system, which had been strengthened in response to the 2019 GAP evaluation. The GAP 3 however does not constitute a “robust results framework”, as was recommended by the 2019 evaluation. Even though the GAP M&E system is embedded within the Strategic Plan and indexes to track progress were put in place during GAP 3, the system is not robust yet, as explained below in EQ2. Moreover, although the GAP is presented as the operational arm of the policy, it is not fully “operational”. It does not attach sufficient accountabilities at key staff level to the existing implementation procedure to ensure compliance to the existing minimum standards and many COs do not establish “clear timebound and measurable gender-equality targets”, as was recommended.

### Finding 6: The GAP is well aligned to the UN-SWAP

**The GAP is well aligned to the UN-SWAP**, the accountability framework that measures performance across the UN organizations system on gender and results-based management, oversight, accountability, human and financial resources, capacity, and knowledge/communications which strengthens the positioning and prioritization of the GAP for UNICEF. The annual UN-SWAP assessments indicate that UNICEF has made progress on the implementation of the institutional enablers both in terms of year-on-year progress, and in comparison, with other UN agencies (see EQ 2 for more details), which strengthens the positioning of the gender agenda within the organization.

**Finding 7: Whilst humanitarian action is addressed in GAP 3 there could be greater contextualization and consideration of working in humanitarian contexts, and a stronger cross referencing in sectoral policies.**

**The CCCs are the main UNICEF policy and framework for humanitarian action.** Revised in 2020, they set mandatory “organizational, programmatic and operational commitments and benchmarks against which UNICEF holds itself accountable for the coverage, quality and equity of its humanitarian action and advocacy”.<sup>52</sup> Gender equality is integrated as a cross-sectoral commitment in the CCCs, together with disability, adolescent development and participation (ADAP), early childhood development, and the sectoral commitments in the five Goal Areas. However, several UNICEF respondents from various COs feel that the coexistence of these two frameworks is challenging for those who are trying to implement them for various reasons such as: the GAP and CCCs do not explicitly reference each other; they do not sufficiently distinguish between work on gender equality in emergency preparedness and in acute emergencies; and finally they do not provide sufficient guidance on specific activities to be carried out by the various sectors, beyond generic advice on how to consult women or ensure parity in operational teams.

**This evaluation also found that the GAP was not consistently embedded in the sectoral strategies (developed after its completion).** Some strategies refer to the GAP and others do not. For example, the Child Protection Strategy<sup>53</sup> 2021-2030 does not explicitly reference GAP, but it addresses gender and includes addressing harmful gender and social norms and doing so through a variety of interventions including cross sectoral ones<sup>54</sup>. UNICEF Education Strategy 2019-2030 explicitly references the GAP 2 2018-2021, indicating alignment with the Gender Policy and GAP.

**All sectoral strategies, display gender-responsive ambitions, while gender equality features only in some** (see more details on this in EQ3.1). Of note, the analysis presented in the GAP about how UNICEF will integrate gender into the Goal Areas is not quoted in any of the strategies themselves.<sup>55</sup>

## EQ2 – Gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers

**How well are the gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers of the GAPs implemented across UNICEF policies, practices, systems, organizational commitments and accountability mechanisms at all levels? (coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability)**

This chapter is divided in four sections: 1) enablers for gender-responsive work which covers aspects of planning, data, monitoring and research, financial and human resources; 2) partnerships with women- and girl-led organizations, UN agencies and government; 3) leadership and accountability mechanisms; and 4) staffing and culture. Summary findings are presented at the beginning of each section.

### Implementation of institutional enablers overall

**Finding 8:** During GAP 2 and GAP 3, UNICEF made considerable progress in consolidating the implementation of gender-related organizational change and performance enablers at all levels.

The institutional enablers for gender integration are the building blocks that UNICEF puts in place to support the implementation of the GAP<sup>56</sup> underlying results in both programmatic and workplace aspects of gender equality. UNICEF framework of institutional enablers is structured around key dimensions “how” and “who” categories as shown below (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5.** Institutional enablers



**Source:** UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2022-2025: A vision for lasting, transformative change

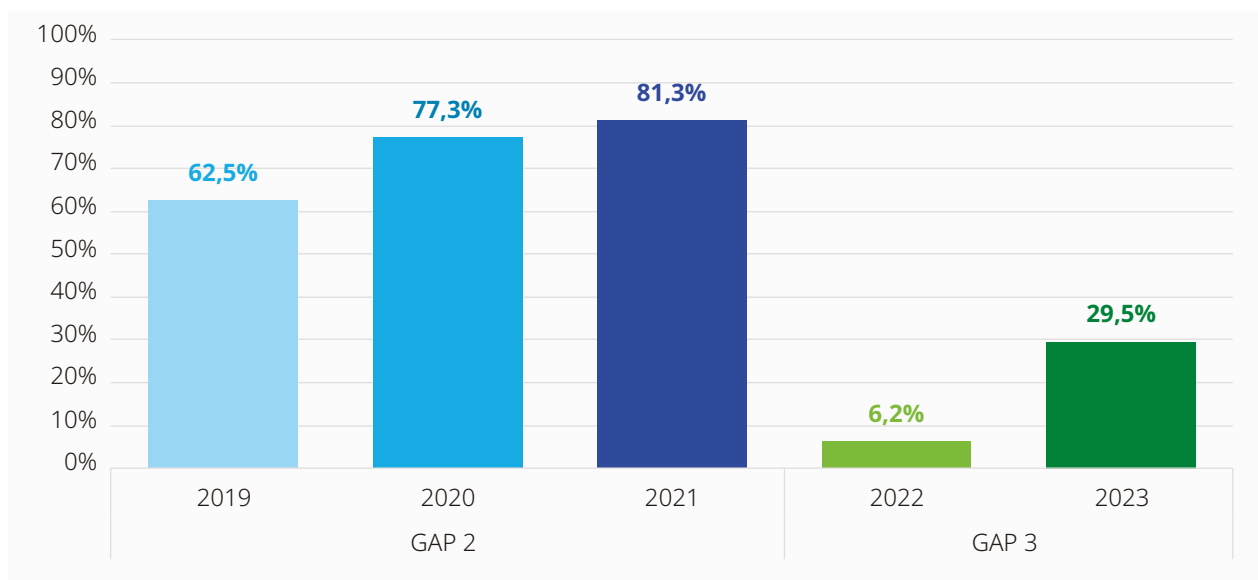
**UNICEF is one of the strongest performers in the UN system with respect to the implementation of institutional enablers for gender equality.**

UNICEF remains one of the highest scoring agencies in UN-SWAP.<sup>57</sup> In 2023, UNICEF “met” or “exceeded” benchmarks on 16 out of 17 indicators (94 per cent) and “approached requirement” in one indicator (6 per cent), which represents its highest overall compliance rate.

**In line with the UN-SWAP assessment, the internal monitoring systems of UNICEF indicate that the organization has made steady progress in this area over the period considered by the evaluation.**

GAP Standard data suggests that UNICEF has overall been progressing on the implementation of institutional enablers over the period (see Figure 6). Despite the sharp decline observed during the transition between the two GAPs; attributed to a change in monitoring framework, the consistent positive trends observed in both periods indicate that there has likely been a constant improvement in the reported implementation of institutional enablers overall between 2019 and 2023.<sup>58</sup> More detail can be found in the interim report of this evaluation.<sup>59</sup>

**Figure 6.** Percentage of COs meeting GAP Standard<sup>60</sup>



**Sources:** [H5.2 GAP standard \\_2023.xlsx](#), [H5.2 GAP standard 2022.xlsx](#), and authors' calculations

## SQ2.1 Enablers for gender-responsive work

### In summary

Gender equality programming for transformative results is increasingly integrated in planning, in particular in the Strategic Plan. A growing number of COs have contextualized GAPs, although their use can be limited by a lack of alignment with sectoral plans. Gender analyses are widely conducted as part of CPD development and in emergencies, however their quality and the extent to which they are used are variable. Under GAP 3, the M&E of gender institutional enablers and data disaggregation have been strengthened. Programmatic M&E remains largely at gender-responsive level and is less ambitious in documenting the contribution of UNICEF to gender equality programming for transformative results, particularly at outcome level. UNICEF is not yet meeting its target overall on financial resources for gender and the distribution of funds is skewed towards emergency programming, with gaps in funding for organizational capacity and in some of the Goal Areas. Gender resources tracking has improved with better systems in place, but these are considered complex to use and are not implemented consistently. While promising results have been achieved in setting up a solid gender architecture across the different levels of the organization, UNICEF still has a way to go to ensure that this architecture successfully drives the integration of gender equality across programming and institutional capacity at all levels. A key area requiring improvement for this architecture to function is improved capacity on gender overall. Progress in this area has lagged. The implementation of gender trainings is not yet moving at pace and there are some gaps in their scope and content, in terms of addressing staff values and attitudes on gender and providing specific technical guidance to sectors.

### Gender in planning

**Finding 9: While gender equality results are well integrated in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, few regions have developed contextualized gender strategies. Less than half of the COs have contextualized GAPs and those that exist are not always aligned with sectoral plans, which limits their implementation and monitoring.**

**Gender equality programmatic approaches have been systematically integrated into the Strategic Plan.**<sup>61</sup> At the regional level, integration has not been as systematic. Some examples of good practices emerged from the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) and Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO), where there is an adolescent girls strategy, and the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) which has a detailed Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2025 that contains an action plan aligned to the GAP. These regional strategies contextualize the GAP to regional needs and provide useful learning for other regions in terms of identifying region-specific priorities. These regions have been proactive in supporting COs to develop their plans on gender equality. At the same time, not all respondents felt that having a regional strategy was useful or practical, and some regions have made the conscious decision to use other frames to support the implementation of the GAP at regional and country levels.

### Gender equality is increasingly featuring in country level planning documents.

The GAP Standard Indicator on the integration of gender analysis in CPDs showed a steady increase during GAP 2, dropping at the start of GAP 3 and increasing again, to 69 per cent of COs in 2023. In humanitarian programmes, integrating UNICEF minimum standards for gender in the CCCs in emergencies is the highest scoring indicator, achieved by 95 per cent of eligible COs in 2023, which is also highlighted as an achievement in the Annual GAP Report 2023. This trend is also reflected in the analysis of CPDs using NLP,<sup>62</sup> which shows both an increase in the average number of references to gender-related keywords in the “programme priorities” sections, and a broadening presence of gender-related output statements across Goal Areas in CPDs launched under GAP 3 compared to those launched under GAP 2, as shown in Annex 12.

### COs have been developing country-level GAPs to localize and contextualize the global GAP, although under half of COs currently have one in place.

The GAP Standard indicator “CO GAP” indicates that the proportion of COs with such a plan in place has increased from 26 to 44 per cent between 2022 and 2023. These country-specific GAPs and strategies have proven useful to contextualize the GAP and the adolescent girls strategy and align them to national priorities. However, in the evaluation country case studies, these national gender plans or strategies, where they existed, varied in scope and format, ranging from a gender strategy modelled on the GAP, to short documents shaped as micro-workplans

referring to gender activities in the CPD. Across case studies, these plans tended to have limited guidance on gender integration within the work at section level and did not have an associated time-bound action plan which is reported against regularly. Limited awareness and ownership of these documents was found across section staff in country case studies, and almost 40 per cent of country-based respondents of the evaluation all-staff survey said that they did not know whether their CO had a GAP. From interviews conducted with programme staff, it emerged that country GAPs are not always aligned to section workplans and often lack guidance on translating principles into action, so it is not clear how the activities will be implemented and resourced.

### Use of gender analysis, monitoring data and research and evaluation

**Finding 10: The extent to which gender analyses are conducted to inform programming has progressed significantly in UNICEF albeit the quality and usage is variable.**

**Indicators relating to gender analysis are moving in the right direction.** There was an increase in COs implementing a gender programmatic review (GPR) from 57 per cent at baseline in 2021 to 60 per cent in 2023. In humanitarian contexts, gender analysis has also become more systematic: COs with humanitarian programmes conducting a rapid gender analysis increased from 50 to 66 per cent in 2023. By contrast, there is still room for improvement to include gender analysis in the emergency preparedness platform achieved by only 32 per cent of eligible COs in 2023 (see Annex 10).

**Despite the available guidance, the quality of these analyses varies.** UNICEF has developed detailed guidance and tools on conducting quality gender analysis, including a GPR toolkit, quality checklist and examples of good practices. In addition, the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) has a dedicated staff member to support GPR across all COs, an innovative practice among UNICEF regions. An in-depth review of a sample of GPR conducted as part of this evaluation's country case studies as well as interviews with programme staff reveal some examples of good practices of GPRs informing CPDs and CO GAPs, but also some quality issues. Some of these are included in Box 2 below.

## BOX 2

### Integration of GPR and gender analysis in programme design

- ▶ GPRs often provide a comprehensive analysis of the national context but the gender analysis of UNICEF existing programmes is not systematically done, or is of insufficient depth, which limits their usefulness to identify entry points to inform gender programming.
- ▶ GPRs and rapid gender reviews are sometimes considered static documents that are not periodically reviewed based on monitoring of the context. This poses issues in humanitarian contexts where, according to country respondents working in those settings, gender analysis can quickly become obsolete given the rapidly evolving context. In development contexts, ongoing analysis can also help a programme adapt when needed.
- ▶ Gender analyses are often based on secondary data and desk-based research, and do not systematically involve meaningful consultations with the affected populations and communities that UNICEF serves, in particular women and girls in all their diversity.
- ▶ As part of secondary data reviews, gender analyses are often based on population-data, so quality and accuracy depend on how reliable, recent and specific the national data is.<sup>63</sup>
- ▶ To support gender equality programming work, UNICEF tools require the use of power analysis. However, most of the gender analyses reviewed for this evaluation focused on vulnerability or needs, rather than integrating a power and barrier analysis. The former does not as easily identify opportunities and entry points for transformative change, and potential risks or backlash that are highly likely during transformative programming.<sup>64</sup>
- ▶ Gender analyses also lack sufficient attention to SOGIESC by taking a more binary approach to gender.

**The extent to which gender analysis feeds into programme design and delivery also varies.**

As mentioned in EQ2.1, the GAP Standard Index indicates that gender analyses are increasingly integrated in CPD and emergency response plans. However, from the country case studies the use of gender analysis as part of CO planning is inconsistent. Sometimes GPR is carried out to inform the CPD and the COs GPs. In other cases, gender analyses are carried out in response to the organizational requirement, but the outcome is “kept in a drawer” or referred to as “a tick box exercise”. The evaluation’s all-staff survey based on a representative number of responses indicates that just over half of respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement “gender analysis is consistently used to inform all policy and programmatic work I am involved in.”<sup>65</sup> These results suggest there may still be issues in terms of meaningful use of gender analysis.

**There are examples of innovative practices from the country case studies demonstrating the countries’ efforts to meaningfully integrate gender analysis in programming.**

In the DRC for example, integrated outbreak analytics (IOA) constitutes an example of good practice (see Box 3).

**BOX 3****Integrated outbreak analytics in DRC: An innovative practice**

IOA was created in 2018 at the start of the tenth Ebola epidemic in DRC. Located in the UNICEF humanitarian team, it conducts contextual studies, at the request of specific programmes when a challenge is identified, to affect the necessary adaptations. These analyses are developed under the General Directorate for Disease Control at the Ministry of Health, by a team composed of national researchers and draw on multiple data sources, including from NGOs and rigorous primary data collection. Responses are co-developed with field actors. The IOA systematically integrates gender analyses into all studies and pays particular attention to generating gender- and age-specific evidence, also insisting on “the analysis of social factors (including power relations) that positively or negatively influence the occurrence, spread and expansion of diseases (epidemics or others)”. It also seeks to reveal “the relationships and interactions between boys and girls, women and men on access to and use of services and care provided in the context of prevention and response to diseases or other health needs”. Gender-specific studies were also conducted during period covered by this evaluation, such as on gender dynamics in nutrition or vaccination or the gendered impact of COVID-19, which were also used to advocate for better considerations of gender in UNICEF humanitarian health responses.

**Finding 11: Under GAP 3, M&E of gender institutional enablers has been strengthened, but programmatic M&E remains largely at gender-responsive level and is less ambitious in documenting the contribution of UNICEF to gender equality programming for transformative results, particularly at outcome level. This results in COs' contribution to gender equality results not being fully captured.**

**Following the 2019 GAP evaluation recommendation,<sup>66</sup> an improved, more comprehensive GAP Standard Index was developed.** More stringent criteria were introduced leading to a drop in the percentage of COs meeting the Standard, but this was followed again by an upward trend the following year for indicators on COs reporting gender equality results that are transformative and implementing programmes addressing gender norms (see Figure 6). While these improvements capture the progress made by COs on implementing gender institutional enablers better, **more attention could have been paid to documenting the cross-over between GAP 2 and GAP 3 Standard indices**, to ensure that trend analysis could be conducted across the period.

**Reporting sex-disaggregated data, a foundational element of gender equality monitoring, is well implemented in UNICEF.** The GAP Standard Index indicator shows that 89 per cent of COs meet the benchmark on country strategic indicators (CSIs) being sex-disaggregated in 2023, slightly higher in humanitarian/emergency COs (91 per cent) compared to non-humanitarian/non-emergency COs (88 per cent).<sup>67</sup>

**Whilst these foundational elements of process monitoring and gender disaggregation are well-implemented, a challenge remains in capturing gender equality outcomes in reporting.** This was mentioned by UNICEF respondents across all case studies. This is a common issue with other UN agencies, as reflected in the SDG 5 evaluation for UN agencies including UNICEF: "Project level M&E often focused on the output level rather than measuring contributions to longer term gender equality outcomes. There is opportunity to incorporate more innovative monitoring and evaluation approaches to measure contribution to complex goals, such as policy advocacy and social norm change."<sup>68</sup>

The fact that the GAP M&E framework is fully integrated in the Strategic Plan is a strength, as it encourages all COs to report against it. However, this also poses a challenge because of the need to keep the number of indicators low. As a result, instead of

having GAP specific outcome indicators, Goal Areas report sex-disaggregated data (potentially capturing gender-responsive programming) and do not tend to have sufficient outcome indicators reflecting gender equality results. Many GAP outcome indicators focus on equal access to services for girls, rather than more transformative outcomes. It is also noteworthy that the framework focuses on binary gender and does not cover diverse gender identities.

**This mismatch between the gender equality ambition outlined in the GAP and a M&E framework which remains at the gender-responsive level, means that COs contributions to gender equality programming for transformative results are not fully captured.** Examples from the country case studies<sup>69</sup> illustrate those key achievements on girls' empowerment and social norms change are not reflected in institutional reporting. This is compounded by the emphasis on quantitative indicators, at the expense of qualitative reporting on how UNICEF influences gender equality changes in the country office annual reports (COARs).

A diagram showing how M&E can incentivize or disincentivize gender programming is included in Annex 11.

**Finding 12: UNICEF has produced an important body of research on gender equality programming and has established avenues to disseminate evidence to programmes. However, the generation of research from interventions piloted at country level and its use to scale up interventions appears uneven.**

**Data, research and evaluation have been an important investment area for UNICEF.** Research on gender equality by the Global Office of Foresight and Research has covered the links between gender and social protection, violence against children and violence against women, gender and migration, gender and child labour, and gender and climate change. UNICEF has also invested in making gender data and research easily accessible, for example through the adolescent data portal and the gender equality data hub and the gender-based violence (GBV) area of responsibility helpdesk, which provides research and technical advisory services for all GBV in emergencies practitioners.<sup>70</sup> At the global level, a series of background papers were developed by sector experts to inform the development of GAP 3 (as mentioned in EQ1). NLP analysis of almost one thousand evaluations conducted between 2018 and May 2024 found that while the percentage of evaluations including a gender focus increased by 16

percentage points between 2018 and 2019 to reach 35 per cent, it remained stable afterwards. This trend suggests that, while UNICEF has increasingly evaluated gender aspects across its work from the introduction of GAP 2 and produced a guidance document on Gender Integration in Evaluation<sup>71</sup> this aspect may not yet be systematically prioritized in all evaluations.

**The degree to which gender research is used for intervention design varies.** Staff survey results indicate that a clear majority of staff considers that UNICEF interventions are evidenced-based: 86.4 per cent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that data, research and evidence on gender equality informs policy and programmatic work and roughly 60 per cent that it is clear how gender data and evidence is used to inform policy and programming decisions. This generally positive perception was nuanced by several key informants at HQ and CO level, for example a key informant at HQ level described research as a “luxury” and argued that “evidence is not used because of urgency of implementation” due to the “emergency” organizational culture.

**UNICEF pilots certain programme interventions on gender equality, however the scale and length of these pilots and the fact that they are not systematically documented limit their use for expansion.** The evaluation found that UNICEF is piloting diverse interventions, but not systematically and rigorously recording their effectiveness, which hampers upscaling of successful programmes. According to UNICEF records of evaluation undertaken over the 2018-2023 period, 35 evaluations related to gender-equality programming for transformative results were taken at all levels (one in East Asia and the Pacific region (EAPR), one in Europe and Central Asia region (ECAR), four in Eastern and Southern Africa region (ESAR), six in West and Central Africa region (WCAR), eight in South Asia region (SAR), three in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENAR), six in Latin America and Caribbean region (LACR), and six at HQ level).<sup>72</sup> There are also a few impact studies (although some were recorded, for example on cash transfers in DRC, more detail on which is provided in EQ3). COs often lack time, expertise and resources to conduct primary research themselves.<sup>73</sup>

## Accountability mechanisms

**Finding 13: While UNICEF guidance clearly states that GAP reporting is meant to serve both global accountability and country level learning and programming, the M&E system appears to be primarily geared to upward accountability.**

**UNICEF guidance clearly sets out the dual purpose of the GAP M&E for accountability and programmatic use.** It reads: “The purpose of CSIs is to enable simultaneous Strategic Plan and country programme planning, monitoring and reporting of output, outcome, and change strategy results and enabler indicators using the same underlying data, entered once. Between the planning and reporting phases, CSI portal will be open in monitoring mode, allowing COs to update values on all or a subset of indicators – so that they could be used for internal reviews and discussions at country and regional levels”.<sup>74</sup>

**In practice, country case studies reveal that many staff in COs feel that GAP data is collected for upward reporting and accountability, which affects both data quality and use of data at country level.** Country case study interviews indicate that some respondents consider GAP reporting and accountability as extractive. In some instances, while sex-disaggregated data is collected and reported regularly, it may appear to be a checkbox exercise with no link to programmatic decision-making. This is corroborated by the evaluation staff survey based on a representative sample of respondents, which shows that only about half of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the purpose of the gender-related reporting on all the dimensions of the GAP Standard Index, gender results and gender financing is clear, and less than half believed that it was a relevant way to explore the quality of gender integration in COs. Most staff interviewed at the country level were not aware of the GAP Standard Index reporting. This tool was used, however, by CO management as a benchmark to compare their progression against others, and the regional gender advisors to guide COs on areas requiring more attention. Qualitative responses from the evaluation all-staff survey, analysed through NLP, show a lack of feedback loops as they indicate that staff do not receive feedback about gender-reporting to the Board, nor are suggestions shared back with them.

## Financial resources

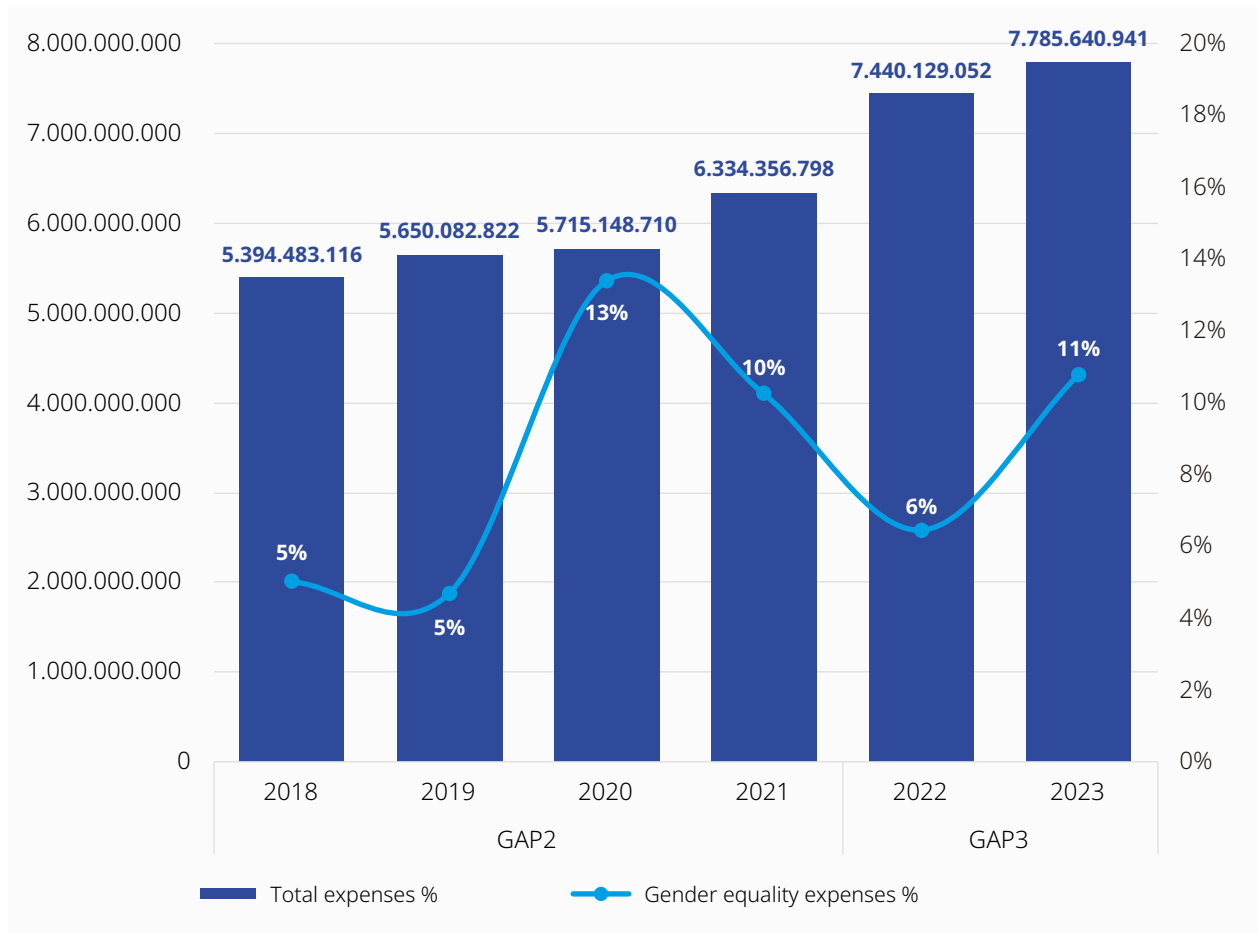
**Finding 14:** An analysis of gender financial resources in UNICEF shows that the organization is not yet meeting its target in this area overall, and the distribution of funds is skewed towards emergency programming, with gaps in funding for organizational capacity and in some of the goal areas. Better systems to track gender expenditure constitute progress but more work is needed to operationalize them.

**Despite progress from 5 to 11 per cent between 2018 and 2023, UNICEF is not meeting its benchmark of 15 per cent of financial resources dedicated to gender work.** This is lower than some of the other agencies included in the comparative analysis conducted as part of this evaluation such as GAC and UNFPA. It is however noteworthy that UNICEF has tightened its calculation of gender equality expenditure in line with UN Secretary General

recommendations, which has resulted in a drop in the reported gender expenditure in GAP 3 as illustrated in *Figure 7*.<sup>75</sup> The marked increase between 2022 and 2023 from 6 to 11 per cent is complex to interpret, given that it could be attributed to a combination of improved tagging of gender expenditure and actual increase in resources spent in gender equality programming for transformative results.

**Less than half of the COs achieved the gender expenditure target for gender equality programming for transformative results in 2023.** Results differ between regions, with ECAR and EAPR having the highest proportion of COs meeting the target (100 per cent and 71 per cent respectively in 2023), while ESAR presents the lowest proportion (5 per cent). It is noteworthy that Goal Areas with the highest gender equality expenditure proportion are also the ones with the lowest total spend (see EQ3 below for more details on this).<sup>76</sup>

**Figure 7.** Gender equality expenditure out of total UNICEF expenditure



**Source:** UNICEF Strategic Plan expenditure cube, 2019-2021 and 2022-2025

**In addition to the amount of resources dedicated to gender, the source of funding determines how those resources are allocated to achieve results.**

UNICEF has three categories of resources: other resources emergency (ORE), other resources (OR), and regular resources (RR). RR encompasses core and flexible funds, while ORE and OR are earmarked resources.

**In line with the 2019 gender evaluation, this evaluation confirms the continued decreasing trend in core funding for gender equality.**

The evaluation found overall stagnation of RR in absolute terms, with a slight increase between 2022 and 2023 (from 6 to 9 per cent) of RR resources dedicated to gender equality programming for transformative results. The increase in gender equality expenditure percentage between 2022 and 2023 is driven by an increase in work tagged as gender equality which falls under ORE funds allocated to Goal Areas and largely coming from bilateral funding to COs.

**Upwards influencing of donors is a key strategy for addressing the resource bottleneck.**<sup>77</sup>

In this respect, UNICEF has worked to raise the profile of its gender work to donors. The Executive Director set the work on adolescent girls as one of two priorities, sending a strong message to the whole organization and beyond. The Executive Director has also put in place a “set aside” fund sourced from the underspend of the 8 per cent overhead taken from all grants, which COs can apply to implement gender work.<sup>78</sup> These funds have been instrumental in Peru, for example, to support the adolescent girl’s empowerment work. However, it is important to note that the Gender Thematic Fund is the least funded thematic fund with just around US\$5 million annually, and gender is the lowest funded thematic area within UNICEF programming budget.

**In many COs, UNICEF flagship gender and adolescent girls programming work is encouraged by key donors like Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.**

The top bilateral donors for gender in 2023 were: the United States, Germany, European Commission, Japan, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, GAC, DRC, Australia, and Norway. On average, the gender equality proportion of the overall expenditures sourced from these donors was 14 per cent. This is slightly under the 15 per cent overall target, which highlights a potential opportunity to increase gender-related funds from this group of donors.

**There are also innovative strategies put in place by some COs to encourage donors to invest in gender, which demonstrate the agency and leadership of COs in prioritizing gender in their programming.**

In Peru, the gender section has developed partnerships with the private sector to secure their collaboration on the *ChicasTec* programme on girls’ empowerment and engagement in engineering and information and communication technologies (ICT) professions. In DRC, an innovative mechanism to ensure that gender is resourced as part of every grant was developed. The CO requires gender analysis to be conducted as part of all proposal development. It has also put in place the ring-fencing of 5 per cent of grants for gender/PSEAH/GBV and set aside 1 per cent of OR for these areas. According to country respondents, this was made possible by the CO having a solid gender architecture to manage these funding streams, as well as senior management appetite for innovation and willingness to prioritize the gender equality agenda.

**As part of GAP 3 and following the 2019 GAP evaluation, UNICEF has put in place more stringent criteria and quality assurance to track its investment in gender.**

UNICEF implements a dual tracking system combining GEM at output level which is marked in the planning phase, and gender-tagging of actual expenditure at activity level. This is in line with the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General’s High-level Task Force on Financing Gender Equality and the implementation of a minimum 15 per cent financial target for activities making a principal contribution to gender equality. It aligns well to the heightened level of ambition on gender equality in GAP 3, which focuses on promoting transformative approaches to obtaining gender results in UNICEF. Quality assurance processes have been put in place by the gender unit in HQ to support COs in accurately identifying their gender equality expenditures, by reviewing the congruence of gender tagging with narrative reporting on gender activities. Revised guidance on how to calculate gender expenditure was also disseminated to COs.

**However, evidence indicates that this system is not yet well socialized across the organization.**

In several country case studies, reported gender spending did not seem to accurately reflect the levels of gender investment. GEM and activity tagging are poorly understood and implemented in some COs and depend on the ability of the individual staff in charge of reporting. The evaluation team compared a sample of six programme documents from the country case studies with their tagging across and within COs and found that in at least two instances the tagging seemed to be subjective, some activities being tagged under “significant” contributions, when the narrative rather pointed to “marginal” or “none” contributions. In two other instances, no activity was tagged in some programmatic areas that were conducting gender work, leading to an underrepresentation of the CO efforts on gender. These challenges are common across the UN system despite gender markers being in place since 2013.<sup>79</sup> Other organizations included in the comparative analysis conducted as part of this evaluation have also grappled with this issue, with good practice identified for example in UNFPA in establishing quality assurance mechanisms and training their staff to implement the GEM accurately.<sup>80</sup>

## Human resources

**Finding 15: Promising results have been achieved in setting up a solid gender architecture across the different levels of the organization. UNICEF still has a way to go to ensure that this architecture successfully drives the integration of gender equality across UNICEF programming and institutional capacity at all levels.**

**UNICEF gender architecture is well developed compared to other organizations,**

according to benchmarks such as the UN-SWAP and Multilateral Organizational Performance Assessment (MOPAN).<sup>81</sup> In HQ, the gender team acts as the GAP Secretariat, in charge of monitoring progress against targets as well as overall institutional accountability for the GAP implementation. In line with the GAP framework, it oversees two streams of programmatic work: adolescent girls targeted programming and integration of gender in programmatic Goal Areas. At regional level, each UNICEF region has a regional advisor and should have a gender specialist. The GAP Standard indicator on adherence to the 2021 staffing guidance<sup>82</sup> shows around 80 per cent of COs achieved this target in 2023.

**While there is progress in developing gender architecture across UNICEF, more remains to be done at country level to support the delivery of the GAP.**

There are only around 40 gender specialists located in larger countries as this is dependent on CO budget size. This criterion was questioned by several respondents, arguing that other criteria should be used to determine the need for a gender specialist, including the growth of the CO gender portfolio and contextual factors. Most COs do not employ a full-time gender specialist, and in the majority integration of gender equality in programmatic areas should be ensured by around 225 gender focal points that have other responsibilities and spend 20 to 50 per cent of their time on gender work. Regional gender advisors also provide support, although the level of resources available to support COs varies among regions, with stronger capacity for example in ECARO.

**The evaluation found considerable variability in the configuration of gender architecture across COs from country case studies, reflecting different programme sizes and contexts.**

More effective set-ups seem to be characterized by a combination of at least one full-time gender staff directly reporting to the CO management and gender expertise in programmatic sections.

- ▶ In one country, the deputy representative shares the gender focal point role with another staff member. This helps position UNICEF as a key gender partner within the UN country team and with donors, resulting in improved resource mobilization and joint programmes. However, while the deputy representative has decision-making and influencing power, their time for in-depth involvement in gender programming is limited, and support by the other gender focal point in the office is limited as well, given that they also dedicate only 20 per cent of time to this function. This configuration, although not ideal, has the benefit of placing gender equality accountability at the management level rather than as a junior position within a programme section.
- ▶ In another country case study, the gender team is practically operating as a separate programmatic section reporting to the deputy representative. This set-up has been successful in delivering gender programming for transformative results focused on girls' empowerment and fundraising. However, due to this focus on specific programme implementation, the gender team has limited capacity to support gender integration across programmatic areas.
- ▶ In one large country programme, the CO management prioritized the resourcing of the gender team, resulting in the recruitment of two specialist staff as well as a task force of gender focal points working in each section team.
- ▶ In other contexts, having a programme specialist as a gender focal point is valued by programmatic staff who benefit from tailored technical assistance for gender integration in each programmatic area.
- ▶ In another country case study operating in a humanitarian context, the gender focal point allocates only 20 per cent of their time to the GAP implementation, which is below the benchmark for an office this size. CO management has requested a full-time position, given the complexity of the context and the need for gender staff to be immersed in programming and support the conduct of a gender review.

**In line with the 2019 GAP evaluation, this evaluation finds that gender work remains to some extent siloed, and project-based.** This challenge appears to be a common UN-wide<sup>83</sup> preoccupation as outlined in the comparative study conducted as part of this evaluation, and an engrained bottleneck

in mobilizing the UN system's potential on gender equality. A recent review commissioned by the UN Secretary General on the UN system's capacity on gender equality concludes that "Gender mainstreaming is often ineffective, and the system-wide work of gender equality is in practice conducted by a small set of marginalized spaces that operate with limited resources and a scarcity mindset".<sup>84</sup>

**Functional gender working groups, as specified in UNICEF gender staffing guidance, are not always in place.** The GAP Standard indicator on "CO organizes regular meetings on the implementation of the gender priorities" was achieved by only 48 per cent of COs in 2023, reflecting the limited implementation of the recommendation to have a gender working group in place in COs. Evidence from most country case studies confirm that a gender working group is not in place, or is inactive, limiting the support to the work of the gender staff to integrate gender across programmes.

**Finding 16:** While UNICEF has continued to invest in developing a range of trainings on gender equality, the roll-out of those is not yet moving at pace. There are some gaps in the scope and content of capacity strengthening plans in terms of addressing values clarification and providing specific technical guidance to sectors.

**UNICEF has developed gender training resources that are geared to developing overall gender capacity across its workforce.** In addition to the GenderPro certification with George Washington University<sup>85</sup> country case studies indicate that in-person gender training for country staff is delivered by gender focal points, gender staff and regional gender advisors.

**However, progress on implementing these trainings remains slow.** While there was progress on the GAP Standard indicator of "having at least one GenderPro staff credentialed" from 12 to 26 per cent between 2022 and 2023, there was a decrease in COs meeting the target on "all staff having completed the foundational gender training" from 12 to 9 per cent in the same period, one of the lowest scoring indicators in the GAP Standard. Qualitative responses from the evaluation all-staff survey, analysed through NLP, indicate that respondents consider there is still a limited capacity development on transformative gender programming in UNICEF. For example, one staff member considered that "gender is yet to be accepted as a discipline akin to others that require

learning, understanding, and evolution over time". The comparative analysis conducted as part of this evaluation indicates that UNICEF is not performing as well in this regard as some other agencies like UNFPA or GAC, that have implemented long-term capacity strengthening plans across their staff.

**The evaluation found that gender training insufficiently emphasizes aspects of value-clarification.**<sup>86</sup> A review of a sample of gender training material on Agora<sup>87</sup> confirmed in interviews with respondents at country level indicate that gender training does not sufficiently engage staff in critical reflections on their own gender values, unconscious biases and norms, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and more (LGBTQI+) rights. Although the evaluation cannot refer to a systematic review of UNICEF staff capacity on gender, the country case studies provide qualitative evidence of a strong variability in staff understanding of gender equality and gender programming for transformative results. When asked about gender equality for transformative programming results pursued by UNICEF, most non-gender-focused respondents referred to gender-responsive work, for example access to services for women and girls and equal participation in UNICEF programmes, rather than changes in power relationships, social norms and in the socio-cultural environment. The evaluation finds that in this respect, the 2019 GAP evaluation findings and the conclusions of the latest UNICEF MOPAN assessment<sup>88</sup> are still relevant.

**In addition, key gaps remain in terms of ensuring that technical staff access training and resources that are specific to their area of work.**

Some programme and management staff interviewed in COs, including many who participated in staff workshops, consider mandatory gender training to be too basic and theoretical, having little application to their programmatic and operations work.<sup>89</sup> Staff across country case studies expressed the need for more practical tools on gender integration specific to their sector,<sup>90</sup> and better signposting to relevant resources, availability to undertake these online training courses, due to heavy workload and time spent on procedural bureaucracy, leaving little time to engage with the resources. There is also a need for further guidance on how to work with and support people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations and promote LGBTQI+ rights. Despite this, interviews with CO staff indicate an appetite for learning opportunities – including in person – on gender, including for peer learning, mentoring, and sharing practical examples and good practices.

**Capacity strengthening efforts and technical assistance provided by gender specialists are sometimes perceived as too theoretical and not grounded in the realities of programmes, resulting in gender specialist and other programme staff not speaking the same language.** Several respondents at HQ indicated that gender staff do not have adequate sectoral expertise to tailor advice to staff in programmatic sections and deliver it in a way that speaks to how each programmatic area operates, a phenomenon observed in another evaluation<sup>91</sup>. According to a respondent at HQ, there is sometimes a "culture clash" between gender specialists that adopt an advocacy stance to promote the integration of gender and programme staff that are focused on programme delivery. This is something that the evaluation observed in some COs. While in others, the gender specialists were deploying creativity and innovation to motivate and engage the staff, using a wide range of capacity building techniques, including inviting prominent feminists to address the staff and holding online discussions on gender. In humanitarian contexts, country respondents noted that there is need for specialized staff that can seamlessly insert gender expertise in humanitarian programming (more on this in SQ 3.1).

## SQ 2.2 Partnerships

### In summary

UNICEF has developed an increasing number of partnerships with women's and girls' organizations and deploys a variety of partnership approaches depending on the context and capacity of its partners. Grassroots organizations, however, still face significant administrative, financial, and capacity barriers that limit the possibility to enter partnerships with UNICEF. As part of the strategy to leverage partnerships with women- and girl-led organizations, UNICEF has invested in strengthening its partners' capacity on gender equality and advocacy, but these efforts are not sufficiently supporting organizational capacity to achieve sustainable results.

UNICEF has established joint programmes with other UN agencies to promote gender equality. However, the lack of clarity on UNICEF's comparative advantage on gender equality creates the risk of missed opportunities for collaboration or duplication of efforts at country level.

UNICEF is seen as one of the most influential UN agencies with governments given its relatively large programme footprint. This provides a platform on which UNICEF can advocate more strongly for girls' and child rights in public campaigns and among governments and member states. Despite ongoing challenges, UNICEF has established partnerships with national governments and strengthened the capacity of national actors to ensure sustainable gender equality programming for transformative results.

### Partnerships with girl-, youth- and women-led organizations and networks

**Finding 17:** UNICEF has developed an increasing number of partnerships with women's and girls' organizations. UNICEF appears to deploy a variety of partnership approaches depending on the context and capacity of partner organizations, ranging from collaborative partnerships engaging partners in intervention design with women- and girl-led organizations at one end of the scale, to more contractual relationships to deliver specific activities with grassroots CSOs with lower capacity.

**The Adolescent Girls Programme Strategy highlights that UNICEF had been increasing partnerships with and funding to more women- and girl-led organizations in both development and humanitarian programmes.** The 2024 GAP Annual Report mentions that US\$160.3 million was transferred to women-led organizations in 2023, of which US\$82.5 million was for humanitarian settings. However, only 5 per cent of this went to grassroots/local women-led CSOs.<sup>92</sup> GAP 3 Standard indicators relating to the breadth of partnerships and the integration of gender concerns in partnerships are among the highest scores in GAP 3 Standard: the two indicators "Partnerships with women and youth groups in programme design and monitoring" and "Integration of gender issues in key partnership documents" have obtained high and improving achievement rates, above 90 per cent in 2023. The GAP Standard indicator on partnerships with grassroots girls' and women's rights groups obtained a much lower score of 55 per cent in 2023 – in line with the qualitative responses from the evaluation all-staff survey.

**From country case study interviews, partnerships with larger women-led organizations appear to involve longer-term engagement with the partner participating in intervention design, implementation and monitoring, whilst interactions with women's and girls' grassroots organizations tend to centre around specific activities.**

This latter type of partnership appears to be more transactional, similar to one with a supplier.<sup>93</sup> In these cases, partner capacity to implement gender-transformative programming may not be fully leveraged, with some partners indicating that their expertise is not valued as they are only being brought in to deliver pre-designed activities, with little say or autonomy in how to do that.

**Overall, adolescent network representatives interviewed valued their relationship with UNICEF,** and, for example in Peru, adolescent networks perceived UNICEF as one of the go-to organizations. Another country case study with a positive, albeit recent, partnership with grassroots girl-led organizations is Bosnia and Herzegovina. Partners mentioned they valued UNICEF's flexibility and ability to work with diverse groups and rights holders and UNICEF extensive expertise and advocacy role.<sup>94</sup> Partners also highlighted that UNICEF implements mechanisms to promote youth and adolescent participation in programmes in monitoring and review processes, including in emergency responses.<sup>95</sup> Even within more project delivery-oriented interactions, UNICEF partnerships include a degree of participation through the implementation of the ADAP framework<sup>96</sup> to ensure that feedback from adolescents is included in the way activities are designed and delivered.

**Finding 18: Grassroots organizations face significant barriers to meeting procurement criteria and accessing funds. As part of the strategy to leverage partnerships with women- and girl-led organizations, UNICEF has invested in strengthening their capacity on gender. These efforts are however still limited in relation to supporting organizational sustainability and capacity to advocate for legislative change in support of gender equality.**

**UNICEF onerous procedures and accountability requirements – like many other UN organizations contributing to SDG 5<sup>97</sup> – present barriers for grassroots organizations that have few resources and limited organizational capacity to access direct funding.** This was mentioned by civil society partners interviewed in all country case studies and corroborated in the qualitative responses from the evaluation all-staff survey. In response to these barriers, grassroots adolescent networks tend to participate as implementers without directly managing the contract or the funds, often in sub-granting relationship through other larger CSOs, NGOs, or umbrella organizations. Barriers documented as part of this evaluation's country case studies mirror the findings of the 2019 GAPs evaluation and include:

- ▶ **Administrative barriers:** Transactional costs are often too high for grassroots organizations to enter partnerships with UNICEF.
- ▶ **Financial barriers:** The model of being reimbursed for completed activities presents barriers for organizations that lack the cash flow or initial capital to invest.
- ▶ **Timescale barriers:** The short-term duration of projects and pressure to deliver outputs within these timeframes, especially in emergencies, are not conducive to achieving long-term, sustainable, transformative gender results.

**There were also several challenges identified from the partners side that may hinder partnerships between grassroots organizations and UNICEF.** These include:

- ▶ Grassroots women's and girls' organizations often have limited funding, in particular core funds to support organizational capacity strengthening
- ▶ In some areas, there are few women's rights focused organizations, which can also affect the delivery of transformative results since it takes time to build non-specialist organizations capacity on gender

- ▶ Feminist, youth and SOGIESC rights and constituency-led organizations are often operating in the context of a shrinking civic space, and a backlash against the gender equality and human rights agendas. As documented in at least two country case studies, new legislation aimed at curtailing the work of these organizations puts their staff at risk, especially if they are working on gender-transformative programming, and may also limit opportunities for these CSOs to enter formal partnerships with UNICEF.<sup>98</sup>

There were reported efforts by UNICEF to address some of these barriers, for example, in emergency settings, lighter and faster partnership processes were introduced, as highlighted in Box 4 below.

#### BOX 4

##### Partnering with grassroots organizations to reach vulnerable girls in humanitarian contexts: Myanmar

In Myanmar, the CO works with local partners who have access to remote and hard-to-reach communities including in camps for internally displaced people. However, new CSO legislation has made it hard for some CSOs to register and operate, and local partners have had to adapt and keep a low profile. These organizations have limited capacity, but remain critical to UNICEF's work. Local CSOs know where communities are moving to and can keep in touch with them and have mobile teams to support children, women and girls. Recognizing the importance of these partners, UNICEF has focused on building their capacity on PSEAH, safeguarding, gender, disability inclusion, and financial systems. UNICEF has also put aside their usual partnership requirements and UN country team guidelines. "We now engage in new partnerships especially with local organizations and women rights organizations" (CO Myanmar respondent)

**With respect to building capacity for gender equality advocacy,** the evaluation found evidence of technical assistance and capacity strengthening efforts on gender equality of partners by COs related to PSEAH, parity in staffing, sex-disaggregated data collection, and gender analysis as part of baselines.<sup>99</sup> In terms of supporting partners' influencing capacity, in some contexts the COs worked as a platform to connect more grassroots organizations to other partners including the government, but in others not enough linkages were made with governmental structures (for example youth representation

and advisory structures not embedded in local and national governments). The previous GAP evaluation included a recommendation for UNICEF to work more closely with other UN partners, including UN Women, to build the capacity of partners in gender equality. However, this evaluation has not found any examples of this type of collaboration.

**UNICEF support to its partners' core organizational capacity is limited. This type of support is essential to foster the agency of local CSOs and women rights organizations and ensure the sustainability of their operations and of gender equality programming for transformative results.** This longer-term engagement is often overlooked in partnerships in the broader UN system, as highlighted in the review commissioned by the UN Secretary General office on gender equality capacity: "The UN system will need to recognize efforts to advance gender equality as inseparable from broader struggles for power both within and across member states. This approach also clarifies the role of civil society in advancing the system's goals around gender equality—a role that is not currently well-defined." UNICEF partnerships with women- and girl-led organizations have allowed the organization to deliver projects focused on gender equality and girls' empowerment, and in some instances to contribute to advocacy for women's and girls' rights. In humanitarian and fragile settings, it has allowed them to reach out to different groups of rights holders in the communities. However, beyond the capacity development needed to deliver interventions, the evaluation found few examples of UNICEF supporting core costs and organizational capacity of its partners, the overheads include in programme cooperation agreements been usually too low to meaningfully strengthen the organizations. An exception to this was in Peru where a partner mentioned that UNICEF was paying a 5 per cent management fee to support their organizational capacity and considered as good practice compared to other funders. In most country case studies however, the lack of support to core institutional costs was one of the main factors that limited the growth and sustainability of women- and girl-led organizations.

## Partnerships with UN agencies

**Finding 19: UNICEF has established joint programmes with other UN agencies to promote gender equality. However, the lack of clarity on UNICEF's comparative advantage on gender equality creates the risk of missed opportunities for collaborations or duplication of efforts at country level.**

**UNICEF is engaged in various global and country partnerships with UN agencies on gender, through programme delivery, advocacy and interagency coordination mechanisms.**<sup>100</sup> UNICEF is also engaged in regional partnerships that are highly relevant to gender equality.<sup>101</sup> Overall, 60 per cent of COs fulfilled the GAP 3 Standard indicator on having a joint programme on gender equality with other UN entities in 2023.<sup>102</sup> A large majority of respondents to the survey considered that partnerships and coordination with UN agencies were instrumental to UNICEF achieving gender equality results (71 per cent of respondents) and to a lesser extent that UNICEF coordinates effectively with other UN agencies on gender equality policy and programming (61 per cent of respondents). At country level, there are examples of programme and advocacy collaborations with other UN agencies, as outlined in Box 5.

**BOX 5****UNICEF formal and informal collaboration gender with other UN agencies on gender: Examples from country case studies**

- ▶ **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** IT girls initiative (UNICEF, UNDP and UN Women), and a Gender Accelerator Framework in pipeline (UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women).
- ▶ **Mozambique:** Three joint programmes on gender (UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, Action for Girls and Young Women (Rapariga Biz), and Child Grant 0-2 Programme (UNFPA, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UN Women, UNDP, ILO, WHO).
- ▶ **Egypt:** Joint programme on addressing FGM (with UNFPA), a partnership on gender programming (with UN Women), and on refugee and migrant youth and children including a gender-responsive component (with UNHCR).
- ▶ **Bangladesh:** UNICEF participates in UN coordination through UN country team working groups on specific projects on ending child marriage, distribution of dignity kits to women and girls, and campaigns and health related interventions for adolescents.
- ▶ **Peru:** UNICEF has conducted high-profile joint advocacy efforts on therapeutic abortion and ending child marriage with UNFPA and other agencies, and on programming in humanitarian settings (UNFPA, International Organization for Migration, UNHCR).

**UNICEF's added value within the shared UN agenda of gender equality is not clearly articulated and understood by other agencies, which leads to missed opportunities in alignment and coordination with other UN agencies at country level.** Stakeholders from other UN agencies interviewed at country level explained that there is some overlap and lack of clarity in gender equality efforts at country level where the mandate of UNICEF and other UN agencies is not clearly delineated. While there are global partnerships between UNICEF and UNFPA, for example on FGM and ending child marriage, these do not seem to translate into increased collaboration and alignment outside the planned interventions<sup>103</sup> within these frameworks and the countries in which they are implemented.<sup>104</sup>

**The 2019 GAP evaluation recommended better defining UNICEF's comparative advantage for gender equality at the country and regional levels, but this evaluation found that more is needed to progress this further.** Within UN country teams coordination could be stronger, as there were examples of duplications in geographies and rights holders being reached by interventions and missed opportunities for more impactful outcomes. Contributing factors include competition for funds in a context of shrinking resources for gender work, the overlap of agencies' mandates especially on GBV, and the lack of incentives for collaboration and joint working with other UN agencies.

**Inclusion of gender in national systems and structures**

**Finding 20:** UNICEF is seen as one of the most influential UN agencies with governments given its relatively large programme footprint. This provides a platform on which UNICEF can advocate more strongly for girls' and child rights in public campaigns and among governments and member states.

**UNICEF is a key actor in influencing national governments on child and girls' rights.** At the same time, respondents from partner organizations and external stakeholders highlighted UNICEF influence in joint advocacy efforts on gender equality. Some UN agency representatives consulted at the country level believe that UNICEF has the potential to do more on advocating for gender equality, but that the organization's focus on project delivery may have led to them keeping a lower profile on contested gender equality issues to maintain good working relationships with government.<sup>105</sup> There are examples from country case studies of UNICEF normative work contributing to advancing gender-responsive and non-discriminatory legislation on women's participation in public life, violence against women, employment and economic benefits, and marriage and family law.

**Another area of strength for UNICEF advocacy is its focus on gender equality within the child rights agenda.** Given the political backlash against gender rights in many contexts where UNICEF operates, the entry point through protection of childhood can open doors, and the evaluation has documented such instances in country case studies where UNICEF was able to progress significantly on gender-transformative results and girls rights with conservative governments that would not discuss these issues with other UN agencies.<sup>106</sup> UNICEF was considered to have key entry points in health and education to push the gender agenda as the children's mandate is more acceptable to many governments who would otherwise not want to discuss gender and human rights issues.

**The evaluation found examples of good cooperation with governments in the implementation of gender equality initiatives.**<sup>107</sup> These were mostly across the health, education and protection sectors, in some cases gaining high-level political endorsement. UNICEF has focused on capacity strengthening and technical assistance, gender integration in national policies and advocacy to shape policies and legislation. UNICEF has had successes in the institutionalization of programmes with governments.<sup>108</sup> More details on UNICEF policy and programme work are presented in EQ3.

### SQ 2.3. Leadership and accountability

#### In summary

Consistent commitment to gender equality by senior leadership has been instrumental in raising the profile of the GAP, both internally and externally, but may need to be consolidated especially at middle management level. Although definitions and understanding of gender equality and gender-transformative results are variable, gender is increasingly perceived as the responsibility of everyone at UNICEF. In practice, however, this wider staff ownership may be limited by a lack of formal and precise accountabilities for gender results beyond gender-focused staff.

**Finding 21: Consistent commitment to gender equality by senior leadership has been instrumental in raising the profile of the GAP across the different levels of the organization as well as to UNICEF partners but needs to be consolidated especially at middle management level.**

**This evaluation identified progress in senior leadership commitment to gender equality, as compared to the 2019 GAP evaluation.** The latter considered that there was a “need to step up senior management efforts to clearly reference and communicate existing corporate principles of gender equality for accountability purposes.” Leadership statements at the HQ level in the context of the current GAP 3 and Gender Policy have contributed to a higher level of ownership of the GAP across UNICEF.

A CO senior leadership staff member mentioned that the Executive Director had made adolescent girls' empowerment one of two key priorities, which was seen as a clear message to staff as well as external partners on the commitment of UNICEF to the gender equality agenda. Leadership commitment is also upheld in the governance of the GAP, namely the global gender equality steering committee which meets twice a year to review progress against targets for gender equality in UNICEF programmes and

workplace. The steering committee is attended by deputy executive directors, regional directors and division directors. This mechanism is instrumental in ensuring that senior leadership is kept abreast of UNICEF progress on gender-transformative results and foster their continued commitment to the gender equality agenda.

**Over the last ten years, leadership at the country level has been increasingly seen as being supportive of gender equality.** The GAP Standard offers a generally positive view of leadership performance on gender, as the indicator “CO has the leadership, oversight and accountability at an appropriate management level (deputy representative)” remained stable and high between GAP 2 and GAP 3, at around 75-80 per cent. This is corroborated by country case study findings, where several examples of leadership commitment to gender equality have been documented.<sup>109</sup> In one country case study, staff flagged that a gender lens had been increasingly applied in decision-making processes by leadership over time. It was also recognized that when senior leadership personally prioritizes gender equality, it creates a supportive environment that trickles down through the various teams.

**Although these results are encouraging, respondents in several case study countries noted that leadership commitment appears highly dependent on leaders' individual motivation and values.** Examples from the comparative study conducted as part of this evaluation point to the importance of embedding gender equality in the identity of the organization to attract the right profiles and as a key incentive for leadership to uphold it. Through interviews during country case studies, the evaluation also identified instances where leadership did not prioritize gender, and as a result the gender specialist was not reporting to senior management or was not supported or invited to senior management team meetings. This was found to have a direct bearing on the extent to which gender was integrated in the office and programmes. In addition, whilst examples of senior management leadership on gender were documented in several case studies, the evaluation found a great variability in terms of capacities and motivation of middle-level management.

**Finding 22: Although definitions and understanding of gender equality and gender equality programming for transformative results is somewhat variable gender is increasingly perceived as the responsibility of everyone at UNICEF. In practice, this wider staff ownership of the gender equality agenda may be limited by a lack of formal and precise accountabilities for gender results beyond gender-focused staff.**

**A key challenge for UNICEF is ensuring that responsibility for gender equality extends beyond gender staff.**<sup>110</sup> The 2019 GAP evaluation highlighted gaps in this respect: "Responsibility for GAP implementation mostly rests with a committed few, and it is frequently perceived as the remit of dedicated gender-focused staff, rather than as an organization-wide responsibility." In answer to this challenge, the GAP 3 emphasizes the importance of a whole-of-organization approach to implementing institutional enablers, ensuring that these are not the sole responsibility of gender specialists and gender focal points, but "are the responsibility of everyone in UNICEF, regardless of organizational role."

**There is evidence that gender is increasingly perceived as the responsibility of everyone at UNICEF.** From the staff survey based on a representative number of respondents, there is a high degree of consensus among UNICEF staff that gender equality is important to their work: the statement "integrating gender into my work is important to me" gathers the highest score in the survey, with a total of 93 per

cent of respondents agreeing/strongly agreeing. This is to be nuanced by the fact that, as outlined in EQ1, what constitutes gender work and gender equality programming for transformative results may mean very different things for different staff based on their personal beliefs and opinions. From country case studies, there were often diverging views among staff on what gender equality results the organization should pursue as part of its mandate focused on child rights. Some staff favoured a more incremental approach to change rather than the gender for transformative programming approach promoted in the Gender Policy. From a country case study staff workshop, it also emerged that some staff do not understand or share the need to promote gender equality, therefore, even if they are aware of the guidelines, these staff are unlikely to implement them. From the workshop it also emerged that including more explicit gender responsibilities in job descriptions could help foster greater accountability and ownership around the agenda.

**UNICEF performance management and talent management systems are meant to embed individual responsibility and accountability for gender equality across UNICEF. However, the evaluation did not find evidence of widespread formal accountability for gender equality.** Country case studies and a sample review of job descriptions for country representatives, deputy representatives and chiefs of section indicate that gender-related responsibilities are not well outlined in job descriptions, in particular at the level of the middle management (for example specialist staff in programmatic areas). Qualitative responses from the evaluation all-staff survey, analysed through NLP, show that staff feel there is a lack of clarity about accountability systems concerning senior management and that "accountability lines for ensuring gender equality and gender structures are usually weak". The evaluation also found no evidence of formal accountability mechanisms for other programmatic staff and gender focal points, except in the DRC where gender was added in the PER of the gender focal points. These observations hold true across the organization, as the GAP Standard indicator "CO programme management plan defines accountabilities to achieve gender results across sectors" was only achieved by around half of COs in 2023.

**A key learning from the comparative analysis study conducted as part of this evaluation is that organizations successful at integrating gender across the board use a combination of incentives and compliance mechanisms and underline the importance of having clear individual targets associated with gender equality.** This is described in Box 6 below.

#### BOX 6

##### Developing accountabilities for gender equality: Example from the comparative study

GAC has enshrined its commitment to gender equality in its feminist global affairs policy,<sup>111</sup> and pursues this agenda internally through a combination of incentives and compliance mechanisms. GAC disposes of ‘soft’ mechanisms to ensure that gender equality is held at the heart of the senior leadership, including the fact that their position on gender equality is part of how they are assessed and perceived. There are also elements of compliance for management at all levels of the organization, “absolute must dos in addition to the should dos.” – Global KII respondent

## SQ 2.4. Staffing and culture

### In summary

Gender parity is achieved at HQ level, but there remain discrepancies in gender across different staff categories. UNICEF recruitment policy tends to consider parity in isolation from the broader goal of improving gender equality in the workplace, which can lead to missed opportunities for achieving an equitable workplace.

UNICEF staffing policy framework has gradually been reviewed to become more intentional in considering gender equality, benefiting staff overall and steps have been taken to address issues of culture and inclusivity in the workplace. However, more remains to be done to achieve a supportive and enabling environment in UNICEF for staff in all their diversity.

### Gender equality in the workplace

**Finding 23: While gender parity is achieved at global level, there remain discrepancies in gender across different staff categories. UNICEF recruitment policy tends to consider parity in isolation from the broader goal of improving gender equality in the workplace, which can lead to counter-productive measures and missed opportunities for achieving an equitable workplace.**

**Across the entire UNICEF workforce, irrespective of grade or location, parity in the workforce is achieved in UNICEF with a total of 49.65 per cent of women and 50.35 per cent of men in 2024.**<sup>112</sup> UNICEF scores high in recruitment and promotion in the latest EDGE survey – the employee survey carried out as part of the EDGE certification on gender equality.<sup>113</sup>

**However, there are enduring gender discrepancies within different staff categories between levels and functional areas.** Female representation

has remained below 43 per cent for general service staff since 2019.<sup>114</sup> In some instances, progress has been reversed: in 2019 50 per cent parity was achieved at D1 and D2 levels, whereas in 2023 there were less than 48 per cent women in those positions. There are also strong disparities among functional areas, in particular a low proportion of female staff in traditionally male dominated sectors such as information and communication technology, security and WASH. Some staff have mentioned that in some instances, management may normalize gender discrepancies in staffing because less female candidates may be attracted to some areas. In the WASH functional area, female staff have created the “Women in WASH” initiative to investigate the reason behind the gender gap in this sector and to find solutions. In WASH, under 30 per cent of the staff are female, a number that has grown only moderately over the past decade. However, there are also gender imbalances in areas that are not traditionally male dominated, such as administration, finance or operations. There are also many more international male staff in emergency duty stations.<sup>115</sup>

**Temporary special measures on preferential recruitment of female candidates were enacted in 2020 to achieve gender parity at P5 level and were removed in 2023 when parity was reached at that level.** Qualitative responses from the evaluation all-staff survey, analysed through NLP, show that senior level representation was recognized as a key area of progress made by UNICEF in the last five years. The evaluation found, however, that the measures generated pushback by male staff who felt the policies do not promote equal opportunities among staff but put men at a disadvantage in terms of hiring and career progression, and that gender should not be prioritized over merit. This illustrates the importance of effective communication around such measures to improve buy-in and ensure they are not seen as a top-down imposition.

**Parity appears to be mainly considered as a numerical target, rather than a means to achieve the broader objective of promoting a gender equal workplace.** While UNICEF recruitment policy emphasizes the importance of gender parity in staffing, gender equality is placed on par with other dimensions of diversity in staffing, under the goal of “hiring suitable staff from diverse backgrounds (geographic, gender, religion, race, ethnicity, LGBTIQ+ persons, persons with disabilities and other historically marginalized groups)”.<sup>116</sup> This may lead to a lack of prioritization of gender, as mentioned in EQ1. In addition, the new guidance only recommends having diverse selection panels but does not appear to formally prohibit all male selection panels, recommending that “the selection panel should be diverse, to the extent possible, from different geographic, gender, and other diversity groups”. Qualitative responses from the evaluation all-staff survey, analysed through NLP, found that the intersection of gender, age, and nationality plays a significant role in terms of career progression, for example a survey respondent considered career progression as considerably lower for women from countries in the Global South, who have “less visibility”. Responses from the same survey also indicate that gender equality is only considered in binary terms.

**Crucially, where gender imbalance is in favour of female staff, counterbalance measures, if not designed carefully, can contribute to further entrenchment of gender inequalities and the discrimination of women in the workplace.** The new UNICEF staff selection procedure stipulates that the gender target is 50-50 (or 47-53), and the recommendation is “to hire under-represented gender at

staff category.” This seems to have been misinterpreted at CO level, even though the intention of the GAP 2 and GAP 3 Standard indicator was not to penalize COs for having an over-representation of females. Country case studies have revealed that COs who had above 70 per cent of female staff understood that they had to start recruiting more men. Male and female staff participating in single-sex staff workshops did not interpret this imbalance as a sign that women were particularly empowered in the workforce, but instead attributed it to the country context where working with children was primarily seen as a female role, hence not attracting so many male staff to UNICEF. In this context, blanket measures put in place to favour male staff recruitment were considered by participants to have further reinforced gender imbalances, leading to reduced opportunities for women to access higher positions (while there was no evidence suggesting those measures would lead to improved gender equality).

**In other instances, however, COs have put in place innovative ways to promote women in staffing.** In DRC, special measures were put in place to hire female drivers and security guards. According to UNICEF respondents, this sent a strong message to girls in the community about what traditional gender roles and professions are, thus contributing to the organization’s mandate on gender equality.

**Finding 24:** There has been progress in UNICEF staffing policy framework, which has gradually been reviewed to become more intentional in considering gender equality, benefiting staff overall. There is scope to keep on improving these policies so that they address the remaining factors of gender inequality in UNICEF workplace, as well as ensuring a more systematic roll-out at the country level.

**New measures have helped create a more positive environment for women working in UNICEF according to both global respondents and interviews with CO staff.** Qualitative responses from the evaluation all-staff survey show the appreciation of staff towards the organization’s steps taken to better align internal policies with gender equality principles. Below is a non-exhaustive list of such measures:

- ▶ Teleworking procedures and flexible working arrangements are widespread throughout the organization. This is a strong enabler for women who have caring duties and in one staff workshop, it was reported that this is used more by women than men. However, the approval is at the discretion of line managers, and some CO

staff considered that it is not applied equitably between various categories of staff, including male/females and international/national. Staff are also hesitant to use it fearing that this may reflect badly on their commitment to work.<sup>117</sup>

- ▶ Pay parameters have been adapted so that women, who tend to have greater caring responsibilities for both children and parents, are better enabled to take paid leave for these duties.
- ▶ Both paternity and maternity leave days have been increased. There is a 24-week maternity leave and 16-week parental leave policy, which includes non-gestational parents. This is better than national legislation in many (but not all) COs included in country case studies. However, some staff wished that maternity leave could be used as flexibly as paternity leave. In some contexts, staff felt that paternity leave policy needed further contextualization and that there was a need for better sensitization of fathers to ensure they utilize their allowance effectively.

**Respondents highlighted that more needs to be done in the following areas to ensure a supportive environment for and retention of women in the workplace.**

- ▶ Workload and a heavy results-oriented culture remains a challenge for staff in most COs, particularly for women given the gender imbalance in home and care duties. Qualitative responses from the evaluation all-staff survey show a perception that experienced and qualified women leave the organization due to social norms and expectations towards leadership. Young female staff in some COs considered that “the workload (was) not compatible with building a family”.
- ▶ There are no special considerations for pregnant women, with some staff reporting that pregnant women must find their own replacement and/or redistribute their tasks, overloading their colleagues.
- ▶ Staff perception emerging from the evaluation all-staff survey indicated that the implicit expectation that staff need to work in non-family hardship stations to advance at UNICEF, creates a structural bias against female staff who are mothers. In two country case studies, respondents considered that these duty stations remain unattractive to women. One staff commented, “We encourage women to apply, but we don’t look at the lived realities of women there.”

- ▶ The mobility policy, which impacts on career progression, penalizes women in particular. While this is a challenge for both men and women’s careers, given gender roles it is often more difficult when female staff are relocated, and their family is expected to follow. One staff member commented “On paper the opportunities are the same for men and women, but in reality, they are not because social norms are different for a woman and a man to prioritize their careers.”
- ▶ Specific needs of women are not always considered: in two countries, staff identified gaps in policies that support women in their experience of menstruation and menopause.

**Stronger systems have been put in place in UNICEF to implement a zero-tolerance policy for sexual misconduct.**

This follows the independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority. Improvements include the creation of a temporary Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) unit under the Executive Director’s Office. The latest report on the implementation of the recommendations made by the independent panel review mentions that 92 per cent of the same have been completed or integrated into ongoing work.<sup>118</sup> Pulse check surveys on the workplace culture are being conducted periodically to assess the trends of staff’s perception of different aspects of workplace culture, with data being used by COs to discuss these issues with staff. The areas where UNICEF scored the lowest included psychological safety and trust and standards of conduct, with men generally responding more positively than women. The staff completion rate for the online training course on the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse of authority is 94 per cent, while the completion rate for all personnel is 79 per cent.<sup>119</sup>

**These systems, however, appear to not be fully translated at country level.**

Interviews with both country case study and global stakeholders indicate that the role of human resources departments at country level is not currently geared towards addressing issues of misconduct and PSEAH. Internal facing PSEAH structures are not as developed as external PSEAH: in one instance there was no focal point for PSEAH; in other cases, the planned institutional systems were in place, but they were not well known; and in one country, most key informants were unable to describe the internal reporting mechanism for

sexual misconduct. Key informants and country case study workshop participants also mentioned that reporting cases through formal channels can be slow and frustrating, and that cases should have a swifter resolution. They also reported a lack of trust towards reporting global PSEAH mechanisms and those in-country to redress instances of abuse of power and discrimination, and fear of retaliation and of losing one's job, leading to under-reporting of cases. However, there appears to be progress as qualitative responses from the evaluation all-staff survey, analysed through NLP, indicate improvements in terms of awareness and women feeling more empowered to "speak-up" and to discuss issues related to SEAH, discrimination, and abuse of power.

**In this respect, the creation of the new DPC (bringing together the culture and diversity team in the Office of the Executive Director with the Division of Human Resources) has potential to address these issues, by strengthening the role and capacity of human resources departments in this area.** This merger has nevertheless raised concerns among some staff in terms of the dilution of the DEI agenda on the one hand, and the level of resources needed to retrain the whole of human resources personnel to refocus their role to include DEI aspects on the other.

**Finding 25:** While steps have been taken to address issues of culture and inclusivity in the workplace, more remains to be done to achieve a gender equitable workplace culture in UNICEF for staff in all their diversity.

**UNICEF has put in place measures to listen to staff.** In 2019, an influential report from the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority<sup>120</sup> concluded that "despite good intentions, UNICEF (was) not living its values when it comes to (their) most important resource. For example, while UNICEF workplace culture is centred on results for children, UNICEF (did) not appear to give equal importance to how those results are achieved." Following this report, UNICEF has regularly implemented surveys in its workforce to explore perceptions around workplace culture. Examples are the survey conducted as part of the EDGE certification process in 2022; the comprehensive global staff survey conducted every two years; and the shorter pulse check on workplace culture survey also conducted every other year.

**Surveys reveal important discrepancies in perceptions of male and female staff around organizational culture and inclusiveness in the workplace, differences that also intersect with other dimensions of diversity.** For example, in the global staff survey of 2022, the statement "At UNICEF, the mechanisms to resolve questionable conduct concerns are applied fairly and timely", obtained an overall positive score of 53 per cent, but this score was higher by 18 percentage points among male staff as compared to female staff. Results from the survey conducted as part of this evaluation and based on a representative number of respondents indicate a high variability of perceptions between genders and among different groups of staff. To the statement "I have an equal opportunity to progress to more senior positions in UNICEF as everyone else" overall, 53 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, but by gender scores ranged from 61 per cent among men, 51 per cent among women and only 14 per cent among gender diverse/non-binary staff. There were also gender imbalances among different staff categories, for example among staff living with a disability and among staff of different ethnicities. How staff with different gender identities responded to culture statements as part of this evaluation's survey are illustrated below (see *Figure 8*)

**There are several networks in UNICEF that play a key role in promoting gender equality and intersecting diversity dimensions in the workplace.**<sup>121</sup> For example, the young UNICEF mechanism has had a positive influence on COs capacity to work on gender; early career staff have a particular interest and motivation to work on gender equality. Differences in perspectives between those early in their career and those more established in their careers were discussed during the staff workshops with female staff and confirmed during several interviews. At times, this has led to an "inter-generational culture clash" expressed through different approaches to programming, innovations, understanding of gender norms and stereotypes. While younger staff feel that their voices are often marginalized or even dismissed, older staff express a fear of not wanting to be competitive in the changing environment. Even though female staff noted they feel they can discuss issues when together in a safe space like the evaluation single-sex staff workshops, there are no regular interactions between the two groups on the topics regarding values, gender norms, or gender equality.

**Beyond global efforts put in place to ensure a more gender-balanced workplace, COs have incorporated measures to improve workplace culture around gender.**<sup>122</sup> However, country case studies document a series of enduring challenges to achieving a conducive workplace culture on gender:

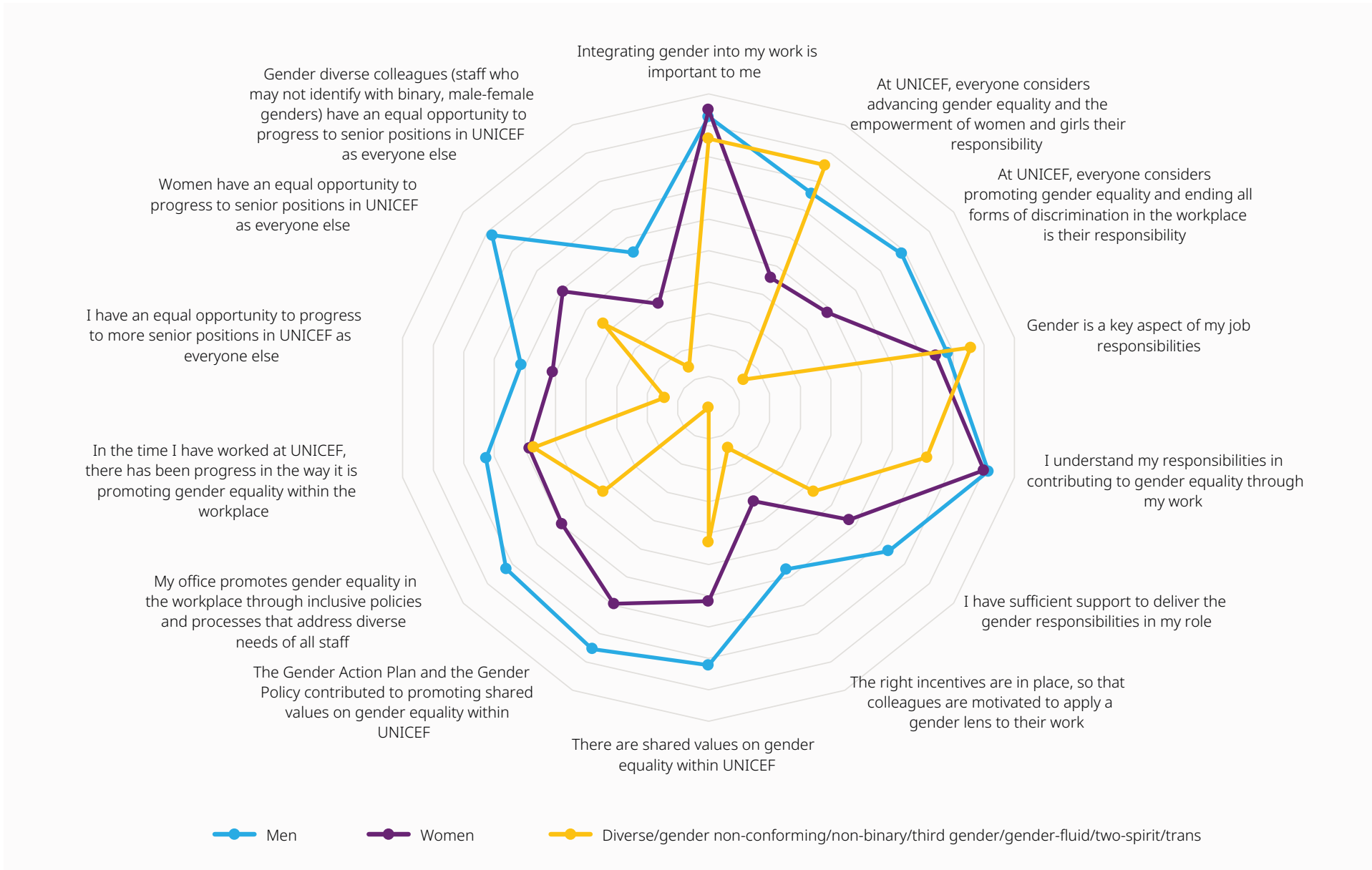
- ▶ Some staff felt that efforts to address inappropriate behaviour in the workplace are limited. Female staff respondents across three COs from country case studies complained about unwelcome “everyday sexism” remarks in the office, showing that clear understanding on setting boundaries is not yet fully in place. In one CO, female staff participating in a single-sex staff workshop proposed to have a functional code of conduct regarding remarks regarding attire and language.
- ▶ Female and gender diverse staff<sup>123</sup> were not confident in existing redress mechanisms for inappropriate behaviours, one staff commenting “I don’t feel safe to raise a gender issue with my supervisors because I don’t think action will be taken.”
- ▶ In at least two country case studies staff reported that the global referral mechanisms were taking much too long, and in one CO, a case was quoted of an alleged perpetrator continuing to work while awaiting a final decision, interacting with some of the witnesses who had provided testimony against them.
- ▶ Female managers and leaders are not always enabled to succeed in their role. In several COs, participants in staff workshops considered that female managers’ voices were not considered on a par with their male colleagues and their decisions were not respected.
- ▶ Achieving parity including in leadership does not automatically solve gender inequality issues or inappropriate, gender-based behaviours in the workplace, as women in leadership positions can still perpetuate machismo culture.<sup>124</sup>

- ▶ What is accepted behaviour by a male manager is perceived very differently for women, who can be seen as aggressive or bullying when asserting their authority, including by their female colleagues. Managerial positions have specific challenges for women. One respondent thus illustrated the difficulty of carrying out managerial duties as a female: “To aspire to a higher position, I have to be like a tiger, I have to be like a man, there is a lot of competitiveness. I have to face a lot of internal conflict. And motherhood influences this. I’ve heard here “woman in high office, divorce for sure.”

**These challenges are common to many organizations and illustrate that, despite progress made, more and sustained efforts are needed to make UNICEF a gender equitable workplace.**<sup>125</sup> A recent UNICEF report notes that “one persistent challenge has been the reluctance of some leaders and managers to embrace the notion that the culture change work is essential, rather than merely desirable, for staff to be able to deliver better on the mandate of UNICEF”.<sup>126</sup>

It is noteworthy that across country case studies both male and female staff appreciated the opportunity to discuss gender- and workplace-related issues in a safe space as part of the staff workshops conducted in the frame of this evaluation. Several staff expressed the wish for more such opportunities, one person commenting for example “I think it’s important that there are formal and institutional spaces where women can talk about work-life balance.”

**Figure 8.** Score for staff and culture statements (strongly agree and agree), by gender



Source: Evaluation all-staff survey

## EQ3 – Programmatic results

**To what extent have UNICEF programmatic results for gender equality throughout the life course been met across all five Goal Areas, particularly to advance adolescent girls' leadership and well-being, in both development and humanitarian settings?**

Indicators on GAP programming and expenditure show there has been progress in integrating gender across the Goal Areas, with different levels of investment across sectors. In general, the approach to gender integration adopted is more responsive than transformative, with transformative programming found more in Goal Area 3 (child protection). UNICEF reported gender-transformative expenditure has also increased in all Goal Areas, but all except one (Goal Area 3) remain lower than UN-SWAP's recommendation. Overall, gender equality results are primarily achieved by gender-focused programmes.

Programming in Goal Area 1 (health and nutrition) focuses primarily on interventions that are gender-sensitive or -responsive such as improved access and uptake of services by women and girls. Many of the programmes target women based on their biological and gendered roles, and there is limited engagement with boys and men.

Results related to Goal Area 2 (education) appear uneven, but with notable country level achievements in upstream system level change, as well as with marginalized and out-of-school adolescent girls. A comprehensive strategy promoting gender equality has been developed but implementation is constrained by limited gender expertise within the education sector at country level and within the national education departments. This contributes to missed opportunities for developing education systems that address harmful gender and social norms at scale.

The child protection section (Goal Area 3) has adopted a more strategic and evidence-based approach to gender integration in recent years. UNICEF focus on prevention of violence has grown, as prescribed in GAP 3. This is a significant opportunity for gender-transformative work, but more needs to be done to address quality in programming. Joint child protection programmes have shown positive results in policy change but their approach to gender transformative programming could be strengthened.

The WASH strategy (Goal Area 4) sets out an ambition for more gender-transformative work, however, current programme and policy interventions are mostly gender-sensitive or -responsive focusing on improved access and uptake of services.

Output and outcome data for Goal Area 5 (social protection) suggest that the increase in dedicated resources, gender-related evidence and expertise have contributed to this good progress in terms of results achieved. As a result of these investments, UNICEF has seen significant results in the uptake and integration of gender in social protection. More could be done to ensure systematic integration of gender across the different COs, and to move beyond gender-responsive programming when/where possible.

UNICEF efforts to mainstream gender in the humanitarian sector are reflected by the increased guidance in place, increased gender analysis, disaggregation of data and involvement of women and girls' organizations. However, ambitions that have been set have not fully materialized, partly because of insufficient gender technical expertise in humanitarian operations. UNICEF is increasingly recognizing the direct needs of women and girls in its climate change work but has a long way to go to integrate gender in practice.

GAP 3 priorities on adolescent girls have gained further momentum from the development of a specific adolescent girls strategy, and a growing number of programmes are working with adolescent girls, which are showing promising results. To date, UNICEF has successfully used its comparative advantage to effectively support individual change among adolescent girls and to strengthen and mobilize youth and adolescent girl groups, and networks. Wider changes to social norms across the SEM have generally been seen to have been slower, or at a smaller scale. In addition, programmes that focus exclusively on adolescent girls may miss opportunities for wider gender integration. Girls participating in the programmes may also experience greater risks of backlash and stigma. UNICEF ambition for transformative programming has created an impetus to go beyond gender-sensitive programming, and some positive examples have been noted. However, several factors limit the agency's ability to sustainably transform social and gender norms, including the depth of gender analysis, existing programming modalities, and staff limited understanding of gender equality.

In summary

UNICEF ambition for transformative programming has created an impetus to go beyond gender-sensitive programming, and some positive examples have been noted. However, several factors limit the agency’s ability to sustainably transform social and gender norms, including the depth of gender analysis, existing programming modalities, and staff limited understanding of gender equality.

Internally, work and impact has been enabled thanks to strong and commitment management and leadership on gender, buy-in and motivation from staff, as well as stronger accountability mechanisms and gender analysis, but hindering factors prevent systematic progress. Hindering factors include insufficient (intersectional) gender analysis to guide transformative programming; a limited understanding of what gender-transformative programming entails; and a lack of operational guidance. Other relevant factors are the short-term nature of interventions; cumbersome processes to partner with small organizations; quality challenges with regards to programme design and monitoring, lesson learning, and the limited leverage of gender staff.

External enabling factors include when national government is supportive of the gender equality agenda, where UNICEF has good relationships with women- and youth-led organizations. Use of digital technology to engage with hard-to-reach or mobile communities can also be impactful. Conversely, hindering factors include remoteness and limited accessibility (e.g. in conflict settings); high mobility; conservative governments and restrictive environment for CSOs.

### SQ 3.1: In looking at examples where UNICEF has significantly contributed to gender equality across all five Goal Areas, what results have been achieved?

This section first presents overall findings about the integration of gender equality into programming across the Goal Areas, based on available data, taking into consideration the limitations impacting the evaluation team’s ability to look at results (as described in EQ2 and in the limitations section above). We also present the results of these programmes, as captured by the GAP quantitative indicators, and any other findings from programme

evaluations or UNICEF publications that the team was able to access.

**GAP 2 and GAP 3 have had slightly different approaches to integrating gender equality within Goal Areas, but the same overall framework**, seeking to focus on both adolescent girls and gender equality integration. The main difference between the two GAPs is the greater ambition placed on integrating gender within Goal Areas in GAP 3, which has expanded the focus beyond the four demonstration results identified per Goal Area in GAP 2 (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Overview of the gender equality approaches adopted in GAP 2 and GAP 3 (Source: Evaluation team)

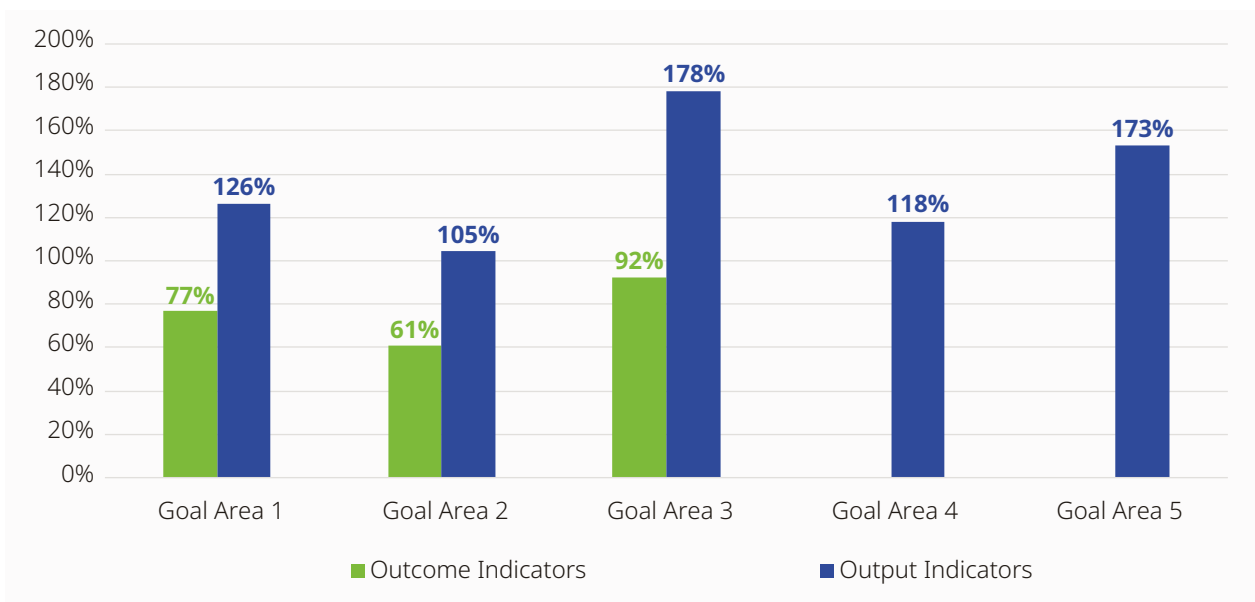
	GAP 2	GAP 3
Approach (programme level)	<p>Twin-track approach:</p> <p><b>Targeted priorities for adolescent girls:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Gender-responsive adolescent health</li> <li>▶ Girls’ secondary education</li> <li>▶ Ending child marriage</li> <li>▶ Gender-based violence in emergencies</li> <li>▶ Menstrual health management</li> <li>▶ Integration across core programme areas.</li> </ul> <p><b>Integrated Results: Four demonstration results per GA</b></p>	<p><b>Gender equitable results across all Goal Areas (gender equality priorities throughout the life course/for adolescent girls)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Quality maternal health care and nutrition, humanitarian cash transfers and care; adolescent girls nutrition and pregnancy care/ human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-human papillomavirus (HPV) prevention</li> <li>▶ Gender-responsive education systems and equitable access to education for all; advance girls’ education and skills</li> <li>▶ Addressing violence against girls, boys and women and harmful practices; eliminate child marriage and early unions</li> <li>▶ Equitable WASH systems, accessible menstrual health and hygiene services</li> <li>▶ Gender-responsive social protection systems and care work</li> </ul>

**Finding 26: Indicators on GAP programming and expenditure show there has been progress in integrating gender across the Goal Areas, with different levels of investment across sectors.**

**UNICEF is well on track to achieve its targets on gender by 2025.**

Average progress towards the achievement of GAP 3 outcome and output indicators against the 2025 targets are described below (see Figure 9). The figure also indicates that the level of ambition for each output indicator may have been set too low as output targets have been overachieved in all Goal Areas.

**Figure 9.** Average progress towards the achievement of GAP 3 output indicators (vs 2023 milestone) and outcome (vs 2025 target), by Goal Area



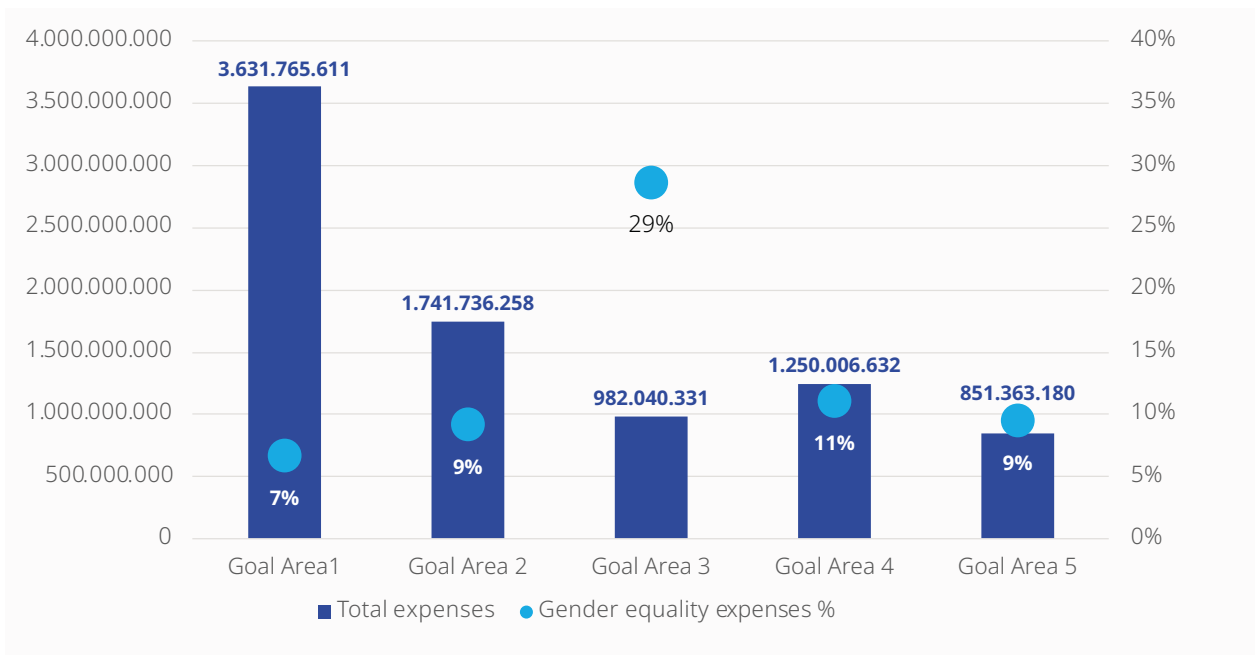
**Source:** Strategic Plan 2022-2025 Results Framework, and authors' calculations

Trends for selected programmatic output indicators are presented below; a full set of indicator trend analyses per Goal Area is set out in Annex 15.<sup>127</sup>

**UNICEF spending on gender has also increased over the evaluation period.** The data shows that spending on gender in each Goal Area was a higher percentage of their budget in 2023 than in 2019, and the increase ranges from 50 per cent (Goal Area 2<sup>128</sup>, reaching 9 per cent on gender-transformative expenditure) to more than 300 per cent (Goal Area 3<sup>129</sup> expenditure tripled and reached 29 per cent in 2023)<sup>130</sup>.

There is great variability in the percentage each Goal Area spends on gender, and only one Goal Area reaches the UN-SWAP threshold of 15 per cent of gender-transformative expenditure (see Figure 10).<sup>131</sup> Moreover, **health (Goal Area 1), which is the biggest sector in volume of funds, displays the lowest percentage of gender-transformative expenditure (only 9 per cent), while child protection, which is the second lowest budget, spends nearly a third on gender.** The remaining Goal Areas spend between 9 and 11 per cent.<sup>132</sup>

**Figure 10.** Total expenditure and proportion of gender transformative with gender equality expenditure by Goal Area in USD, 2023



**Source:** UNICEF Strategic Plan Expenditure Cube 2019-2021 and 2022-2025, authors' calculations

It is important to note that there are data gaps and some issues with reliability of available data, as explained in EQ2, including the fact that some of the work done by UNICEF on gender is not captured by current indicators. In addition, there is a lack of consistency in data collection and tagging processes and the definition of gender equality programming for transformative results is not always understood by those undertaking the tagging.

**Finding 27:** Generally, the adopted approach to gender integration is more responsive than transformative, with transformative programming found more in Goal Area 3, compared to other Goal Areas.

Progress in integrating gender within the five Goal Areas is evidenced by qualitative and quantitative data collected at various levels of the organization<sup>133</sup>, and is supported by the findings from the case studies, which demonstrate that:

► **Gender equality ambitions are more explicit in some sectors than others, as shown in the sectoral strategies** (analysed in EQ1). Social protection programming, for example, is benefitting from increased investment in both research and resourcing – with considerable impact in terms of uptake and integration at country level while the child protection section is piloting several transformative interventions (see below for details).

► **There are examples of successful cross-sectoral work where gender is mainstreamed.**<sup>134</sup>

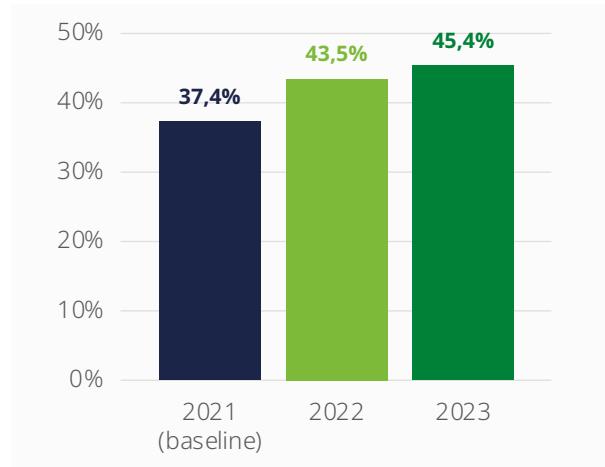
This constitutes an opportunity for UNICEF to achieve gender equality programming for transformative results, as it has the potential to address the root causes of gender inequality along the different levels of the socio-ecological model (SEM). Some of these programmes have demonstrated achievements, but there are still limitations to the effectiveness of such approaches, related to the different challenges of working across sectors (in terms of alignment and coordination of the activities).

► **Overall, gender equality results are primarily achieved by gender-focused programmes.**

There is consistent evidence from the case studies which confirms this and shows that mainstreaming gender across all programmes is not systematic and presents challenges for many staff<sup>135</sup>.

- ▶ **Gender considerations are typically at the sensitive/responsive levels of the gender continuum.** Gender equality work is largely understood as **addressing barriers to accessing services and ensuring equal participation of women and men**, as is mostly the case in the WASH and health sectors, rather than grounded in a more detailed understanding of the root causes of inequality and discrimination, and the power dynamics at play.
- ▶ **The ability of UNICEF to advance gender equality is also heavily dependent on the extent to which they build solid partnerships with government**, and this can be challenging when the sectors are largely male dominated, especially in social protection and WASH.

**Figure 12.** Indicator 1.20 on percentage of pregnant women who benefit from gender-responsive programmes for the prevention of anaemia [adolescents aged 15-19 years]



**Source:** Data companion and scorecard to the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2023

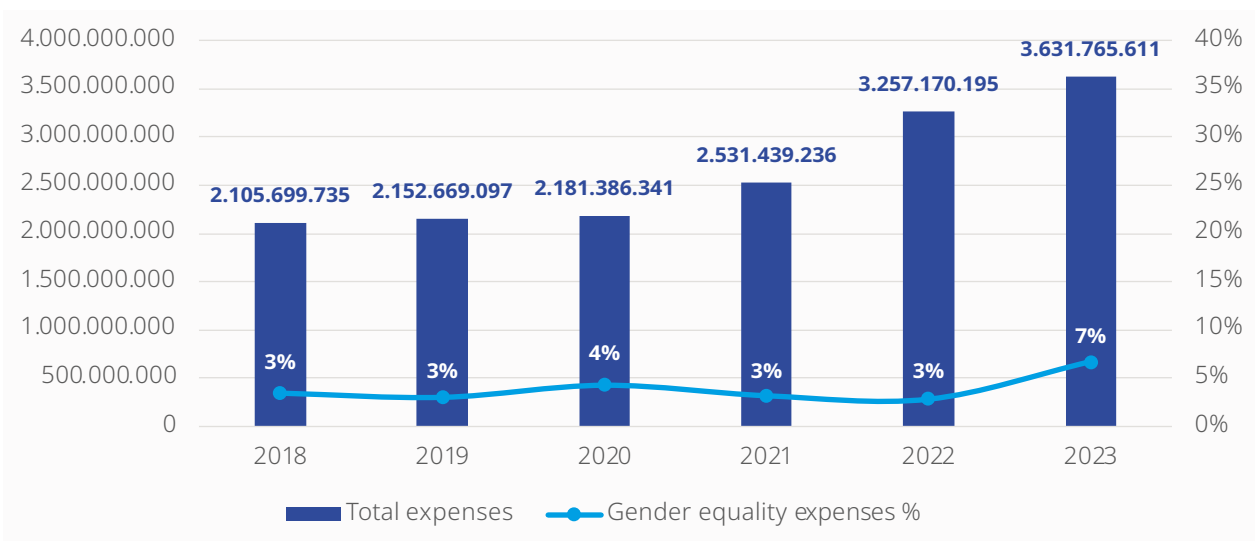
### Gender programming and results in health and nutrition

**Goal Area 1: Every child including adolescents survives and thrives with access to nutritious diets, quality health care, nurturing practices and essential supplies.**

**Finding 28:** UNICEF reported gender equality expenditure in health has doubled (between 2019 and 2023) but remains the lowest compared to other Goal Areas and is less than half of the UN-SWAP's recommendation (see Figure 11).

As the health sector has historically been the biggest portfolio in UNICEF, the limited integration of gender equality considerations represent **a missed opportunity to achieve sustainable gender equality results at scale.**

**Figure 11.** Goal Area 1, Total expenditure and proportion of gender equality expenditure in USD, 2018-2023



**Source:** UNICEF Strategic Plan Expenditure Cube 2019-2021 and 2022-2025, and authors' calculations

**The GAP programme indicators on health mainly relate to child and maternal health, access to HIV treatment and prevention of malnutrition. These output and outcome indicators show positive trends overall, in particular:**

- ▶ Output Indicator 1.1.3. *Number of health workers receiving the skills and support for delivering essential maternal, newborn and child health services, through UNICEF-supported programmes* - has more than doubled between 2021 and 2023 (from 800,247 to 2,300,000); the 2023 target on this indicator has been exceeded by 195 per cent.
- ▶ Output indicator 1.7.3. *Countries with gender-responsive programmes to prevent anaemia in adolescent girls and boys through school and community-based approaches* - has been exceeded (129 per cent), signalling a progress in implementing multisectoral programmes.
- ▶ Outcome indicator 1.3. *The percentage of (a) mothers and b) newborns receiving postnatal care* increased from 60 per cent in 2019 to 69 per cent in 2023.
- ▶ Outcome indicator 1.13 however, shows a decrease in the proportion of young women making their own informed decisions on sexual and reproductive health (SRH).

**With the exception of indicator 1.20, which is explicit about gender-responsive programming and on a positive trend (see Figure 20), these indicators give limited insight into the extent to which gender is integrated in the interventions.**

**The UNICEF Health Strategy 2016-2030** focuses on ending preventable maternal, newborn, and child deaths and promoting the health and development of all children. Gender-responsive in nature, it recognizes the need to collect disaggregated data, including on maternal health to explain differences in access to quality health care and health outcomes across key dimensions such as gender, and mentions that it will contribute to SRH activities on an exception basis only<sup>136</sup>. There is no specific focus on gender-responsive immunization (e.g., HPV). **The UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020-2030** mainstreams gender more deliberately, as **gender-responsiveness** is one of the principles listed as underpinning the strategy, with a focus on lessening gender inequities across the life cycle and within households and societies (e.g., fostering women's decision-making power regarding diets and engaging men in child feeding and care).

**Finding 29: Health programming focuses primarily on interventions that are gender-sensitive or -responsive such as improved access and uptake of services by women and girls. Many of the programmes target women based on their biological and gendered roles, and there is limited engagement with boys and men.**

**The evaluation identified examples of programming across the gender continuum, more commonly at the gender-responsive level.** A

selection of these, drawn largely from the case studies are highlighted below (see Figure 13). This pattern is triangulated by secondary evidence. As part of a broader set of efforts to integrate gender equality approaches in programming, UNICEF commissioned an assessment of its nutrition, health and HIV programming in Africa, which found “promising practices, representing an early or emerging stage in their evolution towards gender equality programming for transformative results”<sup>137</sup>, some of which are captured below. Entry points for more transformative approaches are noted in a) positive parenting programmes and family-friendly policies – a number of these programmes work to address gender norms and roles between mothers and fathers and to improve early childhood development (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Mozambique, Vanuatu); adolescent health, including SRHR and HPV vaccination – these interventions often tackle family planning, abortion rights, HIV testing (examples are also listed below). There were other parenting programme interventions found in case country studies, which were limited to infant-focused practices, which missed the opportunity to deliver more gender equality outcomes for transformative results. KIIs also indicated the positive influence of some donors, such as GAC in strengthening the extent to which gender was integrated into health programmes.

**Figure 13.** Examples of gender-responsive and gender equality programming for transformative results programmes and approaches within UNICEF health portfolio

<b>BANGLADESH</b>	<p><b>MOTHERS @ WORK</b></p> <p>The programme responds to the specific needs of women by supporting factories to provide breastfeeding spaces and breaks, childcare facilities, paid maternity leave, cash benefits, health care, employment protection and a safe work environment for working mothers and pregnant women.</p>
<b>TANZANIA</b>	<p><b>GENDER-RESPONSIVE ANAEMIA PREVENTION PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>The programme reached more than two million pregnant women, by working to address barriers for pregnant women using antenatal care services, such as distance and difficult topography, low demand, lack of support from spouses and traditional beliefs associated with pregnancy.</p>
<b>MOZAMBIQUE</b>	<p><b>RAPARIGA BIZ PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>The programme promotes and protects the SRHR of adolescent girls and young women (aged 10-24 years) by empowering adolescent girls to assert their rights and make informed decisions concerning their SRHR and engaging boys.</p>
<b>BOSNIA &amp; HERZEGOVINA EGYPT</b>	<p><b>NUTRITION CAMPAIGNS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A nutrition campaign seeking to change attitudes of men to take more interest in their child's health and nutrition.</li> <li>▶ Activities tackling the gender bias of preschool professionals, favouring giving boys more nutritious food than girls.</li> </ul>

**Source:** Evaluation team based on UNICEF reports

## Gender programming and results in education

**Goal Area 2: Every child, including adolescents, learns and acquires skills for the future.**

**Finding 30:** UNICEF reported gender equality expenditure in education increased by 50 per cent (between 2019 and 2023) but remains lower than UN-SWAP's recommendation.

**The education sector's gender equality spending has increased by 50 per cent since 2019 but is still below the UN-SWAP target.** As indicated in EQ1, the UNICEF Education Strategy 2019-2030 explicitly references GAP 2, emphasizing girls' education, gender parity and gender equality.

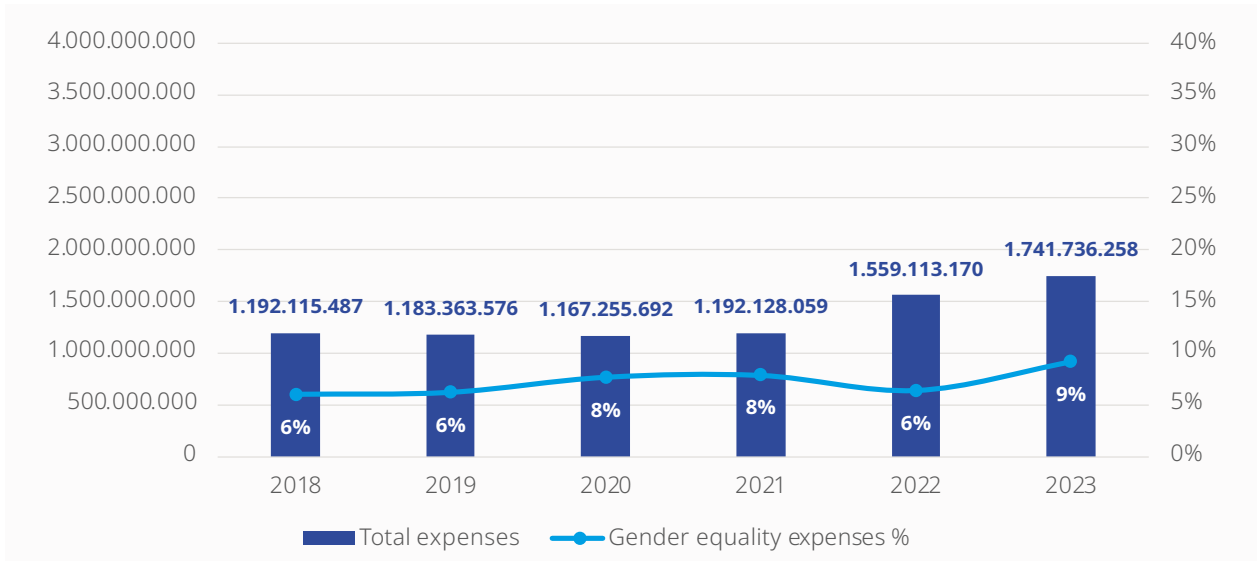
A broadly positive trend towards increased gender equality expenditure is illustrated below (see Figure 14).

### BOX 7

#### Education section's approach to gender

Gender is central to UNICEF's Education Strategy 2019-2030, committing the education section to three core areas of work (1) girls' education; (2) gender parity, focusing on girls or boys, according to context; and (3) gender equality programming for transformative results. The education strategy addresses all children (boys and girls) and uses a two-pronged approach of mainstreaming and targeting gender.

**Figure 14.** Goal Area 2, Total expenditure and proportion of gender equality expenditure in USD, 2018-2023



**Source:** UNICEF Strategic Plan Expenditure Cube 2019-2021 and 2022-2025, and authors' calculations

**Finding 31:** Results related to the education sector appear uneven, but with notable country level achievements in upstream system level change, as well as with marginalized and out-of-school adolescent girls.

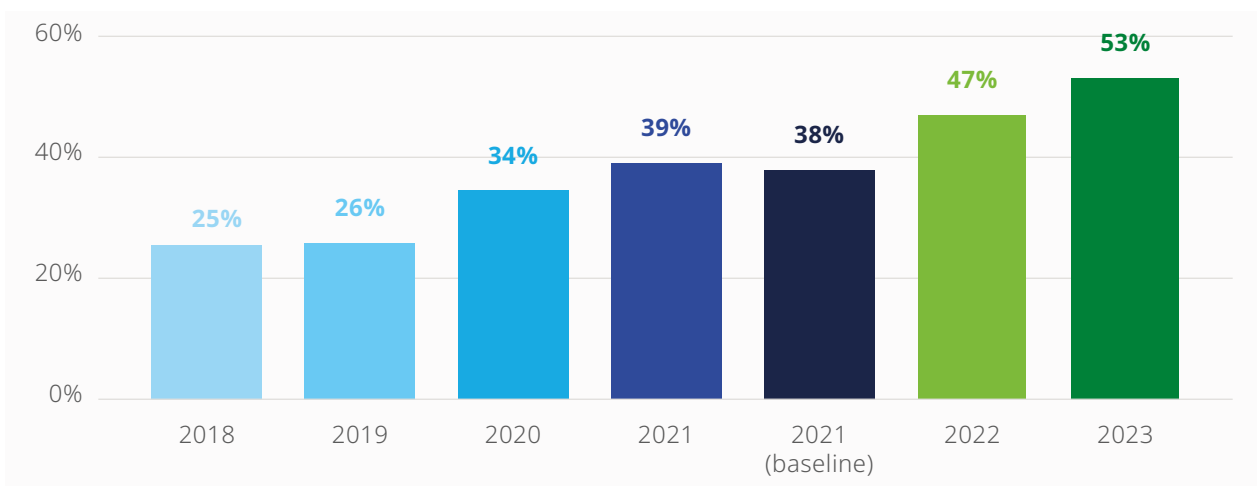
**Outcome and output indicators display a mixed picture of progress between 2019 and 2023**

- ▶ There has been great progress in girls attending primary school. The percentage of countries with gender disparity in education that were disadvantaging girls decreased from 22 per cent in 2019 to

13 per cent in 2023; however, no notable progress was made on secondary schools (22 and 23 per cent respectively).

- ▶ The percentage of out-of-school boys and girls has remained roughly the same over the period.<sup>138</sup>
- ▶ The number of countries with inclusive and gender equitable access to learning opportunities has more than doubled between 2019 and 2023, as shown in *Figure 15*, illustrating the effective efforts of UNICEF in upstream work.

**Figure 15.** Indicator 2.1.1 on percentage of countries with inclusive and gender-equitable system for access to learning opportunities

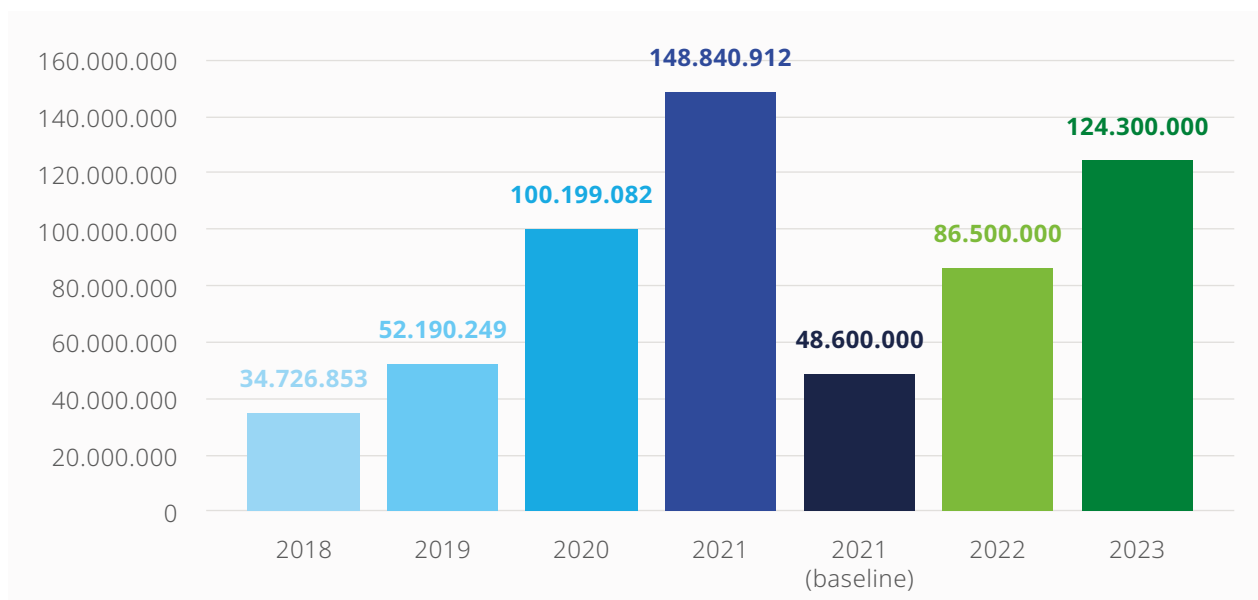


**Source:** Evaluation team based on UNICEF database

**UNICEF work at country level focuses extensively on working with government for system level change**, what is known as upstream work. Upstream work usually includes interventions in policies, teacher education, textbook reform and teacher deployment. There are country examples of gender budgeting, strengthening disaggregated M&E systems, gender-responsive curricula and revision of textbooks and teacher training to support gender-responsive pedagogy<sup>139</sup>. As a result of this work, the percentage of countries with inclusive and gender equitable systems more than doubled between 2019 and 2023, reaching 53 per cent in 2023 (see Figure 15).

**Programmes also work directly with children who are in and out of school.** UNICEF works with marginalized children and develops specific interventions to ensure girls attend and remain in school and develops multi-sectoral projects to prevent violence in schools or providing menstrual health and hygiene management (MHM). Other interventions focus on out-of-school adolescent girls and skills for girls, reaching many children (see Figure 16).

**Figure 16.** Indicator 2.1.4 on number of out-of-school children who accessed education through UNICEF-supported programmes, 2018-2023



**Source:** Evaluation team based on UNICEF database

**UNICEF work on gender in education also benefits from the support of the United National Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI).** Initiated in 2000 and hosted by UNICEF, the UNGEI is a partnership of 30 multilateral, non-governmental and civil society entities to pioneer collective action for girls' education and gender equality, with a gender-transformative approach. It facilitates research and shares innovative good practices, including related to school related GBV. This key asset to promote gender equality could be used more by COs.

Examples of gender-responsive and -transformative approaches identified in this evaluation are presented below (see Figure 17).

**Figure 17.** Examples of gender-responsive and gender equality programmes and approaches within UNICEF education portfolio

<p><b>AFGHANISTAN</b></p>	<p><b>SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS</b></p> <p>In 2022, UNICEF significantly expanded community-based education programme, doubling the number of vulnerable children reached to more than 520,000 (55 per cent girls) in 28 provinces, with corresponding teachers and school management shuras being recruited and trained. The Girls Access to Education programme to trained around 1,200 female students to become teachers.</p>
<p><b>BANGLADESH</b></p>	<p><b>ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>A programme was implemented on occupational training along with entrepreneurship training and other relevant soft skills for out-of-school adolescent boys and girls, with some implementing partners offering gender non-stereotypical vocational training to girls such as electricians' course, driving, auto repair, etc. (see details in case study).</p>
<p><b>MYANMAR</b></p>	<p><b>LEARNING TOGETHER</b></p> <p>An education initiative in the humanitarian sector in Rakhine was launched in mid-2019 and reached about 45,000 children. The initiative goes beyond the humanitarian response and includes initiatives to support longer-term development. It engages children in educational activities with a focus on gender equality.</p>

**Source:** Evaluation team based on UNICEF reports

**Finding 32:** A comprehensive education strategy promoting gender equality programming has been developed but implementation of the strategy is constrained by limited gender expertise within the education sector at CO level and within the national education departments.

**UNICEF has put in place strong institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality programming for transformative results within the education sector.** The education strategy includes regional support, multiple tools and guidance, and is complemented by the support provided by the UNGEI. However, respondents at all levels of the organization pointed to factors that hamper the implementation of gender equality programmes, including limited accountability mechanisms in place for staff working in the education section, whose **performance appraisal does not include performance indicators on gender and often have a limited understanding of gender equality programming.** On the other hand, it is notable that countries with well-resourced education sectors have been able to achieve remarkable results, such as in Peru, where the posting of the gender specialist within the education team enabled the development

of comprehensive sexuality education in schools. Another hampering factor relates to insufficient capacity within government, and in some places, the conservative nature of government. **Given the importance awarded to gender socialization in the UNICEF Gender Policy and the large numbers of children reached by UNICEF interventions, strengthening the gender equality approach within this sector is a priority.**

## Gender programming and results in child protection

**Goal Area 3: Every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful behaviors.**

**Finding 33:** In parallel to a large increase in gender equality expenditure in this Goal Area (which was multiplied by more than threefold) between 2019-2023 and is above the UN-SWAP target, the child protection sector has adopted a more strategic and evidence-based approach to gender integration in recent years but current indicators do not capture well the breadth of gender equality programming in this sector.

The evaluation noted progress in gender integration within child protection, a sector working to reform its theories and practices that have been traditionally rooted in gender neutral approaches. Several respondents from the sector reported that working on gender has become ‘part of the DNA’ of the child protection sector, which now includes numerous girl-focused programmes. This includes programmes for adolescent girls, focused on ending child marriage and FGM. Supported by a

comprehensive sectoral strategy<sup>140</sup> developed in 2021, and with the support of the Office of Research and Foresight Innocenti Centre, the sector is seeking to create better linkages and synergies across the violence against children (VAC) and violence against women and girls (VAWG) sector to build on learning and global evidence and best practice.

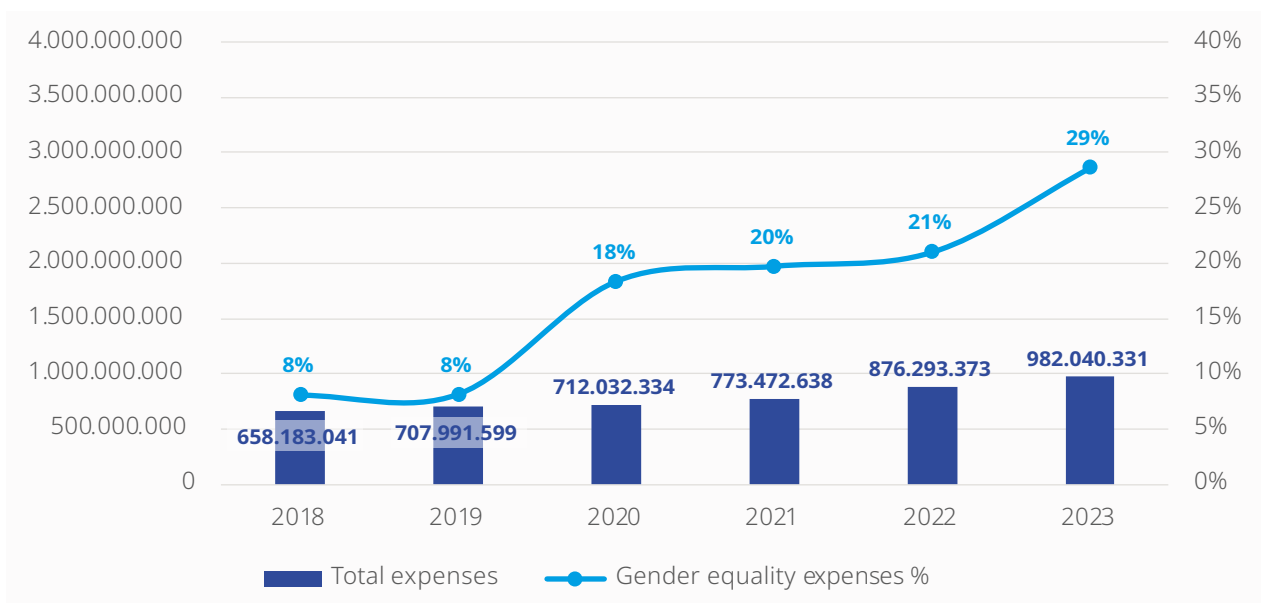
**BOX 8**

**Child protection section’s approach to gender**

The child protection strategy uses the SEM to address social norms change and stresses the need to involve women, youth groups and promote children rights. Gender-focused thematic priorities are a) child marriage and FGM b) violence against girls, boys and women, focusing on prevention programmes for children in situations of greatest risk by building capacity for service provision, and c) GBV in emergencies (GBViE).

**Gender equality expenditure in this sector has more than tripled over the period.** How the new emphasis on gender equality in the child protection strategy (see EQ1) translates into sector spending is illustrated below (see Figure 18).

**Figure 18.** Goal Area 3, Total expenditure and proportion of gender equality expenditure in USD, 2018-2023



Source: UNICEF Strategic Plan Expenditure Cube 2019-2021 and 2022-2025, authors’ calculations

The output indicators relate to service delivery and only one output indicator (3.3.2) measures change in social norms (indicator 3.3.2 on reflective dialogue for social norms change), **which does not capture the variety of interventions piloted in the sector.** Most indicators show a positive trend, illustrated in the selection of graphs below.

**Finding 34: UNICEF focus on prevention of violence has grown over the period, as prescribed in GAP 3. This is a significant opportunity for gender equality work, but more needs to be done to address quality in programming.**

The following highlights emerged from the analysis of evidence collected:

- ▶ **Annual reports<sup>141</sup> consistently report the extent of UNICEF work and achievements on GBVIE.** For example, the annual report, 2020 states that the number of people reached with GBV response services in emergencies nearly doubled in the year. As part of the COVID-19 response UNICEF reached 17.8 million people in 84 countries affected by crisis with GBV risk mitigation, prevention and response services (98 per cent of the target) over the course of 2020. Programming on GBV in general is largely focused on services and response to violence in humanitarian and emergency settings. UNICEF reached 4.5 million children with violence response services in 2023 – a figure that has remained largely stable since 2021.
- ▶ **Significant improvements on PSEA**, in humanitarian and development settings, can be seen in publications such as the 2021 'Procedure for Managing Risks of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Implementing Partnerships', which was in response to PSEA scandals that were identified during the tenth Ebola outbreak in DRC in 2021 as well as the policy on safeguarding published in March 2024. UNICEF has placed great emphasis on putting in place strong accountability mechanisms on PSEA at all levels, including by providing regular progress updates to the UNICEF Executive Board on PSEA, as well as protocols within their offices and programmes. At an operational level, this translated into assessments of implementing partners' capacities to prevent PSEA (3,000 CSOs), mandatory training on PSEA for all staff and implementing partners, which has been greatly appreciated by implementing partners, who reported to the evaluation team that they saw this as

important support to their institutional strengthening. In 2023, COs reported that an estimated 70.3 million children and adults had access to safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse, compared with 49.2 million in 2022, while the number of reports received through these channels increased from 82 in 2022 to 128 in 2023<sup>142</sup>. These measures, coupled with the promotion of gender parity within humanitarian teams highlight that UNICEF investment in safeguarding has gone beyond a focus on establishing reporting mechanisms and response initiatives. More still needs to be done to ensure that the online training is well understood by all staff and partners and that the plans are translated into action more systematically, as highlighted in a recent evaluation<sup>143</sup>. However, PSEA appears to be better understood that gender as a theme of work and is supported by clear and detailed guidelines to explain what needs to be done, accompanied by a very strong requirement for accountability. This appears to make it easier for staff to understand and implement actions for PSEA rather than those required for GBV prevention and response programming. The evaluation has also identified a potential risk for some staff considering that by working on PSEA, they have addressed the need to mainstream gender within their programme. This was observed by some respondents within the humanitarian teams in particular,<sup>144</sup> with staff often not distinguishing the differences between GBV prevention, GBV impact mitigation and PSEA. In another country, the emphasis placed on PSEA within the CO largely outweighed the emphasis placed on gender, both in terms of the accountability systems and the support given to the issue by the leadership, leading to less buy-in for the gender agenda than for PSEA work among the staff.

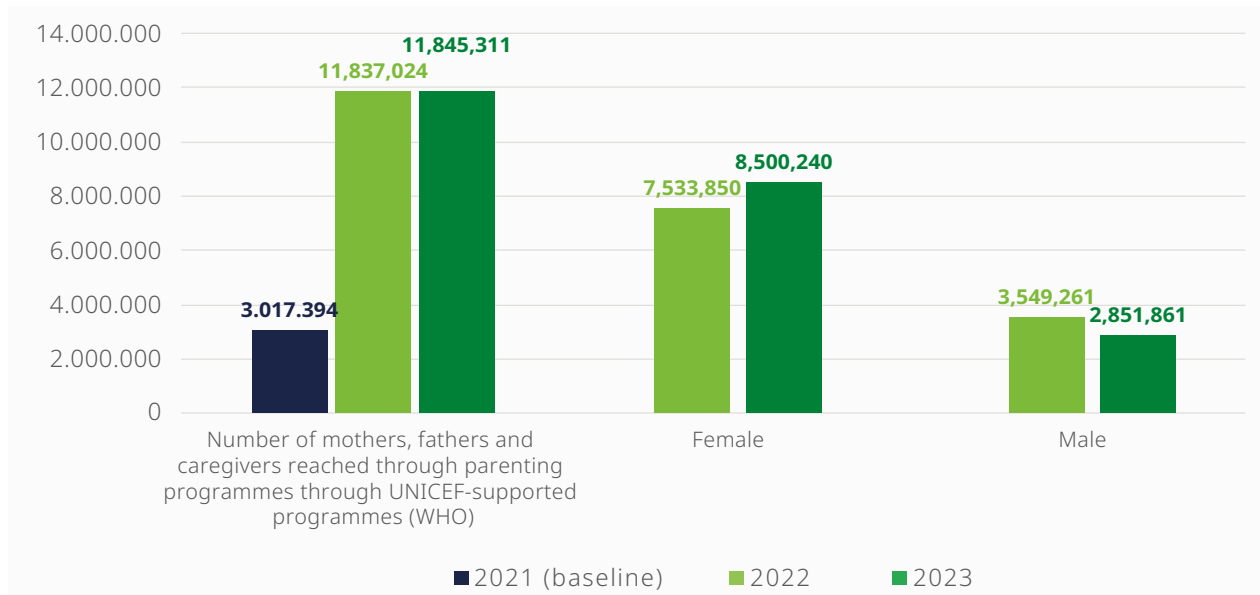
- ▶ The emphasis placed on prevention of violence in GAP 3 has resulted in several interventions being implemented, including parenting programmes, which have increased dramatically in GAP3. This is illustrated in *Figure 19*, which shows that the number of parents involved in UNICEF programmes has more than tripled between 2021 and 2023, reaching more than 11 million people. However, despite this being an important entry point for more transformative work as identified in the discussion on health programming above, some respondents flagged that the parenting programmes, frequently implemented with the early childhood development sector, are

still largely gender-neutral in their approach, despite existing guidance and tools to support more gender transformative programming in this area.<sup>145</sup> This constitutes a missed opportunity to put into practice the emphasis the Gender Policy places on gender socialization and to leverage UNICEF comparative advantage on this topic.<sup>146</sup> Respondents also flagged that parenting interventions should be expanded to the second decade of a child’s life, focusing on adolescence and early adulthood, reaching parents of teenagers.

- ▶ **The volume of prevention programmes operating at community level which promote behaviour change and seek to address harmful gender norms has also increased dramatically,** and some promising practices were identified (see Figure 25). The number of community members engaged through community platforms has more than tripled between 2019 and 2023, reaching more than 32 million people globally (see Figure 20). However, the interventions identified in the case studies are largely considered as pilot programmes, not systematically rigorously evaluated. **Moreover, case studies and KIIs revealed that UNICEF**

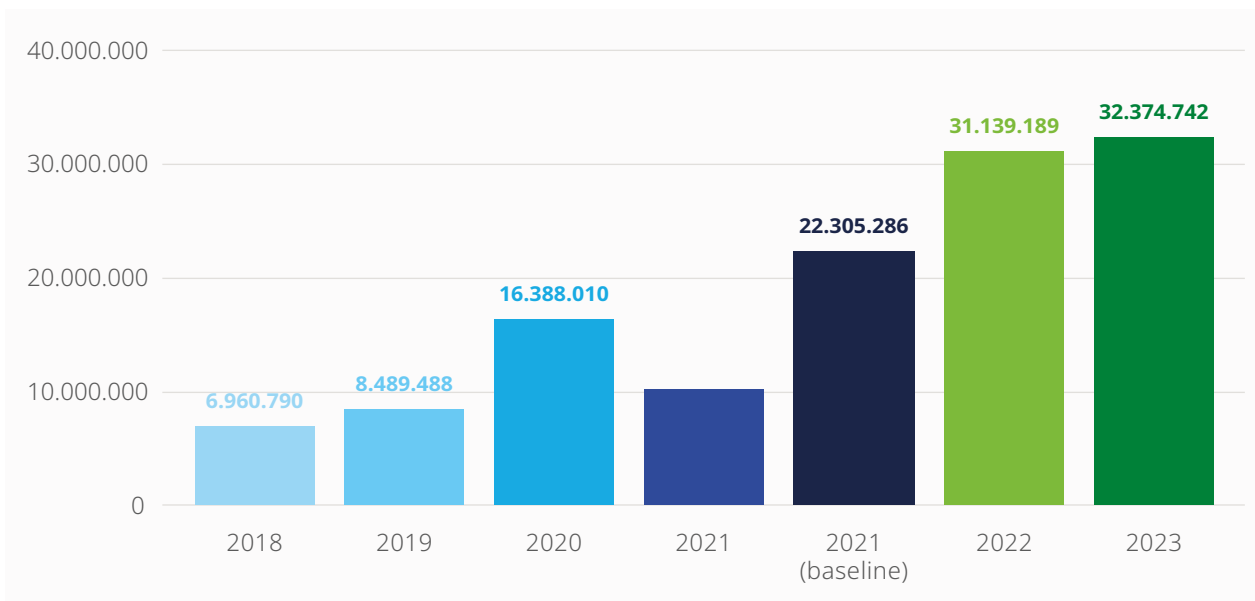
**does not fully leverage the opportunities that could be derived from stronger collaborations between social behaviour change (SBC) and child protection teams.** The integration of SBC support is uneven within the child protection sector. Whilst a SBC position is embedded within the child protection team at HQ and within the child marriage programme, levels of collaboration between gender and SBC teams vary among COs, as shown in the case studies. It is also worth noting that the expertise on gender equality within the SBC teams is uneven across the organization, with some SBC teams implementing gender equality interventions without the required skills nor support from gender advisors. This constitutes a missed opportunity, as the benefits of strong gender equality SBC skills could be identified, in the child marriage programme for example, or in DRC where the U-Report platform is being used to disseminate gender equality messages. Globally, the U-Report platform conducted a survey with 590,000 young people on adolescent girls’ rights and policy priorities, which led to the publication of a document to promote gender equality.<sup>147</sup>

**Figure 19.** Indicator 3.1.2 on number of mothers, fathers and caregivers reached through parenting programmes through UNICEF-supported programmes (WHO), 2021-2023



**Source:** Evaluation team based on UNICEF internal database

**Figure 20.** Indicator 3.3.2 on number of people engaged through community platforms in reflective dialogue towards eliminating discriminatory social and gender norms and harmful practices that affect girls and women, through UNICEF-supported programmes, 2018-2023



**Source:** Evaluation team based on UNICEF internal database

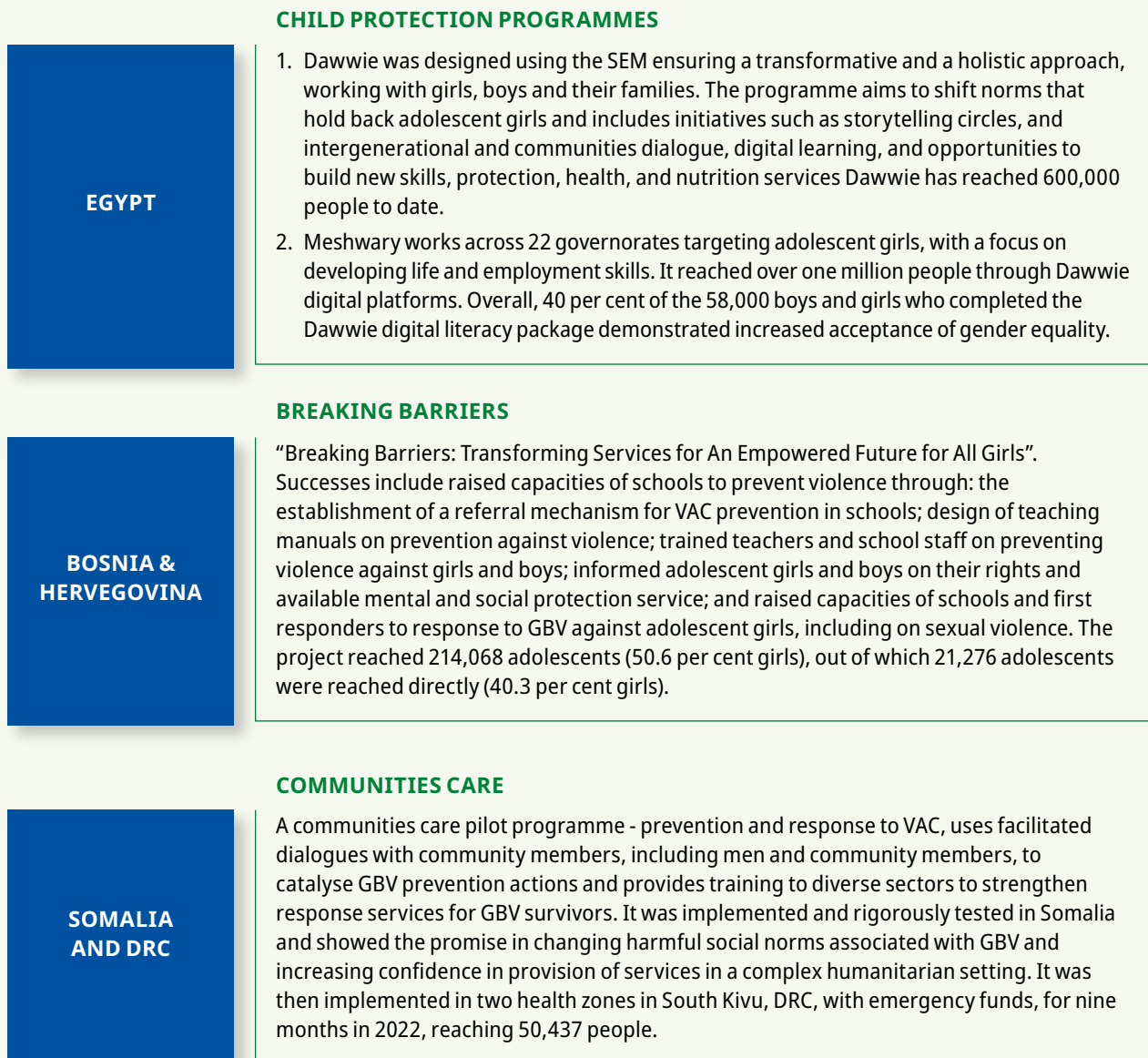
**Finding 35:** Joint child protection programmes have shown positive results in policy change but their approach to gender equality programming could be strengthened.

**Joint gender equality programming on FGM and child marriage appears to be yielding positive results.** The child protection section implements two global programmes with UNFPA to address the harmful practices of FGM and child marriage - the Joint Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage (implemented in 12 high prevalence countries since 2016) and the Joint Programme on the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation (implemented in 17 countries since 2008). Recent evaluations<sup>148</sup> recognized progress in policy level changes to eliminate FGM and secure political buy-in as well as the development of guidelines to measure social norms change.<sup>149</sup> The evaluation of the FGM programme qualified it as gender-responsive in design, language and programming tools.<sup>150</sup>

**The evaluations also found limitations in gender equality approaches in these programmes.**

Although the child marriage programme approach to gender equality was qualified as “nascent”, the evaluation pointed to the need to strengthen implementing partners’ understanding of girls’ agency and how to programme for norms change. Similar to the findings surfaced in this report, both evaluations flagged the need for greater involvement of men; to conduct thorough gender analyses; to improve the measurement of gender and social norms change; and to ensure a common understanding of gender equality across the programmes and among partners and stakeholders.

**Figure 21.** Examples of other gender-responsive and gender equality programmes and approaches within UNICEF's child protection portfolio



**Source:** Evaluation team based on UNICEF reports

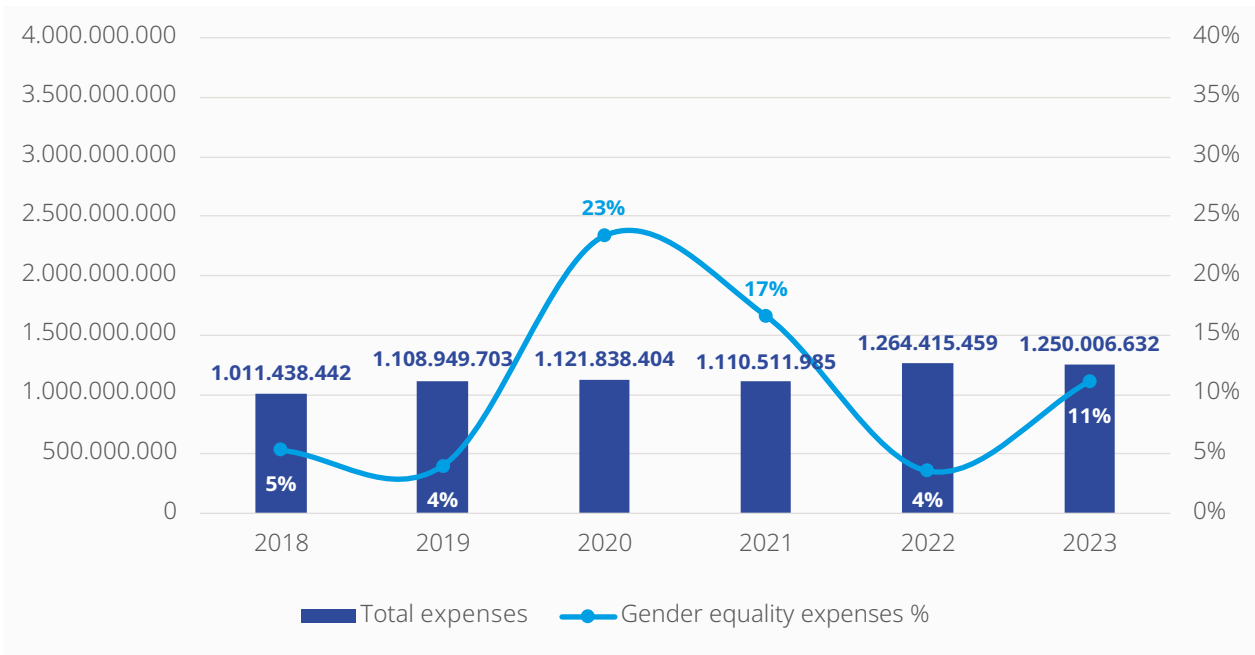
## Gender programming and results in WASH

**Goal Area 4: Every child including adolescents has access to water, sanitation and hygiene and lives in a safe and sustainable climate and environment.**

**Finding 36:** Framed by a gender-responsive WASH strategy and guidance, UNICEF reported gender equality expenditure in WASH has doubled (between 2019 and 2023) but remains lower than the UN-SWAP recommendation.

**The proportion of reported gender equality expenditure in WASH doubled between 2019 and 2023, to 11 per cent.** *Figure 22* illustrates this trajectory, noting that the current percentage remains lower than the UN-SWAP recommendations (15 per cent).<sup>151</sup>

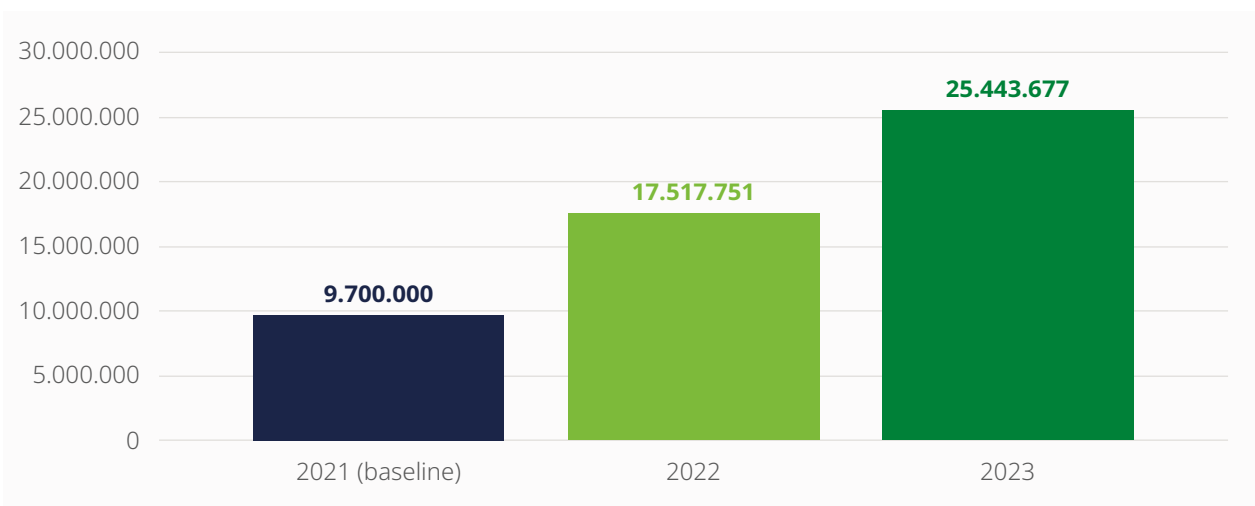
**Figure 22.** Goal Area 4, Total expenditure and proportion of gender equality expenditure in USD, 2018-2023



**Source:** UNICEF Strategic Plan Expenditure Cube 2019-2021 and 2022-2025, and authors' calculations

Data on output indicator 4.1.6 shows impressive, rapid progress from 2021-2023 with menstrual health and hygiene needs of 25,443,677 women and girls being addressed in 2023 (see Figure 23).

**Figure 23.** Indicator 4.1.6 on number of women and adolescent girls reached whose menstrual health and hygiene needs are addressed through UNICEF-supported programmes [adolescents aged 15-19 years], 2021-2023 <sup>152</sup>



**Source:** Evaluation team based on UNICEF internal database

**UNICEF's WASH strategy and guidance is gender-responsive.** UNICEF has developed the WASH Strategy 2016-2030, which articulates two goals: 1) By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all and 2) By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations. A key principle articulated in the strategy is to reduce inequality. The strategy mentions that UNICEF aims to address under-representation of women in positions of authority in the sector both within the organization and by encouraging other sectoral stakeholders to do the same. The strategy sits at the gender-responsive level of the continuum. Gender-responsive WASH guidance was also developed in 2017, as well as a discussion paper on 'WASH for and with the Second Decade' which outlines UNICEF aim to address the needs of girls and boys related to reproductive health and menstruation.

**Gender mainstreaming has been largely prioritized within the multi-country grants and humanitarian response** with a dedicated learning playlist developed aiming to provide UNICEF staff, implementing partners and consultants with tools and examples to incorporate a gender lens at each stage of the WASH programme cycle using a results-based management approach.

**Finding 37: The WASH strategy sets out some ambition for more gender equality work, working across sectors. Current programme and policy interventions sit mainly at the gender-sensitive and -responsive part of the continuum, focusing on improved access and uptake of services, in both regular programming and humanitarian response.**

**UNICEF work in Goal Area 4 includes the integration of WASH in households, schools and health care facilities in development and humanitarian settings.** This includes the promotion of hygiene education and MHM (e.g., awareness raising, supplying dignity kits and menstrual hygiene kits), alongside building inclusive toilets that adhere to defined standards and ensuring separate toilets for girls and boys in schools. Many of the programmes address issues affecting girls and women related to their biological sex and gendered roles.

**UNICEF is co-driving efforts to improve gender data in the WASH sector.** The WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene published a gender focused report – "Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) 2000-2022: Special focus on gender" which is the first global in-depth analysis of gender inequalities in WASH. To ensure gender is monitored globally, a list of priority indicators for enhanced monitoring of gender in WASH under SDG targets 6.1 and 6.2 including different aspects of menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) to expand the number of countries with national datasets on MHH has been initiated and will be pilot tested in 2024.

**WASH commitments for humanitarian contexts have a specific focus on women and girls** (although results described in annual GAP reports and global annual results reports, do not extensively focus on women and girls and results are not disaggregated by sex), e.g., improve children and women's access to sufficient water of appropriate quality and quantity for drinking, cooking and maintaining personal hygiene (commitment 2); improve children and women's access to toilets and washing facilities that are culturally appropriate, secure, sanitary, user-friendly and gender-appropriate (commitment 3); children and women receive critical WASH-related information to prevent child illness (commitment 4).

**The WASH section is looking at opportunities to do more transformative work.** For example, UNICEF has signed an agreement with the Netherlands that has a significant focus on gender equality for transformative results. UNICEF is also currently working on gender equality WASH principles using findings from a recent gender-responsive guidance review. Some examples that have the potential to be transformative have been identified around water governance and decision-making (e.g., in Burkina Faso, Niger, Vanuatu) and women's access to sanitation finance. Other examples focus on tackling gender and social norms and working with boys and girls to tackle stigma around MHH, for instance, school club sessions engaging boys in MHH discussions to educate and empower them to become allies and supporters (e.g., in Bolivia and Mozambique).

**Key informants identified various challenges with making WASH interventions more focused on gender equality.** Despite efforts of the Women in WASH network<sup>153</sup>, which has been very active at publishing papers and analysis to promote gender

equality at the global and regional level, the sector remains very male dominated and despite attempts to address this, gender parity - particularly at senior levels - has yet to be achieved. Competing priorities can also be a challenge.

**Figure 24.** Examples of other gender-responsive and gender equality programmes and approaches within UNICEF's WASH portfolio

<b>BRAZIL</b>	<p><b>ENACTMENT OF MENSTRUAL LAW</b></p> <p>UNICEF led evidence generation and advocacy on MHH empowering girls to demand increased attention to access affordable menstrual hygiene services and led to the adoption of the Dignified Menstrual Law.</p>
<b>DRC</b>	<p><b>MULTI-SECTORAL PROGRAMMES</b></p> <p>Attention to promoting transformative changes in gender norms can be seen at several levels: Strategy promoting systems change, training government partners and ensuring that a scale-up plan is designed around the pilots tested by UNICEF. Efforts to involve women in jobs traditionally reserved for men, for example by training women in bricklaying or recycling plastic to build latrines; projects combining income generating activities for women and hygiene promotion in refugee camps; and good practice was identified in a sanitation project that paid particular attention to conducting detailed gender analyses and monitoring sanitation projects by example, with the aim of identifying the progress made in changing norms, particularly through household surveys that sought to measure the process of change.</p>
<b>BHUTAN</b>	<p><b>RED DOT CAMPAIGN AND MEN TAKE LEAD</b></p> <p>The 'Red Dot' campaign and high-level advocacy on MHH with the theme 'Men Take Lead' was observed on Global Menstrual Hygiene Day. Fifty-nine health coordinators in 49 monastic institutions were trained on hygiene behaviour benefitting 2,554 children (145 nuns) in monastic institutions. Another 41 monks from 40 monastic schools, 10 nuns from five nunneries and 45 support staff from 45 schools were trained on sustainable and quality WASH services – 2,206 child monks, 287 child nuns and 15,271 school children (7,797 female) benefitted from the training.</p>
<b>MYANMAR</b>	<p><b>MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>In Myanmar, MHM facilities and education were provided to 19,513 girls in schools, ensuring their well-being, dignity, and proper menstrual hygiene.</p>
<b>ZIMBABWE</b>	<p><b>WASH IN SCHOOLS</b></p> <p>UNICEF support ensured comprehensive WASH services in 308 schools reaching 157,983 students with basic sanitation facilities. Facilities enabled 36,212 adolescent girls and female staff to manage their menstrual health.</p>

**Source:** Evaluation team based on UNICEF internal reports

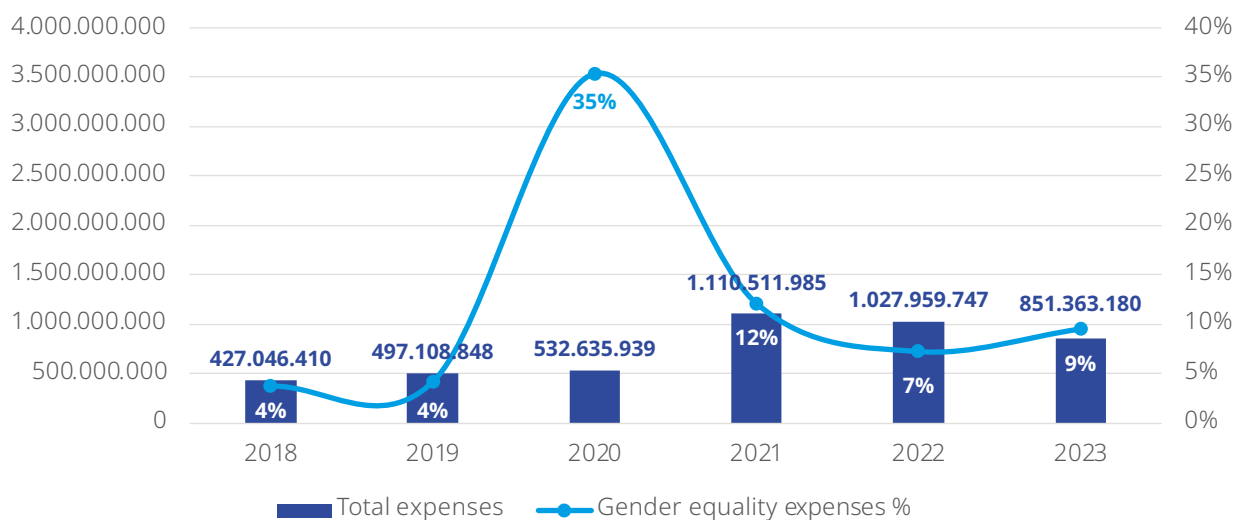
## Gender programming and results in social protection

**Goal Area 5: Every child including adolescents has access to inclusive social protection and lives free from poverty.**

**Finding 38: UNICEF reported gender equality expenditure in social protection has doubled between 2019 and 2023 but remains lower than the UN-SWAP recommendation. Output and outcome data suggest that the increase in dedicated resources, gender-related evidence and expertise have contributed to this good progress in terms of results achieved.**

**The proportion of reported gender equality expenditure in social protection has doubled to 9 per cent between 2018 and 2023 but remains lower than the UN-SWAP recommendation (15 per cent) (see Figure 25).** The evaluation found that the section has resource constraints, which staff report limits their ability to undertake sustainable and impactful programming and create models for scale up. An informant explained this by saying: “there are pots of money, but some sectors seem more relevant to women and girls and in social protection it is not immediately obvious, so we are often overlooked even if we have programmes in this area”.

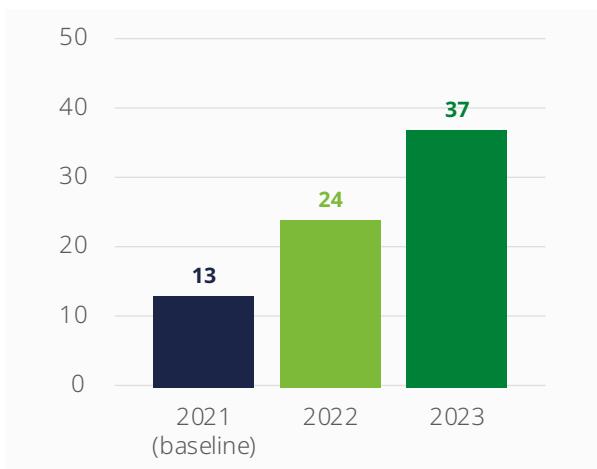
**Figure 25.** Goal Area 5, Total expenditure and proportion of gender equality expenditure in USD, 2018-2023



**Source:** UNICEF Strategic Plan Expenditure Cube 2019-2021 and 2022-2025, authors’ calculations

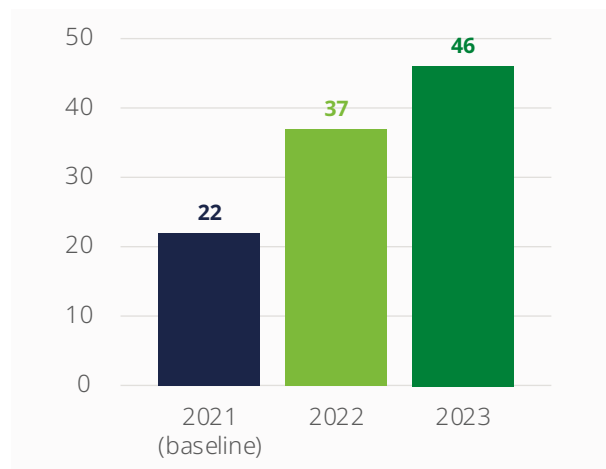
**Data, where available, on output and outcome indicators for social protection show good progress.** The number of countries taking action to support care work through family-friendly policies increased from 13 in 2021 to 37 in 2023; and the number of countries with social protection programmes that are gender-responsive or lead to transformative gender equality results increased from 22 in 2021 to 46 in 2023.<sup>154</sup>

**Figure 26.** Indicator 5.5 on number of countries taking action to support care work through family-friendly policies



**Source:** Evaluation team based on UNICEF internal database

**Figure 27.** Indicator 5.2.2 on number of countries with social protection programmes that are gender-responsive or lead to transformative gender equality results



**Source:** Evaluation team based on UNICEF internal database

**UNICEF has invested resources to support better integration of gender and inclusion evidence and expertise into social protection programming.** This is evidenced by the research being undertaken through the five-year Gender Responsive Age Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) programme<sup>155</sup> and the [Transfer Project](#) in partnership with University of Carolina and the Global Office of Research and Foresight, as well as the recruitment of a full-time social protection and gender lead and a disability and social protection lead at the global level. The social protection and gender lead role was originally created because of a partnership with the United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office. UNICEF continued to fund this role in recognition of the added value of, and the high demand for, this role. Having this specialist support is imperative to delivering on UNICEF gender commitments in social protection programming outlined in the GAP and Gender Policy. This is true both at a HQ and country level, and notably some countries are also commissioning gender reviews to understand opportunities and bottlenecks to mainstreaming gender in social protection programming or to evaluate the effects of different interventions on women and girls (e.g., in Ghana).

**A range of interventions are ongoing to renew, expand and deepen UNICEF gender integration work and expertise in social protection.** UNICEF has a long history of working on family-friendly policies, and this work has now expanded to include work on the care agenda. There is a whole portfolio working on adaptive social protection during humanitarian crises and emergencies, which is supported by the social protection and gender lead. New guidance is being developed for shock-responsive and adaptive social protection programming which will have a chapter on both gender and disability. It is also worth noting that UNICEF Social Protection Programme Framework 2019 has a focus on social vulnerabilities, including gender, and has two objectives that aim to contribute to gender-responsive social protection. A document is also being drafted articulating what inclusive social protection means, to support better integration of gender at the country level. A study looking at lessons from gender-responsive and -transformative social protection practices in Sub-Saharan Africa in six countries<sup>156</sup> is currently being published by the social protection and social policy team. Operational tools based on this learning have already been disseminated to support capacity on gender integration including how to integrate a focus on social and gender norm change and communication as part of their messaging in their cash transfer programmes.

**Finding 39: UNICEF has seen significant results in the uptake and integration of gender in social protection. More could be done to ensure systematic integration of gender across the different COs, and to level up and move beyond gender-responsive programming when/where possible (where there are the resources, right partners in place and the right capacity to manage risk).**

**There has been more than a fourfold growth in the number of countries integrating gender-specific objectives into national and subnational social protection systems, from 29 countries in 2019 to 129 in 2023.**<sup>157</sup> There has been a 15 per cent increase in countries achieving gender-responsive or -transformative status by adopting gender considerations into the design and delivery of social protection policies and programmes.<sup>158</sup> This is also reflected in the programmatic indicator 5.2.2 as shown above.

**By not addressing the harmful norms that perpetuate inequity there is risk that programmes will inadvertently reinforce women's role as primary caregiver, and other stereotypes.** The evaluation found evidence of social protection programmes with gender-sensitive poverty related objectives targeting women (especially pregnant and lactating women) and adolescent girls, as well as other vulnerable groups. Some programmes adopt programmatic components or activities that are gender-responsive (addressing direct needs of women and girls for example), but neither of these types of programming are designed with the explicit goal of reducing inequality and/or empowering women and girls. In addition, cash transfers (and other economic empowerment activities) can cause intra-household conflict<sup>159</sup>, so complementary communication and outreach activities are being promoted by the UNICEF gender and social protection lead and other gender advisors, to mitigate for any adverse effects. These include evidence informed social and behaviour change communication (SBCC), and GBV prevention components both of which involve men and boys (cash plus).<sup>160</sup> A challenge as highlighted in EQ2, is that **gender analysis is not always used to inform programming and if it has been done, it often focuses more on vulnerabilities and needs rather than barriers and power analysis which would help inform more responsive and transformative programming.** This analysis would also improve risk management.

**There are some programmes with gender-responsive objectives whereby gender equality goals are mainstreamed into broader objectives.** Some of this includes UNICEF work on the care economy; services and policies to support people during more vulnerable times along the life-course, for instance, paid parental leave, access to childcare tax benefits, flexible working arrangements for care givers and social entrepreneurship schemes. This work is multi-sectoral and involves engaging with other sections, especially child protection. However, the evidence suggests that there is an opportunity to expand more in this regard. The evaluation also found several good examples of social protection programming that include transformative work. Across the board however, the evaluation found fewer examples of interventions or programmes supporting women and girls with disabilities.

**Figure 28.** Examples of other gender-responsive and gender equality programmes and approaches within UNICEF's social protection portfolio

<b>BURUNDI</b>	<p><b>MERANKABANDI CASH PLUS PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>It addresses extreme poverty and builds human capital of children in nutrition, early childhood development and basic education. SBCC modules are designed to encourage men to take part in gender dialogues to promote positive and equal gender dynamics at home in terms of division of labour, involvement of fathers in childcare, resource allocation and GBV prevention. Evidence from recent gender reviews show that the programme has increased intra family cohesion and women's decision-making at the household and community levels.</p>
<b>DRC</b>	<p><b>NSELE CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>Trained and equipped Relais Communautaires (RECO)/ Cellules d'Action Communautaire (CAC) community agents with communication tools to disseminate messages to the communities. Women's representation on the CAC rose from 30 to 80 per cent, educational talks, including on money-related conflict, were held with husbands of women receiving cash transfers and RECOs.</p>
<b>IRAN</b>	<p><b>POWER4GIRLS</b></p> <p>Skills development and empowerment programmes for women and adolescent girls. Components included skills and vocational training, connection to social services, cash transfers for female social workers and parenting programmes to address gender discriminatory norms.</p>
<b>MADAGASCAR</b>	<p><b>ZARA MIRA PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>Provision of cash allowances to promote the human capital of children and assist persons living with disabilities. It reaches 20,000 households in three districts. It also supports women's health, nutrition and income security during pregnancy, and strengthens women's financial capacities. One design provision is to provide cash with progressive gender framing and messaging to promote agency, positive attitudes and behaviours related to division of reproductive work and bodily integrity. There are plans to introduce gender dialogues including looking at gender stereotypes and masculinity.</p>
<b>SUDAN</b>	<p><b>MOTHER AND CHILD CASH TRANSFER PLUS (MCC+) PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>A whole of women and whole of child approach addressing both practical and strategic needs of pregnant and lactating women. Gender equality is an explicit focus aiming to increase women's empowerment and decision-making power, improving health and nutrition outcomes. There are plans to include SBCC to address discrimination and social norms – a transformative agenda.</p>
<b>TANZANIA</b>	<p><b>UJANA SALAMA PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>Targets adolescents aged 14-19 years and provided them with training on livelihoods and SRH/HIV, mentoring and enterprise grants and SRH/HIV and GBV response services. Results include increased HIV testing, health visits, contraceptive knowledge, delayed sexual debut, reduced sexual violence and depression but also improved gender-equitable attitudes between boys and girls.</p>
<b>UGANDA</b>	<p><b>URBAN SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>Cash plus model providing adolescent girls with unconditional cash transfers, peer mentoring, skills building and refers to services. It reached 3,000 girls targeting vulnerable adolescent girls (those currently out of school or at risk of dropping out).</p>

## Gender programming in the humanitarian sector

**Finding 40:** UNICEF efforts to mainstream gender in the humanitarian sector, as illustrated by increased guidance, led to more gender analysis, disaggregation of data and involvement of women's and girls' organizations. Programmes are generally gender-sensitive to -responsive, with a few small-scale gender equality initiatives. However, the ambitions set have not fully materialized, partly because of insufficient gender technical expertise in humanitarian operations.

Issues related to the gender normative framework are discussed in EQ1 and examples of programming in the humanitarian sector are integrated into the above discussion by Goal Area. This section brings additional elements to better capture progress in the integration of gender in UNICEF humanitarian operations, noting that UNICEF programming in humanitarian action has increased during GAP 3 and the organization now spends 65 per cent of its budget in providing humanitarian aid.

**This evaluation found that efforts have been made to better structure the work on gender equality within the humanitarian sector through the design of several guiding documents.** Gender was integrated in the revised Core Commitments for Children (CCCs), published in 2021 outlining three overarching gender-equity commitments for the first time: 1) Ending GBV; 2) Engaging with and for women and girls; and 3) Making programming gender-responsive. The CCCs also make rapid gender analysis a mandatory part of humanitarian action, commit UNICEF to more equity-focused data collection and disaggregation, and call for more meaningful partnerships with CSOs, advancing the rights of women and girls. This is accompanied by programming guidance. In 2023, a series of **gender checklists** were developed for each sector, outlining how to mainstream gender across the project cycle. One question relates to the inclusion of transformative interventions to address social norms and gender barriers at family and community level including engagement of men and shifting negative gender roles. However, whilst the checklists propose a list of actions that could be implemented, they do not provide detailed guidance nor links to lessons learned or detailed case studies on the models of interventions. The momentum on gender within the sector is illustrated by the establishment of the **GBV Areas of Responsibility" Helpdesk** in 2017, which provides expert advice on demand to a range of GBV practitioners and stakeholders in the humanitarian sector.

### BOX 9

#### Example of UNICEF's emergency supply packages for adolescent

##### The adolescent girl personal care and protection package for adolescent girls

contents are informed by discussions with young girls while the distribution is supported by local organizations led by women and girls. **In 2023 in the Gaza Strip, it was distributed to 9,337 adolescent girls**, which included sanitary pads, underwear, skin wipes, a multipurpose cloth, a scarf and a whistle. It also contains a booklet on mental health and GBV and an adolescent girls care kit booklet.

The **Laaha platform**, designed by and for women and girls in humanitarian and development settings to address GBV provides information to women and girls on sexual and reproductive health and GBV as well as where and how to access services when needed.

Against this backdrop, several results have been identified:

- ▶ **There has been an improvement in gender analyses in humanitarian programming, as recommended by the CCCs.**<sup>161</sup> UNICEF has also innovated in terms of gender analysis using the integrated analytical cell (e.g., in DRC), which conducts detailed action-oriented gender analysis (see EQ2 for more details on this).
- ▶ **Progress in partnerships with women- and girl-led organizations was also noted, as illustrated by the development of more flexible contracting modalities.** The sector seems to allocate a higher proportion of its funding to local women actors,<sup>162</sup> in comparison with other sectors, although still low. The cash transferred to women local actors represents 8 per cent of the total OR in emergencies, including 2.4 per cent to community-based organizations (as opposed to 4 per cent of OR – regular funds, 1.6 per cent to grassroots organizations).<sup>163</sup> However, a recent evaluation<sup>164</sup> conducted in DRC **noted limitations to these partnerships**, which were confirmed by KIIs with CSOs respondents including: persistent barriers in accessing funding for small CSOs, still limiting their involvement (see EQ2); limited participation of women- and girl- led organizations in the humanitarian programme cycle, particularly in the implementation of interventions; underestimation of the capacities of women- and girl-led organizations by many humanitarian actors; and

a limited number of strategies or interventions aimed at the meaningful involvement and participation of men and boys.

- ▶ KIIs also reveal **progress in disaggregating data** and the intention to consult with women as part the initial community engagement processes, ensuring women were involved in leadership roles and striving for gender parity in field teams (see EQ2). These findings are aligned with the recent evaluation of UNICEF work in public health emergencies.<sup>165</sup>

#### **Several types of gender related initiatives have been identified and include:**

- ▶ Increased attention to PSEA, presented in the section above (child protection).
- ▶ UNICEF response to the COVID-19 pandemic showed 44 UNICEF COs prioritizing GBViE in 2019, compared with 18 COs in 2018. As a result, UNICEF was able to reach more than 3.3 million women, girls and boys in 46 countries affected by crisis with GBV risk mitigation, 22 humanitarian action prevention or response services – up from 1.3 million in 2018 (exceeding the target).<sup>166</sup>
- ▶ The evaluation found a plethora of gender-responsive or -sensitive programming (such as reaching caregivers with messages on feeding and screening for malnutrition or distributing MHM kits, child friendly spaces, nutrition, WASH rehabilitation (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina) and WASH in informal camps and temporary learning centers (e.g., Myanmar), mental and psychosocial support (e.g., Myanmar, Bosnia and Herzegovina).
- ▶ A few specific gender-transformative interventions were also identified, such the communities care programme, implemented in DRC, Somalia, and South Sudan and rigorously evaluated in Somalia<sup>167</sup> or the pilot project on masculinities in South Kivu in DRC (see SQ3 above).
- ▶ Programming on adolescent girls is also growing, with the development of an action brief and guidance to inform the development of context-specific emergency supply packages for adolescent girls.<sup>168</sup>

#### **The KIIs and document review also highlighted some limitations and challenges outlined below:**

- ▶ **Despite progress and proactiveness of the gender team and the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), the ambitions have not fully permeated the reality on the ground.** A recent evaluation pointed that “while gender,

equity and rights were incorporated into UNICEF preparedness plans and prevention protocols, it was challenging to translate these plans into action, particularly in emergency settings. A lack of adequate financial resources and human capacity, caused by insufficient trainings or awareness raising, led to poor application in practice<sup>169</sup>. The evaluation confirms the findings that the **gender commitments are not fully operationalized by the various sectors and clusters, and it was reported that some humanitarian staff are not aware of them or are not actively using them.** It was also reported in KIIs that the checklists were still considered too limited to effectively guide implementation, as they lack detailed examples of interventions and case studies; gender analysis was said to be considered as a tick-box exercise and to be too succinct to provide the granularity require to address all gender related challenges. It was also reported that operational teams still feel tools are not accessible.

- ▶ **The availability of gender technical expertise is also an issue, with gender surge not consistently requested by COs during the height of an emergency response.** Level 3 emergency response countries still lack the requisite P4/P5 staffing despite recommendations from the staff guidance note. UNICEF is seeking to address this gap by developing training programmes on gender for COs, but funding is not readily available yet. Other challenges with capacities were identified by a recent evaluation<sup>170</sup> and confirmed by KIIs; they range from the lack of awareness among humanitarian actors of the humanitarian country team roadmap for gender equality in humanitarian operations, to capacity weaknesses in sectoral and multi-sectoral coordination teams and members.
- ▶ **Gender parity in staffing in the humanitarian sector is also still an issue, despite efforts from management to redress this.**

**UNICEF work in the humanitarian sector is also guided by global UN inter-agency gender system and architecture in place, which includes many of the same challenges that mirror those faced by UNICEF.** This includes the lack of “inter-agency gender expertise that can influence both strategic and operational considerations and which is present throughout the entire time period of the response” and “weak accountability for inter-agency gender equality work outside of the sexual and reproductive health and protection areas. Gender working

groups and networks had little influence with other sector clusters and humanitarian country teams, and gender was usually not part of inter-agency discussions outside of those groups".<sup>171</sup>

**Examples of effective inter-agency collaborations were identified.** During the COVID-19 response, where UNICEF and other UN agencies developed a collective response to the gender-related impacts of the pandemic, including through the design of guidance for all UN country teams to apply a gender lens in their response plans. Other examples include UNICEF working with UN Women and other UN agencies in 2023 in EAPR to promote the integration of the VAC/VAWG agenda, including through the integration of capacity-building on child protection referral pathways into a GBV-focused training for community-level police, health workers, and island representatives from the outer islands.

**Whilst these are strong positive examples, several key informants reported competition between UNFPA and UNICEF on gender and GBV.** This appears to be rooted in the lack of clarity of both agencies mandates in the sector, which was flagged in other evaluations<sup>172</sup> and continues to hamper efforts in this space.

### Gender programming in climate change

**Finding 41: UNICEF is increasingly recognizing the direct needs of women and girls in its climate change work but has a long way to go to integrate gender in practice.**

The adolescent girls strategy<sup>173</sup> states the need to prioritize adolescent girls in climate funding, policies and resource allocation. For example, UNICEF seeks to address climate change and its negative effects on adolescent girls by promoting technological and educational capabilities, enhancing community participation, and empowering girls to become leaders and advocates in assisting communities to tackle climate challenges (see Box 10). In general, the dual-track approach aims to achieve structural, legal, and cultural changes to address the effects of climate change and achieve gender equality, bringing about lasting positive change in the lives of adolescent girls.<sup>174</sup> UNICEF is also helping to direct climate financing towards inclusive agrifood and social protection systems by adopting an integrated approach, and formulating gender-responsive and -transformative innovations that are locally informed and tailored to the needs and preferences of women and adolescent girls.<sup>175</sup>

#### BOX 10

##### UNICEF's partnership with Karama and the Wa'ed Network of adolescent girls

This initiative supported the development of a technical cohort to advance adolescent girls and young women's leadership in climate change. The technical cohort consists of members in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen representing over 25 different girl-led community initiatives and organizations. UNICEF and Karama together with the technical cohort supports increasing and strengthening partnership with, and support to girl-led movements and networks to ensure adolescent girls' leadership and adolescent girl-led solutions in disaster preparedness and climate.

A recent UNICEF report (2023) also states that "addressing adolescent girls' basic WASH needs and water scarcity must be part of a comprehensive, gender equality approach to mitigate the impact of increased heatwaves, floods and other consequences of climate change and to build adolescent girls' resilience to climate change".<sup>176</sup> The report states that this includes shifting gender norms that impeded the full realization of adolescent girls' rights.

Operational guidelines on climate change were also developed by the UNICEF regional office in Latin America and Caribbean.

However, as indicated in EQ1.1, the UNICEF Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2030, is close to being gender-unaware, with only two references to the disproportionate impact climate change has on girls, which signals that more needs to be done to mainstream gender through the whole climate change approach, beyond working with adolescent girls, given the importance climate change has on nutrition or health, to quote a few.

## Adolescent girls programming

### SQ 3.2: What results have been achieved in advancing adolescent girls' leadership and well-being?

**Finding 42:** GAP 3 priorities on adolescent girls have gained further momentum from the development of a specific adolescent girls strategy, and a growing number of programmes are working with adolescent girls, which are showing promising results.

**There has been an increasing focus on adolescent girls, with GAP 3 establishing priorities for adolescent girls under each Goal Area.** This direction was driven by the specific vulnerabilities of adolescent girls, and the “multiplier effect”<sup>177</sup> that could be obtained by working with them at scale. This focus, spearheaded by the Executive Director, culminated in the development of an Adolescent Girls Strategy 2022-2025,<sup>178</sup> that aims to increase girls' agency and impact gender and social norms. The strategy is accompanied by an adolescent girls investment case and dedicated funds set aside from the UNICEF Executive Director and other donors, for its implementation, which are still not commensurate to the targets and ambitions set in the strategy. Other developments related to adolescent girls' policies and programming include the development of

regional adolescent girls strategies (e.g., ROSA, and one for the MENA region) as well as the recent publication of gender equality “game changing priorities” describing concrete examples of interventions<sup>179</sup>, the development of an adolescents data portal and child marriage country profiles, amongst others.

**Within COs, the adolescent girls strategy has provided further impetus for the prioritization of gender and design and implementation of programmes which directly contribute to gender equality.**<sup>180</sup> Country case studies show that in COs, the strategy has enabled the development of multiple interventions working with adolescent girls, which have more visibility and stronger gender transformative objectives. These interventions are implemented across goal areas. Now, 48 COs have dedicated funds for girl-focused programming. Some of these interventions are implemented as joint UN-programmes, such as the IT Girls Initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina presented below, which illustrates the components of successful joint UN gender equality programming. These include the identification of a need by a group of young, motivated staff from various agencies, leadership support, effective joint UN coordination, organic growth and implementation over a long period. Some interventions have been presented in the sections above and others below (see Table 3). The following programmes demonstrate promising results.

**Table 3.** Examples of promising interventions

<p><b>Girls education: Improving girls access to science technology engineering and mathematics (STEM) education opportunities and strengthening their vocational skills</b></p>	<p><b>Skills4Girls</b> is a global initiative working in more than 20 countries, impacting over 5.8 million girls since 2019 <b>and developing their skills</b> in areas such as STEM, digital technologies, and <b>social entrepreneurship</b> in addition to life <b>skills</b>.</p> <p><b>In Peru, ChicasTec</b> targets girls aged 15-18 years in vulnerable situations who have an interest in professional careers related to STEM areas. The programme includes interventions in training girls on STEM and digital skills, building the capacity of education sector professionals to integrate digital skills, and advocating to change gender norms and stereotypes.</p> <p><b>GirlsGoIT</b> programme in <b>Moldova</b>; <b>Building Bridges 4 Girls</b> programme in <b>Kosovo</b>, equipping equips girls with coding skills and makes internship placement in private sector and ICT entities.</p> <p>In Ghana, UNICEF has supported the <b>Ghana Education Service to implement the Better Life for Girls initiative</b>, which includes a comprehensive package of interventions that aim to improve teaching and learning of STEM, and girls' interest in STEM education (AR GA2 2020).</p>
<p><b>Girls SRHR</b></p>	<p><b>In Mozambique, the Rapariga Biz Programme</b> (see Goal Area 1).</p>

### Interventions centred on girls, with a community mobilization component

**In Egypt, the Dawwie and Meshwary programmes** include storytelling circles, intergenerational and communities dialogue, digital learning, and opportunities to build new skills, through life skills and employability training and career guidance.

**In Mozambique**, UNICEF supported the involvement of 19,599 adolescents engaged in community dialogues aimed at addressing harmful practices that perpetuate **child marriage**.

**In Bangladesh, community level informal clubs** and groups for adolescents to learn, discuss and interrogate gender roles. Girls have reported benefiting from these clubs in terms of knowledge of child rights, social norms and agency.

### Strengthening young girls' mobilization (networks and girl-led CSOs)

**In DRC, UNICEF is implementing the U-Report global programme and U-Report-files** were created to strengthen young girls' participation in the U-Report social media platform, where young people are consulted on topics that matter to them, through surveys and information. It has attracted more than seven million members in DRC and has become both a powerful lever for community action (as U reporters get involved in community work), but also a tool for gender equality, because it enables positive norms to be amplified and disseminated through the network.

#### BOX 11

#### The IT Girls initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina

This initiative has been implemented as a joint UN initiative among three UN agencies: UNICEF (lead agency), UNDP and UN Women since 2016. The overall aim of the programme is to address the gender gap in the information technology sector by increasing girl's access to education and high valued jobs in this sector, and address gender norms. The initiative was designed by five young staff from three UN agencies as a response to the internal UN innovation challenge. Over the years, the IT Girls project has grown in scope, thanks to personal investments made by the UN staff, but also interest and support of the agencies' senior management who saw the project as a great example of successful UN cooperation. Currently, IT Girls is seen as one of the most successful UN joint projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in terms of UN cooperation, project outreach and project results. Although the initiative is currently only funded through UNICEF, joint planning has been maintained all along. The initiative has been included in the comprehensive UN fundraising plan on gender equality – the gender accelerator framework - confirming the intention of UNICEF and other two UN agencies to continue to implement IT Girls using the same UN joint implementation modality in the future.

**Finding 43:** To date, UNICEF has successfully used its comparative advantage to effectively support individual change among adolescent girls and to strengthen and mobilize youth and adolescent girl groups, and networks. Wider changes to social norms across the SEM have generally been seen to have been slower, or on a smaller scale.

**UNICEF work appears particularly effective through using a mix of skills development and various strategies to promote girls' participation and leadership.** This comparative advantage was mentioned by several external respondents. Analysis of UNICEF documents and the workshops with a sample of community members in countries visited confirmed this and led to the identification of emerging results for the young girls. Girls generally feel empowered by their participation in UNICEF programmes, with improved agency, skills, knowledge and decision-making. This finding is in line with past evaluations<sup>181</sup> and largely takes place at an individual level, with some exceptions, as in the child marriage programme which has been implemented over a longer period than most of the other interventions and where changes in policies and within communities were identified.

**Adolescent girls' participation in UNICEF programmes appears to be mostly for implementation.** In line with the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) evaluation, this study found strong evidence of adolescent girls being engaged in implementation and monitoring activities, with less evidence of their engagement in programme and policy design and evaluation. In addition, UNICEF support of girl-led organizations is still very limited, which may be due in part to UNICEF onerous procurement and bureaucratic partnership requirements, that act as barriers to funding grassroots organizations in general (see EQ 2).

**In parallel, UNICEF is supporting the leadership of adolescent girls, including by supporting networking between them,** as noted in DRC where the CO organized a forum gathering more than 100 girls from 36 countries in 2022, to exchange about their common vulnerabilities and join forces to advocate for their resolution, or through the [global girl leaders advisory group](#), comprised of 10 girl leaders from around the world who advocate for adolescent girls' rights.

**Finding 44: Programmes that focus exclusively on adolescent girls may miss opportunities for wider gender integration. Girls participating in the programmes may experience greater risks of backlash and stigma.**

**The extent and manner to which programmes should include boys is an issue of much debate within UNICEF and the wider sector.** The involvement of men and boys is a key aspect of gender equality programming, but it needs to be done in a manner that is supportive of adolescent girls' outcomes. There are differing views on how far programmes should prioritize adolescent girls with several respondents, at all levels of the organization, and outside (partners and government stakeholders) reporting that the adolescents girls strategy draws the attention away from boys, which is viewed by some as problematic as they see it as overlooking the vulnerability of boys, for example in countries where the rate or age of boys' school drop-out from secondary schools is higher than for girls. Others highlighted that working with boys is as much needed as working with girls to change norms and improve gender socialization and represents good practice towards achieving gender equality results. There is an urgent need for UNICEF to communicate clearly and without hesitancy on the importance of maintaining a focus on girls, adolescent girls and women whilst ensuring

boys and men are meaningfully involved and not left out of the wider benefits of programming. Gender equality benefits everyone.

**An exclusive focus on programming for girls may limit opportunities for wider gender integration across all Goal Areas.** In COs, case were found, where the attention to dedicated programmes working with adolescent girls did not include a strong focus on gender mainstreaming, as recommended by the dual tracked approach of the GAP. In these scenarios, the work on gender tended to be siloed within one sector, not fully taking advantage of UNICEF's potential for multi-sectoral programming. This is largely related to a broader challenge in that the UNICEF Programme Group is structured around the various Goal Areas, which tend to favour a more siloed approach<sup>182</sup>. This also runs counter to the efforts to ensure that "gender is the work of all" in the organization.

**Gender equality for transformative results can also present a risk of backlash for adolescent girls.** The evaluation found examples of gender equality interventions for transformative results empowering young girls without sufficiently engaging their families and communities, including religious leaders/faith-based organizations and local elders, to ensure that the changes among them are supported by the wider environment and that the girls do not face backlash. Such a backlash is partly because of the staff's limited understanding of gender equality designs (as explained in previous sections) and how to create and sustain an enabling environment for adolescent girls at the community level.

Another challenge presented relates to engaging governments and youth ministries in particular, because they are often under-resourced and, in some countries, opposed to girls' empowerment.

Finally, the evaluation also found that the activities promoting the empowerment of adolescent girls are often implemented over a short period, while changes in the enabling environment are longer-term and require a large-scale, multi-sectoral approach, and do not happen at the same speed as the changes in participation, leadership and capacities of the girls involved.

### SQ 3.3: To what extent has UNICEF contributed to producing transformative changes in gender norms and systems, and to tackling structural power dynamics, whether intended or not?

**Finding 45:** The evaluation found that UNICEF ambition for transformative programming has created an impetus for many COs to do more, going beyond gender-sensitive programming, and some positive examples have been noted of transformative approaches being used in programming across the sectors. However, several factors limit the organization's ability to sustainably transform social and gender norms, as mentioned in EQ2, including the depth of gender analysis, UNICEF existing programming modalities, and staff limited understanding of gender equality.

**UNICEF has put great emphasis on developing normative guidance, tools and interventions to change gender and social norms and systems and tackle structural power dynamics** through various interventions in all Goal Areas. Entry points for transformative work have been identified and capitalized on in different sectors to different degrees and several examples of transformative interventions were identified in the previous sections.

However, the approach to working on gender and gender equality is not systematic and there are challenges both internally and externally that impact the ability to do more, including on social and gender norms<sup>183</sup>. Some of these are listed below:

▶ **The importance of undertaking ongoing gender analysis is recognized by UNICEF, and more has been invested in this area, but it is not always of good enough quality to support gender equality programming design and adaptation.** For example, the evaluation noted in some analyses, that they are focused on vulnerabilities and needs, and less so on power and barriers which are key to identifying opportunities (and risks) for transformative programming. This was also noted with some UNICEF key informants and in a recent UNICEF review of its social protection programming.<sup>184</sup>

- ▶ **Implementation and programming modalities limit the ability to do transformative work (safely and ethically) and to see changes in norms and systems which take time.** Many respondents emphasized that it is impossible to achieve transformative change when projects are short-term (often less than a year), discontinued, small-scale, not rigorously monitored, and where there are limited technical and financial resources. A UNICEF respondent stated: **"We are being asked to do long-term work, to work on systems, without changing the DNA of our programmes and their implementation** (our indicators are still at the output level). UNICEF has undergone a paradigm shift conceptually, but it is not being supported in terms of indicators and implementation... **We are in a transition phase and we have only done part of the work.... We should move from a project culture to a programme culture; we should stop this "stop and go" culture, which is pointless...** Sometimes, we light a small spark in six months, and then the project stops...".
- ▶ **There is scope to build more collaborative partnerships with those working on gender across their key sectors.** Most COs are in partnership with CSOs, in some cases this includes WROs. However, partnering processes appear to be cumbersome for small or grassroots organizations, and the evaluation did not find examples of UNICEF working collaboratively with social movements. There is also more scope to improve collaboration with governments and other organizations working on gender to push a more ambitious agenda. A partnership mapping, like the one completed by the Pacific multi-country office, is a good way to understand who, outside existing partnerships, is working in the space including feminist-led or youth-led organizations, and how UNICEF may better partner with them.

- ▶ **Many CO staff have limited understanding of the gender continuum and what gender-transformative programming entails in practice.** This can, in addition to other factors (explained in EQ2 and in the enabling and hindering factors below in SQ 3.4), result in poor quality design of interventions (including the design and monitoring of ToC that clearly articulate the change pathway for gender, as well as insufficient efforts to measure results and adapt from lessons learned. There is also limited availability and/or use of tools per sector to guide the design and implementation of programming.
  - ▶ **Initiatives are not always implemented at all levels of the SEM,** often focusing more on individual women and girls and their empowerment and agency (less on the collective) and less on the (dis)enabling environment and gender norms at family, community and institutional levels, including engaging with traditional leaders, faith-based leaders etc. **Limited cross sectoral collaboration** is hampering efforts to bring about social norm change at scale.
  - ▶ **UNICEF has had notable success engaging boys and men in positive parenting programmes, but this is not systematically pursued across sectors.** The evaluation noted that boys and men were not always engaged in programming except for positive parenting programmes (including components on positive masculinities) under Goal Area 1 and adolescent SRHR interventions, with a few pilots working at community level on harmful masculinities, as identified in DRC and Mozambique. Programmes focused on fostering positive parenting have the potential to promote a more equitable distribution of household responsibilities and changes in gender roles and norms within households (e.g., some results show boys challenging gender norms because of engaging them in the activities).
  - ▶ **There are risks of doing harm with transformative programming if certain areas are not adequately addressed.** In the current global climate of a roll-back on women's rights, the risks to pushing a transformative agenda remain high, especially for women and girls who may face backlash as a result. The risks are amplified if programmes and policies are not designed based on comprehensive gender analyses (incorporating a power analysis approach), the capacity of staff and partners and resources for long-term programming are limited, and risks, including safeguarding risks, are not properly identified or mitigated. Part of the backlash includes a lack of understanding (or a misunderstanding) of what gender equality programming for transformative results means in practice internally and by external partners. For these reasons, it is important that the COs set their own level of ambition for programming, noting in some cases, gender-sensitive or -responsive programming may be more appropriate. However, there needs to be a clear rationale as to why they may or may not be working on social norm change, based on robust analysis of their context. It is important to note that it takes time to build up the right skills and partnerships to do transformative work.
- Since the level of ambition has increased with GAP 3, UNICEF is moving in the right direction as noted in this evaluation and should continue to ensure all its work is, as at a minimum, gender-sensitive, -responsive, and -transformative results where possible.

### SQ 3.4: What have been the enabling (and hindering) factors and processes both within and outside UNICEF?

Below is a summary of the main enabling and hindering factors and processes that were identified in the course of the evaluation to promote gender equality within and outside UNICEF.

**Figure 29.** Internal and external enabling and hindering factors



**Source:** Evaluation team



## 5 Conclusions and lessons learned

The overarching conclusions and lessons presented below are derived from the findings of this evaluation that were analysed based on the assumptions in the evaluation ToC.

**Conclusion 1:** *This evaluation set out to assess the extent to which the GAPs propose the right ingredients for the organization and concludes that UNICEF is on the right trajectory and momentum should be harnessed through a GAP 4 that focuses on the operationalization of UNICEF transformative ambitions on gender equality by addressing challenges related to the institutional enablers, including:*

- ▶ *Strengthening accountabilities across a continuum ranging from the individual staff level to HQ, ROs and COs across sectors;*
- ▶ *Reforming UNICEF programming and partnership modalities; and*
- ▶ *Strengthening accountabilities on gender expenditure and measures of outcome level gender results.*

When GAP 1 was designed ten years ago, the ambition was to have three iterations with the hope that by the end of GAP 3, gender quality would be firmly embedded within UNICEF. Whilst **the GAPs have established a solid foundation to promote**

**gender equality, and progress has been made, this evaluation shows that gender is not yet fully embedded**, and that UNICEF needs to better capitalize on its assets to respond to the current context and contribute to gender equality results at scale. This does not mean that the GAP as a framework is inefficient; evidence clearly demonstrate that where institutional enablers are in place, UNICEF contributes more meaningfully to gender equality while conversely, the challenges to achieving programmatic results are largely linked to insufficient progress on some enablers. This confirms the relevance of the GAP as a framework to achieve gender equality.

**Whilst various accountability mechanisms for gender exist, through M&E systems, benchmarking and the gender architecture, there is insufficient accountability at the country and individual level.** Accountability largely sits with the gender staff, which is at odds with the mainstreaming strategy and “minimum standards” for staffing (these standards are not reflected in staff job descriptions and PERs at middle and senior management levels). In parallel, there is also no global guidance on how to contextualize the GAP and ensure it is accompanied by clear timebound targets and workplans so that the CO is accountable for its implementation. Just under half of the COs have developed national versions of the GAP, but they are not all effectively leading to the integration of gender within the sections and their programmes.

UNICEF has invested heavily over the last few years on the institutional enablers, and there is good progress, but challenges persist, which **limit the ability of the institutional enablers to drive effective programming for gender equality on the ground**, noting that some of them are organization-wide challenges that are not specific to the gender team. Whilst **the gender architecture is solid at HQ level and should be maintained, there is still further need to strengthen the architecture at the regional and country level**. The GAP M&E system has improved and contributes to strengthening accountability and benchmarking, however, the indicators are not relevant to inform the implementation of gender-transformative interventions as they are often disconnected from the work implemented and there is an issue with the quality of data, which is also inconsistently collected, as well as challenges with target setting. The use of gender analysis has increased but is not systematic and always of sufficient quality, nor used enough to influence programming. Attempts to implement cross-sectoral collaborations have increased but more attention needs to be paid to design and implementation modalities to strengthen their effectiveness. Securing sufficient financial resources for gender is key, however, UNICEF is not reaching its overall target. The distribution of these resources focuses insufficiently on the core capacity of the organization, and programmatic areas with the bigger budget shares are also the ones that have a lesser proportion of gender equality expenditures, reflecting a missed opportunity to leverage UNICEF status and achieve results at scale.

**UNICEF programmes are increasingly gender-responsive and pay attention to the needs of women and girls**, although more can be done to take an intersectional approach to support women and girls in all their diversity, for instance, girls with disabilities. UNICEF is particularly effective at delivering interventions focused on the empowerment and leadership of young people (adolescent girls in particular) but is still not as effective on gender equality for transformative results, which requires tackling the root causes of gender inequality and working across the SEM, over a longer period, with sufficient intensity and quality. **The tension between the current gender equality ambition of UNICEF and its programming modalities needs to be resolved**. Current programming modalities are rooted in an organizational culture and history that prioritizes reaching high numbers of vulnerable children in the shortest time. This is an important aspect

of how UNICEF works and remains accountable to its donors. This approach, however, leads to more short-term programmes whereas gender equality programming requires longer-term programming based on solid gender analyses, with effective M&E systems and clear sustainability and exit strategies in place. **Furthermore, while gender equality is and should remain the ultimate goal, there is a need to set the level of ambition for programming at the CO level**, depending on the context and capacities and resources available, noting that in some cases, gender-sensitive or -responsive programming may be more appropriate (there are risks of doing harm if transformative programming is done without the necessary pre-conditions in place). UNICEF is moving in the right direction and should continue to ensure all its work is, at a minimum, gender-sensitive and -transformative results where possible.

**A gender equality for transformative results ambition cannot be achieved alone**. UNICEF is heavily dependent on its implementing partners and CSOs. In a context of shrinking civil space and a backlash against gender equality and women's rights globally, UNICEF is not yet making the most of its ability to leverage its partnerships more intentionally. A critical part of achieving transformative results at scale is supporting and sustaining local organizations, networks and movements that are mobilizing collectively to champion the gender agenda. The evaluation has identified several promising examples of partnerships with women's rights and women- and girl-led organizations. While these collaborations are currently limited in number, it is a start and UNICEF can learn from these collaborations and deepen the partnerships to make them more meaningful. It will also be important for UNICEF to expand partnerships to include other CSOs such as organizations of persons with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ organizations to better support women and girls in all their diversity (and to take a more intersectional approach), and to think about how to strategically target, engage and work with faith-based organizations and religious communities that may hinder/support gender-transformative programming on the ground. To work with these smaller local CSOs, UNICEF needs to review its contracting procedures and policies. Moreover, partnerships are often geared to project delivery, and less so on strengthening the organization. Building the capacity of these CSOs is important given that these are the very organizations that can embed and diffuse change sustainably, beyond the programming period.

**Conclusion 2:** *UNICEF has established a bold gender equality vision with GAP 3, supported and promoted by leadership and a pool of high quality, committed gender staff and champions. But UNICEF ambitions on gender equality are not universally owned and understood by staff and the GAP expectation that “gender is the responsibility of all” is not a reality yet and many staff do not know yet how to operationalize the work on gender. The bold ambitions of UNICEF require better equipping the staff to operationalize them.*

Staff have an increased understanding of their role, pay more attention to gender and can generally adopt a gender-sensitive or -responsive approach but many still have insufficient technical capacities and resources for gender equality programming, and some still lack motivation (noting that some of this may be down to personal biases and attitudes).

The evaluation concluded that gender integration is largely left to personal motivation and interpretation, leading to results that do not always match UNICEF’s transformative ambition. In parallel, **whilst capacities remain the main “Achilles heel” of the organization, a common challenge with other UN agencies, the appetite for learning opportunities on gender constitutes a great asset UNICEF should harness to ensure that the ambition is translated into programmes and spread throughout the organization.**

**Conclusion 3:** *The Gender Policy has established a transformative vision for the organization on gender equality that was recommended by the 2019 evaluation, which ambitions are commensurate to respond to the global needs to meet the SDGs and respond to the rollback on women rights. But the current definition of gender equality is not consistent across guiding documents and among staff, which leaves room for personal interpretation and hampers operationalization and broad-based buy-in for the gender equality agenda across the organization.*

The vision for gender equality established in the Gender Policy, as well as the prominence of gender within the Strategic Plan and the GAPs, all position UNICEF as a strong partner to accelerate efforts towards the gender-related SDGs. These are accompanied by a set of guiding documents and frameworks, but many of these documents remain unknown and unused, some staff perceiving them to be too theoretical and many expressing the need for more concrete operational guidance. In addition, sectoral strategies are not all fully aligned to the gender ambitions of the GAP.

**Now, how can UNICEF leverage its comparative advantage and assets towards a vision that would act as a rallying point for its staff and meaningfully contribute to gender equality through programmatic priorities?** UNICEF gender equality strategy must be designed in a context of poly-crisis, an increasing rollback on women rights and by noting that 65 per cent of its work happens in humanitarian contexts. The way forward must be anchored on the solid foundations already put in place and by leveraging UNICEF existing strengths, and lessons learned in the course of this evaluation which could involve:

- ▶ Building on the existing momentum around **young girls**, while developing a **more explicit narrative placing gender equality as central to children’s rights**, clearly delineating its comparative advantage vis-à-vis UNFPA, which also works with adolescent girls.
- ▶ Emphasizing the **gender socialization approach** more consistently, which is present in the Gender Policy but not sufficiently harnessed. This approach is well-aligned to UNICEF’s unique focus on children and adolescents. It lends itself to working along the SEM, involving boys, parents and community, governments and tackling systems. This would resolve the pertinent and recurrent question on “involving boys” and give further impetus to parenting interventions.
- ▶ **Leveraging the scale of its programmes and multisectoral positioning** through the Goal Areas, as UNICEF’s multisectoral mandate is particularly well suited to tackle the root causes of gender inequality in various domains. This would require **strengthening gender equality mainstreaming** efforts, including in humanitarian programmes.

**Conclusion 4:** *UNICEF is a better workplace than it used to be for women due to efforts to address gender imbalances in staffing and the workplace, and the growing number of “gender activists” that champion the gender agenda. Measures to ensure parity, however, are not always applied as intended and more needs to be done to ensure women’s well-being in the workplace.*

While gender parity overall has been achieved, differences between seniority and functional levels are still visible. If these disparities exist, gender equity in the workplace will not be achieved. In addition, parity is seen by some as a mere statistical exercise, which means that some COs favour male recruitment when the 70 per cent threshold of female staff is reached, which is at odds with the GAP transformative agenda. The importance of leadership championing the agenda and promoting an equitable and safe workplace culture has proved to be essential, including to prevent sexism and “micro-aggressions” still seen in certain COs, noting that these sometimes happen in contexts where reporting mechanisms to formulate complaints related to SEAH within the office are not always clearly communicated and known by staff. Positive changes within UNICEF include the setting up of a new DPC. The various networks focused on gender for people with shared experience are useful, but there are not enough safe spaces to discuss gender within UNICEF. It was illustrative, for example, that the workshops held as part of this evaluation were appreciated by staff and incentivized the creation of a women’s group within one CO, and opened conversations in all, on gender and associated intercultural or intergenerational dimensions, that continued long after the workshops. The recruitment of young staff that are passionate about gender equality has also brought new energy to the organization to drive the agenda, using the Gender Strategy and the GAP as a rallying point. This is encouraging for the future.

**Table 4.** Main progress achieved by the GAPs over time

	2014	2017	2022	2024
	GAP1		GAP2	
	GAP1		GAP3	
	Achievements of GAP 1 and 2 (2019 evaluation)		Achievements of GAP 3 (this evaluation)	
	Achievements of GAP 1 and 2 (2019 evaluation)		Going forward: Operationalize the vision	
<b>Vision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Put gender on the table, but lacks ambition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Established a gender equality ambition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The ambition is understood by all and clearly articulates how women rights contribute to children rights, and how gender equality will help achieve sectoral goals</li> </ul>	
<b>Institutional enablers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Set up a system for gender programming and fine-tuned it</li> <li>▶ Focused on institutional structures and systems: developed a gender architecture - including regional gender advisors</li> <li>▶ Developed a M&amp;E system</li> <li>▶ Weak accountabilities undermined ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Expanded the pool of “gender activists”</li> <li>▶ M&amp;E system built stronger accountabilities (GAP Standard Index)</li> <li>▶ Foundational elements of gender reporting in place</li> <li>▶ M&amp;E not sufficient to ensure buy-in from all staff and does not capture gender equality well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The GAP M&amp;E system is geared to measure and guide gender equality and is used by COs to strengthen their programmes</li> <li>▶ Gender analyses are deep enough</li> <li>▶ Gender specialists are posted in all COs</li> <li>▶ All senior and middle-management staff have gender in their PER</li> <li>▶ UNICEF invests more core funds on building gender capacities and programming</li> </ul>	
<b>Staff motivation and capacities</b>	<p>Identified that gender is seen as someone else’s business in the organization</p> <p>Capacity gaps still a major challenge</p>	<p>Most staff feel working on gender is part of their job</p> <p>Mandatory gender and PSEA training have built a solid foundation</p> <p>Capacity gaps remain</p>	<p>Staff have the technical skills, the motivation, self-awareness, and values to share the vision for gender equality</p>	
<b>Programmes</b>	<p>Identified programmatic results on targeted priorities that were along the continuum from gender-sensitive to -responsive</p> <p>Evidence of weak / insufficient mainstreaming</p>	<p>Gender equality programming is growing</p> <p>Identified results on the continuum from gender-sensitive to gender equality</p> <p>Gender mainstreaming across sectors is still insufficient to achieve results at scale</p>	<p>All sections integrate gender equality approaches/ ambitions in an iterative way, based on a few interventions selected from the menu proposed in the GAP, according to capacities available and GPR recommendations</p>	

## 6

## Recommendations

The table below presents a list of prioritized recommendations and suggested actions that were validated and prioritized with UNICEF, ERG and YAG. By implementing these recommendations, UNICEF can strengthen its ability to advance gender equality, fulfilling its mandate effectively in the six remaining years of the Decade of Action toward the 2030 Agenda.

Theme	Rationale and prioritization	Suggested actions
<b>Recommendation 1: Update the vision for gender equality, refer to it consistently, and ensure alignment between GAP 4 and all policy frameworks across Goal Areas and in the humanitarian sector</b>		
<p><b>UNICEF mandate</b></p>	<p><b>The current vision for gender equality</b> is not <b>consistent</b> across guiding documents and among staff, which leaves too much room for personal interpretation and hampers broad-based buy-in for the gender equality agenda and its operationalization.</p> <p><b>Intersectionality</b> is mentioned in the Gender Policy, but <b>is not consistently considered, and the approach to gender is often binary</b>, with insufficient attention to LGBTIQ+ rights.</p> <p>There is a lack of clarity and an inconsistent narrative on <b>children’s and women’s rights in the climate of a rollback on rights.</b></p> <p><b>Priority:</b> <i>Very high</i></p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> <i>Within six months, while GAP 4 is prepared</i></p> <p><b>Responsible Units:</b> <i>Gender team in PG, in collaboration with Goal Areas directors, EMOPS, and ROs, under the leadership of the PG Director</i></p> <p><b>Cost implications:</b> <i>Staff time</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNICEF should update its vision in the new Strategic Plan with a <b>more explicit narrative placing gender equality and women’s rights as central to the attainment of children’s rights</b> and explain in what ways “women’s and children’s rights are inextricably linked”. The GAP 4 should elaborate on this, while also referencing the relevant human rights frameworks (e.g., the CRC, the new UNICEF child rights framework, CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration).</li> <li>UNICEF should also ensure alignment between the updated vision of the Strategic Plan, Gender Policy, GAP 4 and <b>all sectoral strategies, including on intersectionality, and children’s, women’s and LGBTIQ+ rights.</b></li> <li><b>UNICEF should ensure alignment between GAP 4 programmatic priorities and sectoral strategies</b> by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Discussing and defining gender sectoral priorities for GAP 4 with PG, under the supervision of the PG Director, as well as individual Goal Areas leads and gender advisors; and</li> <li>▶ Revising UNICEF <b>sectoral strategies</b> (including health and climate change) to ensure alignment with GAP 4 priorities and ensure gender equality is more deliberately embedded at outcome level, <b>with clear gender inputs.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li><b>UNICEF should cross-reference the GAP and the CCCs more explicitly.</b></li> </ol>

## Recommendation 2: Develop a GAP 4 that is more explicit on “how to” operationalize it at all levels, and how to implement programmes for gender equality

### GAP 4 and contextualization to country context

The GAP framework is useful to drive the gender equality agenda and has enabled UNICEF to achieve incremental institutional and programmatic change towards gender equality, but its operationalization is still hampered by:

- ▶ Insufficient operational guidance and procedures to ensure CO accountabilities to deliver; and
- ▶ Competition for bandwidth between cross-cutting issues.

**Priority:** *Very high*

**Timeframe:** *Within six months, while GAP 4 is prepared*

**Responsible Units:** *Gender team in PG, in collaboration with DAPM, ROs, and COs, under the leadership of the PG Director*

**Cost implications:** *Staff time*

In drafting a new GAP, UNICEF needs to consider the following actions:

1. GAP 4 could take the form of a **guiding framework, outlining expected programmatic and institutional results** on gender equality, followed by **operationalization guidelines in key areas. In particular:**
  - ▶ It should include a menu of gender equality interventions that could be implemented under each programmatic priority or Goal Area and for adolescent girls, in the next five years, and include clear outcome level results (see below recommendation on M&E framework). This menu should be defined in consultation with the various sectors and based on effective interventions that have been tested by UNICEF and others. Sectoral tools and programming guidance on each of the interventions should be annexed to GAP 4.
  - ▶ It should also include precise operationalization guidelines and clear procedures (covering human resources; M&E; gender results reporting mechanisms at CO and RO levels – see details below).
  - ▶ This should also include guidance on how to operationalize the inclusion of various cross-cutting issues (consider tackling inclusion through a gender lens and developing “two-in-one tools” to tackle gender and disability together for example).
2. **UNICEF should also provide more precise operational guidance on the development of national GAPs, notably:**
  - ▶ National GAPs should be linked to GPRs, that need to be conducted at the same time as CPD reviews, with hands-on support from regional gender advisors. They should also have realistic and time-bound targets and intermediary steps that should be reflected in the CPD.
  - ▶ COs should identify realistic priorities and carefully set the level of ambition in each Goal Area within the global menu, that fit in their current portfolio, based on context, opportunities, capacities, ability to manage risks, as identified in the GPR and other gender analysis, with the support of the regional gender advisor (fostering a “bottom-up approach” to defining priorities).
  - ▶ They should reference the enactment of global human rights frameworks and national reviews where they exist (e.g., CRC, CEDAW, Beijing Platform of Action) and outline the approach to responding to adverse contexts and sensitive issues such as abortion, SRHR and gender diversity, and establish high-level advocacy goals where necessary.
3. **UNICEF should ensure that reporting on gender is a standing item at the headquarters, regional and country level meetings, and in emergencies,** (GMT, regional management team and deputy representatives and operational managers meetings, and CMT) and is given more space in COARs.

### Establishing staff accountabilities on gender equality across sectors and strengthening the gender architecture

Operationalization of the GAP is also hampered by:

**An over-reliance on gender staff** to implement the GAP and insufficient attention to the role of the various sectors.

**A gender architecture** that is solid at HQ level and needs to be maintained but is still not sufficiently developed at regional and country levels to “decentralize gender equality efforts”.

Insufficient core funds dedicated to gender capacities within UNICEF.

**Priority:** *Very high*

**Timeframe:** *Within six months, while GAP 4 is prepared*

**Responsible Units:** *DPC, in collaboration with the gender team in PG, ROs and COs*

**Cost implications:** *Likely to require repurposing and/or upgrading some posts and some new funding in country offices*

In addition, in operationalizing the GAP, UNICEF should consider:

**1. Strengthen accountabilities to implement the GAP among senior and middle management, across sectors and at all levels (HQ, ROs and COs) by making the “minimum standards” established by the 2021 staffing guidance mandatory, including by:**

- ▶ Updating job descriptions and PERs of heads of sections at HQ, RO and CO level, country representatives and deputy representatives so that they reflect roles and responsibilities on gender equality outlined in the staffing guidance;
- ▶ Ensuring that gender specialists report to the country representative or deputy representative have equivalent hierarchical level as the chiefs of sections and attend CMT meetings and/or section chiefs meetings – including in humanitarian contexts;
- ▶ Appointing sectoral gender specialists embedded in sections who possess dual gender and sectoral technical expertise (“double-hatting”) in all COs (even those that have a gender specialist), to support the gender integration in sectoral workplans and attend CMT meetings and/or section chief meetings;
- ▶ Ensuring gender focal persons in COs who do not qualify for a full-time gender specialist attend CMT meetings and/or section chief meetings and include gender focal point duties in their performance plan and PER; and ensuring that in those countries sectoral gender technical experts are also appointed; and
- ▶ Ensuring the gender working group, composed of staff from across sections and operations with sufficient seniority (mix of genders), and chaired by the country representative or deputy representatives, meets regularly, develops and monitors the implementation of the CO gender action plan annexed to the national GAP.

**2. UNICEF should also amend the existing rule to appoint a gender specialist in-country (based on budget) and consider making it based on merit and context (COs demonstrating increasing gender results and portfolio or proving the context warrants a specialist should be prioritized).**

<h3>Financing</h3>	<p>UNICEF gender-transformative expenditure is below the UN-SWAP recommended 15 per cent target.</p> <p>The current calculation system of gender-transformative expenditures based on double GEM and gender tagging at output and activity level respectively is aligned to the global UN recommended practice, but 1) penalizes COs with massive budgets where traditionally gender is not integrated, and 2) COs struggle with tagging as it does not allow to fully capture the gender integration efforts.</p>	<p>In financing the GAP, UNICEF needs to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Strengthen the support to CO staff to use the existing expenditure tracking system</b> more accurately.</li> <li><b>2. Incentivize CO senior management to spend at least 15 per cent of the unearmarked funding for gender equality work</b> (this could be a criterion qualify for the allocation of a gender specialist).</li> <li><b>3. Ensure that the 15 per cent target of gender-transformative expenditure is reached more equitably across Goal Areas</b>, particularly those with the highest budgets like health and education.</li> <li><b>4. When assessing a CO's success in mobilizing funds for gender work, also emphasize achievements towards increasing levels of integrated expenses</b> (all gender-tagged activities under GEM2 outputs and half gender-tagged activities under GEM1 outputs).</li> <li><b>5. Track and report the RR dedicated to strengthening internal capacity on gender at HQ.</b></li> </ol>
<h3>Programming modalities</h3>	<p>Current programming modalities are at odds with gender-transformative ambitions and existing good practice, with stop-and-go programming/short timeframes and limited attention placed to programme design.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNICEF should encourage COs to <b>develop programmes that are aligned to the CPD cycle and last approximately five years</b> and consider advocating with donors for longer-term funding, evidencing that this is a precondition to achieve transformative results.</li> <li>COs should align UNICEF programming processes to “gold programming standards” recommended by ensuring that <b>the gender change pathways are reflected in the ToC developed for all UNICEF programmes, as recommended by the new UNICEF country programme planning guidance and the rights and results-for programming training</b>, to ensure that the incremental steps/milestones towards gender equality are clear (and reflected in M&amp;E frameworks), as well as risks and assumptions are identified. The participatory development of ToCs is also a key step to motivate and mobilize staff on gender-transformative programming.</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Priority:</b> <i>Very high</i></p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> <i>Within the next twelve months while GAP 4 is prepared</i></p> <p><b>Responsible Units:</b> <i>DFAM, in collaboration with the gender team in PG and DAPM</i></p> <p><b>Cost implications:</b> <i>Staff time</i></p>	
	<p><b>Priority:</b> <i>High</i></p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> <i>Within the next twelve months while GAP 4 is prepared.</i></p> <p><b>Responsible Units:</b> <i>DAPM, ROs, and COs, with the gender team in PG and regional gender advisers</i></p> <p><b>Cost implications:</b> <i>Staff time, with some cost savings in the long run</i></p>	

<p><b>M&amp;E</b></p>	<p>The M&amp;E system is not sufficiently geared to improving the effectiveness of programmes in COs; it does not sufficiently capture incremental changes and results towards gender equality.</p> <p>The field testing of the adolescent girls programme measurement framework should provide good lessons for improving the GAP 4 M&amp;E framework.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>UNICEF should ensure that impact and outcome level targets, and <b>core standard indicators across the Goal Areas better capture change at outcome level.</b></b> Some points for consideration include <b>testing</b> the following:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Including the same indicator under each Goal Area that measures norms change (for example: “percentage of country programmes that demonstrate meaningful contribution to gender equitable norms in [include relevant sector]”).</li> <li>Other examples of indicators that could be tested include percentage of people holding egalitarian beliefs about men and women; and they could measure changes in legal and regulatory frameworks, changes in access to adolescent friendly services, amongst others.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>UNICEF should consider using progress markers or shifting toward indicators that aim to capture contributions towards system change,</b> instead of binary indicators (such as the indicator ‘2.1.1. Percentage of countries with inclusive and gender-equitable system for access to learning opportunities).</li> </ol>
<p><b>Partnerships</b></p>	<p>There are bureaucratic barriers limiting partnerships with women- and girl-led organizations. The UNPP portal, e-Tools, harmonized approach to cash transfers procedures do not allow for women-led and girl-led organizations in rural and disadvantaged context to access funding, creating a barrier to reaching the most vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Partnerships are often geared to project delivery but lack long term transformative vision.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>UNICEF should revise partnership procedures,</b> through the legal and partnership division, to support more partnerships with small CSOs, especially WROs and youth-led organizations.</li> <li><b>UNICEF should invest in the institutional capacities of CSOs working on gender equality</b> (networks of youth, feminist organizations) recognizing their key role in context of backlash against rights and providing them with core flexible funding.</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Priority:</b> <i>High</i></p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> <i>Within 6 months, while GAP 4 is prepared</i></p> <p><b>Responsible Units:</b> <i>Gender team in PG, in collaboration with DAPM</i></p> <p><b>Cost implications:</b> <i>Staff time</i></p>	
	<p><b>Priority:</b> <i>High</i></p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> <i>Within the next twelve months</i></p> <p><b>Responsible Units:</b> <i>Legal office, working with DAFM, DAPM and the gender team in PG.</i></p> <p><b>Cost implications:</b> <i>Staff time</i></p>	

## Gender analysis

Gender analysis need to be geared to informing gender programming more deliberately. Gender analysis that integrates a power and barrier analysis approach, allows for a better understanding of the context, how gender relates to each sector and what the opportunities and risks are to do transformative work that challenges gender and social norms and other systemic root causes of inequality.

**Priority:** *High*

**Timeframe:** *Within the next twelve months while GAP 4 is prepared*

**Responsible Units:** *Gender team in PG, in coordination with DAPM, and regional gender advisers and regional chiefs of programme and planning*

**Cost implications:** *Staff time*

- 1. UNICEF should make GPRs mandatory in every CPD and conduct robust gender analysis of all sector portfolios** to identify entry points to mainstream gender and develop gender-specific programmes and reflect them in the CPD, which ambitions need to be set depending on contexts and using the GAP guidance.
- 2. UNICEF should deepen the existing guidance on gender analysis** to include power and barrier analysis of opportunities and risks to embark in transformative work and use a DNH do no harm approach.
- 3. UNICEF should ensure that initial gender analysis/GPR are reviewed** on an ongoing basis to help adaptive programming and to update risk matrix.

### Recommendation 3: Train, motivate and hold staff accountable for the operationalization of gender integration across all sectors

#### Staff technical capacities, motivation to work on gender

Staff have a limited understanding on how to operationalize gender integration and lack practical tools specific to their sectors.

Most of the existing training methods are often too generic and do not engage staff personally.

In addition, the norms and values of some of them hamper gender equality programming, with some being resistant and lacking motivation to work on gender.

The Gender Pro training module conducted over a long period, with a mentor and a concrete project to implement is appreciated by the few staff who could access it, but online foundational training is not enough, and face-to-face training is preferred.

**Priority:** *High*

**Timeframe:** *Within a year*

**Responsible Units:** *Learning and development team within DPC, working with the gender team*

**Cost implications:** *Staff time and consultants' time where needed*

- UNICEF should develop a gender equality capacity strengthening plan** that is based on an approach that “starts from where people are at”, building on the interest of the staff and motivating those who are not motivated, while increasing technical practical skills. This **training should** be utilization focused, avoid using jargon, **engage staff in more discussions to help them identify entry points to integrate gender within their sections and build on them, incrementally.** This would involve, amongst other activities:

  - ▶ Conducting a training programme **over a long period of time, mixing approaches and favouring practical approaches using examples and case studies and peer learning;**
  - ▶ **Developing training modules on gender per sector;**
  - ▶ **Develop training modules on gender diversity and LGBTQI+ issues;**
  - ▶ Developing and/or disseminating wider **practical sector guidance** that goes beyond mainstreaming tips at design, implementation and design phase but **share step-by-step guidance on activities/approaches that work in each sector;**
  - ▶ Encouraging **peer learning** across regions and countries, typically among those implementing in similar contexts (e.g. humanitarian settings); encourage **mentoring and practical on-the ground training** and “shadowing”, especially in humanitarian settings;
  - ▶ **Engaging staff in critical reflections on their own biases and values over several sessions** - consider adapting and **testing** tools like those developed in the FGM programme (gender-transformative accelerator and values clarification workshop training training), or the “looking in looking out” tool or annual gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) scans/audits to address things like unconscious bias, attitudes, etc.;
  - ▶ Conducting **regular appraisals of staff capacity and values on gender, based on a competency framework within each sector (not just certification after training), to measure progress at all levels (leadership/programmes/general service staff);** and
  - ▶ Systematically assessing progress on gender competencies after the training.
- UNICEF should conduct PSEA training face to face as well as online.**

**Recommendation 4: Review recruitment, parity and workplace well-being policies, procedures, and practices in line with UNICEF’s vision for gender equality**

<p><b>Human resources</b></p>	<p>Some COs practice male preferential recruitment when their staff is composed of more than 70 per cent of females.</p> <p>Gender norms values and skills are not systematically assessed during interviews.</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> <i>High</i></p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> <i>Within a year</i></p> <p><b>Responsible Units:</b> <i>DPC, OIAI, gender specialists and PSEAH specialists in ROs and COs, in collaboration with the gender Team</i></p> <p><b>Cost implications:</b> <i>Staff time</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>UNICEF should review and update policies, and address the existing practice</b> consisting of recruiting male staff when the 70 per cent threshold is reached on female staff needs revisions due to adverse consequences and provide clearer guidance to hiring managers.</li> <li><b>In recruitment assessments and interviews, UNICEF should systematically integrate questions to assess if personal values of the staff are in line with the UNICEF vision</b> for gender and their rights-based approach, through scenario-based discussions.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Workplace culture</b></p>	<p>PSEAH reporting mechanisms are not efficient and not well known by the staff. The complaints mechanism is slow and does not propose enough protection to complainants.</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> <i>High</i></p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> <i>Within a year</i></p> <p><b>Responsible Units:</b> <i>DPC, OIAI, regional chiefs of human resources, gender specialists and PSEAH specialists in ROs and COs, in collaboration with the gender team</i></p> <p><b>Cost implications:</b> <i>Staff time</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>UNICEF should make it mandatory for human resources to systematically analyse gender gap surveys</b>, with the support of the gender advisors and under the supervision of senior management. and take remedial actions as required (HQ, RO and CO levels). This should be discussed in senior management team meetings and during the capacity building session engaging staff in discussions on gender norms.</li> <li><b>UNICEF should support and promote the development of accessible and safe spaces for women</b>, including those with children, in all their diversity, to engage on issues that matter to them.</li> <li><b>Human resources to engage with the gender team, Gender Push and other women’s groups</b> to better capture factors affecting women well-being within the office and career progression (looking at issues faced by pregnant women, single women with children, women in emergencies context, work-life balance, amongst others), with a view to develop human resources measures/an action plan to respond to women’s challenges.</li> <li><b>UNICEF should ensure that accessible PSEAH reporting mechanisms</b> are in place and known by the staff in each UNICEF office at all levels.</li> <li><b>UNICEF should improve the resolution of SEAH cases</b> by the OIAI, including by speeding up the management of cases</li> <li><b>UNICEF should design and roll out initiatives and trainings that tackle organizational and individual unconscious biases</b>, attitudes and values for staff at all levels, including management and leadership (see section on capacity building above).</li> </ol>



© UNN UN1665637/Dejongh

# A

## List of annexes

- ▶ Annex 1: Terms of Reference
- ▶ Annex 2: Evaluation Theory of Change
- ▶ Annex 3: Evaluation Matrix
- ▶ Annex 4 : ERG role and list
- ▶ Annex 5: YAG role and list
- ▶ Annex 6: Social ecological model
- ▶ Annex 7: Country selection criteria
- ▶ Annex 8 : List of key informants
- ▶ Annex 9 : NLP analysis
- ▶ Annex 10 : GAP Standard Index
- ▶ Annex 11 : Gender M&E incentivises programming or not
- ▶ Annex 12 : NLP analysis of CPDs
- ▶ Annex 13 : Bibliography
- ▶ Annex 14 : Tools for comprehensive GEDSI analysis
- ▶ Annex 15: Analysis of GAP indicators progression
- ▶ Annex 16: Core evaluation team biographies

## Endnotes

- 1 Largely based on UNICEF's definitions as outlined in the Gender Integration Continuum.
- 2 United Nations Children's Fund, *Gender Glossary of Terms and Concepts*, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, November 2017. People of diverse gender identities are not mentioned in this definition.
- 3 United Nations Children's Fund, *Evaluability Assessment and Formative Evaluation of the UNICEF Positioning to Achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, E/ICEF/2023/3*, UNICEF Executive Board, January 2023.
- 4 *Gender Glossary of Terms and Concepts*.
- 5 United Nations Children's Fund, "UNICEF's Brief on the Social Ecological Model", UNICEF, New York, 2022.
- 6 United Nations Children's Fund, *Gender Policy 2021–2030*, UNICEF, July 2021.
- 7 A leading global provider of innovative gender equality and social inclusion consultancy and research based in the UK
- 8 UNICEF last evaluated its Gender Action Plans (2014-2019) in 2019.
- 9 UNICEF, however, has been working on issues of women and girls since the 1980s.
- 10 2018 data was limited and analyzed when possible.
- 11 A stakeholder list is in Annex 8.
- 12 An approach to organizational culture change that deliberately focuses on strengths rather than on weaknesses.
- 13 The YAG was constituted of nine young women and three young men from Barbados, Cameroon, Canada, France, Greece, India, Morocco, Syria, United States, Zimbabwe.
- 14 This was not always possible however, as demographic information was not always provided by key informants.
- 15 SDDirect's Ethical Policy outlines principles, approaches, and methods for maintaining high ethical standards throughout all stages of work. The Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults (safeguarding) Policy sets out values and principles and describes how commitments are met to create a positive and safe environment for children and vulnerable adults who may be connected to work.
- 16 SDDirect has their own gender equality and social inclusion continuum that differs slightly from this framework.
- 17 See glossary for full definition.
- 18 See inception report for the definition.
- 19 The analysis conducted on the GAP Standard Index includes a descriptive trend analysis of the different indicators, complemented by a statistical analysis of binary logistic regression to identify possible correlation between GAP Standard criteria and a dichotomous outcome variable: the quality of gender results criteria. Strength of correlation was assessed based on the Pearson coefficient.
- 20 The ToR stipulate that the evaluation should focus on 2019-2024 but were/where possible, data from 2018 was also analyzed.
- 21 This allowed for triangulation and limited duplication and respondent fatigue (in particular, in relation to questions focusing on staffing and culture institutional enablers).
- 22 Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.
- 23 70 for Peru, 18 for Bangladesh, 50 for Mozambique, 70 for DRC, 50 for Bosnia and Herzegovina, 62 for Egypt
- 24 The full methodology is available in the inception report.
- 25 This includes a snapshot of available quantitative results (trends on selected GAP programming indicators and expenditure on gender); analysis of the evidence collected on programmes and on the level of gender integration within the Goal Area and enabling factors; and examples of gender transformative and responsive interventions.
- 26 The papers looked at the following themes: Adolescent girls, links between VAC and VAWG, involving boys and men, gender equality in the workplace, gender transformative programming, engagement of women and girls in humanitarian settings, amongst others. Some of these papers were written by the Office of Research and Foresight Innocenti.
- 27 The evaluation noted in this regard that the priorities for gender integration in each GA identified in the GAP 3 are more gender transformative than those identified in GAP 2 and the overarching principles and priorities established are well aligned with the gender transformative agenda of the Gender policy.
- 28 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Preparing for an independent evaluation of UNICEF's Gender Policy and Action Plans 2018 to the present: A background paper' (internal document), January 2024.
- 29 Calling for an increased focus on GBV, economic justice and rights, bodily autonomy and SRHR, feminist action for climate justice, technology and innovation for gender equality, feminist movements and leadership.
- 30 Equal Measures 2030, Findings from the 2024 SDG Gender Index - A Gender Equal Future in Crisis? Equal Measures 2030, September 2024. The Index monitors progress on SDGs based on an Index encompassing 56 issues.
- 31 UNICEF Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring – Data and Analytics Section, *Progress on Children's Well-Being: Centring child rights in the 2030 agenda – For every child, a sustainable future*, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York, September 2023; and *Global effectiveness review*.
- 32 United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNICEF GMT Global Effectiveness Review' (internal document), 12 June 2023.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Evaluability Assessment and Formative Evaluation.
- 35 Defined as "the intentional effort to address multiple constraints or deprivations that will achieve a greater impact than just reducing one vulnerability". Ibid.
- 36 Intersectionality is mentioned in the background section but does not feature in the programming section, except for one mention in the social protection introduction: "UNICEF is committed to leaving no one behind and recognizes that gender intersects with multiple risks faced by the poorest and the most marginalized and excluded groups, including heightened risk of discrimination and neglect related to disability, racism, xenophobia, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity, urbanization, migration and displacement, 'natural disasters and armed conflicts, or any other reason'. United Nations Children's Fund, *Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025, E/ICEF/2021/31*, UNICEF Executive Board, July 2021.
- 37 Evaluability Assessment and Formative Evaluation.
- 38 Dalberg United Nations, *Independent Review of the UN System's Capacity to Deliver on Gender Equality – Final Report*, Executive Office of the Secretary-General, New York, 11 February 2023.
- 39 Ibid.

- 40 As indicated in the Evaluation of the GAP 1 and 2. United Nations Children's Fund, *Realizing Potential: Evaluation of UNICEF's Gender Action Plans*, UNICEF, New York, December 2019.
- 41 *Gender Policy 2021–2030*.
- 42 The socio-ecological model addresses various influences that drive gender and social change: children, adolescents and youth, parents, caregivers and families, local leaders including religious leaders and, more broadly, the private sector, communities and societies.
- 43 "UNICEF recognizes the need to address gender holistically, including through the ways in which it intersects with other dimensions of children's and adolescents' lives. This includes addressing its linkages with race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, gender identity, and other critical factors" (*UNICEF Gender Policy 2021-2030*).
- 44 As quoted in the 2019 GAPs evaluation: "UNICEF aims, through its country programmes, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social and economic development of their communities". The CEDAW is also referenced in the Strategic Plan, as an overall framework (*Realizing Potential: Evaluation of UNICEF's Gender Action Plans; United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025, UNICEF, New York, October 2021*).
- 45 Which is not mentioned in the GAP at all.
- 46 A quote often heard during the interviews at CO-level.
- 47 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>
- 48 *Independent Review of the UN System's Capacity to Deliver on Gender Equality*.
- 49 *Realizing Potential: Evaluation of UNICEF's Gender Action Plans*.
- 50 Recommendation from in the 2019 GAPs evaluation (*Realizing Potential: Evaluation of UNICEF's Gender Action Plans*).
- 51 According to staff met in COs and at HQ level, who were not involved in the development of GAP 3, including gender specialists.
- 52 United Nations Children's Fund, *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action*, UNICEF, New York, October 2020.
- 53 The Child Protection Strategy is longer, up to 2030. United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Child Protection Strategy 2021-2030*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
- 54 Positive parenting, gender roles, masculinities which address the root causes of gender inequality such as power, group sanctions and socialization.
- 55 Clements, Rebecca, *A Gender-Transformative Climate Change Programming Guide: Experiences from Latin America and the Caribbean*, United Nations Children's Fund, Panama City, Panama, 2024.
- 56 As shown in the evaluation ToC (see Annex 2).
- 57 The UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, developed by UN Women, produces an annual benchmark of UN agencies on gender equality integration. See the UN-SWAP 2.0 accountability framework at [www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/How%20We%20Work/UNSystemCoordination/UN-SWAP/UN-SWAP-2-TN-Accountability-framework-en.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/How%20We%20Work/UNSystemCoordination/UN-SWAP/UN-SWAP-2-TN-Accountability-framework-en.pdf).
- 58 This is due to the introduction of a more nuanced GAP Standard Index with GAP 3 which assesses institutional enablers through 29 indicators.
- 59 United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Gender Policy and Gender Action Plans: Interim Report: Institutional Enablers Assessment*. UNICEF Evaluation Office, New York, 2024.
- 60 No available data for 2018.
- 61 As mentioned in EQ1.
- 62 Please see Methodology section for more details.
- 63 In Egypt, the Social Policy and Child Rights Monitoring Section worked with the government to fill evidence gaps and strengthen the robustness of the data that they were collecting.
- 64 Example of such tools are listed in Annex 14.
- 65 There are also regional differences, with around 60 per cent of respondents agreeing/strongly agreeing except in the Latin America and Caribbean and EAP where scores were lower (38 per cent and 51 per cent respectively). A slightly higher proportion (60 per cent) of respondents based in humanitarian/emergency COs agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, compared to those in non-humanitarian/non-emergency COs (51 per cent)
- 66 *Realizing Potential: Evaluation of UNICEF's Gender Action Plans*.
- 67 While the indicator on sex-disaggregation on RAM standard introduced in GAP 3 shows very low score (26 per cent in 2023), it was explained that this is due to the fact that UNICEF is phasing out this set of indicators, hence focusing efforts on CSIs disaggregation.
- 68 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund, World Food Programme, *Are We Getting There? A Synthesis of UN System Evaluations of SDG 5*, UN Women, New York, 2024.
- 69 These were documented in Peru, Egypt and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 70 Social Development Direct, 'Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility Helpdesk', SDDirect, London, [www.sddirect.org.uk/project/gender-based-violence-aor-helpdesk](http://www.sddirect.org.uk/project/gender-based-violence-aor-helpdesk), accessed 7 October 2024.
- 71 United Nations Children's Fund Evaluation Office and Gender Team, *UNICEF Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation*, UNICEF, New York, September 2019.
- 72 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Evaluation Evidence Gap Map', UNICEF, <https://evaluationreports.unicef.org/app/evaluation-evidence-gap-map.html>, accessed 7 October 2024.
- 73 Although some do, like Bosnia and Herzegovina, embarking in an implementation research project, and Myanmar in humanitarian contexts.
- 74 United Nations Children's Fund, 'GAP 2022–2025 M&E FAQ' (internal document), undated.

- 75 The Evaluation's Interim Report reported the gender expenditure rather than the gender transformative expenditure for the period covered by GAP 2 (see Figure 9 in *UNICEF Gender Policy and Gender Action Plans: Interim Report*), which cannot be compared to the gender transformative expenditure in the period covered by GAP 3. Using the same formula (100 per cent of gender-tagged expenditure under GEM 3 outputs), the evaluation team calculate the proportion of gender-transformative expenditure before for the period covered under GAP 2 to make the two periods bully comparable. It is important to note that these calculations show that the proportion of UNICEF's gender-transformative expenditure reached an all-time high – 13 per cent – in 2020, decreased to 10 per cent in 2021 and dropped to 6 per cent in 2022. This might be due to more accurate guidance on gender and GEM tagging for expenditure.
- 76 In 2023, Goal Area 1 'Survive and Thrive' accounted for the highest proportion of total expenditure (43 per cent), but the lowest proportion of gender transformative expenditure (7 per cent). In contrast, Goal Area 3 'Protection from Violence and Exploitation', accounted for a smaller proportion of overall expenditure (12 per cent), but had the highest percentage of gender transformative expenditure (29 per cent).
- 77 As highlighted in the SDG 5 evaluation of UN agencies: "there was limited evaluative evidence on efforts to influence the funding ecosystem through advocacy or technical support, representing a need for future evaluations.". *Are We Getting There?*
- 78 This had 93 per cent expenditures with the adolescent tag for 2023, with 20 per cent of those being categorized as gender transformative.
- 79 A recent UN Women study concludes that "overwhelmingly, UN entities have great difficulty in tracking and reporting on expenditures on gender equality, both in terms of staffing and programming." United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Gender Architecture Mapping & Costing Study*, UN Women, April 2022.
- 80 UNICEF (2024) Comparative Analysis report.
- 81 Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, *United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2020 Assessment Cycle*, Paris, December 2021.
- 82 The Staffing Guidance sets minimum threshold for: i) meeting the target of gender specialists for COs with an annual budget of or above \$USD 20 million; ii) dedicated resourcing in COs with a budget below \$USD 20 million; and iii) gender expertise in humanitarian contexts. It also mentions that the management of COs and sections need to fundraise and allocate a sufficient budget for additional gender expertise (such as sectoral gender specialist expertise) and add gender expertise to the Job Description of key posts. United Nations Children's Fund, 'Guidance on Staffing for GAP Results and Institutional Standards 2021', UNICEF, New York, 2021.
- 83 *Independent Review of the UN System's Capacity to Deliver on Gender Equality*.
- 84 Gender-related working groups at the CO level had varying levels of activity and extension to the various sectors. For example, Egypt CO has an Inclusion Task Force which only focused on internal matters. The DRC's taskforce has a wider focus on gender, GBV and risk mitigation and PSEA. Some COs had gender focal persons across some or all sectors, in one case only focused on PSEA, and in some cases these did not result into an active taskforce.
- 85 GenderPro, 'Capacity Building Programme', George Washington University, Washington, D.C., <<http://genderpro.gwu.edu/capacity-building-programme>>, accessed 7 October 2024.
- 86 This can also be linked to the lack of clear definition of what gender transformative results mean for UNICEF as outlined under EQ1.
- 87 Agora catalogue possesses 78 entries for gender in its training catalogue. United Nations Children's Fund, 'Agora – Gender', UNICEF, <[http://agora.unicef.org/local/catalogue/index.php?query=gender&filters\[\]=174](http://agora.unicef.org/local/catalogue/index.php?query=gender&filters[]=174)>, accessed 7 October 2024.
- 88 *United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2020 Assessment Cycle*.
- 89 Agora offers courses on the foundations of gender-transformative approaches and on gender-transformative approaches to adolescent girls programming, and on gender integration in WASH, Education and within Protection on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. There are also specific resources on integrating gender considerations in humanitarian and emergency contexts. At regional level, ECARO produced a high quality regionally tailored Gender Toolkit (United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, *Gender toolkit – Integrating Gender in programming*, UNICEF ECARO, Geneva, October 2019) and compendium of best practices (United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, *Regional Compendium – Best Practices of Gender-transformative programming in Europe and Central Asia*, UNICEF ECARO, May 2023). UNICEF also recently launched a "Regional Gender Resource Hub" on SharePoint as a space to access gender-related resources produced by Regional Gender Teams and Country Offices (United Nations Children's Fund, 'Regional Gender Resource', <<https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/PD-RegionalGender/SitePages/Home.aspx?csf=1&web=1&e=Q9HGCI&CID=c9d10c39-eb9a-4ab8-a180-bd8d727b379f>>, accessed 7 October 2024), compiled by theme and by geography.
- 90 In one country case study, staff did not recall receiving training and specifically requested more practical, scenario-based training that was adjusted to their context.
- 91 To add
- 92 United Nations Children's Fund, *Annual Report on the Implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025*, Official Document E/ICEF/2024/17, UNICEF, New York, 2024.
- 93 This was mentioned by civil society partners in several country case studies.
- 94 Under the "We Deserve Better" initiative, UNICEF and partners conducted a series of consultations and a global survey with feminist, women and girl-led organizations aimed at exploring the lived experiences of women and girls with the design and implementation of social protection to inform policymaking, and at encouraging COs to reflect on the findings to guide their work and their engagement with partners. *We Deserve Better: Unlocking Social Protection for Women and Girls* | UNICEF, video, United Nations Children's Fund, 2024, <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=X714yCXWj-k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X714yCXWj-k)>, accessed 7 October 2024.
- 95 United Nations Children's Fund, *Adolescent Participation in UNICEF Monitoring and Evaluation: Guidance Note*, UNICEF, New York, 2019.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 *Are We Getting There?*
- 98 In one country, CSO and grassroots WROs faced challenges in gaining the required government recognition and certification needed to receive funding form UNICEF.

- 99 In Peru, youth and adolescent's networks valued the direct access to the gender team which they viewed as an equitable relationship. In Bangladesh, the CO delivers a week-long gender equality training at the start of all contracts.
- 100 Examples include the Spotlight Initiative (on GBV), the UNICEF-UNFPA Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to End Child Marriage, the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, the UN Sustainable Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality, the UN Task Force on Violence Against Women and Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics.
- 101 Such as the 2gether 4SRH joint programme in Eastern and Southern Africa funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and implemented in collaboration with UNAIDS, UNFPA and WHO in ten countries.
- 102 This includes 65 per cent of COs within humanitarian/emergency contexts and 58 per cent of COs within non-humanitarian/non-emergency contexts
- 103 The Evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM found "variable coordination" between the Joint Programme on FGM and the Global Programme on ending child marriage. There was a general consensus on the need for better synergies and coordination between the programmes. (United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Children's Fund, *Joint Evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change Phase III (2018-2021)*, UNFPA and UNICEF, New York, 2021). The Evaluation of Phase II of the Global Programme to ECM found clear efficiencies gained from joint working (coordination and management) between UNFPA and UNICEF at global, regional and country levels, including increased complementarity and reduced duplication. However, in some cases, this relied largely on the willingness and commitment of individuals, rather than on systems, which may pose challenges for sustainability. In addition, weaknesses were observed in some cases, including at subnational level, with parallel coordination mechanisms and siloed implementation (United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Children's Fund, *Evaluation of Phase II (2020-2023) of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage*, E/ICEF/2024/5, UNFPA and UNICEF, New York, 2024).
- 104 A similar finding was made in a recent evaluation (United Nations Children's Fund, *Formative Evaluation of Gender Transformative Programming through Investment in Adolescent Girls' Leadership in Eastern and Southern Africa*, UNICEF, New York, 2023).
- 105 This has been noted more widely in UN organizations, see for example *Independent Review of the UN System's Capacity to Deliver on Gender Equality*.
- 106 In Peru, this has resulted in strong public campaigns and joint advocacy with other UN agencies on therapeutic abortion, child marriage and domestic violence against girls.
- 107 For example, in country case studies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Bangladesh and Mozambique
- 108 Examples from case studies include the inclusion of gender budgeting in sectors in Bangladesh, the integration of a gender lens in curricula with the Ministry of Education in Egypt, the resourcing of gender units in education, health and social ministries in Peru, the scaling up of UNICEF youth clubs by government in Bangladesh, shifting gender attitudes in government in Egypt, and training government staff on gender equality in DRC.
- 109 Examples include: in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the deputy representative is one of the two gender focal persons in the office, and the senior leadership commitment in the CO is demonstrated in their involvement in fundraising efforts for gender; in Peru, the CO senior leadership has led inter-agency high-profile advocacy efforts on girls' rights in the country; in DRC, leadership commitment to achieving gender-transformative results has translated in innovation on gender financing, senior leadership communication in and outside the office and role-modelling; in Bangladesh, the leadership aims to increase the visibility of gender work and better recognize and support gender champions in the office.
- 110 See EQ 2.1 on the gender architecture for further details.
- 111 Government of Canada, *Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy*, Global Affairs Canada, Ottawa, 2017.
- 112 United Nations Children's Fund People Analytics Team, Division of Human Resources, *Workforce & Recruitment Report - Quarter 2 2024*, UNICEF, New York, 2024.
- 113 The Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE) survey and certification is a leading global assessment methodology and business certification standard for gender equality. It measures where organizations stand in terms of gender equality across various dimensions, including pay equity, recruitment and promotion, leadership development, training and mentoring, flexible working, and company culture.
- 114 United Nations Children's Fund People Analytics Team, Division of Human Resources, 'Workforce & Recruitment Report - Quarter 2 2024' (internal document), 2024.
- 115 *UNICEF Gender Policy and Gender Action Plans: Interim Report*.
- 116 United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNICEF Staff Selection Procedure' (internal document), 2024.
- 117 In ECARO, this policy has been restricted to ensure staff availability in emergency duty stations.
- 118 United Nations Children's Fund, Update on the Implementation of the Recommendations Made in the Independent Panel Review of the UNICEF Response to Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the Report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority, E/ICEF/2022/6, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
- 119 United Nations Children's Fund, Update on Organizational Culture and Diversity, E/ICEF/2024/15, UNICEF, New York, 2024.
- 120 United Nations Children's Fund, *Report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority*, UNICEF, New York, 2019.
- 121 Including Gender Push, a global network advocating for gender equality at the workplace, the Network of Employees with Disabilities, the Network of Parents of Children with Disabilities, UNICEF/UN GLOBE, a network of colleagues who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning and others (LGBTQI+), and Young UNICEF, a network of professionals under 35 years old.
- 122 For example, in Egypt the CO has put in place an Inclusion Taskforce.
- 123 In one CO staff mentioned that gender was considered binary in the workplace, and it was difficult to talk about gender diversity of sexual orientation in the country setting
- 124 Examples of this were reported in two country case studies.
- 125 The *Looking In-Looking Out* suite of products was developed by Positive Vibes for tools and curricula to support organizational development. Positive Vibes and Frontline AIDS, *LILO Inclusion Manual*, Positive Vibes and Frontline AIDS, Cape Town, 2021.

- 126 Update on Organizational Culture and Diversity.
- 127 The evaluation team took a sample from the GAP indicators as agreed with the UNICEF gender team, to cover all goal areas across the life course and adolescent girl indicators. A small sample have been presented in the main report, but the full list is presented in Annex 15. There are concerns about the quality of the data for reasons mentioned in the report especially in EQ2.
- 128 Every child, including adolescents, learns and acquires skills for the future.
- 129 Every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful behaviours.
- 130 See details in each section below.
- 131 Gender transformative expenditure 100 per cent of gender-tagged activity expenditures under GEM 3 outputs.
- 132 Caveat: the tagging process is not perfect, as outlined in EQ2.
- 133 Evidence includes reviews of country office annual reports and end of year results reports 2019-2023, key informant interviews, evaluations or gender reviews.
- 134 Across case country studies, programmes involving several sectors were identified, particularly in DRC, such as health/nutrition and WASH, or health and education (on school health or school nutrition interventions), or education and WASH (on school MHM)
- 135 Based on self-reports by CO staff and HQ KIIs.
- 136 It specifies “where appropriate, UNICEF will work closely with UNFPA, which takes the lead in the UN system on this area of work”
- 137 Picard, Mary, *A Review of Gender-Transformative Approaches and Promising Practices in Health, Nutrition and HIV Programming in Africa: From Theory to Practice*, UNICEF, New York, 2022.
- 138 Primary school: Female: 12 per cent and males: 11 per cent; secondary school: Female: 18 per cent, male: 19 per cent.
- 139 As observed in DRC, where UNICEF supported teachers training on gender and strengthened the gender machinery in the Education department. In Bangladesh, UNICEF supported revision of textbooks and curriculum to be more gender equal and avoid gender stereotypes.
- 140 See EQ1 for more details on the policy
- 141 United Nations Children’s Fund, *Global Annual Results Report 2019: Goal Area 3*, UNICEF, New York, June 2020; United Nations Children’s Fund, *Global Annual Results Report 2020: Goal Area 3*, UNICEF, New York, December 2020; United Nations Children’s Fund, *Global Annual Results Report 2021: Goal Area 3*, UNICEF, New York, June 2022; United Nations Children’s Fund, *Global Annual Results Report 2022: Goal Area 3*, UNICEF, New York, June 2023; United Nations Children’s Fund Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, *Gender Equality: Annual Results Report 2021*, UNICEF ECARO, Geneva, March 2022; United Nations Children’s Fund Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, *Gender Equality: Annual Results Report 2020*, UNICEF ECARO, Geneva, March 2021; United Nations Children’s Fund Regional Office for South Asia, *Empowered Women and Girls – Prosperous South Asia, Gender Annual Report for South Asia 2022*, UNICEF ROSA, Gender Team, Programme Group, Kathmandu, 2023; United Nations Children’s Fund Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, *Regional Compendium: Best Practices of Gender-Transformative Programming in Europe and Central Asia*, UNICEF ECARO, Geneva, May 2023.
- 142 United Nations Children’s Fund, *Update on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, E/ICEF/2024/14*. UNICEF, New York, April 2024,
- 143 United Nations Children’s Fund, *Evaluation of UNICEF Work in Public Health Emergencies*, UNICEF Evaluation Office, New York, 2024.
- 144 And document in a case study conducted in DRC – UNICEF, 2024, *Case Study – An innovative funding mechanism to strengthen UNICEF’s work on gender, GBV risk mitigation and PSEA in the Democratic Republic of Congo*
- 145 An example of parenting programme focused on infant stimulation and feeding was found in a country visited.
- 146 Interviews with HQ and CO staff.
- 147 United Nations Children’s Fund, *Delivering with and For Adolescent Girls – Five Game-Changing Priorities With and For Adolescent Girls*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
- 148 *Joint Evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation; Evaluation of Phase II (2020–2023) of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage*.
- 149 Through the ACT Framework, developed in 2020. United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children’s Fund and Drexel University’s Dornsife School of Public Health, *ACT Framework: Measuring Social Norms Change Around Female Genital Mutilation (Summary)*, UNICEF, New York, 2020,
- 150 United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Children’s Fund, *Advancing Gender-Transformative Approaches in the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Exploring Gender, Power, and Agency – Integrated Gender-Transformative Accelerator and Values Clarification Workshop Facilitation Guide (GTA+)*, UNFPA and UNICEF, New York, April 2024.
- 151 The graph shows a steep increase in funding in 2020 and then a drop up to 2022 before increasing again. It is not clear what caused this – the variations may have been caused by a one single big funding on gender in a given year or lie in the tagging process and/or errors when computing the data.
- 152 Note this is the same value they are using for women, girls and boys so not specific to adolescents 15-19
- 153 A global Women in WASH initiative was launched in 2018 set up by the global WASH section and the Division of Human Resources; to investigate the reason behind the gender gap in the sector and to find solutions Several intentional efforts were made to address recruitment, retention and advancement. At the regional level, the WASH team in EAPRO and WCARO started similar initiatives to influence the sector more broadly including through joint advocacy with the World Bank, Institute for Sustainable Futures and others. Similar work has been done in Indonesia, PNG, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.
- 154 The graph shows a steep increase in funding in 2020 and then a drop up to 2022 before increasing again. It is not clear what caused this – the variations may have been caused by a one single big funding on gender in a given year or lie in the tagging process and/or errors when computing the data.
- 155 The GRASSP programme is an important initiative which aims to address the evidence gap on the contribution of social protection to gender equality; role of design, implementation and contextual factors; and the integration of gender in social protection systems. The programme has three core research streams 1) contextualization of gender responsive age sensitive social protection; 2) impacts of social protection programmes on gender equality outcomes; and 3) institutionalization of gender into social protection programmes.

- 156 This review was part of the UNICEF programme entitled “Accelerating progress towards a better world through evidence-based actions on strengthening inclusive and shock responsive social protection systems” supported by the Government of Ireland.
- 157 United Nations Children’s Fund, *Global Annual Results Report 2023*, UNICEF, New York, August 2024.
- 158 Ibid.
- 159 This was also noted in one of the case study countries.
- 160 Gavrilovic, Maja, et al., *Lessons from Gender-Responsive and Transformative Social Protection Practices in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Six Countries*, UNICEF, New York, forthcoming in 2024.
- 161 Evidenced in KIIs and documentation.
- 162 This was also noted in one of the case study countries.
- 163 United Nations Children’s Fund, *UNICEF Localization Dashboard*, accessed 7 October 2024, <<https://app.powerbi.com/groups/me/apps/627ccefa-92fb-46a3-bff4-9973db1f1c36/reports/774485d6-41d7-4694-9ab0-e01eaf02ab7e/ReportSection1eb-4134b039ec4900918?ctid=77410195-14e1-4fb8-904b-ab1892023667&experience=power-bi>>.
- 164 Mécanisme Ad Hoc Genre, *Examen et renforcement de l’intégration de l’égalité de genre dans les réponses humanitaires sectorielles et multisectorielles en République Démocratique du Congo, Rapport d’étude*, February 2024.
- 165 Evaluation of UNICEF Work in Public Health Emergencies.
- 166 United Nations Children’s Fund, *Global Annual Results Report 2019: Humanitarian Action*, UNICEF, New York, June 2020
- 167 Glass, Nancy et al., *Effectiveness of the Communities Care programme on change in social norms associated with gender-based violence (GBV) with residents in intervention compared with control districts in Mogadishu, Somalia*, BMJ open vol. 9,3 e023819. 13 Mar. 2019, doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2018-023819
- 168 United Nations Children’s Fund, *Global Annual Results Report 2023: Humanitarian Action*, UNICEF, New York, July 2024
- 169 *Evaluation of UNICEF Work in Public Health Emergencies*
- 170 Mécanisme Ad Hoc Genre, Examen et renforcement de l’intégration de l’égalité de genre dans les réponses humanitaires sectorielles et multisectorielles en République Démocratique du Congo, Rapport d’étude, February 2024.
- 171 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: Final Report, IASC, October 2021.
- 172 Core Commitments for Children.
- 173 Although as noted in EQ1, the strategy is gender blind.
- 174 United Nations Children’s Fund Regional Office for Middles East and North Africa, *Gender and Climate Change*, UNICEF MENA, accessed 4 October 2024, <[www.unicef.org/mena/gender-and-climate-change](http://www.unicef.org/mena/gender-and-climate-change)>.
- 175 United Nations Children’s Fund, *Tackling Gender Inequality in a Climate-Changed World*, UNICEF, 22 May 2024, <[www.unicef.org/blog/tackling-gender-inequality-climate-changed-world](http://www.unicef.org/blog/tackling-gender-inequality-climate-changed-world)>, accessed 4 October 2024.
- 176 United Nations Children’s Fund, *Adolescent Girls’ Access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene: Data Snapshot and Recommendations for Gender-Responsive Climate Action*, UNICEF, New York, 2023.
- 177 As quoted by the Adolescent Girls Programme Strategy (United Nations Children’s Fund, *Adolescent Girls Programme Strategy*, UNICEF, New York, 2021).
- 178 Ibid.
- 179 *Five Game-Changing Priorities With and For Adolescent Girls*.
- 180 As observed in CO case studies and reported in KIIs with CO staff.
- 181 Such as the *Formative Evaluation of Gender Transformative Programming through Investment in Adolescent Girls’ Leadership in Eastern and Southern Africa*.
- 182 Evaluability Assessment and Formative Evaluation.
- 183 It is important that the level of ambition for programming is set at the country level depending on the context, their capacity and resources, and their partners. Doing transformative work is highly risks especially for women and girls who may face backlash, so UNICEF needs to have the capacity to mitigate these risks and adapt when needed.
- 184 Gavrilovic, Maja, et al., *Lessons from Gender-Responsive and Transformative Social Protection Practices in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Six Countries*, UNICEF, New York, forthcoming in 2024.



**For further information, please contact:**

**UNICEF**

**Evaluation Office**

3 United Nations Plaza

New York, NY 10017

USA

 [www.unicef.org/evaluation](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation)

 [UNICEF-Evaluation](https://www.linkedin.com/company/unicef-evaluation)

 [twitter.com/UNICEFEval](https://twitter.com/UNICEFEval)

 [evalhelp@unicef.org](mailto:evalhelp@unicef.org)

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
October 2024