

Evaluation of Innovation

Inception Note

Updated draft based on the comments provided by the
ERG/AG for validation by the Evaluation Office

January 2025

Lydia Tanner, Alexander Finlayson, Omar Gonzalez,
Liddy Greenaway, Sali Hafez, Erisa Pereira



Contents

- Introduction
- Context and stakeholders
 - Context
 - Insights from the inception phase
- Methodology
 - Evaluation questions
 - Data collection and analysis
 - Benchmarks
- Planning
 - Team
 - Workplan
 - Outputs and quality assurance



Introduction

The UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025 outlines a vision for achieving results for children by 2030, providing a global framework for its offices and partners. It recognises the need for fresh approaches to persistent challenges and includes innovation as one of its nine change strategies.

In October 2024, the Evaluation Office (EO) commissioned the KonTerra Group to conduct an evaluation to **generate systematic evidence on UNICEF's use of innovation as a change strategy** and to contribute to organisational learning. It focuses on the period from 2019 to 2024, encompassing both the management response to the 2019 evaluation of innovation work and implementation of the current Strategic Plan (2022-2025).

Combining **formative and summative** elements, the evaluation will assess achievements to date as well as provide forward-looking recommendations on (i) the systems, processes, governance and culture of UNICEF to support innovation, including empowerment of staff to innovate; (ii) the results of UNICEF innovation initiatives; (iii) the value-added of innovation portfolio management; and (iv) contribution of innovation towards effectiveness.

This is a **global evaluation, covering all seven UNICEF regions**, with a focus on the positioning of innovation as a change strategy, including its systems, processes, governance, capacity, resourcing, partnerships and culture. It includes innovation initiatives across different Divisions and at different levels.

The findings will inform UNICEF's approach to innovation as a change strategy including the internal governance and systems for innovation at the global level. The findings will also aim to inform the management of innovation in regions and countries to achieve rights-based results for children. Interim findings will be shared to inform the design and implementation of the next Strategic Plan (2026-2029).

This inception report documents the evaluation team's understanding of the evaluation purpose, scope and methodology. It outlines the key objectives and provides a workplan for data collection and analysis. It is intended for UNICEF stakeholders including the EO, Office of Innovation (OoI), Product Innovation Centre (PIC), and relevant staff in the Information Communication and Technology Division (ICTD), Programme Group (PG) and Regional Offices (ROs).

Evaluation objectives

Purpose: The evaluation aims to generate systematic evidence on the extent to which UNICEF has leveraged innovation as a change strategy to accelerate results for children. It will also aim to strengthen organisational oversight and accountability for innovation, contribute to learning, and consult with rights-holders.



1. To assess the relevance, coherence and sustainability of UNICEF **institutional arrangements** to integrate innovation as a change strategy.



3. To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of **innovation initiatives** to enhance programme effectiveness and accelerate positive outcomes for children.



2. To examine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of **UNICEF innovation approaches**.



4. To identify and analyse the **enabling and hindering factors** influencing innovation within UNICEF.

The full evaluation questions are listed in Annex 2.

Inception activities

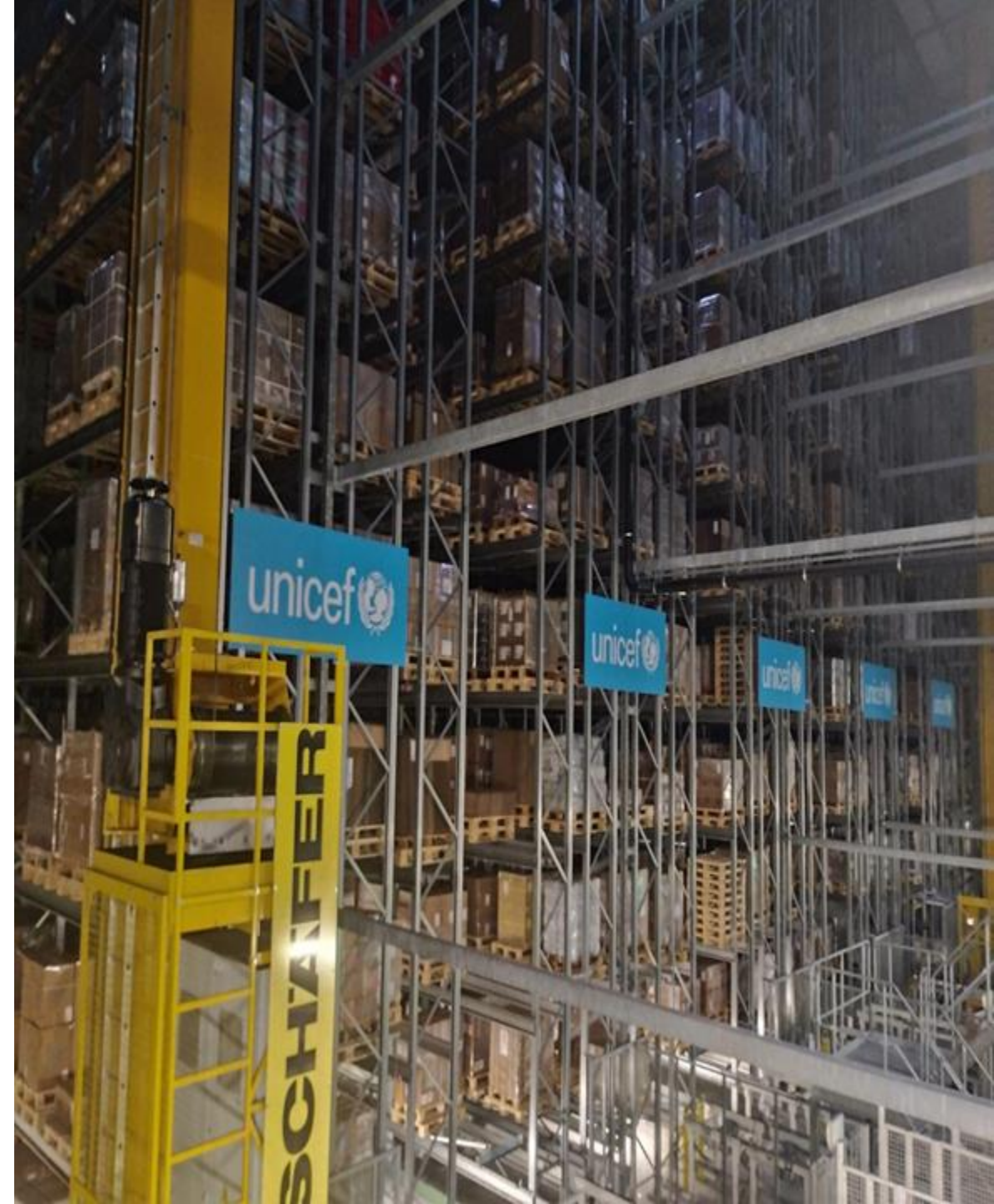
Inception mission in Stockholm & Copenhagen

- **5 workshops** on (i) Critical turning points in the innovation journey (ii) Scaling and partnership, (iii) Governance, (iv) Product innovation and (v) WASH Hub
- **13 interviews** with Ool and Supply Division (SD) staff
- **2 discussions on how innovation is monitored and evaluated** and data available with Ool and PIC
- **Tour of the SD warehouse**

Remote activities

- **Orientations** with EO and Ool
- **Desk review** of over 30 documents
- **7 interviews** with regional chiefs of ICT and evaluation staff
- **8 interviews** with Headquarters (HQ) staff
- Meetings with the Innovation Steering Committee (ISC) and Advisory Group (AG)

In total the team consulted with 47 people from the Ool, SD and ICTD (23 women and 24 men) including those in HQ (36) and in ROs (11) (see Annex 8).



Context and stakeholders

- Context
- Definition of innovation
- Object of the Evaluation
- Stakeholders and audiences
- Insights from the inception phase



Context



While progress has been made in many sectors, **millions of children continue to face persistent and intersecting challenges that threaten their well-being and future.** Children worldwide remain unable to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, despite two-thirds of them attending a school. Many continue to die from preventable diseases. Violence and abuse against children are rife, particularly in humanitarian settings. Systemic change and new solutions are required to tackle these challenges.



The last two decades have seen growing interest in innovation to tackle persistent challenges in the humanitarian and development sectors. This has been **catalysed by limited resources, a desire to drive efficiencies through digital technologies, and an interest in the possibilities of public-private partnerships.** Many organisations have established labs and funds, although estimates suggest funding on research and innovation is around 0.2% for the humanitarian sector, far behind other industries (1). There is no data available for the development sector.



Within the United Nations (UN), innovation is seen an important component of advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **This commitment is encapsulated in the UN 2.0 approach** (2) which describes the “quintet of change”: data, innovation, digital, foresight and behavioural science. Within this vision, innovation is described as the capacity for experimenting with and scaling up new solutions, processes, products and services that add value and drive SDG progress.



Sixty per cent of UN entities are implementing specific innovation strategies and action plans, and 50 per cent have established centres of excellence (3). **A UN Innovation Network (UNIN)** was established in 2015 and is co-chaired by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, and the World Food Programme (WFP) to foster innovation across the UN system.

[1] Issa, Z., Lindenfors, A. & Timmins, N., 2024. *Global Insights: The Humanitarian Research and Innovation Landscape – 2024 Report*, Elrha.

[2] <https://www.un.org/two-zero>.

[3] UN 2.0: Forward-thinking culture and cutting-edge skills for better United Nations system impact. Policy Brief 11 (United Nations, 2023). p. 11

Within this broader context for the evaluation, UNICEF has defined **innovation** as (1):

“*a new or significantly improved solution that contributes to progress for children and accelerates results for children or young people. It is about doing new things to solve problems and improve the lives of children around the world. It is about matching today’s challenges with tomorrow’s solutions.*”

Innovation as a change strategy at UNICEF

UNICEF has a long history of testing and supporting innovations to scale to improve the lives of children. Notable examples include the mark 2 handpump (1990s), Child Survival Revolution (1980s), Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM, 2000s), U-Report (2011) and RapidPro (2014).

UNICEF was also one of the first UN agencies to develop specific innovation capacities, establishing an Innovation Unit in 2008 and a Global Innovation Centre in 2015. It has led other agencies through its emphasis on open-source solutions and in becoming an early signatory of the Principles for Digital Development. Several advancements in health, education and emergency response that were developed within UNICEF have also been adopted by other UN agencies.

Innovation was recognised as a change strategy in UNICEF's Strategic Plans for 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, which aim to accelerate progress towards the SDG's. This means focusing on the intractable problems, stagnating progress and stubborn barriers, and matching them with a portfolio of new solutions, with the **belief that applying innovation to these problems will accelerate progress**. By elevating innovation to a change strategy for the organisation, UNICEF aims to build on the pockets of innovation that already exist, foster its culture and capacity to innovate, and strengthen the innovation ecosystem.

A **[2020 Global Innovation Strategy and Framework 2.0](#)** describes the strategic priorities through the 'ABCs of Innovation':

- **Accomplishments:** Comparative advantages and demonstrated successes in applying innovation to improve children's lives.
- **Bending the curve:** Understanding where to focus innovation to influence and accelerate the arc of progress positively for children and applying a portfolio approach to do so.
- **Capability and culture:** Contributing to innovation as a catalyst, convener and collaborator and evolving UNICEF's organisational capability and becoming more fit for purpose in the context of a learning oriented, risk-taking culture.

Innovation at the global level

UNICEF is a devolved organisation; **innovation approaches and capacities differ across countries, regions and divisions**. The entities described on this slide have a mandate and/or positions to support innovation. Innovations are operationalised in partnership with the PG.

The Ool is tasked with positioning UNICEF as a leader in public sector innovation for children and aligning resources with programmatic priorities. [A 2019 Evaluation of Innovation in UNICEF Work](#) led to reorganisation of the Ool. A **Global Innovation Board (GIB)** was established in 2023 to provide vision, leadership and strategic direction for innovation at UNICEF. An **Innovation Steering Committee (ISC)** coordinates efforts across UNICEF, reviews strategic decisions, and advises on portfolios. Thematic Teams execute day-to-day tasks in collaboration with the PG.

In 2019 the Ool introduced Global Innovation Portfolios (GIPs) and in 2022 it developed a 5D Innovation Framework (see glossary in Annex 2) in order to align technical and financial resources to promising projects. There are nine portfolios (see glossary), two of which sit within specialist hubs that provide a mechanism for resourcing, collaboration and influence.

The PIC sits within the SD and is responsible for product innovation. The PIC uses an innovation pipeline to manage potential innovations and transition them to scale through the SD. Clearly defined stage gates assess the suitability of products to progress. Significant efforts are made to foster demand for new products; the PIC has published learning on this topic.

UNICEF's Technology 4 Development (T4D) initiative is structured to support digital innovation and to integrate digital innovation across its operations, overseen by ICTD and the ROs. An **ICT Board** reviews digital technology project prioritisation and funding using a scoring methodology.

The Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division (PFP) leads and executes new partnerships and modalities of innovative finance and innovative fundraising. It hosts a Hub for Innovative Finance (IF) overseen by an **Innovative Finance Committee**.

Operationalising Innovation

Innovation is operationalised by the Country Offices (COs). **COs** are tasked with fostering an enabling environment and selecting and implementing innovation projects that leverage UNICEF core capabilities while managing associated risks. To maximise the impact of innovation, COs identify areas within country programme documents (CPDs) that could benefit from inter-agency innovation efforts. They work closely with government institutions, national stakeholders and private sector actors to mobilise and leverage resources and drive demand for innovative products. They also have a role in fostering strategic engagements with businesses, including alternative and innovative financing mechanisms. Data from the Division of People and Culture (DPC) indicates that 10 of the COs have one staff member dedicated to supporting innovation.

ROs have a role in identifying regional issues that have hindered progress for children and determining where focused innovation efforts can make a meaningful impact. They oversee the approval and implementation of priority innovation investments, ensuring that these initiatives are supported through governance, targeted incentives and allocated resources. The Regional Management Team (RMT) monitors the implementation of these initiatives, evaluating regional results and fostering knowledge exchange. The ROs each have a T4D staff member to support digital transformation. There are no dedicated staff members for other types of innovation within the ROs.

INVENT is a global digital hub for both innovations and mature digital solutions and serves as an inventory and portfolio tool with over 1700 initiatives registered. It is owned by the OoI and ICTD's Digital Centre of Excellence (DCOE).

Audiences and stakeholders

Innovation at UNICEF involves **a wide range of distributed activities and diverse stakeholders at multiple levels.** Innovation efforts are supported by donor governments and private sector partners who provide financial resources and technical expertise to support development and scaling. UNICEF's programmatic teams and COs are central to identifying needs, developing solutions and integrating innovations into their core operations. Local stakeholders, including governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and frontline workers adapt and use innovations and help ensure their relevance and sustainability. Children, young people and their communities, as end-users, may be directly involved in co-creating and testing solutions.

The **primary audiences** for the evaluation are internal UNICEF stakeholders at:

- Global level (particularly the GIB, ISC, OoI, SD, ICTD, PG and EMOPS),
- Regional level (particularly Regional Programme and Planning Chiefs, Regional Evaluation Advisers, and Regional T4D Specialists)
- Country levels (particularly CO staff developing innovation strategies, thematic teams involved in portfolio governance, and those working on specific innovations).

The **secondary audiences** for the evaluation include the UNICEF Global Leadership Team, UNICEF NatComs, the Executive Board of UNICEF and external development partners and governments.

Additional entities for consultation and engagement are listed in Annex 3.

Key insights from the inception phase

Theme	Feedback from stakeholders	Implications for Evaluation
Structures	The most frequently discussed issue during the inception phase was the fragmentation of innovation structures, including between HQ entities and between HQ and ROs.	Prioritise early interviews with COs and ROs to understand how innovation is part of CO planning and to inform the Institutional Assessment. Explore how innovation governance structures connect with global governance.
Innovation as a practice	This evaluation will not focus on any specific Division or Office in UNICEF. The evaluation should focus on the practice of innovation across the organisation as well as how the entities mandated to facilitate innovation provide management and support.	Identify innovations that both (1) have arisen within the innovation-promoting offices and teams and; (2) have arisen outside of those offices. This will be achieved through discussion with ROs and Cos.
Operations	Interviewees discussed the role of procurement, human resource management (and talent), planning processes and other operations in facilitating or challenging implementation of innovation, and how this differs across different types of innovation.	Identify key informants across operations at both HQ and CO levels.
	Initial data suggests there are more operational barriers where there is a more novel "business model".	Include at least two case study innovations with a more novel business model to understand how the operational issues are being addressed.
Data	Interviewees described challenges measuring resourcing and performance on innovation across COs.	Explore options for secondary data from case studies to supplement global level data.

Theme	Feedback from stakeholders	Implications for Evaluation
Portfolio management	UNICEF's thesis is that taking a problem-focused approach and selecting from a portfolio of innovations to tackle the most difficult challenges will accelerate results. It is not clear the extent to which portfolios can currently be managed as cohesive portfolios with a balance of risks and solutions.	Review the coherence of the portfolios and conduct key informant interviews (KIIs) with portfolio managers that explore management approaches and challenges.
Prioritisation	Its unclear how innovation prioritisation happens in the ROs and COs, and how the Teams/approaches deliver on those priorities. There are a range of approaches, with some COs having more developed approaches and strategies.	Include a wide sample of ROs and COs in global KIIs as well as the case studies and explore the issue of prioritisation.
Innovation community	There is appetite for engaging with innovation by many staff. It is unclear the extent to which there are communities of innovators within UNICEF.	Look at entities designed to foster innovative culture (e.g., SPARK, COMPASS). Consider the approaches to internal communications. Incorporate analysis on Viva Engage and other UN-wide communities of practice.
Funding innovations	Funding approaches varied, with funding made available through UNICEF governance structures or earmarked funding allocations, but with few allocated Regular Resources (RR) or Institutional Budget (IB).	Explore the implications of funding arrangements on innovation approaches and initiatives.
Scaling innovations	Scaling was a recurring theme across the inception phase. Offices described various frameworks for monitoring progression along an innovation pipeline (including the 5D innovation framework and stage gating). Partnering with government is a key strategy for scaling and takes different forms. There is strong public sector capacity to innovate and desire to partner in some contexts.	<p>Make potential to scale a component of all questions on sustainability of initiatives.</p> <p>Conduct interviews with government actors across case studies to understand partnerships for scaling.</p>

Methodology

- Evaluation questions (the full evaluation framework with sub-questions is listed in Annex 2)
- Scope
- Evaluation design
- Data sources
- Sampling
- Benchmarks
- Analysis
- Ethics, risks and limitations



Updates to the ToR

The following slides give an overview of the evaluation objectives, methods and evaluation questions. There are **no substantial changes, additions or deletions to the evaluation questions proposed in the Terms of Reference (ToR)**. Minor changes have been made to:

- Modify wording of several questions for clarity;
- Separate some questions combining many elements;
- Clarify that, under Objective 3, the evaluation will not evaluate the impact of initiatives through the case studies. Instead, it will review the frameworks for assessing impact and the documented results of impact studies where they are available.
- Add the term 'scaling' within the definition of sustainability which was emphasised throughout the inception phase.

The methodology builds on the ToR with minor changes and clarifications:

- The scope, timing and resourcing of the evaluation will allow for seven regional thematic case studies (not regional evaluation reports)
- The Evaluation Team (ET) will use elements of the Theory of Change (ToC) within the analysis (see slide 42) but will not rely solely on the ToC to verify if necessary inputs were made and outputs realised. The team will analyse data relevant to the assumptions but will not aim to validate all assumptions. The ET will not produce an updated ToC.
- The methodology for EQ2 (innovation approaches) recognises the very different objectives, ambitions and resourcing of the listed approaches. The evaluation does not aim to compare the contributions of these approaches but considers how the different mechanisms contribute to innovative initiatives, practices and cultures at UNICEF and beyond.
- The thematic portfolios are implemented across different regions but 'thematic regional portfolios' were not recognised as a way to sample innovations. The ET proposes specific thematic focuses for each of the case studies, which include different portfolios, mechanisms and types of innovation.

Evaluation objectives



1. Institutional arrangements

To assess the relevance, coherence and sustainability of **UNICEF institutional arrangements to integrate innovation as a change strategy**. This includes examining innovation governance, systems, processes, capacity, resourcing, partnerships and organisational culture supporting innovation work at the global, regional and country levels.

Methods: Primary data will be captured through an online staff survey and interviews at the global, regional and country office levels. Secondary data will be gathered through a portfolio analysis of innovation initiative data, internal audits and process evaluations, internal monitoring data, funding data, and partnership agreements.

Key elements within this objective are:

- Governance
- Systems and processes
- Capacities
- Resourcing
- Partnerships
- Organisational culture including mindset
- Internal coherence (with other UNICEF interventions and with relevant norms and standards)



2. Innovation approaches

To examine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of UNICEF innovation ‘approaches’. This includes evaluating how well innovation ‘approaches’ are aligned with strategic goals and their overall contribution to achieving organisational outcomes and goals, and strengthening an innovation ecosystem

The ‘approaches’ covered in EQ2 are:

- Nodes
- Venture fund
- Innovation portfolios
- Hubs: Learning, WASH, IF,
- GIGA
- Product Innovation Centre (PIC)
- Global network of field-based innovation and tech professionals

Methods: The ‘approaches’ being examined have very different objectives and purposes. The evaluation will not compare the approaches but instead consider how each contributes to UNICEF’s capacity to innovate using an appreciative enquiry approach, considering capacity building, resourcing and different pathways to scale and sustainability. The evaluation will draw on primary data through global and regional interviews. Secondary data such as budget information, portfolio data and relevant documents will be compiled and analysed alongside the broader literature and evaluation review.



3. Innovation initiatives

To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of innovation initiatives to enhance programme effectiveness and accelerate positive outcomes for children. This includes a specific focus on how these innovations address considerations of gender, equity, and disability inclusion in achieving child rights

Methods: The regional thematic case studies will explore initiatives within different areas of innovation. They will assess strategic alignment and how focused these efforts have been considering gender, equity and disability inclusion and on the benefits of innovation for children and adolescents. The case studies will each have a thematic focus and they will draw on secondary sources, including documented results of piloting and scaling innovations.

Key elements in EQ3 are:

- Impact
- Gender
- Equity
- Disability inclusion
- Scalability and sustainability

Locations:

- All 7 regional offices



4. Enabling and hindering factors

To identify and analyse the **enabling and hindering factors** influencing innovation within UNICEF.

This includes understanding how new knowledge and thought leadership are used to influence the innovation ecosystem and promote child rights

Methods: This objective will cross-examine and analyse findings from across the regional case studies and institutional assessment to identify common enabling factors and barriers. The regional case studies are being selected to consider the a) type of innovation, b) portfolios/themes and c) all seven UNICEF regions. The evaluation will consider processes and results across different elements of the innovation theory of change and of the proposed benchmark frameworks.

Key elements in EQ4 are:

- Scaling/accelerating innovative initiatives
- Innovation ecosystem
- Learning and insight/thought leadership
- Culture and capacity

Approach

- **Credible and utilisation-focused:** The evaluation will employ a rigorous methodology, a transparent process and robust quality assurance systems. It will be planned and conducted to enhance the likely use of both the findings and the process itself to inform decisions and improve performance. This includes delivering emerging findings through an institutional assessment (February 2024) and assessment of approaches (March 2024) and working with the ISC and regional reference groups (case studies) on the uptake of findings.
- **Criteria-guided:** The high-level evaluation questions cover the key evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. These criteria provide a normative framework to support a consistent, high-quality evaluation by offering a range of lenses and complementary perspectives that together provide a holistic picture of the evaluation subject.
- **Regional case studies:** Stand-alone regional case studies will provide a deeper understanding of two or more innovations in a specific context and in a specific thematic area that have led to observed results. The case studies will also explore how innovations have created an enabling environment (or not) and promoted child rights, equity, gender and inclusion.

Principles

- **Independence and impartiality** of the evaluation team members will be prioritised and guaranteed as per international evaluation standards to ensure the credibility of the evaluation. This will be achieved through transparency and traceability of evidence within the boundaries of ethical standards. None of the team members has any conflict of interest; if one arises, this will be reported immediately.
- The approach to data collection, storage and use will prioritise **confidentiality and informed consent**. The ET will provide full disclosure of the context of the study, including potential harm or benefit. Interviewers will inform all respondents that they have the right to decide whether they want to participate or not, and they may stop at any time. Information will be stored anonymously, encrypted and deleted six months after closure of the assignment. Consent forms are available in Annex 5.2. The EO will request Institutional Review Board approval as necessary according to UNICEF Ethics Procedure.
- The evaluation will seek to ensure equitable participation and treatment of its key stakeholders with **cultural sensitivity and non-discrimination**. Efforts will be made to achieve a fair and representative selection of participants, adhering to diversity standards by including women, men, and, where feasible, individuals from specific vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities.
- The evaluation will seek to maximise **participation** by actively engaging key stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation team will ensure that “Do No Harm” principles are adhered to when working with participants or their communities. Measures will be taken to ensure that children in this evaluation are protected, such as the orientation of all evaluation team members on UNICEF’s child protection policy and ensuring that informed consent from children and their parents/ guardians is obtained before participation.
- The evaluation will prioritise a **child-based approach and gender equality**, including through inclusive and accessible language and products and meaningful disaggregation of data by factors such as gender, age or disability (see slide 23).

The evaluation approach and framework are in line with UNICEF and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) standards and principles on evaluation ethics and quality, as outlined in the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation; the UNICEF Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards; the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation; and the UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis.

Ethics

Planning

- Team composition with gender and human rights expertise.
- Methodology design following UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations.

Data collection and analysis

- Data collection respects accountability to affected populations (AAP) commitments and humanitarian principles and maximises participation of stakeholders.
- Data protection respects participant confidentiality.
- Clear safeguards when processing personal data, particularly concerning vulnerable people.
- Data collection seeks to include a wide diversity of informants, including women and people with disabilities.

Reporting

- Accessible reports using human rights and gender sensitive language. Reports assessed against the UN-System Wide Assessment Plan (UN-SWAP) Evaluation Performance Indicator (UN-SWAP EPI).

Ongoing risk assessment to anticipate and mitigate potential harms that could arise from participating in the evaluation.

Equity and inclusion

The evaluation will explore equity and inclusion through two lenses: **who innovates** (who makes decisions that affect innovation and who has access to innovation funding, resources and support) and **who benefits from innovation** (who is reached directly and indirectly by innovative initiatives and how are different people factored into the design and prioritization of initiatives). Where possible, the evaluation will explore equity and inclusion from a broad perspective, including barriers related to gender, disability, nationality, race and ethnicity, age and social mobility. However, data collection and analysis will primarily focus on **gender** and **disability**, as areas specified in UNICEF's strategy.

Gender

A gender-sensitive lens will be integrated across all stages of the evaluation, including the design, data collection, analysis and reporting. Gender equity will be analysed both in terms of who innovates (EQ1-3) and who benefits from innovation (EQ3). The ET will evaluate how gender is incorporated into the design of initiatives and innovation decision-making and assessment structures.

The team will adhere to the 2014 UNEG Guidelines on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations. All primary data collection (surveys and interviews) will capture gender-specific information. Sampling will seek equal representation of both men and women wherever possible.

Primary quantitative and qualitative analysis will be disaggregated by gender. Analysis will explore how social and cultural power dynamics influence the experiences, opportunities and outcomes of different groups, evaluating whether innovation structures and initiatives challenge or reinforce existing norms.

Where possible, gender will also be analysed together with other characteristics, including age, disability and ethnicity, to provide an intersectional lens. Secondary data will also be disaggregated by gender where available.

Additionally, KIIs will be conducted with UNICEF gender inclusion experts to gain their reflections and insights on inclusion in innovation processes and to triangulate early findings.

Disability

Similarly, the evaluation will seek to understand the inclusion of people with disabilities across different aspects of innovation initiatives, including decision-making processes, innovation design and implementation. This will include identifying barriers to participation and to what extent disability inclusion is embedded in portfolio strategies and individual initiatives.

The team will ensure data collection tools are inclusive and adjust wherever feasible to enable access. For example, the survey will be available in large type format and will be accessible for standard screen-readers.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis will be disaggregated by disability status where possible to identify different perspectives, experiences and outcomes related to disability.

Additionally, KIIs will be conducted with UNICEF disability inclusion experts to gain their reflections and insights on inclusion in innovation processes and to triangulate early findings.

Scope: What's in? What's out?

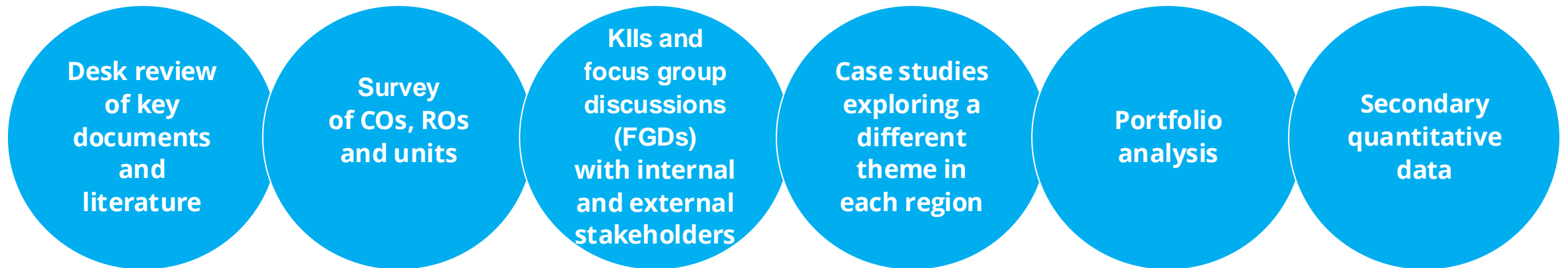
Theme	In Scope	Out of scope
TEMPORAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2019-2024 including commitments made in the management response to the 2018 evaluation of innovation work in UNICEF through the current Strategic Plan (2022-2025). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data from pre-2019.
GEOGRAPHICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global, whole-organisation approach. Regional case studies on 2-4 innovations that have been implemented, including those that have failed to be brought to scale or replicated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full evaluations of innovation at RO or CO levels.
STRUCTURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of specific innovation governance, structures, and processes including ISC, ICT Board and Innovative Finance Committee. Descriptions of the governance, structures and processes in SD, ICTD and other entities where they are used or relevant to innovation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance of other governance, structures and processes in SD and ICTD. Analysis of the effectiveness of governance, structures and processes that are part of other Divisions or units unless directly relating to specific innovation initiatives..
RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial, human and technical resources linked to the OoI, PIC and T4D. Financial, human and technical resources for innovation within PG and EMOPS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial, human and technical resources from other Divisions unless directly relating to specific innovation initiatives.

Scope: What's in? What's out?

Theme	In Scope	Out of scope
INNOVATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Programme innovations: Data, digital, IF, product, social● UNICEF priority areas across the humanitarian-development nexus, including programming with and for adolescent girls, sustainability, innovative financing and climate; accelerating health and nutrition outcomes through community action; addressing the learning crisis; and other cross-sectoral platform solutions.● The analysis of innovation's contribution to organisational outcomes and goals will depend on the availability and completeness of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Innovations in internal operations will not be included in case studies. (However, the team may include qualitative analysis on operational innovation where it arises through the institutional assessment).● Primary evaluation data on the effectiveness and impact of specific innovation initiatives.
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● On (i) institutional assessment (systems, processes, governance, resourcing, capacity, partnerships and culture) (ii) innovation approaches; (iii) the results of UNICEF innovation initiatives; (iv) enabling and hindering factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Recommendations on staffing.

Overview of data sources

The evaluation will use a mixed-methods approach that draws upon the following data sources:



The following slides outline the approach to data collection, sampling, benchmarks, analysis, ethics and inclusion. A more detailed **Evaluation Matrix** is available in Annex 2 which outlines sub-questions, indicators and data on which analysis will be based and conclusions drawn. A risks and limitations analysis is provided in Annex 6 which outlines potential methodological issues, a preliminary view of the likely quality of information from UNICEF, organisational/logistical issues, and corresponding mitigation measures.

Document review

Purpose: The review of key documents and literature will be a foundational step for developing further understanding of innovation at UNICEF and beyond.

The approach will be comprehensive and systematic and will include the following document types:

1. Strategy and planning documents
2. Annual reports and monitoring data
3. Sample of country programme documents
4. Sample of programmatic reports
5. Budget and financial documents
6. Evaluation reports
7. Research studies
8. UNICEF policy documents
9. Partnership agreements.

Elements:

1. Background Documents Review (c.60 documents) including historical context, understanding organisational context, strategic objectives and operational frameworks.

2. Systematic Progress Review (c.110 documents) to assess the progress made in innovation initiatives since the last evaluation and readiness assessment

3. Literature and Evaluation Review (c.30 documents) of good practices and lessons learned from external public or private sector innovation approaches.

4. Comparative Analysis (c.20 documents) With 3-4 other public UN or private sector organisations to review efforts against other industry practices.

1. Background document review

The background document review will include around 60 documents that will be analysed to shape the understanding of UNICEF's organisational context, historical understanding, strategic objectives and operational frameworks in UNICEF.

Documents will be analysed to respond to EQ1 and 2. A data extraction and analysis tool has been developed to analyse the following fields:

1. Organisational context
2. Institutional capacities
3. Governance
4. Systems
5. Processes
6. Resources
7. Partnerships
8. Organisational culture.

An initial set of 60 documents was identified through the inception mission discussions, the EO's own desk review, and via the UNICEF intranet. Select documents may be added through snowballing.

The documents include, but are not limited to:

1. Innovation strategy documents
2. Regulatory framework policy
3. Organisational structure and organogram
4. Institutional assessment
5. UNICEF annual reports
6. Midterm reviews
7. Global innovation Board ToR, Innovation Steering Committee ToR and innovation governance documents
8. Integrated results and resources framework
9. Annual Management Plan
10. Policy to delegation
11. Key regional documents
12. Ool priorities documents.

2. Systematic progress review

A systematic progress review will analyse the progress UNICEF has made in the past four years and the factors that have influenced it, particularly relating to the institutional assessment (EQ1). The systematic review will be structured for analysis against the key recommendation from the last evaluation and the institutional assessment including the following areas:

- Risk-taking as a necessary component of innovation
- How different parts of the organisation contribute to innovation
- Transparency of governance and decision-making roles
- More standardised approaches and processes
- Clarity on medium- and long-term staff requirements
- Attention to and investment in learning and uptake
- Structural changes to advance innovation as a means of achieving results for children
- Balance between central and local structures
- Deputy Executive Director role to oversee the agenda
- Innovation Enabling Services teams created
- Leadership of digital innovation housed under ICTD
- Dedicated innovation staff in COs/ROs
- Portfolio management approach.

An initial c.110 documents have been identified through the inception mission discussions, the EO's own desk review and via the UNICEF intranet. The documents include:

1. Global Innovation Strategy and Framework 2.0
2. GIGA annual reports (2022 onwards)
3. Supply annual reports (2022 onwards)
4. Ool CO annual reports (COAR)
5. Operational Management Plans (PMP) from Ool, ICTD, SD
6. Theory of change documents
7. Portfolio Approach documents
8. GIB key documents and meeting minutes
9. ISC, ICT Board and Innovative Finance Committee documents
10. Scaling Innovation documents
11. Innovation landscape reports
12. UNICEF monitoring data.

3. Literature and evaluation review

The ET will review key research and evaluations to identify approaches, good practices and lessons learned on harnessing innovation and new technologies to improve development outcomes, including progressive approaches from the public or private sectors (EQ2).

The review will include both peer-reviewed and grey literature documents using keywords to capture the state of evidence on strategic alignment, approaches, innovation management, resourcing, scaling, sustainability, organisational culture and capacity, and partnerships. The review will prioritise systematic and scoping reviews, evaluations, case studies and learning papers.

The review will exclude documents that describe innovation proposals, initial designs, testing or piloting without explicit engagement with evidence, good practices or learning.

Examples of documents to include:

- **ALNAP (2022)** Assessing the promise of innovation for improving humanitarian performance: A 10-year review for the State of the Humanitarian System report.
- **Bruder, M., Baar, T (2024)** Innovation in humanitarian assistance—a systematic literature review.
- **Chyba, Tatarinov and Ambos (2023)** The UN’s innovation learning journey.
- **Innovation Norway (2023)** Updated Tool for Innovation-Friendly Procurement.
- **McClure and Wilde (2024)** Do Bigger Things.
- **Moleka (2024)**. Frugal Innovation for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in Africa.
- **Narayanan and Altay (2024)** Ambidextrous humanitarian organisations.
- **Nesta (2021)** Participatory AI for humanitarian innovation.
- **OECD (2023)** Adoption of innovation in IDOs.
- **USAID (2021)** Development Innovation Ventures.

4. Comparative analysis

The evaluation will review c.20 documents that captures the efforts of 3-4 other organisations. The goal is to identify and analyse best practices and learning from comparable organisations with a focus on their strategic goals, financing, collaborations and practices.

- **Comparative areas:** strategic goals, structures, types of financing, process and approaches to fostering culture of innovation.
- **Out of scope:** specific methodologies, specific innovations, effectiveness of approaches.
- **Data sources:** Publicly available documents and evaluations, KIIs where possible.
- **Comparator organisations:** 3-4 comparators will be selected from the adjacent list based on similar missions, commitment to innovation, global presence and approach to collaborating with government and private sector.

Comparators include:

- **WFP** - Initiatives in food security technology, supply chains, data and innovative finance. Its Accelerator is a known platform for fostering solutions.
- **UNHCR** - Known for its innovation lab and partnerships focusing on connectivity, biometrics and refugee solutions.
- **UNDP** - Focused on new solutions and partnerships to accelerate sustainable development, address complex challenges and empower communities.
- **Gates Foundation** - Scalable technology and data solutions in areas of disease eradication, agriculture and financial inclusion.

Survey

Purpose: To gather a breadth of quantitative and qualitative insights on innovation governance, approaches, culture and partnerships for the Institutional Assessment (EQ1).

The survey has been drafted (Annex 4) with plans to distribute it in December 2024 to collate and analyse responses ahead of the Institutional Assessment.

The survey will be sent to over 9000 staff across all ROs, COs and selected units at HQ involved in innovation and T4D. The EO will follow up with offices after two weeks.

We will seek at least 360 responses to ensure that results are representative.

Approach:

- **Survey design:** A combination of Likert scale 'agree'/'disagree' statements and open text questions.
- **Access:** To be shared digitally using Typeform in English, French and Spanish.
- **Participation:**
 - Responses will be anonymous.
 - Diversity will be captured using demographic questions, including location, gender and disability (TBC, survey dissemination approach currently under discussion).

Global KIIs

Purpose: to gather in-depth insights and perspectives focused on EQ1 (the institutional assessment) and EQ2 (the assessment of approaches).

Selection of interview participants will follow a purposive sampling strategy. An initial list of approximately 80 internal and external interviewees has been developed based on consultations with key innovation entities. This list will be systematically reviewed against the sampling framework to identify candidates reflecting diverse roles, levels of engagement and geographical representation. In collaboration with the EO, additional interviewees will be identified through the ongoing document review and snowball sampling during interviews.

Note 1. This sample does not include the case study interviews.

Note 2. The ET will engage COs early in the data collection phase to inform the institutional assessment.

Approach

- Global interviews will be **remote** and last approximately 60 minutes.
- Interviews will be **semi-structured**, providing flexibility to explore key themes while tailoring questions to the participant's area of expertise and relevance to the study.
- Data will be **anonymised within the evaluation reports** to protect participant confidentiality and to promote candid contributions.
- Participants will receive **consent** information prior to the interview, outlining the purpose of the study, data handling procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time. With explicit consent, interviews will be recorded for accuracy and transcribed.
- Participants will be informed in advance about the primary topics of discussion.

FGDs

Purpose: To gather in-depth insights and perspectives focused on EQ2 (the assessment of approaches) and for the thematic case studies informing EQ3. The ET plans to conduct up to eight FGDs at the global level and up to six in each case study location (two with staff and four with rights holders) .

The FGDs will be participatory, activity-based discussions and may include internal and external participants. They will include activities such as:

- Ranking the relevance and novelty of innovations within a portfolio with young people.
- Drawing key events on a timeline over the last four years for an approach or initiative.
- Mapping stakeholders involved in approaches or initiatives .
- Illustrating pathways to scaling for innovation initiatives.

Approach

- Global level FGDs will be **remote**; case study FGDs will be held **in person**. **FGDs** will last 60-120 minutes.
- Selection of FGD participants will follow a **purposive sampling strategy**.
- FGDs will be **semi-structured** and **participatory** with activities designed to elicit discussion around key themes.
- Data will be **anonymised in the evaluation reports** to protect participant confidentiality and to promote candid contributions.
- **Consent** will be gained at the start of the FGD. The ET will outline the purpose of the study, data handling procedures and rights, including the right to withdraw at any time. With explicit consent, FGDs will be recorded for accuracy and transcribed.

Global FGDs and KIIs

Internal 70 interviews +up to 8 FGDs	Innovation governance: 8 KIIs GIB members (3), ISC members (3), UNICEF Executive Board (1) and National Committees (1).
	UNICEF staff responsible for innovation at HQ: 25 KIIs (plus 8 participatory FGDs) Ool (12), Hubs (6), SD (10), ICTD (6), PG (8), Office of Emergency Programmes (2), Division of Analysis, Planning and Monitoring (DAPM) (2), DPC (1), Global Communications and Advocacy Division (GCA) (1), the Office of Global Foresight and Research (2), Public Partnerships Division (PPD) (3), Division of Private Fundraising and Partnerships (PFP) (3).
	Regional Offices: 10 KIIs Regional Directors (4), T4D focal points (4), other focal points (2).
	Country Offices: 22 KIIs Country Representatives (5), ICTD staff (5), Innovation staff and those responsible for implementing initiatives (5), Operations and support staff (5).
	Support functions: 5 KIIs Global Shared Services Center (GSSC), Operations, Gender and disability inclusion advisors.
External 30 interviews	Partners: 20 KIIs Government, private sector and academic collaborators.
	Global actors: 10 KIIs UNIN, other innovation entities in the UN, Donors.

The KIIs and FGDs for case studies are in addition to this list and provided on slide 38.

Case studies

Purpose: Case studies support analysis of EQ3 and EQ4. They will explore the contribution of the innovations, how they addressed considerations of equity, gender and disability inclusion, their outcomes, cost-effectiveness (where comparative cost analysis is available) and scaling.

The ET will conduct an in-depth examination of 2-3 innovation initiatives for each of the seven regional offices. Innovations will be selected around specific themes (see adjacent text). By focusing on specific themes, the case studies will highlight the ways in which regional/country dynamics, local partnerships and other contextual factors contributed to or hindered innovations. Data collection will involve a mixture of workshops, KIIs and FGDs with primary data collection in 1-2 COs per region (up to one setting will be in-person). Findings will be validated with a regional advisory group.

Each case study will allow for exploration of how priorities are identified and how innovations are selected, supported and scaled. The ET will use an 'appreciative inquiry' approach in the selection of the case studies (1).

Approach:

Themes and innovations are being selected in consultation with UNICEF stakeholders including the OoI, ROs, ICTD, SD and EO to identify priorities while also ensuring a broad sample of initiatives. The evaluation plans to include the following elements within the sample:

- **Type of innovation** - Data, Digital, Innovative Finance, Product, Social.
- **Portfolio** - Coverage across different areas including health, learning, WASH, and Youth
- **Inclusion** - Including innovations specifically designed for gender, equity and disability inclusion
- **Global/CO solutions:** The case studies will include both 'global' solutions from OoI, PIC, T4D or Financing and solutions that were designed/identified in the CO.
- **Risk, success and failure:** Innovations from different ambition categories (incremental, substantial, breakthrough innovations) including those that have 'failed' to achieve sustainability and/or scale.

THEMES	DETAIL	REGION	COs
Scaling	2 Innovations that have and 1-2 that have not gone to scale. Explores factors that support and undermine scaling including structures, processes, relationships, support and resourcing.	ESARO	Malawi/Kenya
Product innovation	2 product innovations. Explores problem definition, design and developing the market for products, including working with government.	MENARO	TBC
Programme / social innovation	2-3 programme innovations. Explores designing, scaling and implementing programme innovations with a particular focus on engagement with stakeholders. Ideally will include an IF component.	WCARO	TBC
Co-creation and innovation	2 innovations that have involved co-creation with young people as part of the design and testing process. Explores learning and co-creation with young people, including work supported by the Learning Hub.	LACRO	TBC
Emerging tech	2-4 emerging tech innovations, including how they have been selected, supported and developed. This case study will focus on innovations with external partners.	EAPRO	Fiji
Digital and data	2-4 innovations in a CO digital portfolio, considering how COs prioritise, select and support innovations.	ROSA	Nepal
Strategy and culture	2-4 innovations in a CO that has developed an innovation strategy. How CO's identify priorities, select innovations, and promote a culture of innovation. Consider how strategy contributes to scaling.	ECARO	Ukraine/Serbia

Thematic FGDs and KIIs for case studies

The table below gives an indicative sample for a regional case study. In cases where two COs are included in the case study, the sample will be divided across the COs. The ET can do up to one CO visit per case study.

Internal:	Decision-Makers: 4 KIIs Country Rep, Deputy from ROs & COs
	Implementers and innovation support: 2 participatory FGDs and 2 KIIs Program Manager, technical specialists, and advisors from T4D, Ool, PIC and PG/DAPM/EMOPS
	Support functions: 3 KIIs Operations, Partnerships, M&E
External:	Right-holders including children and young people: 2 participatory FGDs Rights holders will be selected based on the specific innovations assessed. Where young people have been involved in design, selection or implementation of innovation the ET will conduct FGDs to explore their perspectives
	Partners: 5 KIIs Implementing partners, National government, Private sector partners including vendors, Donors
	Academics: 1 KII Researchers or academics with insights into trends and best practices

Portfolio analysis

Purpose: To categorise and summarise the types of innovations supported, the level of investment, different pathways to scale and sustainability, and results primarily informing EQ2 and EQ3. This exercise will be light touch and flexible to allow the ET to identify patterns across the dataset.

Data sources will be drawn from:

1. Venture Fund
2. Portfolio management data
3. Hubs (learning, WASH, IF) data
4. PIC data
5. GIGA mapping and data
6. Evaluations of individual initiatives
7. UNICORN Fundraising Innovation Fund.

Approach:

- **Review** of UNICEF's existing data on innovation initiatives including dashboards from the Ool (which includes funding, reach, areas and status), Venture Fund, PIC and the INVENT dashboard, including also initiative-level reports and portfolio-level reports.
- Development of a **database** of all initiatives supported from 2019 to 2024, drawing together available information on:
 - Type and stage of innovation
 - Thematic portfolio
 - Countries/Regional Offices
 - Demographics of innovation teams (where available)
 - Problem [or possibility] addressed
 - Inputs/investment
 - Pathways (e.g., learning, further funding, adoption)
 - Reach and results, where available.
- **Analysis** to provide a summary of key innovation initiatives at UNICEF and to identify common themes and patterns for exploring further during case studies.

Secondary data

The team will also collate and analyse relevant quantitative secondary data which is expected to include:

Secondary survey data: Global staff survey, previous OoI surveys, especially questions related to culture of innovation and risk taking.

Financial data: Including budget allocations, expenditures, funding sources and resource mobilisation efforts both within specific innovation initiatives and at CO level where available.

UNICEF monitoring data: Indicators and metrics articulated in the organisational Strategic Plans (2018-2021 and 2022-2025) related to uptake, scaling-up and sustainability of innovation.

Innovation indicators:

- **The secondary data will include analysis of UNICEF's two indicators for innovation in the current strategic plans:**
 - Proportion of UNICEF global innovation portfolios with at least one innovation that has attained multi-country scale and reached more than 1 million people.
 - Proportion of UNICEF global innovation portfolios that have secured the minimum investment threshold to support innovations.

Analysis Overview



An **evaluation framework** will be used to analyse key sources and organise findings. Contradictions, data gaps and limitations will be noted in the report and explored in the validation workshop.



Quantitative data will be analysed in Excel to produce **descriptive statistics**. Data will be disaggregated by demographic variables. Statistical tests will be performed using R (i.e. Chi square) to understand relationships between variables.



Qualitative data will be undergo **systematic coding using MaxQDA** software to identify key themes, patterns and insights. The coded data will help extract and organise primary themes related to the research objectives.



Natural Language Processing (NLP) will be used to extract and summarise and information from COARs to extract insights on operationalisation of innovation.



Analysis will incorporate a **gender, equity and disability inclusion lens**, including identifying trends, challenges or disparities in the data where possible.



The evaluation will draw upon innovation **benchmarks and frameworks** and the Ool Theory of Change (ToC).



Data will be **triangulated** across the different sources, methods and perspectives. The evaluation will identify the **strength of different findings** including consistency across sources, coherence with literature, and robustness of statistical analysis.



The evaluation will **validate findings through workshops** with different groups to increase reliability, deepen analysis and elicit potential conclusions and recommendations.

Using the Theory of Change

A [retrospective ToC](#) was developed by the Ool in Summer 2024 and captures four 'change' domains for Innovation at UNICEF. It describes the theoretical underpinnings of the Ool approach to facilitate more innovative initiatives, practices and culture at UNICEF and beyond. The ToC will be used in the analysis phase. The Ool has developed a new ToC for its future work. An updated ToC will not be developed during the evaluation.

Institutional arrangements (EQ1): The definition of an innovative culture has incorporated assumptions from the fourth section of the ToC, including on acceptance of risk, innovative mindset, enhanced capacity and on leaders championing innovative approaches and solutions. The ET will also incorporate the assumption on resource allocation under this objective, asking: were sufficient resources secured for innovation?

Innovation initiatives (EQ3): The evaluation will draw upon the ToC assumptions on scaling innovative initiatives. It will engage with the assumptions on the relevance of innovations, whether successful pilots scaled across COs/ROs, whether mentorship supported scaling, and if innovations are integrated into local systems.

Limitations: Some of its assumptions are important philosophical positions (local, open-source, entrepreneurial mindset) on which there is much literature, but which are not easily verifiable through simple indicators or an evaluation alone.

Innovation approaches (EQ2): EQ2.4 asks how innovation approaches contributed to a stronger innovation ecosystem. The evaluation will use the ToC's assumptions within the analysis including: the relevance of local solutions; engagement of local partners, donors and governments; whether open-source solutions were accessed and adopted; the extent to which policies and financing were mobilized; and whether UNICEF is developing an enabling environment.

Enabling/hindering factors (EQ4): The ET will review findings against the main domains of change in the ToC to identify important factors in enabling or hindering innovation.

Benchmarks for Analysis

There are no standard benchmarks for innovating within the UN system or the humanitarian/development sectors. However, the evaluation will draw on the following frameworks.

UNIN Innovation toolkit

Framework: A (light-touch) 27-question diagnostic assessment on readiness to innovate as well as tools on the innovation ecosystem, risks and enabling environments.

How it will be used: The toolkits will be reviewed as part of the document review. Findings from the institutional assessment will be reviewed against the diagnostic assessment to identify any additional factors that should be considered.

Link to evaluation questions: Objective 1 including 1.1 (governance), 1.6 (culture) and 1.7 (capacity building).

OECD Oslo Manual: Guidelines for collecting, reporting and using data on innovation

Framework: Provides definitions of innovation, categories for innovation, principles, indicators for measuring innovation outputs, and external and internal factors influencing innovation success.

How it will be used: The framework will be used to compare UNICEF indicators to those used for measuring innovation outputs in other organisations and sectors as specified in the Oslo Manual. The findings from the Institutional Assessment and case studies on enabling factors and barriers to innovation will also be reviewed against common factors influencing innovation success in the manual.

Link to evaluation questions: Objective 1 (all questions) and 4.1 (enabling factors and barriers).

Benchmarks cont.

Principles for Digital Development and 5D innovation framework

Principles: The 9 Principles for Digital Development were adopted by UNICEF in 2015 and by other UN agencies shortly after. They are: design with the user, understand the ecosystem, design for scale, build for sustainability, be data-driven, use open approaches, reuse and improve, ensure privacy and security, and be collaborative.

5Ds: The innovation framework underpins the Ool's portfolio management approach and includes innovation, impact, viable business model, scalability and risk.

How it will be used: The evaluation will establish how the Ool uses these principles alongside the 5D innovation framework, and how ICTD uses the principles in its T4D initiatives. The evaluation will also consider how the Principles were used within digital initiatives within case studies.

Link to evaluation questions: Objective 2 including 2.2 (inclusion), 2.4 (outcomes) and 2.5 (sustainability). Objective 3.1 (where the case studies are digital).

Gartner practices for Effective Portfolio Management

Framework: The ToR proposes the Gartner practices for effective portfolio management (2019). The practices include visibility to work and constraints, user-driven approach, managing resource allocation, tracking performance, change culture and adapting to change.

How it will be used: The evaluation will consider how UNICEF has implemented these steps to strengthen its portfolio management and the extent to which the portfolio management approach helps align innovation to strategic objectives. This will include considerations in governance structures, the effectiveness of resource allocation, as well as the adaptability of portfolio management processes.

Link to evaluation questions: Objective 2 including 2.1 (alignment) and 2.5 (resources).

Benchmarks cont.

UNICEF Innovation cycle and maturity models

Frameworks: Comparable but slightly different models for assessing the maturity of innovations and stage gating are used across UNICEF.

How it will be used: The evaluation will use lifecycle benchmarks to assess innovation progress, success factors and barriers in the case studies. Where available, the evaluation will use the benchmarks related to the unit where the innovation is implemented and provide a qualitative analysis of how case study innovations in different parts of the organisation progress on their development journey and advance to the next stage.

Link to evaluation questions: Objective 3, especially 3.5 (sustainability)

Lean impact

Frameworks: Focuses on applying lean startup principles—rapid experimentation, iterative learning, and a relentless focus on measurable impact—to create scalable solutions for complex social challenges. Iterative testing is used to validate social impact assumptions using real-world feedback.

How it will be used: The evaluation will review how effectively new solutions are tested and refined through iterative cycles, ensuring they address root causes and deliver measurable results for children.

Link to evaluation questions: Objective 3, especially 3.1 (effectiveness)

Limitations and mitigation measures

Risks and limitations	Mitigation
<p>Understanding of innovation: Different understandings of innovation and expected contributions and results over the evaluation timeframe.</p>	<p>Develop clear communication materials explaining the evaluation’s objectives, process, and benefits early and share them with all stakeholders. Work closely with stakeholders throughout the evaluation to ensure alignment. Use the inception report’s definition of innovation (taken from the Ool 2024) as a baseline while analysing its practical applications within UNICEF. Triangulate findings using multiple data sources to enhance credibility, including surveys, interviews, and documentation,.</p>
<p>Desk review: Limited by selection bias on relevant data sources, availability of documented information, quality of data sources and bias towards the ‘official’ stance. Relatively few published evaluations of innovation and relatively little academic literature on innovation management in UN agencies.</p>	<p>Ensure a broad range of over 100 documents identified during the evaluation plan are included, with flexibility to add additional case study and global analysis documents as needed. Actively seek diverse perspectives through additional data collection methods (e.g., interviews and surveys) to address potential biases in documentation. Address financial data gaps by complementing secondary data with qualitative data collection on resource decision-making and prioritising case studies with financial information for deeper insights.</p>
<p>Portfolio analysis and secondary data: Variability in data quality, definitions and metrics for innovation across thematic portfolios. Insufficient gender and equity disaggregation in data. Difficulty in assessing long-term outcomes and sustainability of innovations. Inconsistent availability of financial data across COs and ROs.</p>	<p>Design a flexible portfolio analysis framework to identify data patterns while adapting categories during data collection. Complement portfolio data with qualitative case studies to understand progress through the innovation cycle and scaling impact. Prioritise data disaggregation by gender and equity and address gaps with targeted primary data collection. Provide a high-level overview of financial resource utilisation, supported by qualitative data collection on decision-making processes. The intention is not to compare the portfolios or initiatives, but to look for common themes and patterns within and between portfolios</p>
<p>Regional thematic case studies Challenges in balancing case study contributions to the global report while addressing specific regional needs.</p>	<p>Engage ROs early in the inception phase to co-identify case study priorities aligning with both regional and global objectives. Establish clear criteria for case study selection that consider regional priorities and relevance to the global framework. Use the analysis phase to integrate region-specific findings into the global evaluation while ensuring coherence with overarching goals.</p>

Planning

- Timeline
- Workplan
- Planned workshops
- Written outputs
- Quality assurance
- Team



Timeline



Workplan

Summary of activities

Evaluation element	Main activities and deliverables	Interpretation/ translation plans	Location	Timeline
Inception	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Inception mission● c.15 remote KIIs● Discussions with regional offices● Inception report & Annexes + workshops with ISC and Advisory Group	-	Inception mission to HQ Stockholm and Copenhagen	October - November
Global data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Systematic desk review● Survey● c.100 KIIs and 8 FGDs● Institutional assessment + workshop● Assessment of approaches + workshop	Translation of survey into French and Spanish Team members to undertake interviews in French, Spanish and Arabic.	Remote	December - March
Regional case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Stakeholder engagement● Desk review● Primary data collection in CO● 7 x case studies● Regional advisory groups presentation	In addition to languages above, local evaluators will collect data in other local languages. Case studies will be produced in English.	Primary data collection in one CO per region	February - April

Workplan

Summary of activities

Evaluation element	Main activities and deliverables	Interpretation/ translation plans	Location	Timeline
Analysis, validation and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Draft report and Annexes● Summary of findings PPT● Validation workshop	-	Remote	May-June
Co-creation of recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Co-creation PPT● Co-development of recommendations workshop	-	Co-creation workshop in HQ in Stockholm	July
Finalisation and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Final report and annexes● Comment matrix● Evaluation brief● PPT and webinar● Data and editable graphics	Evaluation report will be produced in English	Remote	July-September

Workplan

Workshops	Detail	Date, location	Participants
Inception workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review inception report Insights and feedback 	10/11 Dec., online	ISC External advisory group
Institutional assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review draft institutional assessment Insights and feedback 	Feb., online	ISC / OoI / PIC External advisory group
Assessment of approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review draft assessment of approaches Insights and feedback 	Mar., online	ISC / OoI / PIC
Youth workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participatory workshop on innovation priorities 	Apr., online	Youth advisory group
Case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validation of finding from the case study 	May, online	Regional advisory groups / ISC
Validation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validation of evaluation findings 	July, in-person	ISC / OoI / PIC
Co-development of recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of findings Proposed recommendation areas Development of recommendations 	July, online	ISC / OoI / PIC
Evaluation report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of findings and recommendations 	July, online	External advisory group

For more information on the reference groups for this evaluation see Annex 3.

Outputs

Inception Note

Purpose: This inception report and its annexes are a foundational document for the evaluation, outlining the approach and framework. It will be used to guide the evaluation process by establishing clear approaches, parameters and timelines and by considering the needs and priorities of key stakeholders.

Content:

1. Context, rationale, objectives and scope of the evaluation
2. Stakeholder engagement strategy including how the evaluation can feed into the next strategic plan
3. Evaluation framework and description of methods
4. Team, workplan and outputs
5. Draft tools



Format: Approximately 50 slides plus

- Annexes
- Summary PPT

First draft: 13 Dec. 2024

Finalised: Jan 2025

Outputs

Institutional Assessment

Purpose: The Institutional Assessment will provide preliminary findings under Objective 1 including on governance, structures, resourcing and roles and responsibilities at different levels. The inception mission underlined the importance of qualitative interviews in addressing these questions. This document needs to be completed ahead of the strategic planning cycle in February to be useful, which will constrain the number of consultations to c.45 and limit data analysis.

Data sources:

1. Systematic progress review based on the findings and recommendations of the previous evaluations.
2. Benchmarking on resources and sustainability outcomes from the literature.
3. Emerging findings from (approximately 45) qualitative KIIs at the global (15), RO (10) and CO (20) levels and a survey of UNICEF staff on governance, structures, processes and culture.



Format: 20 page paper

First draft: 14 Feb. 2025

Finalised: Mid March 2025

Outputs

Review of approaches

Purpose: The review of approaches will outline preliminary findings under Objective 2, focusing on the contribution of different approaches in terms of strategic alignment, effectiveness, outcomes and sustainability.

Data sources:

1. Desk review of the innovation approaches, including secondary analysis on the data from the portfolios.
2. Literature and evaluation review on innovation approaches. High-level comparative analysis of different innovation models across comparative organisations.
3. Emerging findings from approx. 60 KIs at the global, RO and CO levels



Format: 20 page paper

First draft: 28 Feb. 2025

Finalised: End Mar 2025

Outputs

Case studies

Purpose: The case studies, selected with a thematic focus, will assess the outcomes achieved through innovation as a change strategy and use an appreciative enquiry approach to share learning about what is working in different regions and the challenges associated with implementing and scaling different types of innovations.

Data sources per case study:

1. Desk review of key documents from RO and CO related to 2-3 innovative initiatives.
2. In-country visit for primary data collection with internal and external stakeholders, including children or young people.
3. Findings on based on approx. 15 KIIs and 4 FGDs per case study



Format: 7 case studies, 15-20 pages each

Example case: Apr. 2025

First drafts: May 2025

Finalised: June 2025

Outputs

Evaluation report

Purpose: A final evaluation report that addresses the four evaluation objectives using all data gathered. It will augment findings from the institutional assessment and assessment of approaches and combine case study results into an analysis of enabling factors and barriers to innovation across the institution.

Data sources:

1. Findings from the systematic document review, literature and evaluation review
2. Analysis of primary data including all survey data, FGDs, KIIs and workshops
3. Analysis of secondary data including a portfolio analysis
4. Validations of findings with key stakeholders and co-development of recommendations



Format: 60-page report, plus:

- Findings slide deck
- Recommendations slide deck
- Annexes and comments matrix

First draft: June 2025

Finalised: Sept 2025

Outputs

Evaluation brief

Purpose: A concise, summary designed for external audience, the brief will provide a clear and accessible overview of the evaluation key findings and implications.

Contents:

1. A brief introduction outlining the purpose, scope, and methodology of the evaluation.
2. A summary of the most significant findings
3. A summary of the conclusions and recommendations
4. Editable infographics, charts, and/or tables to present data clearly and succinctly.



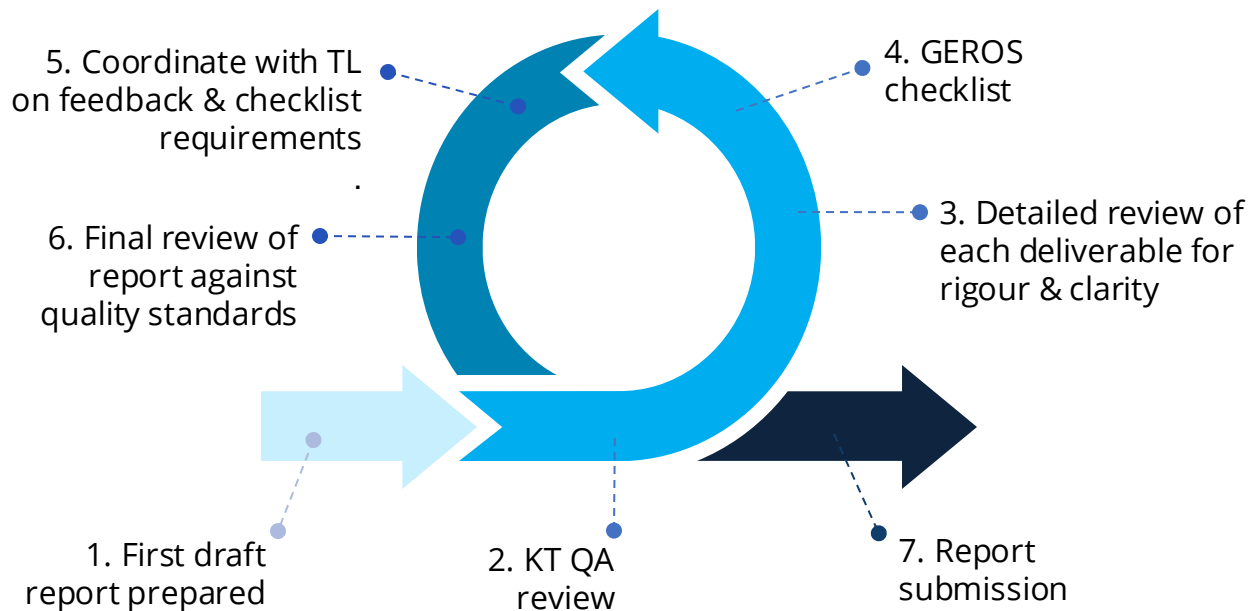
Format: 4-page summary brief

- Evaluation slide deck
- Webinar

First draft: Sept 2025

Finalised: Sept 2025

Quality Assurance







The evaluation quality will be ensured through the following Quality Assurance (QA) processes:

1. Application of UNICEF's Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) standards and the UN-SWAP EPI and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) Indicator 10 (Disability -inclusive Evaluation);
2. Approaches supporting data reliability, consistency and accuracy;
3. Support and oversight provided by KonTerra Evaluation Manager and QA advisor;
4. Quality review and management of UNICEF TCO; and
5. Guidance and review provided by the ISC and advisory group.

KonTerra holds ultimate responsibility for promoting and delivering quality assurance. KonTerra ensures the quality of deliverables (validity, consistency and accuracy) and will make necessary amendments at the company's expense to bring evaluation products to required quality levels in the case of any standards that are not being met by the evaluation team. In the event of unsatisfactory performance of a team member, KonTerra will make the rearrangements required if it cannot be remediated in a timely manner.

Evaluation Team

	ROLE	ACTIVITIES	DELIVERABLES
	Lydia Tanner, Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversee all elements of the evaluation• Global interviews, comparative analysis, evaluation review, case study data collection• Lead analysis and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership of all deliverables• Case studies for ROSA, ESARO, and EAPRO
	Kelsy Nelson, Senior Evaluator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global interviews• Case study data collection• Analysis and writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Institutional assessment• Evaluation report• Case studies for LACRO, ESARO
	Alexander Finlayson, Innovation Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global interviews• Comparative analysis and institutional assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Institutional assessment• Assessment of approaches• Evaluation report
	Andrew Lamb, Product Innovation Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global interviews• Case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Institutional assessment• Assessment of approaches• Evaluation report



Liddy Greenaway, **Data Specialist**

- Secondary data analysis
- Portfolio analysis
- Case study data collection
- Analysis and writing

- **Review of approaches**
- **Evaluation report**
- **Case studies for ECARO, and WCARO**



Sali Hafez, **Researcher**

- Document review
- Systematic review
- Case study data collection
- Analysis and writing

- **Institutional assessment**
- **Evaluation report**
- **Case studies for MENARO**



Erisa Pereira, **Evaluation Manager**

- Evaluation management and coordination
- Stakeholder engagement



Jane Burke, **Quality Assurance Advisor**

- Review and QA main deliverables

- **All written deliverables**

Annexes to this report

1. Terms of Reference
2. Evaluation matrix and definitions
3. Engagement with stakeholders
4. Data collection instruments
5. Ethics protocols
6. Risk and limitations
7. Bibliography
8. Inception interview list
9. Draft case study outline
10. List of documents for systematic review