



Child poverty reduction approaches within the humanitarian-development nexus

Evaluation of UNICEF's work in contributing to child poverty reduction, including in humanitarian and fragile settings

Key messages



humanitarian aid

critical intersection

development strategies



when addressing the multifaceted challenge of child poverty within these contexts

The good practices outlined in this document showcase two or more of the following criteria



evidence-based approach grounded in robust data and analysis



innovation and creativity in employing novel solutions



replicability and adaptability, allowing the practices to be applied in various contexts



a focus on **capacity building** and ensuring stakeholder ownership



demonstrated **sustainability and scalability**, with long-term impact and potential for expansion



measurable positive outcomes and **tangible impact**



collaborative and multi-sectoral engagement involving diverse stakeholders



an emphasis on **inclusiveness and equity**



Introduction

In the ever-evolving landscape of global crises, the intersection between humanitarian aid and development strategies becomes increasingly critical, especially when addressing the multifaceted challenge of child poverty within these contexts. As countries grapple with the impacts of conflict, economic instability, and social upheaval, the vulnerability of children to poverty intensifies, demanding a response that responds to immediate needs while building resilience, strengthening systems, fostering partnerships and engaging community participation.¹ This Good Practice Note aims to highlight UNICEF's work in supporting the five milestones of child poverty reduction within humanitarian and fragile contexts, showcasing good practices in adaptable and collaborative strategies within a humanitarian-development nexus approach. The highlighted practices exemplify UNICEF's commitment to reducing child poverty within the humanitarian-development nexus. In Yemen, amidst the civil conflict, UNICEF's dual approach of immediate support and system strengthening has ensured the continuity of essential services and laid the foundation for a resilient social protection framework. Lebanon's economic turmoil and the innovative Haddi programme illustrate the power of integrated cash-plus interventions to support vulnerable families and transition to nationally owned social assistance. Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, amidst political upheaval, UNICEF's dynamic adaptability in child poverty measurement has provided crucial data to inform interventions and advocate for children's wellbeing.

The good practices outlined in this document showcase two or more of the following criteria: i) an **evidence-based approach** grounded in robust data and analysis; ii) **replicability and adaptability**, allowing the practices to be applied in various contexts; iii) demonstrated **sustainability and scalability**, with long-term impact and potential for expansion; iv) **collaborative and multi-sectoral engagement** involving diverse stakeholders; v) **innovation and creativity** in employing novel solutions; vi) a focus on **capacity building** and ensuring stakeholder ownership; vii) measurable positive outcomes and **tangible impact**; and viii) an emphasis on **inclusiveness and equity**, targeting the most vulnerable and promoting fairness. The primary aim of this document is to provide valuable insights and serve as a guide for other UNICEF COs to provide policy advice and technical assistance on policy and programme approaches to reduce child poverty in humanitarian and fragile settings. This good practice note will highlight activities undertaken by UNICEF COs in the practical applications of humanitarian-development nexus approaches that break the linear process of humanitarian relief followed by development programming to a comprehensive approach which provides for the poorest children in the face of crisis, simultaneously building the systems and partnerships needed to ensure long-term progress and impact. These activities highlighted are aligned with the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty's guide to reducing child poverty, A World Free from Child Poverty, the Core Commitments for Children and UNICEF's linking humanitarian and development (LHD) programming.

Highlighted good practices

Bridging relief and recovery: UNICEF's integrated approach to social protection and system strengthening in Yemen

Summary of the good practice

UNICEF's work in Yemen demonstrates **collaborative and multi-sectoral engagement** through partnerships with the World Bank and local authorities, **sustainability and scalability** through bridging humanitarian relief with long-term system strengthening, **evidence-based approach** through Yemen Socio-Economic Updates, and tangible **impact** seen in reaching 1.45 million beneficiaries with integrated social protection schemes. In the aftermath of Yemen's civil war, which resulted in the dismantling of the social protection system, UNICEF has provided critical services to address the urgent needs of vulnerable populations while laying the groundwork for long-term recovery and resilience.² At the centre of the Yemen Country Office's (YCO) efforts to respond to the humanitarian situation is the dual prioritisation of immediate humanitarian needs and long-term planning for Yemen post-conflict.

Ensuring continuity of social protection while advancing humanitarian integrated assistance amid conflict

In the wake of the conflict, UNICEF, supported by World Bank funding, took pivotal steps to ensure the continuity of cash transfers to 1.45 million beneficiaries through the national Social Welfare Fund (SWF), adapting the national programme to a delivery model for high-risk environments while using the same beneficiary list and system.³ Additionally, UNICEF and its partners are advancing the Integrated Model of Social and Economic Assistance and Empowerment (IMSEA), a multi-sectoral strategy aiming to integrate benefits, social services, and economic interventions. This model focuses on improving outcomes for the most vulnerable, enhancing resilience, and fostering greater sector collaboration.⁴ Simultaneously, UNICEF YCO has pioneered a comprehensive approach to delivering humanitarian assistance, notably through its leadership role in the inter-agency coordination of Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), emphasising community engagement and collaboration across humanitarian partners.⁵ This effort includes enhancing partnerships with local agencies and authorities, alongside the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other key stakeholders, to prioritise child-centred and risk-informed planning.

	<p>System strengthening within the Humanitarian-Development nexus: Ensuring sustainable transition to nationally owned social protection systems</p>
	<p>The seamless transition from immediate assistance to developmental planning is evident in UNICEF's commitment to strengthening Yemen's social protection system. UNICEF has played a pivotal role in establishing the Social Protection Consultative Committee (SPCC), a vital coordination body aimed at fostering an integrated and inclusive social protection system.⁶ By bolstering the SPCC's capacity as a key advisory platform, UNICEF contributed to the development of a national social protection framework, emphasising the importance of comprehensive and shock-responsive social protection systems.⁷ This commitment to system strengthening was notably highlighted during the UN Senior Officers' Meeting in Brussels, where UNICEF co-led discussions on the humanitarian-development nexus.⁸ Through these efforts, UNICEF continues to be an active participant in shaping the social protection strategy, engaging in platforms like the Yemen Partners Group to advocate for and implement these vital systems.</p>
	<p>Enhancing information availability for informed decision-making</p>
	<p>Further strengthening its strategic approach, UNICEF Yemen has placed a significant emphasis on enhancing the availability of crucial information to support informed decision-making processes. This commitment involves substantial investment in supporting the Yemeni government for the generation of evidence regarding social protection systems, child poverty, and the disparities and vulnerabilities that affect Yemeni children and their families.⁹ UNICEF has supported the production and publication of 12 Yemen Socio-Economic Updates (YSEU), which provide senior management and programme staff with critical insights into the country's socio-economic conditions, ensuring informed decision-making.¹⁰</p>
<p>Key results achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ the establishment of the Social Protection Consultative Committee has reinforced Yemen's capacity for integrated, inclusive social protection and supported the continued involvement of national government in the delivery of social protection. ▶ strategic capacity building that has taken place by UNICEF over the past two years has laid the groundwork for the national social protection strategy, which is now strategy, now being developed with discussions on the road to recovery for the sector. ▶ Through the World Bank-UNICEF partnership, the Integrated social protection and service schemes have reached 1.45 million beneficiaries, with UNICEF enhancing the cash transfer delivery process and supporting informed decision-making and effective sector coordination.
<p>Lessons learnt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ engaging with government structures from the outset is crucial for ensuring the sustainability and scalability of humanitarian interventions. This approach not only facilitates a smoother transition from immediate response to long-term development but also strengthens government ownership of the initiatives. ▶ Directly delivering aid is essential in crisis situations, but simultaneously building the capacity of national and local institutions ensures the resilience and sustainability of social protection systems. The establishment and empowerment of the SPCC underline the importance of creating robust advisory platforms that can guide the development of inclusive social protection frameworks.

UNICEF's Haddi Programme: Spearheading cash-plus delivery and transitioning to a national child grant amidst Lebanon's economic crisis.

Summary of the good practice

UNICEF's Haddi programme in Lebanon shows **innovation and creativity** through adapting to crisis with USD-based payments and private sector partnerships, **sustainability and scalability** by transitioning from humanitarian response to national child grants, and **collaborative engagement** through partnerships with Ministry of Social Affairs and the ILO. In Lebanon's deepening economic crisis, the impact on families, particularly on children, women, and people with disabilities, has become increasingly severe. Despite the presence and gradual expansion of an anti-poverty programme, the scope and breadth of social protection in Lebanon continue to be notably restricted.¹¹ The absence of a comprehensive national social assistance system remains a pressing challenge for supporting vulnerable groups.

Implementing an integrated response to vulnerable children amidst Lebanon's economic crisis

To help fill these gaps in the system, UNICEF's Haddi programme was established in 2021 and stands out as a significant initiative offering not just a cash grant but also access to a set of comprehensive services. In addition to the grant, households receive additional complementary services, social behaviour change communication and, when needed, additional household visits.¹² The Haddi programme, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs, aims to deliver monthly cash assistance in USD to about 130,000 vulnerable Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian children.¹³ Starting as an emergency response, the programme specifically targets individuals at risk of child labour, child marriage, educational exclusion, nutritional needs, or disabilities. Households with one child in a priority service receive \$40 per month, those with two children get \$60, and households with three or more children receive \$80.¹⁴ Adapting to the economic situation and financial crisis, UNICEF shifted to using private sector transfer agencies for the disbursement of cash and switched to the use of USD, circumventing the challenges posed by the compromised banking system and fluctuating exchange rate.¹⁵

The Cash Management Information System (MIS) of UNICEF is employed to ensure the efficient and transparent management of this large-scale cash provision, alongside addressing grievances and monitoring outcomes.¹⁶ Initial evaluations indicate that Haddi is successfully reaching those most in need and is helping to alleviate the economic crisis's strain on household consumption and children's wellbeing.

	The UNICEF Haddi programme paving the way for a transition from a humanitarian response to a nationally owned child grant
	<p>During the process of developing the National Social Protection Strategy, endorsed and launched by the Government of Lebanon with UNICEF's support in early 2024, a national consensus was reached in 2021 to establish social grants. The establishment of these grants aimed to address lifecycle vulnerabilities and complement the existing poverty reduction programmes by targeting specific vulnerable groups. The initiative started with the introduction of a Child Grant and a Disability Allowance. Following the expansion of Haddi in December 2021, UNICEF released a brief that highlighted the programme's beneficial impacts and its capacity to evolve from a UNICEF-directed initiative to a nationally administered programme. The success of the programme, along with the national consensus to implement social grants as part of an overarching national social protection system, laid the groundwork for a broader, systemic approach to social protection, with UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Affairs working towards establishing Haddi as a national Child Grant programme, further integrated into Lebanon's social assistance system. A key success factor in the discussions to transition from a UNICEF-ran programme to a government-owned child grant was UNICEF Lebanon's strong partnership with national authorities, the International Labour Organisation, and other stakeholders.</p>
Key results achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ UNICEF's impact evaluation has shown Haddi to be a lifeline for vulnerable families, with the cash assistance leading to improved household spending on essentials like food, education, and clothing for children, fostering enhanced wellbeing amidst the crisis.¹⁷ Haddi has also contributed to a noticeable reduction in financial strain for families, as evidenced by decreased borrowing and a lower tendency among recipients to adopt negative coping strategies such as reducing meal sizes or frequency and skipping required health visits. ▶ Evidence from the Haddi programme led to the design of a National Child Grant (NCG) in 2023, with a technical team being established in 2022 to support this initiative.¹⁸ However, as of June 2024, funding constraints from development partners have delayed the Grant's launch.
Lessons learnt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ the Haddi initiative exemplifies the crucial role of integrated cash programmes in times of economic crisis, combining immediate financial aid with behaviour change communication and robust monitoring mechanisms. This multifaceted approach ensures that the assistance provided is optimally utilised to promote the wellbeing of vulnerable children, demonstrating the effectiveness of a coordinated cash-plus model in enhancing the impact of humanitarian aid. ▶ The Haddi case exemplifies the strategic process of advocating for the transition of UNICEF-led initiatives to government-run programmes. By illustrating the tangible benefits and successes of its programmes, UNICEF can effectively advocate to government officials for the adoption and integration of these programmes into national systems. This represents an exemplary practice of working within the humanitarian-development nexus approach—delivering immediate relief services while simultaneously collaborating with the government to foster the establishment and capacity-building of nationally-owned systems, bridging humanitarian with development programming.

UNICEF's adaptive approach to child poverty measurement in the changing context of Afghanistan

Summary of the good practice

UNICEF's work in Afghanistan highlights an **evidence-based approach** through comprehensive poverty measurements and MICS data, **adaptability and replicability** by shifting measurement strategies post-Taliban takeover, **capacity building** through training government officials in data collection and analysis, and **impactful results** seen in influencing budget allocations and humanitarian response strategies. UNICEF's approach in Afghanistan stands as a good practice in adaptability and dynamic measurement of child poverty in response to changing national needs and contexts. The UNICEF Afghanistan CO provided cross-cutting support to the government and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) in the implementation of poverty measurements, including age disaggregates, with the first measurement completed in 2016-2017. UNICEF continued its support and adapted to political change with the Taliban takeover in August 2021 to ensure continued evidence generation and poverty metrics.

Ensuring dynamic adaptability to changes in governance, stability and data availability

Initially, in a more stable environment, UNICEF, in collaboration with OPHI, supported the inclusion of child poverty within the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and its subsequent incorporation in the 2020 income and expenditure survey report, along with its use for government planning. UNICEF's work on measurement went beyond direct support for the measurement and extended to developing the capacities of government officials. UNICEF Afghanistan played a significant role in strengthening local capacities in data collection, analysis, and dissemination, ensuring sustainable monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

However, the situation changed drastically following the takeover by the current de facto authorities (DFA), necessitating a swift adaptation of poverty data and the need for an updated understanding of the poverty situation in Afghanistan. Immediately after the takeover by the de facto authorities, UNICEF supported OPHI and the Asian Development Bank in conducting simulations using the 2020 Income, Expenditure and Labour Force data, assessing the impact of the crisis on multidimensional poverty. In 2023, with the completion of the Afghanistan MICS (2022-23), encompassing data from over 23,000 households with representativity at the provincial level, UNICEF gained access to the latest insights into the conditions of children and women in Afghanistan. The comprehensive MICS data has been used to update the MPI measurement, allowing for updated and relevant data on the situation of children to inform the initiatives of development and humanitarian actors in the country.

In addition to the MPI measurement, UNICEF Afghanistan is completing the Multidimensional Child Poverty Analysis to enhance the design of its programming. UNICEF's approach in Afghanistan is a testament to its commitment to timely, informed, and context-sensitive interventions in the ever-evolving landscape of humanitarian emergencies, such as the one faced after the Taliban Offensive in Afghanistan.

<p>Key results achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ prior to the de facto authority's takeover, the MPI estimates captured the attention of government and development partners, leading to reference to the measurement by the country's president in a 2020 speech as an advocacy tool for continued donor support.¹⁹ Additionally, the Ministry of Finance utilised the MPI measurements to inform budget allocations and guided discussions towards national social protection policy.²⁰ ▶ UNICEF's support to OPHI helped simulate the effects of the crisis on poverty, using three scenarios, including a rise in food insecurity, more children out of school, and adverse work-related shocks. The simulation data was instrumental for internal strategy development and external advocacy, focusing on child-centric humanitarian responses.²¹ ▶ By ensuring the protection of national data and statistics systems, Afghanistan CO managed to carry out the MICS in 2022-2023, covering all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The recent MICS data has been used to update the household-level MPI and the multidimensional child poverty measurement to reinforce UNICEF programming.
<p>Lessons learnt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ the application of data simulations, the calculation of the MPI and the updated measurement using the recent MICS data in Afghanistan underscores the necessity of methodological adaptability in the face of data availability. While simulations in a fluctuating context like Afghanistan can overestimate the actual situation, they provide critical evidence for advocacy and commitment to humanitarian response at the early stages of the crisis. However, the Afghanistan case study underscores the importance of moving back to traditional means of measuring child poverty once data is available. ▶ Ensuring the resilience of data collection tools such as MICS in the context of political changes ensures the continued production of child poverty rates. This adaptability allows for the continuous, contextually relevant assessment of child poverty, accommodating the unique challenges and needs of each situation. ▶ UNICEF Afghanistan's adaptation to the distinct needs of internal and external stakeholders—by supporting a child-sensitive household MPI for the use of certain stakeholders and a child multidimensional poverty measure for internal programming—underscores the importance of supporting different child poverty measurement approaches to meet different stakeholder needs.

Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CO	Country Office
EPRI	Economic Policy Research Institute
IMSEA	Integrated Model of Social and Economic Assistance and Empowerment
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MIS	Cash Management Information System
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
PEP	Partnerships for Economic Policy
SPCC	Social Protection Consultative Committee
SWF	Social Welfare Fund
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
YCO	Yemen Country Office
YSEU	Yemen Socio-Economic Update

Endnotes

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