

A group of children and an adult are gathered around a tablet computer. The children are looking at the screen with interest and excitement. The adult is pointing at the screen, likely explaining something to them. The background is a bright, colorful room with various educational toys and materials.

Evaluability Assessment and Formative Evaluation of UNICEF's Innovation Hubs

Inception Summary

Validation of scope, design, and priorities

20 March 2026

Purpose of this Slide Deck

This final inception summary for the Evaluability Assessment and Formative Evaluation (EAFE) of UNICEF's Innovation Hubs reflects the agreed evaluation focus, scope, and design following consultations with the Evaluation Reference Group and Advisory Group, and incorporates the comments and inputs received to guide the implementation of the evaluation going forward.

Structure of the Inception Summary

The presentation is organized as follows:

- [Introduction and Background](#)
- [Overview of the Inception Phase](#)
- [Evaluation Scope and Methodology](#)
- [Proposed Deep Dives](#)
- [Governance, Roles, and Timeline](#)
- [Annexes](#)

Introduction and Background



UNICEF and the Government of Finland partnered to launch two innovation Hubs in Helsinki in 2022: the **Global Learning Innovation Hub** (LI Hub) and the **Innovative Finance Hub** (IF Hub).

The Hubs were implemented during the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan period, with continued support agreed for 2026-2028, aligned with the start of UNICEF's next Strategic Plan cycle.

Against a backdrop of organizational change and evolving institutional arrangements within UNICEF, **this evaluation forms part of a broader learning framework for the Innovation Hubs**, with this early, process-oriented assessment undertaken at a formative moment to inform ongoing development, and a subsequent summative evaluation with an outcome focus envisaged at a later stage.

Purpose

This Evaluability Assessment and Formative Evaluation aims to assess how well the two Innovation Hubs are **strategically positioned, how clearly their goals are articulated, and whether they are operationally ready** to sustain and scale their impact for children.

Objectives

- Review the **clarity and plausibility of each Hub's theory of change** and supporting M&E systems;
- Assess how well the **Hubs are aligned with and integrated** into UNICEF's structures, strategies, and partnerships;
- Examine the **added value of the Hub model** compared to traditional and emerging approaches, and its potential applicability to other thematic or regional contexts;
- Identify **key enabling and constraining factors** influencing each Hub's effectiveness, sustainability, and potential for scalability and systemic change

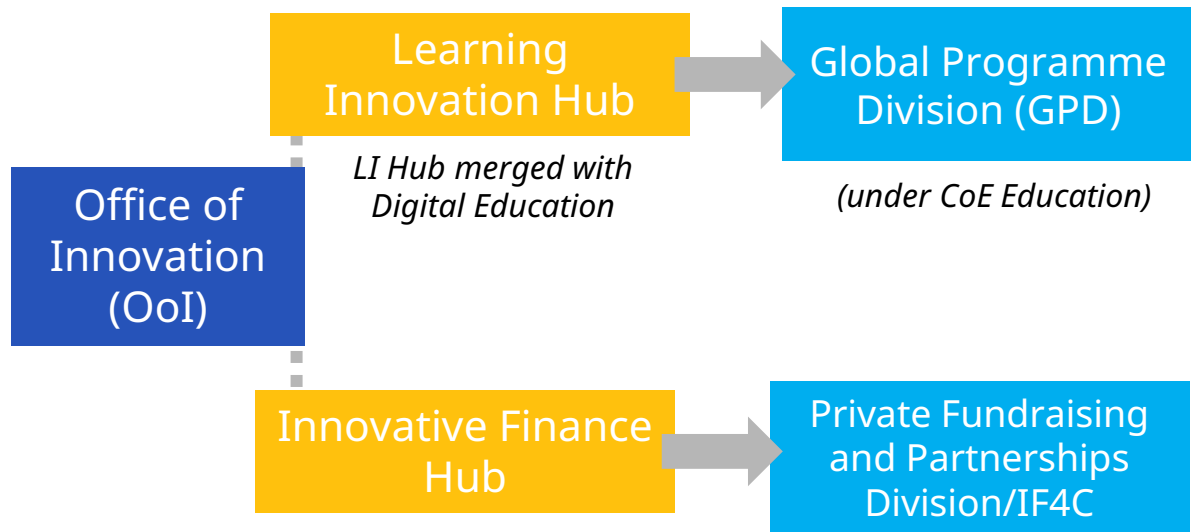
***Evaluability Assessment** examines whether strategies, systems, and clear performance measures are in place.*



***Formative lens** surfaces lessons and opportunities for course correction. It will also review the Hubs' future plans to test their assumptions and alignment.*

Background: Positioning of Innovation Hubs

Institutional Positioning of the Innovation Hubs within UNICEF



The Innovation Hubs have **transitioned from the Office of Innovation into relevant UNICEF divisions**, reflecting a shift in their institutional positioning and governance arrangements. These shifts have implications for how the Hubs are governed, how they interface with sectoral leadership, and how their work is embedded within UNICEF's core operational structures.

UNICEF Strategic Frameworks and Initiatives

The Innovation Hubs are anchored in **UNICEF's Strategic Plans** and **broader innovation agenda** and operate within an organizational transformation context shaped by initiatives such as the **Future Focus Initiative (FFI)**, which aims to modernize UNICEF's operating model and ways of working in response to evolving institutional and resource realities..

Each Hub aligns with its respective thematic strategies and initiatives: the Learning Innovation Hub with the Digital Education Strategy 2025–2030 and related digital initiatives beyond the Centre of Excellence for Education, and the Innovative Finance Hub with Innovative Financing for Children (IF4C).

Strategic Funding Partner

Government of Finland - Strategic funding partner whose priorities and learning interests inform the direction, accountability arrangements, and ongoing development of the Innovation Hubs

Background: Learning Innovation Hub

- The Learning Innovation Hub is UNICEF's global platform for evidence-based education innovation, testing and scaling digital learning solutions to improve outcomes for all children.
- It operates as a learning system that adapts and co-creates solutions with partners (technical partners, solution partners, financial partners, including Finnish partners) to deliver impact at scale.



Spacecraft *Imagine + think tank*

Production of future-oriented research and thought leadership on learning.

- Leads Reimagine education Community of Practice
- Public digital learning
- Partners with academia and UNICEF Innocenti



EdTech for Good *Standards curation, and acceleration*

- Introduced as a new pathway. Includes:
 - EdTech for Good Framework - Development and advocacy
 - Learning Cabinet – Edtech solutions
 - Blue Unicorn Portfolio – Scalable solutions (previously a standalone pathway in 2022–2025, now integrated under EdTech for Good)

Networks, Communications & Visibility

emphasis on strategic positioning, ecosystem influence



Playground *Experimentation lab*

Testing frontier technologies and new learning solutions.

- Pilots including Tinkering with Tech using micro:bits, Eduten and Accessible Digital Textbooks (ADTs) were experimented here.



Engine Room *Grounding innovation*

Working with COs, governments, and partners to adapt and scale EdTech pilots and solutions

- Includes Learning Pioneers, Learning Explorers, Superstar teachers toolbox
- Tinkering with Tech with transitioned from the Playground to the Engine Room to support adaptation and scaling.

Kaleidoscope evolving from the Playground, harnesses AI to bridge learning barriers.

- Includes Accessible Digital Textbooks

Background: Innovative Finance Hub

- The central ambition is to unlock and accelerate the integration of global capital toward child-lens considerations in investment decisions.
- In 2024, the Innovative Financing pathway integrated into PFP/IF4C and the Emerging Fundraising Pathway moved into the Fundraising Innovation team.
- In its 2026–2028 design, the Hub is advancing **Child-Lens Investing (CLI) through guidance, adoption, and field-building activities** by engaging investors and key market intermediaries across capital markets (debt, equity, etc).

Guidance

(Investors are provided with clear, practical guidance to help them apply CLI in practice)

- Publish CLI guidance for different asset classes
- Apply a child lens to UNDP SDG Investor Maps
- Integrate child lens into GIIN IRIS+
- Influence regulators to integrate children's considerations in their regulation

Adoption

(Investors begin adopting CLI in their investment decisions)

- Enable CLI adoption by providing technical assistance through investor partnerships with Financial Institutions (e.g. FinnFund/CAF (DFIs) and asset managers (e.g. Triodos)
- Expand adoption among public and private equity investors

Field Building

(CLI becomes recognised as a key lens within sustainable finance)

- Build a global stakeholder network around Child-Lens Investing
- Roll out CLI guidance for scaling through COs and NatComs
- Position CLI through global platforms, convenings and media
- Launch Community of Practice (CoP) to test, validate and co-create the field of CLI

Overview of the Inception Phase



Overview of the Inception Phase

The inception phase aimed to ensure that the Evaluability Assessment and Formative Evaluation (EAFE) is feasible and well targeted, and to refine the evaluation design in light of UNICEF's current strategic and organizational context.

Inception Activities

The evaluation team undertook:

- **A review** of key strategic, programme, and governance documents related to the Innovation Hubs and UNICEF's organizational priorities
- **An initial analysis** of Hub design, objectives, and ways of working
- **Preliminary consultations** with the two Hub teams to clarify expectations, decision needs, and areas of learning focus
- **Refinement** of the evaluation scope, questions, and overall approach

Key Inception Insights

The inception phase underscored:

- The need to further clarify and align the **strategic positioning and goals** of each Hub within UNICEF's evolving institutional arrangements
- Differences and recent refinements in how **theories of change and results frameworks** are articulated across the Hubs
- The relevance of a **formative, systems-oriented perspective**, given the Hubs' stage of implementation and the broader organizational context
- The potential value of **focused deep dives** to support learning on selected pathways, partnerships, and ways of working

Implications for the Evaluation Design

What the design will prioritize:

- The evaluation places emphasis on **strategic positioning, clarity of goals, and operational readiness**
- Theories of change and results frameworks are treated as **central analytical entry points**
- Two **focused deep dives** are included to support learning on selected pathways and partnerships
- The evaluation **approach remains flexible**, allowing refinement of lines of inquiry as the study progresses

Evaluation Scope and Methodology



Evaluation Scope and Focus Areas

- The inception phase **confirmed the relevance and feasibility** of the proposed evaluation scope and objectives and identified areas for prioritized focus.
 - The proposed **evaluation questions have been refined** to better reflect the implementation experience and Hub context.
 - **Deep dives** have been identified based on **potential for learning**.
-
- Given the stage of implementation, Hub maturity and recent institutional shifts, the assessment will place emphasis on the **formative dimension of the evaluation**.
 - The **2026–2028 Theories of Change** will serve as the primary analytical anchor for examining relevance, alignment, institutional arrangements, and strategic positioning.
 - The **2022–2025 period** will inform analysis of implementation pathways, early effectiveness, enabling and constraining factors, and value addition.
 - **Systems Change lens:** The Hubs' vision and operational pathways are oriented towards transformative changes in both education and financing landscapes. The evaluation will apply a systems-oriented lens, recognizing interdependent pathways and time-span assumptions associated with landscape-level change.
 - **Alignment, Positioning and Governance:** The evaluation will examine the Hubs' role in strategic alignment, governance responsibilities, and positioning for value addition within UNICEF's evolving institutional arrangements.

Learning Innovation Hub:

- Examination of initiative-level maturity and implementation pathways, including pilot-to-scale approaches.
- Assessment of alignment with the Digital Education Strategy.

Innovative Finance Hub:

- Examination of initiatives under innovative financing pathways.
- Focus on modalities for mobilizing private and public capital.

Evaluation Approach

Systems Based Assessment: Situating the hubs within UNICEF's wider institutional and strategic context, including governance, systems, and alignment with strategies and priorities.

Theory of Change (ToC) Led: Reviewing and validating the hubs' ToCs, assumptions, pathways, and risks to inform plausibility of causal pathways.

Utilization Focused: Generating findings that are relevant and actionable for key users, supporting strategic decision-making, sustainability, and future directions of the hubs.

Participatory and Consultive: Engaging Hub teams, Government of Finland, UNICEF offices and divisions (GPD, PFP, OoI, COs, ROs, CoEs), and partners throughout the evaluation.

Forward Looking and Adaptive: Examining how hub models and ways of working are evolving in response to global landscape and identifying areas for adaptation.

Strategic Decisions with Evidence: Generating insights on what works, and why, to inform hub-level and organizational decision-making on design, and course corrections.

Evaluation Dimensions (1/2)

The insights from the inception phase have informed the focus and structure of the evaluation dimensions as presented in the following section detailing key elements of each dimension

Evaluation Dimension	Assessment Focus	Evaluation direction based on inception insights
Alignment and Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant and responsive to the needs of countries • Alignment with the priorities of MoF. • Alignment of the Hubs' strategies with UNICEF's Strategic Plans 2022-2025 and 2026-2029, Digital Education Strategy and IF4C 	<p>Considering that the hubs operate in UNICEF's broader programmatic and partnership frameworks, the EAFE will examine whether the Hubs' activities and strategies are aligned with UNICEF's Strategic Plans, Digital Education Strategy and IF4C.</p> <p>At the same time, it will explore whether the Hubs' strategies are responsive to countries' evolving and differing priorities and needs.</p>
Theory of Change and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on ToC, Results framework, and assumptions • Relevance, logic and coherence of the strategies • Plausible and testable linkages within the design 	<p>The recent revision of the Hubs' Theory of Change (2026-2028), with a stronger system-level orientation, suggests that the EAFE will assess the coherence, plausibility, and testability of this revised ToC as a central analytical framework.</p>
Monitoring and Data Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validity and reliability of indicators • Availability of baseline indicators, data sufficiency 	<p>In light of the revised results framework (2026-2028), the EAFE will examine whether existing monitoring and data systems are fit for purpose and sufficiently aligned to support future evaluations.</p>
Effectiveness and Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early signs of effectiveness and systems change outcomes • Timeliness of key processes and decision-making 	<p>Considering differing levels of pathway maturity (LIH) and adoption by financial institution partners (IFH), the EAFE will examine early system-level signals and assess whether the timing and alignment of key processes and decisions supported progress.</p>

Evaluation Dimensions (2/2)

Evaluation Design	Assessment Focus	Evaluation direction based on inception insights
Positioning and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional positioning of the Hubs within UNICEF • Governance of partnerships and ecosystem engagement 	<p>Given the transition of Hubs into their respective divisions, EAFE will examine the Hubs' current institutional positioning and governance arrangements, including the clarity of roles and accountabilities, decision-making and coordination mechanisms across UNICEF (OOI, GPD, PFP, ICTD, ROs, COs and COEs).</p>
Value Addition and Implementation within the Ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added value of the Hubs model • Coherence of implementation • Partnership and ecosystem engagement • Value of hubs at country level 	<p>Recognizing that the Hubs operate through a unique model which is distinct from traditional programming approaches, the EAFE will examine the value added by the Hub model in advancing innovation, fostering collaboration, and enabling more adaptive, iterative, and system-oriented ways of working with its partners and Country Offices.</p>
Enablers, Constraints, and Learning for the Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal and external enablers and constraints influencing how the Hubs function and adapt over time • Learning and feedback processes, including how lessons and challenges inform course correction and future design 	<p>Considering the progress that has taken place since 2022, the EAFE will examine the key internal and external enablers and constraints shaping the Hubs' potential to contribute to scale, sustainability, and systems-level change (government uptake-LIH and sustainable business models-IFH).</p>
Utility and Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder accessibility and availability • Primary users of evaluation findings • Information required by stakeholders from the evaluation 	<p>The EAFE will examine the demand for future evaluations and whether the programme maturity supports an evaluation that is positioned for use in learning and decision-making.</p>

Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation is guided by a structured set of Evaluation questions, which will serve as the primary analytical lens for the study. **Equity, Human Rights, and Gender Equality** considerations will be embedded across all evaluation dimensions, ensuring they are systematically examined throughout the evaluation. The detailed evaluation matrix is provided in Annex I. The methods through which evidence will be generated to respond to these evaluation questions are outlined in the following slide.

EQ1: Alignment and Responsiveness - How well do the Hubs' strategies and activities align with key UNICEF priorities (Digital Education Strategy 2025–2030 and the Strategic Plans 2022–2025 and 2026–2029), and how well they are designed to be feasible and responsive to country level needs *and MoFA Finland?*

EQ2: Theory of Change and Design - How clear, plausible, and coherent is each Hub's theory of change, including whether intended results are realistic, measurable, and underpinned by credible assumptions and causal pathways?

EQ3: Monitoring and Data Systems - To what extent are appropriate indicators, baselines, and monitoring systems in place to track progress, support learning, and ensure accountability?

EQ4: Effectiveness and Efficiency - *To what extent are there early signs of effectiveness and emerging system-level change arising from the Hubs' work since 2022, and how timely are key processes and decision-making in supporting early implementation?*

EQ5: Positioning and Governance - To what extent are the Hubs appropriately positioned within UNICEF's institutional systems and governance arrangements to deliver on their mandates, particularly in the context of recent structural changes within UNICEF?

EQ6: Value Addition and Implementation within the Ecosystem - To what extent does the Hub model add value within UNICEF's innovation ecosystem, including through its ways of working and engagement with partners such as the Finnish innovation ecosystem?

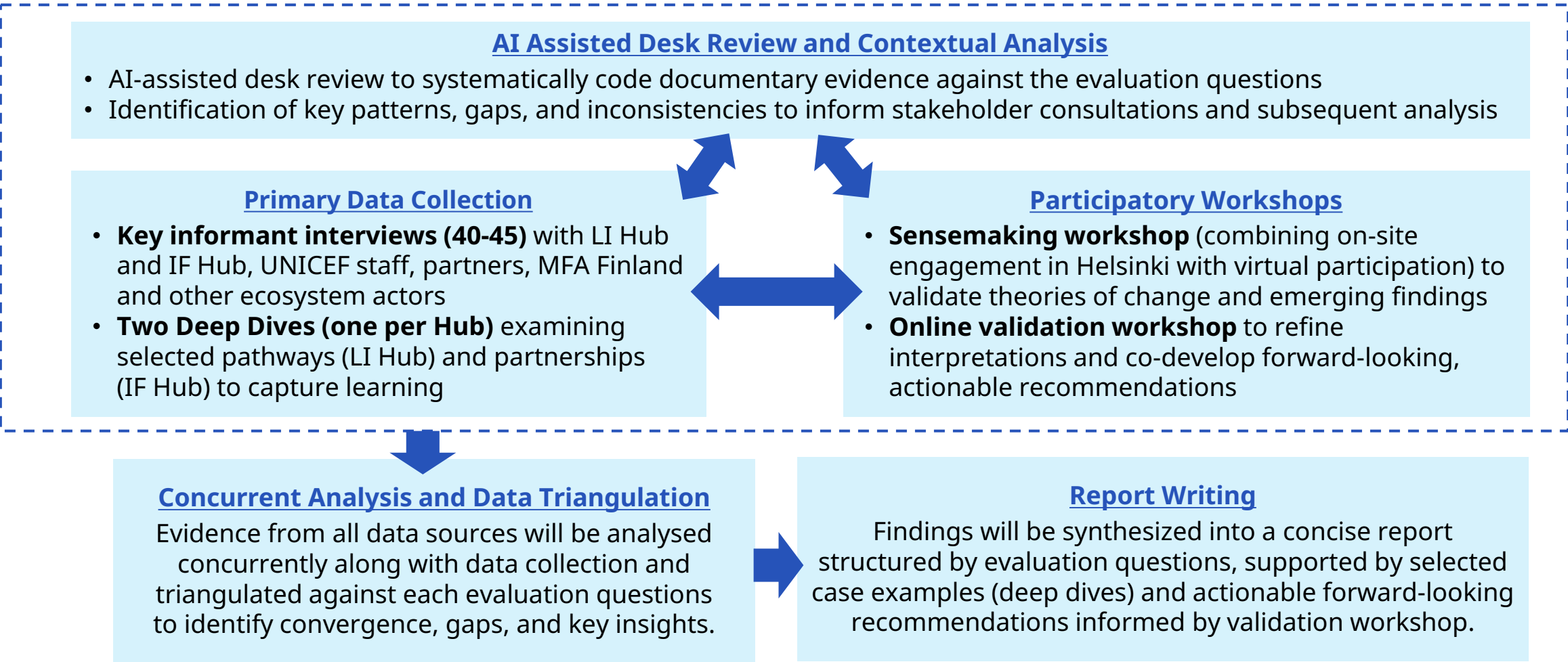
EQ7: Enablers, Constraints, and Learning for the Future - What factors enable or limit the Hubs potential for scale, sustainability and systems change? How have learning and feedback processes informed course correction and current design?

EQ8: Utility and Feasibility of the Evaluation - *To what extent do programme maturity, resources, and stakeholder priorities support future evaluations?*

Changes to the evaluation questions from the ToR are shown in italics.

Methodology and Analytical Process

To meet the evaluation objectives and address the Evaluation Questions, the assessment will apply a mixed-methods approach that combines desk review, targeted primary data collection, participatory validation, and concurrent analysis and triangulation of evidence. The overall process and sequencing of activities are illustrated in the visual below. Detailed data sources are presented in Annex II.



Proposed Deep Dives



Deep Dives: Learning Innovation Hub – *Pathway to Scale*

The Learning Innovation Hub aims to take promising EdTech innovations from **idea to scale** by testing, refining, and advancing digital learning solutions that improve learning outcomes for all children.

This deep dive will examine the Hub's broader **modelling for scale** approach, through which promising ideas are tested, packaged and refined so they are ready for implementation and can be taken forward in other country contexts.

Transforming Math Learning with Eduten will be used as the illustrative case for this deep dive, as it is one of the more advanced examples within the Hub's portfolio. The initiative has been piloted in Bhutan, Lao PDR, and Uzbekistan, and has shown early signs of government uptake in these countries.

Using this case, the deep dive will explore how the Hub identifies, tests, adapts, and supports innovations across different country contexts, and how these are taken forward towards uptake and scale. The findings will help assess the viability of the Hub's modelling approach and generate lessons for the future scalability and replication of other EdTech initiatives.

Learning Questions

1. What enables or constrains EdTech initiatives to move from pilots to scale?
Enablers and Constraints
2. How are scale/replication decisions made (what evidence, criteria, and actors shape the "go/no-go")?
Readiness for Scale
3. How do UNICEF COs, governments, and partners collaborate in moving pilots toward adoption?
Value addition and Ecosystem approach
4. What creates sustainable handover from UNICEF/ partners to government systems (ownership, institutionalization, support arrangements)?
Sustainability and Scalability
5. What partnership models work best?
Value Addition of Hub modality

Deep Dives: Innovative Finance Hub – *Partnership Approach*

The IF Hub is advancing Child-Lens Investing by partnering with investment partners, providing strategic guidance and technical assistance to support the adoption and integration of CLI within their investment policies, processes, and decision-making frameworks.

In this context, IF hub's private investment partner **Triodos Investment Management** is being proposed for the deep dive because:

- It is a leading player in impact investing in Europe with strong credibility in sustainable and future-generations investing;
- it provides a valuable opportunity to examine how Child-Lens Investing (CLI) can be operationalized within a real private investment context;
- To date, Triodos has tested how child-related risks, opportunities, and outcomes can be integrated across its investment screening, portfolio assessment, and stewardship processes, applying CLI alongside existing impact and ESG lenses rather than as a standalone framework.

As a case study, this engagement will generate concrete, practice-based evidence for the broader private investment market, supporting learning, replication, and wider adoption of CLI across private capital actors.

Learning Questions

1. How do partners (investors) integrate CLI in their existing impact/ESG frameworks and decision processes?
Relevance and Alignment
2. What partnership and collaboration arrangements between the IF Hub and its partners enable or constrain CLI adoption across their full cycle?
Enablers and Constraints
3. What kinds of tailored technical support is provided to partners exploring CLI adoption?
Efficiency and Scalability
4. What creates shared value for private investors?
Value Addition

Governance, Roles, and Timeline



Evaluation Governance and Roles

The evaluation is governed through a clear separation of roles to ensure independence, credibility and practical relevance.

Evaluation Office Institutional Effectiveness portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leads and manages the evaluation• Ensures independence, quality and methodological rigour
Evaluation team (IPE Global, complemented by Evaluation Office staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducts the evaluation and brings dedicated thematic expertise• Responsible for analysis and findings
Evaluation Reference Group (internal stakeholders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides strategic guidance at key stages• Contributes to interpretation, sensemaking and institutional uptake
Advisory Groups (external, one per Hub)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide thematic and ecosystem perspectives• Contribute to sensemaking and inform forward-looking recommendations
Quality assurance and approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Products reviewed by the Chief of Institutional Effectiveness• Final approval by the Director of Evaluation

Outputs of the Evaluation

Given that this evaluation exercise is utilisation-focused, the outputs have been designed to support learning, engagement, and the practical use of findings by key stakeholders.

Outputs of Evaluation	Intended Use
Final Evaluation Report	Findings synthesised into a report structured around the evaluation questions, supported by deep dives and actionable forward-looking recommendations for Hub Teams, MFA Finland and relevant UNICEF stakeholders
Evaluation Brief and One-page summary	Key findings and recommendations distilled into a concise format for use by the Hub Team, MFA Finland, and relevant UNICEF stakeholders
Communication Product	Key findings disseminated in accessible formats (e.g. flyers) to support learning and uptake by MFA Finland, Hub Team and UNICEF stakeholders

Annexes



Annex I – Evaluation Matrix

Submitted as an Excel file separately

Annex II – Data Sources (1/2)

Secondary Data Sources

Joint Documents/Frameworks

- Technical Proposals
- Annual Joint Reports
- Previous Evaluations
- Evaluations of Innovation
- UNICEF Strategic Plans (2022-2025 and 2026-2029)
- Budget Revision Documents
- Partnership with Finnish Ecosystem

Innovative Finance Hub

- IF Hub & Child-Lens Investing decks
- AMP
- Annual Reporting
- OOI OMP 2022-2025
- IFH Transition Document
- Triodos and Finnfund Collaboration Documents

Learning Innovation Hub

- Digital Education Strategy (2025-2030)
- Learning Innovation Hub – MFA Finland Presentation
- LIH Initiatives Programme Documents
- LIH for MFA Meeting
- UNICEF LIH- AI in Education
- LIH Initiatives Document
 - Accessible Digital Textbooks
 - EdTech for Good
 - Learning Pioneers Programme
 - Superstar Teacher Toolbox
 - Eduten Implementation
 - Tinkering with Teach

Primary Data Sources

Innovative Finance Hub

UNICEF Headquarters

- Office of Innovation
- Office of Global Innovation
- Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division (PFPD)
- Innovative Financing for Children (IF4C) – Core Team
- UNICEF Evaluation Office
- Public Partnership Division

Core Team

- Head- IF Hub
- Guidance Team
- Adoption Team
- Field Building Team
- Child-Lens Investing (CLI) Technical Leads

- Finnish National Committee for UNICEF
- Ministry of Finland

Financial Institutions Partners

- Triodos
- Finnfund

Multilateral Development Banks & IFIs

- European Investment Bank (EIB)
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
- Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

Stock Exchanges & Market Infrastructure Actors

- United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges (UNSSE)
- NASDAQ Helsinki

Annex II – Data Sources (2/2)

Learning innovation Hub

UNICEF Headquarters

- Office of Innovation
- Global Pulse
- UNICEF Innocenti
- Global Programme Division (Education)
- UNICEF Evaluation Office
- UNICEF Country and Regional Offices

Core Team

- Senior Adviser/Hub Lead
- Engine Room Team
- Edtech for Good Framework Team
- Spacecraft Team
- Playground Team
- Kaleidoscope
- Hub General Management (Operations Officer, Administrative Associate, Partnerships Specialists and Communication Officer)
- Digital Pedagogies and EdTech experts

Network and Partnerships

- Arm
- OpenAI
- Eleva Foundation
- Member countries of Gateways to Public Digital Learning
- Google
- Global Partnership for Education (Funder)
- Finfund (Funder)

Finnish Government and Public Agencies

- Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI)
- Finnish Center of Expertise in Education and Development (FinCEED)
- Education Finland
- FinCEED

Finnish Private sector actors

- Eduten
- GraphoGame
- TeachersPro
- Slush

Finnish NGO Partner

- Finn Church Aid (FCA)

National Committees & Advocacy Actors

- UNICEF National Committees
- UNICEF Finland National Committee
- Other engaged NatComs (e.g. UK, USA, Nordics – as relevant)

Multilateral and Bilateral Partners

- World Bank
- ADB
- UNESCO

Prospective Partners (*subject to interest and relevance*)

- Nokia
- Supercell
- Sanoma Pro
- Moomin Characters
- Illusian

Finnish Innovation & Knowledge Partners

- Helsinki Education Hub
- SITRA
- Aalto University
- University of Helsinki

Annex III – Detailed Overview Learning Innovation Hub

- LI Hub is UNICEF's global platform that drives evidence-based innovation in education by testing, shaping, and scaling digital learning solutions that improve learning outcomes for all children. Since 2022, the hub has become more focused and integrated, with its building blocks increasingly aligned around a shared purpose: delivering impact at scale.
- At its core, the Hub operates as a living system-continuously learning, adapting, and co-creating solutions with technical partners to transform learning where it is needed most.
- **Digital Education Strategy** (2025-2030) integrates Digital Education and Learning Innovation Hub across 5 key areas – Teacher Empowerment, Foundational Learning, Skills and Competencies, Systems Strengthening, Thought Leadership



Spacecraft leads the LI Hub's thought leadership and evidence generation, shaping global thinking on the future of digital education through insights, research, and learning that influence policy, practice, and investment decisions.
Digital Education Strategy – “What Works”, Thought Leadership



EdTech for Good is cornerstone of all UNICEF's work on digital education guiding how education technology is designed, selected, and scaled to ensure it is safe, inclusive, evidence-based, and aligned with learning outcomes for all children. It includes:

- EdTech for Good Framework - Development and advocacy
- Learning Cabinet – Edtech solutions
- Blue Unicorn Portfolio – Scalable solutions
- **Digital Education Strategy** – Map + Match + Transform (LC); Thought Leadership

Networks, Communications & Visibility emphasis on strategic positioning, ecosystem influence



Playground is where experimentation happens - testing new edtech ideas, technologies, and approaches before they are taken to scale.
Digital Education Strategy – Skills and Competencies, Teacher Empowerment, Foundational Learning



Engine Room is the Hub's country-facing pathway, working with UNICEF COs, governments, and partners to adapt and scale EdTech pilots from the Playground and government ready solutions from Blue Unicorn Farm into national education systems.

- Includes Learning Pioneers Programme , Learning Explorers, Superstar teachers, Tinkering with Tech
- **Digital Education Strategy** – Systems Strengthening, Teacher empowerment (Digital Pedagogy), Foundational Learning (LC)

Kaleidoscope evolving from the Playground, harnesses AI to bridge learning barriers and personalize training.

- Accessible Digital Textbooks (ADTs)

Annex III (cont.) - Overview Learning Innovation Hub (Design changes)

The Learning Innovation Hub was designed to support and advance UNICEF's Reimagine Education initiative through experimentation, foresight, and pilot initiatives, testing frontier ideas across distinct pathways. In the current design, the Hub places greater emphasis on system-level impact, global evidence generation for education systems, and alignment with UNICEF's strategic priorities and digital education strategy.

Implementation Phase (2022-

Spacecraft Imagine + think tank producing future-oriented research and thought leadership on learning.

01

Playground Innovation lab for hands-on experimentation, prototyping, and testing frontier technologies and new learning solutions.

02

Engine Room Ecosystem engineering function working with Country Offices and governments to ground innovation in real education systems.

03

Blue Unicorn Farm Portfolio for sourcing, testing, and early scaling of high-potential learning innovations through challenges and pilots.

04

Focused on **networking, outreach, and advocacy** linked to individual initiatives.

05

Current Design (2026-2029)

01

Spacecraft leads the Hub's thought leadership with sharp insights and evidence that mobilize the learning ecosystem, in alignment with the strategic shifts of the new Digital Education Strategy and grounded in evidence of "what works" from the Engine Room.

02

Playground is a sandbox for frontier ideas - an open space to test early-stage innovations, aiming to ensure the Hub's work is at the cutting edge of emerging trends, and integrating successful approaches into existing Hub workstreams.

03

Engine Room grounds innovation to the realities in the countries, empowering countries to shape bold education futures aligned with the UNICEF Digital Education Strategy and initiatives like Learning Pioneers - enabling the acceleration and scaling of Blue Unicorn Portfolio solutions, the Superstar Teachers in the Digital Age, and Tinkering with Tech.

04

EdTech for Good integrates the former **Blue Unicorn Farm** building block, and becomes the engine of global EdTech standards, curation, and acceleration. It brings together the **EdTech for Good Framework**, **Learning Cabinet**, and the Blue Unicorn Portfolio to guide partners toward safe, inclusive, and high-impact digital learning tools. The Framework has specific standards linked to gender, equity and inclusion.

05

Reframed as **Networks, Communications & Visibility**, with a stronger emphasis on strategic positioning, ecosystem influence, global visibility, and narrative coherence across the Hub's work.

06

Kaleidoscope is a new pathway. Born from the Playground, it harnesses AI to bridge learning barriers and personalize learning, starting with Accessible Digital Textbooks.

Annex IV – Detailed Overview Innovative Finance Hub

- **Unlock global capital in support of children** through guidance, advocacy, technical support and partnerships
- IF Hub pathways merged (2024) independently i.e., IF Pathway with PFP/IF4C and EF with the Fundraising Innovation team
- Integration with **IF4C** strategy and field facing activities moved to IF4C Geneva (engagement with RO, CO)

Innovative Finance Pathway

- Child-Lens Investing Framework
- Toolkits – Private Equity and Debt
- Guidance – Listed Equity, Stewardship
- Partnerships - UN SSE, GIIN

- Technical Assistance to align capital with a child-lens
- FinnFund, Triodos, CAF

- Influence and Thought leadership
- Communications and Advocacy
- CLI community of Practice

- Incubation of financing models
- Field facing activities supporting COs

Guidance *Investors have practical guidance and rationale to implement CLI*

- Publish CLI guidance for private and listed equity investors
- Develop guidance on CLI instruments (e.g. loans, bonds)
- Apply a child lens to UNDP SDG Investor Maps
- Launch a Community of Practice on Child-Lens Investing
- Integrate a child lens into GIIN IRIS+

Adoption *(CLI is adopted by public and private investors)*

- Enable CLI adoption through anchor investor partnerships (e.g. DFIs, asset managers)
- Expand adoption among public and private investors
- Influence regulators to integrate children’s considerations
- Increase number of investors with public commitments to CLI

Field Building *(CLI recognized as a key investment lens in sustainable finance)*

- Build a global stakeholder network around Child-Lens Investing
- Roll out internal UNICEF CLI guidance for scaling through COs and NatComs
- Position CLI through global platforms and convenings
- Strengthen CLI’s recognition as a core lens in sustainable finance

Emerging Fundraising Pathway *transformational fundraising*

- Tested new fundraising models enabled by emerging technologies (Experimented with crypto, NFTs, Web3, gaming, metaverse)
- Incubator model (explore, co-create, pilot, capacitate and scale)
- Supported National Committees and PFP with tested concepts and toolkits
- Generated evidence on opportunities and risks of new technologies
- Pilots identified for scale-up

Annex V – Risk and Mitigation Plan

Risk Category	Risk/Challenge	Probability	Impact	Mitigation Plan
Stakeholder Availability	Limited availability of key UNICEF staff, Hub teams, donors, and partners may delay consultations, particularly given competing priorities and time zones	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and prioritise critical stakeholders during inception. Schedule interviews well in advance Use document review and triangulation to complement stakeholder inputs where availability is constrained.
Staff Turnover / Loss of Institutional Memory	Stakeholder inputs may be influenced by personal roles, or individual experiences, leading to biased or partial perspectives	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use structured interview guides to ensure consistent questioning across stakeholder groups. Triangulate stakeholder inputs with documentary evidence and perspectives from multiple internal and external stakeholders.
Stakeholder Bias	Former Hub team members or UNICEF staff involved in earlier design and implementation phases are no longer available, limiting access to historical perspectives and institutional memory	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a systematic review of proposals, ToCs, meeting records, and key documents from earlier phases Use structured interviews with current staff to reconstruct historical decisions and assumptions. Triangulate perspectives across multiple sources to mitigate gaps arising from staff turnover.
Timeline Management	Delays in deliverables due to dependencies on stakeholder inputs, document access, and review/approval cycles	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a realistic and sequenced workplan with clear milestones and buffers. Closely track progress against the workplan and flag risks early. Proactively flag emerging risks and timeline implications to UNICEF to enable timely course correction.

Annex VI – Ethical Considerations

The evaluation will be conducted in line with the **United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards** for Evaluation, and UNICEF's ethical principles and evaluation guidance. The evaluation team will adhere to the following ethical commitments:

- 1. Informed consent:** Ensure that all participants are fully informed about the purpose of the evaluation, the nature of their participation, and how the information they provide will be used. Participation will be entirely voluntary, and respondents will have the right to decline or withdraw at any point.
- 2. Do no harm principle:** Ensure that participation in the evaluation does not pose any risk – professional, reputational, or otherwise to individuals or institutions.
- 3. Data protection and secure data handling:** All data collected will be stored securely and accessed only by authorized members of the evaluation team. Data handling will comply with relevant data protection standards and organizational requirements.
- 4. Independence and integrity:** The evaluation team will maintain independence in analysis and judgement. Findings and conclusions will be evidence-based, balanced, and transparently derived from the data, irrespective of stakeholder expectations.
- 5. Ethical use of findings:** Findings will be shared responsibly and constructively, with the intention of supporting learning, decision-making, and improvement.

Annex VII – Quality Assurance

Oversight, Review, and Stakeholder Engagement

- Continuous weekly engagement between the UNICEF Evaluation Office and the IPE Global Evaluation Team to ensure alignment, shared understanding, and coordinated implementation throughout the evaluation.
- Structured engagement with Innovation Hub teams, external consultants, and relevant stakeholders across evaluation phases to enhance relevance, transparency, and ownership of findings.

Data Quality and Methodological Rigor

- Qualitative data collection and analysis will be governed by UNICEF and IPE Global internal quality control mechanisms
- Standardized protocols will be applied to ensure data accuracy, consistency, and reliability
- Quality checks will be embedded at each stage of the evaluation cycle, including data collection, analysis, synthesis, and reporting

IPE Global's Institutional Quality Systems

- IPE Global is an ISO 9001:2015–certified organization, and its quality management system will be adhered
- The evaluation will be guided by established internal quality assurance procedures, including:
 - Periodic reviews by the Team Leader
 - Structured interactive feedback mechanisms
 - Systematic quality checks across deliverables

Annex VIII – Evaluation Team





Shantanu Das

Team Leader & Senior Evaluation Specialist

Brief Profile

Jérôme is an expert on Finland’s innovation and higher education systems, with extensive experience designing collaboration platforms across universities, government, and the private sector. His insight will support the analysis of the Innovative Finance Hub

Responsibilities:

- Provide contextual knowledge and understanding of the Finnish innovation ecosystem models
- Conduct desk research and drafting data collection tools
- Undertake stakeholder consultations and support workshops
- Contribute to final report writing



Bidemi Carrol

Education Expert

Brief Profile

Bidemi is an international education specialist with more than 18 years of experience in education system reform, research, and policy analysis. Her work across early learning, teacher development, and higher education will benefit the assessment of the Learning Hub’s approach and direction.

Responsibilities:

- Provide technical expertise on digital education and learning innovations
- Conduct desk research and drafting data collection tools
- Undertake stakeholder consultations and support workshops
- Contribute to final report writing



Dr. Jérôme Rickmann

Finnish Innovation Ecosystem Expert

Brief Profile

Shantanu is an evaluation and learning expert with over 26 years of experience leading complex evaluations across Asia and Africa. He brings strong expertise in organizational systems and strategic alignment, informed by extensive work with UNICEF and other UN agencies.

Responsibilities:

- Lead the overall evaluation
- Lead the development and finalization of the inception and final report and presenting to UNICEF
- Lead stakeholder consultations and workshops
- Provide internal quality assurance on all deliverables



Jyothsna Yasarapu
Evaluation Specialist

Brief Profile

Sana is a monitoring and evaluation specialist with strong expertise in mixed-methods research and analysis, results frameworks, and data quality assurance to support credible and actionable findings.

Responsibilities:

- Support the refinement of the evaluation matrix, and data collection tools
- Contribute to the desk review, analysis framework, and interpretation of findings
- Contribute to the inception and final evaluation reports



Kasturi Drolia
Researcher

Brief Profile

Jyothsna is an evaluation specialist with over a decade of evaluation experience across Asia and Africa. She brings strong mixed-methods expertise to assessing programme logic, systems, and stakeholder engagement across both hubs

Responsibilities:

- Co-lead and manage the overall evaluation process
- Contribute to the design and methodology of the EAFE
- Lead the desk review and inception report, and oversee the development of data collection tools
- Develop the analysis plan
- Conduct stakeholder consultations
- Co-facilitate workshops with the Team Leader
- Contribute to drafting the final evaluation report



Sana Ashraf
Senior Researcher

Brief Profile

Kasturi is a mixed-methods researcher with experience working for government agencies, foundations, and international organizations.

Responsibilities:

- Support the team in desk research and data collection tool development
- Contribute to the inception and final evaluation reports
- Conduct data analysis
- Support stakeholder engagement and coordination
- Support logistical, administrative, and workshop coordination



Kyra Variyava
Evaluation Officer (UNICEF)

Brief Profile:

Kyra has been engaged in a wide range of corporate evaluations and assessments of the Institutional Effectiveness team in the Evaluation Office.

Responsibilities:

- Maintain the evaluation document repository
- Support stakeholder mapping, contact management, outreach tracking, and scheduling of interviews and workshops
- Take structured notes in selected interviews or support transcription in coordination with Team Lead and Evaluation Manager
- Identify and retrieve internal data sources