



# Evaluation of UNICEF risk-informed humanitarian, development and peacebuilding-resilience programming

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## Executive summary

### Why this evaluation?

UNICEF works across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding settings, where the “nexus” between these domains is critical to achieving sustainable results for children. While nexus approaches have gained prominence in recent years, their application within UNICEF programmes, systems, and partnerships has not yet been comprehensively assessed. This evaluation will examine how UNICEF operationalizes the nexus across different contexts, focusing on whether strategies, resources, and institutional arrangements enable practical and sustainable programming. It will also explore how UNICEF balances humanitarian and development financing, and whether organizational culture, leadership, and partnerships support coherence across the nexus. The UNICEF Evaluation Office is commissioning this evaluation, prioritized in the Plan for Global Evaluations 2022-2025, to generate strategic insights and actionable recommendations on how to strengthen UNICEF’s nexus approach and ensure it delivers greater impact for children.

### What will the evaluation do?

The evaluation will take stock of UNICEF’s progress in operationalizing the humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus since 2021, assessing the extent to which it has been embedded into the organization’s strategies, planning, programming, and operational functions. It will examine the enabling factors and constraints that shape UNICEF’s ability to integrate humanitarian, development, and peace-related interventions, drawing on perspectives from headquarters, regional, and country levels. Beyond internal systems, the evaluation will also explore the results and added value of the nexus approach for children, partners, and systems, with particular attention to resilience, risk management, systems strengthening and future sustainability. In addition, it will analyze how UNICEF has adapted the nexus approach to diverse operational contexts, including protracted crises, climate-related emergencies, and post-crisis recovery settings, highlighting lessons from different experiences. By synthesizing these findings, the evaluation will generate practical and forward-looking recommendations to strengthen the institutional, operational, and partnership dimensions of nexus implementation, and to support evidence-based decision-making under the new Strategic Plan 2026-2029.

### How will it be done?

The evaluation will be managed by UNICEF’s Evaluation Office and conducted together with an independent team of external consultants, guided by a strategically composed internal Evaluation Reference Group, an external Advisory Group, and young people. It will follow a mixed-methods design, drawing on document review, interviews and focus groups, country and regional case studies, and participatory workshops to validate findings and co-create recommendations. Where relevant, futures perspectives and comparative reflections from other UN and multilateral organizations will be incorporated.

### Who will use it?

The primary users of this evaluation are UNICEF senior management, the newly created Global Programme Division (GPD), the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), Centers of Excellence (CoEs), regional and country offices, and other UNICEF’s offices and divisions. Findings will also be relevant to external partners, including governments, development partners, and UN agencies, among others, who collaborate with UNICEF across nexus contexts. By informing organizational strategy, workforce planning, and financing models, the evaluation is expected to support decision-making at multiple levels and strengthen UNICEF’s leadership role in advancing nexus approaches across the humanitarian–development–peace continuum.

### When will it happen?

The evaluation will run from January to July 2026 in four phases: inception, data collection, analysis and reporting, and finalization and dissemination. Findings will be shared through a concise report, co-created recommendations, and user-friendly products to support uptake and organizational learning.

## 1. Background and context

The **humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus** is an approach that aims to improve outcomes for communities living in fragile and crisis-affected contexts by aligning humanitarian, development, and peace efforts. It focuses on addressing root causes, managing risks, reducing vulnerabilities, and strengthening systems over time. UNICEF’s corporate definition of nexus is “an approach that seeks to strengthen the linkages between humanitarian, development, and peace programmes with the aim of addressing needs, reducing risks and vulnerabilities, and preventing crises and conflict through improved coordination, coherence and complementarity, joint analysis and, where appropriate, joined-up programming.”

**The concept gained renewed momentum following the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the Agenda for Humanity, and the adoption of dual UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions in 2016<sup>1</sup> and 2020<sup>2</sup>, which promoted “sustaining peace” as a shared responsibility across the UN’s development, human rights, and peace and security pillars. These resolutions marked a shift away from narrow, post-conflict notions of peacebuilding toward a broader, more preventive and inclusive understanding of crisis response and recovery to address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace and development.**

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has also prioritized the HDP nexus, serving as a key forum for coordination and decision-making among humanitarian partners. Momentum has further grown through global initiatives such as the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, with the UN Secretary-General making the nexus a central element of the UN agenda and UN Development System reform.<sup>3</sup>

**At the inter-agency level, this work is advanced by the [Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration \(JSC\)](#), established in 2017 to strengthen coherence between humanitarian and development action in crisis settings, support transitions to long-term sustainable development, and reduce vulnerabilities by building resilience.**

Internally, in alignment with the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)<sup>4</sup>, which calls for enhanced cooperation, collaboration and coordination between humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding, **UNICEF has committed to strengthening coherence between its humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding work in the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.** This effort is grounded in UNICEF’s dual mandate, its decentralized presence in high-risk contexts, and its child rights-based approach. Operationally, the nexus is reflected in how UNICEF designs programmes that address urgent needs while also promoting sustainable development, resilience, risk management and systems strengthening. Humanitarian action, for instance, as outlined in the revised **Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs)**<sup>5</sup> (2020), is expected to reinforce systems and accountability even in emergencies. Development programmes aim to reduce vulnerabilities through inclusive services and long-term investments in national capacities. In some contexts, peace-responsive programming might include support for conflict-sensitive education, youth participation, or local social cohesion.

**The HDP approach touches many parts of UNICEF, as outlined in the revised 2022 UNICEF Procedure on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.**<sup>6</sup> For instance, Country Offices (COs) operate in environments where crises and fragility intersect with long-term development challenges. Regional Offices (ROs) provide strategic guidance and support. Headquarters (HQ) programme teams in the Global Programme Division (GPD) are responsible for embedding risk, resilience, and systems thinking into technical guidance. When it comes to emergency operations, the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) provides coordination and technical leadership for emergency preparedness and humanitarian action. At the same time, the Supply Division (SD) contributes through procurement strategies, national supply chain capacity-building, and support for the continuity of essential services. Planning, monitoring and reporting functions are increasingly

tasked with reflecting coherence and risk analysis in country programme documents and results frameworks, while resource mobilization functions are asked to accelerate engagement with governments, UN agencies and development partners to support humanitarian, development and peace programmes (i.e., promoting social cohesion). In parallel, human resources functions are requested to strengthen internal capacities and provide operational support to promote and implement the HDP nexus.

**UNICEF's recent evaluative work has highlighted both progress and persistent challenges in operationalizing the HDP approach.** In 2020, UNICEF conducted a [Formative Evaluation of Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming](#)<sup>7</sup>, which was presented to the Executive Board in September 2021. The evaluation found that while the organization had established a robust policy foundation and made progress in promoting risk-informed programming, operational integration remained inconsistent. The evaluation pointed to gaps in joint risk analysis, leadership and coordination, and the contextual application of existing guidance. It also noted that internal systems and incentives were not yet aligned to support sustained coherence across functions. Similarly, the [Formative Evaluation of Emergency Preparedness \(2013–2024\)](#)<sup>8</sup> noted progress in preparedness but persistent challenges in applying the HDP nexus, including siloed approaches, weak risk integration, and limited focus on peacebuilding. Promising practices in social protection, climate resilience, and cross-sector leadership demonstrate the potential to embed preparedness across humanitarian, development, and peace efforts. In addition, a draft 2025 *Synthesis of UNICEF Humanitarian Evaluations (2017–2024)* outlined that while progress has been made in systems strengthening and risk-informed programming, operationalizing the HDP nexus remains constrained by vertical programming, limited staff understanding, and insufficient flexible, multi-year funding. The 2024 [Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025](#)<sup>9</sup>, which was presented to the Executive Board in February 2025, reinforced these findings and recommended embedding the nexus as a core part of UNICEF's operating model. Specifically, it called for more apparent strategic prioritization, stronger leadership accountability, and improved support systems to enable integrated programming across different settings and sectors. **The new 2026-2029 Strategic Plan**<sup>10</sup> **reflects this shift.** It identifies coordination across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts as a core delivery **strategy**, with a focus on resilience, risk management, systems strengthening, and sustainability.

**Efforts to implement the HDP nexus approach are also unfolding alongside broader organizational transformations** within the UN, including UN80 and the IASC's Humanitarian Reset, as well as within UNICEF through the Future Focus Initiative (FFI). In UNICEF, organizational changes are driven by shifts in global funding patterns and the need to enhance efficiency, alignment, and impact across programming and operational models. As the organization adapts its structure and ways of working, the ability to link humanitarian, development, and peace-related efforts coherently becomes increasingly critical.

**While the term “nexus” has gained traction across the UN system, it is understood and applied in different ways by various actors.** Some governments and development partners see it as a necessary approach to address protracted crises more effectively. Others express concern that efforts to integrate humanitarian, development, and peace work might blur institutional mandates or challenge the independence and neutrality of humanitarian action. These perspectives highlight the importance of examining not only how Nexus principles are implemented in practice, but also how they are understood and interpreted within diverse operational and political contexts.

Recognizing the growing strategic importance of the HDP nexus within and beyond UNICEF, the Evaluation Office included an independent institutional effectiveness evaluation of UNICEF risk-informed humanitarian, development and peacebuilding-resilience programming in its 2022–2025 Plan for Global Evaluations<sup>11</sup>, endorsed by the Executive Board.

Against this backdrop, this evaluation is expected to provide timely evidence and insights on how nexus principles are applied in practice, the progress achieved, and areas where further alignment or adaptation might be needed in light of the new Strategic Plan, UNICEF's ongoing transformation, UN80, and the IASC's Humanitarian Reset.

## 2. Purpose and scope

The overall purpose of this evaluation is to assess how effectively UNICEF has operationalized the HDP nexus approach to deliver more coherent, risk-informed, and sustainable results for children across diverse contexts, and to provide recommendations for strengthening UNICEF's work across the HDP nexus to better meet children's needs. It will examine the extent to which nexus principles are embedded in strategy, systems, and practice, and whether this has led to measurable improvements in outcomes, resilience, and systems strengthening. The evaluation will cover key countries and programmes, engage internal and external stakeholders, and take a forward-looking perspective over the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan period. By identifying progress, persistent gaps, and opportunities for refinement, and capturing lessons learned and good practices, the evaluation aims to inform strategic decision-making, enhance accountability, and guide future organizational and programmatic efforts to strengthen UNICEF's work across the HDP nexus.

This will be an independent, outcome-oriented evaluation, drawing on a summative lens to assess results achieved since the 2020 *Formative Evaluation of Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming*, while also incorporating forward-looking analysis to guide implementation of the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.

Specifically, the evaluation will focus on the following objectives:

- **Assess UNICEF's progress in operationalizing the HDP nexus since 2021**, including the extent to which it has been institutionalized across planning, programming, and operational functions;
- **Identify enablers and constraints at HQ, regional, and country levels** that influence the integration of humanitarian, development, and peace-related work;
- **Examine the results and added value of the HDP Nexus approach for children, systems, and partners**, with attention to resilience, risk management, and systems strengthening and sustainability; and
- **Analyze how the approach has been adapted to different contexts**, including protracted crises, climate-related emergencies, and post-crisis recovery settings.

The evaluation will also provide practical, forward-looking recommendations to strengthen institutional, operational, and partnership dimensions of HDP implementation, supporting evidence-based decisions under the new Strategic Plan.

### Use

The findings and recommendations from this evaluation are primarily intended to inform **UNICEF senior leadership, regional and country office management teams, and technical specialists** responsible for planning and delivering integrated humanitarian, development, and peace-related programming. They will also be particularly relevant to colleagues in the **Global Programme Division (GPD), the Centers of Excellence (CoEs), the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), programming, planning and reporting functions, partnership, supply and human resources functions** that support institutionalizing coherence, risk-informed approaches, and resilience-building. Secondary users will include the UNICEF National Committees, the members of the Executive Board, government and development partners, including other UN agencies.

The evaluation will provide an evidence base to guide:

- Strategic and operational decisions on how to further embed the HDP nexus approach in UNICEF's delivery model during the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan period;
- Adjustments to guidance, systems, and incentives to support integrated programming in diverse contexts;
- The design of capacity development, partnership, and resource mobilization strategies that enable more coherent and sustainable results; and
- Engagement with Member States, donors, and UN partners on the value, limitations, and practical implications of HDP integration.

Beyond informing UNICEF's internal decision-making, the evaluation will contribute to the **broader HDP nexus discourse** within the UN system and among partners by sharing lessons on how a dual-mandate organization can operationalize the Nexus in a principled, context-sensitive, and results-oriented way.

## Scope

**Temporal scope:** The evaluation will cover the period from **2021 to 2025**, aligning with the final phase of the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan and capturing progress made since the *Formative Evaluation of Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming*. While the primary focus will be retrospective, the evaluation will also adopt a forward-looking lens to inform the operationalization of the new **2026-2029 Strategic Plan**.

**Geographic scope:** This will be an **organization-wide evaluation**, encompassing HQ, ROs, and COs. It will include maximum **five country case studies** selected to represent a range of typologies:

- Protracted crisis contexts with prior HDP implementation;
- Fragile or conflict-affected middle-income countries newly engaging in humanitarian action;
- Climate- and disaster-prone settings; and
- Transition or recovery contexts.

Case study selection will also take into account geographic diversity, scale of operations, and the opportunity to examine different institutional and partnership models for HDP implementation.

**Thematic scope:** The evaluation will focus on how UNICEF has **institutionalized and operationalized** the HDP approach, with attention to:

- Strategic positioning and coherence in policies, guidance, and planning frameworks;
- Contextual adaptation and differentiated programming models;
- Institutional enablers and barriers, including leadership, coordination, human resources, financing, and incentives;
- Contributions to peace, resilience, risk management, systems strengthening, and sustainability;
- Partnerships and localization,
- Organizational learning and use of evidence from previous evaluations and external sources.

The evaluation will not assess all aspects of UNICEF's humanitarian, development, or peacebuilding programming. Instead, it will concentrate on those areas most relevant to understanding how nexus principles have been applied in practice, and the outcomes and lessons that can inform future integration.

### 3. Evaluation questions

The evaluation will address the following indicative questions to assess the degree to which UNICEF has institutionalized and operationalized the HDP approach, identify enabling and constraining factors, and generate insights to guide future implementation. These questions may be further refined and prioritized during the inception phase in consultation with key stakeholders.

#### 1. Strategic positioning, coherence, and contextual adaptation

- How clearly and consistently is the HDP nexus approach positioned in UNICEF's strategies, policies, and guidance?
- How effectively do UNICEF COs interpret and operationalize HDP nexus guidance within their specific country contexts, including through a clear articulation in Country Programme Documents (CPDs), work plans, and common understanding among staff?
- To what extent is the HDP nexus approach to programming tailored to different types of crises, such as protracted crises, climate-related disasters, and post-crisis recovery?

#### 2. Impact, peace-responsiveness, added value, gender, equity and inclusion

- To what extent has the HDP nexus approach contributed to improved outcomes for children, strengthened systems, and enhanced resilience, risk management, and sustainability across country contexts?
- Where peace-responsive programming has been implemented, how has it been designed, delivered, and monitored? What contributions has UNICEF made to peacebuilding and social cohesion through these efforts?
- What value has the HDP nexus approach added to more traditional modes of programming?
- To what extent has the HDP nexus approach addressed the needs of vulnerable groups, including girls, children with disabilities, and displaced populations?

#### 3. Partnerships and localization

- How has UNICEF engaged with national and local actors, UN agencies, and other development partners to advance HDP nexus integration? What, if any, coordination challenges have arisen, and how have these been addressed?
- To what extent has UNICEF supported or enabled the leadership and participation of national and local actors—including civil society, youth, and women-led organizations—in shaping and implementing HDP nexus programming?

#### 4. Institutional enablers and barriers

- What leadership, governance, coordination, planning, human resources, resource mobilization, and incentive structures enable or constrain HDP nexus approach?
- How have organizational culture and systems evolved to support or hinder coherence toward HDP integration?
- How effectively are planning, monitoring, reporting and learning mechanisms supporting HDP integration?

#### 5. Learning and future direction

- What progress has UNICEF made in addressing the findings and recommendations of the 2020 formative evaluation of the HDP nexus, and what recurrent challenges remain and why?
- What lessons can be drawn from progress since 2021 to inform operationalization of the Strategic Plan 2026–2029?

- What strategic, operational, or capacity adjustments would most strengthen UNICEF's HDP implementation going forward and improve its sustainability?

## 4. Methodology and approach

This evaluation will adopt a theory-based, utilisation-focused, participatory, gender-responsive, mixed-methods, approach, combining qualitative and quantitative evidence to ensure a comprehensive analysis of UNICEF's approach and contribution to the HDP nexus. The methodology will be guided by [UNICEF's Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System \(GEROS\)](#) quality standards and the [UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#). Methods will be finalized during the inception phase in consultation with the Evaluation Reference Group, the Advisory Group and young people.

### Key features of the approach

- **Theory-based:** While a fully articulated theory of change (ToC) does not yet exist, the evaluation will reconstruct it based on corporate strategies, policies, guidance, and prior evaluations. This reconstructed ToC will provide a framework to assess the pathways through which UNICEF's institutional, programmatic, and partnership actions contribute to coherent, risk-informed, and sustainable results for children.
- **Utilization-focused:** The evaluation will be utilization-oriented, designed to generate actionable evidence and insights for decision-makers, with engagement of key stakeholders throughout the process to enhance uptake and relevance. Findings will support strategic planning, operational adjustments, engagement with governments and development partners, and broader organizational learning within UNICEF and the wider UN system.
- **Participatory:** Key stakeholders will be engaged throughout the evaluation process – from refining evaluation questions to validating findings and co-creating recommendations. This approach will ensure inclusion of diverse perspectives, including attention to gender balance, regional representation, and voices from different levels of UNICEF and partner organizations.
- **Gender equality and leaving no one behind:** A gender and inclusion lens will be applied across all aspects of the evaluation, assessing how gender equality and leaving no one behind principles are embedded in UNICEF's HDP nexus approach to programming.
- **Conflict-sensitivity:** The evaluation will explicitly incorporate a conflict-sensitive lens, examining how UNICEF integrates peace considerations across the HDP nexus through the promotion of social cohesion.
- **Forward-looking and adaptive:** Beyond assessing the current state of HDP nexus implementation, the evaluation will examine how UNICEF's strategies, structures, and programming models are evolving, and identify adaptations needed to enhance future effectiveness, learning, and readiness for scale across diverse contexts, in light of FFI, UN80 and the IASC's Humanitarian Reset.

**Evaluation criteria** will be drawn primarily from standard [evaluation criteria for assessing humanitarian action](#)<sup>12</sup>, as applicable. These are: relevance, coverage and inclusion, effectiveness, efficiency, inter-connection, coherence, and impact, with emphasis on coherence and institutional effectiveness.

### Data sources and methods

The evaluation will use multiple complementary data sources (mixed-methods) to allow triangulation and enhance the credibility and usefulness of findings. Priority will be given to contexts and areas where

evaluability is high, and lessons can generate significant learning for strengthening UNICEF's HDP nexus approach. These might include:

- **AI-supported document review:** Analysis of corporate strategies, policies, guidance, evaluations (incl. the effective implementation of management responses), CPDs, management plans, and relevant inter-agency frameworks.
- **Global portfolio analysis:** Mapping UNICEF's HDP-related interventions since 2021 to assess scope, coverage, and trends.
- **Secondary data review:** Review of monitoring and evaluation data, including from the 2020 nexus evaluation and related evaluations.
- **Programme expenditure analysis:** Examination of UNICEF investments in HDP-related programming to assess resource allocation, prioritization, and alignment with nexus objectives.
- **Key informant interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with UNICEF staff (HQ, ROs, and COs), government counterparts, partners (UN, IFIs, NGOs, donors), and where feasible, local actors and community representatives.
- **Case studies:** In-depth analysis of a purposive sample of maximum five country contexts representing different types of nexus settings (e.g., protracted crises, climate-related emergencies, post-crisis recovery). Each case study will triangulate documentary evidence, interviews, expenditure analysis, and other available data.
- **Surveys:** Targeted surveys of UNICEF staff and partners to capture broader perspectives on institutional enablers, barriers, and results.
- **Participatory workshops and consultations:** The evaluation will actively engage stakeholders at HQ, regional, and country levels, as well as government counterparts, development partners, local actors and, where feasible, communities. Stakeholder consultations will help interpret emerging findings, validate evidence, and co-create practical recommendations. Where feasible and cost-effective, some activities – such as clustered interviews or sensemaking workshops – may be conducted in person or virtually, depending on context and accessibility.
- **Futures and foresight perspectives:** The evaluation will consider long-term trends and strategic shifts relevant to humanitarian, development, and peace programming, including changing crisis patterns, climate impacts, and evolving funding landscapes. These perspectives might be captured through interviews, scenario planning, or horizon-scanning exercises with a diverse set of stakeholders to inform adaptive and forward-looking recommendations.
- **Comparative review of Nexus approaches:** A comparative analysis will examine how similar HDP or nexus-related approaches are operationalized within other UN agencies, and relevant global organizations. This review will provide insights into good practices, challenges, and potential opportunities to strengthen UNICEF's HDP nexus institutional and operational models.

The data analysis should include a thematic analysis, contribution analysis and comparative analysis. Thematic analysis will be used to identify patterns, enabling factors, and barriers across contexts. Contribution analysis will help assess UNICEF's added value within broader inter-agency and national efforts. Comparative analysis across case studies will identify context-specific and cross-cutting lessons. Findings will be triangulated across data sources to ensure credibility, validity, and utility for decision-making.

## Anticipated limitations and mitigation strategies

Potential limitations might include data gaps, response biases, and access constraints in fragile or crisis-affected settings. These will be mitigated through mixed-method triangulation, use of virtual data collection where needed, and validation workshops to test emerging findings.

## Ethical standards and safeguarding

The evaluation will adhere to UNEG ethical guidelines and UNICEF's procedures on ethics in evidence generation. In particular, the evaluation team will:

- **Obtain informed consent** from all participants involved in interviews, workshops, or consultations;
- **Maintain confidentiality and anonymity** of participants, unless explicit permission is provided;
- **Respect the diversity of perspectives**, including gender, regional, and functional representation;
- **Avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest**, and uphold the independence and impartiality of the evaluation process;
- **Foster a safe, inclusive space** for open dialogue, particularly where organizational sensitivities or power dynamics may be present; and
- **Proactively identify and address any ethical risks or dilemmas** in consultation with the Evaluation Manager.

Special attention will be paid to child safeguarding, informed consent, confidentiality, and conflict-sensitive approaches in all data collection.

## 5. Governance and management arrangements

The evaluation is commissioned and managed by the UNICEF Evaluation Office, which holds overall responsibility for ensuring quality, independence, and credibility. The Senior Evaluation Specialist for Institutional Effectiveness in the Evaluation Office will serve as the Evaluation Manager, leading day-to-day coordination. The Evaluation Manager will supervise an externally recruited evaluation team and support data collection, analysis, and quality assurance in line with GEROS. The final approval over all deliverables rests with the Director of Evaluation. A formal management response will be required to ensure uptake and accountability.

**The independence of the evaluation is anchored in the institutional mandate of the Evaluation Office, which functions as an impartial and independent unit within UNICEF.** The Evaluation Office is responsible for managing the evaluation process, framing the inquiry, validating final deliverables, and ensuring that findings are credible, evidence-based, and free from undue influence. While external consultants will be engaged to provide technical expertise and additional capacity, the Evaluation Office will maintain full oversight, methodological stewardship, and quality assurance throughout the evaluation process, from framing the evaluation scope and questions to validating the final deliverables.

**The evaluation will follow a blended evaluation management approach**, combining external capacity and technical expertise with meaningful involvement from UNICEF Evaluation Office personnel to ensure relevance, credibility, and use. The Evaluation Manager will oversee quality assurance while also contributing to specific aspects of the process, including stakeholder coordination, participation in interviews and other data collection activities, and analytical inputs to data analysis. In addition, two Evaluation Officers from the Evaluation Office will work alongside external consultants, supporting implementation through tasks such as document review and logistical coordination. This internal engagement will strengthen contextual relevance, facilitate access to key information, and promote the timely use of findings.

To further promote transparency, relevance, and learning, the evaluation will be guided by the following structures:

- **Evaluation Reference Group:** An internal, strategically composed, Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will provide guidance and feedback at key moments. It will include representatives from relevant divisions and offices such as the Global Programme Division (GPD), the Centers of Excellence (CoEs), the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), the Office of Strategy and Evidence (OSE), the Supply Division (SD), the Public Partnership Division (PPD), the Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division (PFP), and the Division of People and Culture (DPC). Regional and country office colleagues may also be invited to join, as appropriate. This ERG will be engaged at four key stages: (i) a kick-off meeting to align expectations and share background; (ii) a review of the inception summary; (iii) a sensemaking session to discuss preliminary findings and inform recommendations; and (iv) a review of the draft evaluation report and co-creation workshop to develop recommendations that are grounded in evidence and shaped by organizational feasibility and readiness for change. The group is advisory and does not interfere with the independence of the evaluation team.
- **Advisory Group:** Throughout the evaluation, an external Advisory Group (AG) comprising senior leaders and strategic development partners will be actively engaged to ensure that the evaluation is grounded, inclusive, and designed for use.
- **Youth Advisory Group:** The evaluation will also benefit from the engagement of an external group composed of young people. The Youth Advisory Group (YAG) will play a consultative role in promoting further contextualization and localization of the evaluation findings and conclusions. By bringing lived experience and youth perspectives into the evaluation process, the YAG will help ensure that the insights generated are grounded in the realities of affected communities and responsive to the needs and priorities of young people in nexus contexts.

The Evaluation Office will apply its standard quality assurance procedures, including milestone-based approvals, ongoing coordination with the evaluation team, and structured review of all key outputs. This governance model is intended to promote ownership, foster shared accountability, and increase the likelihood that evaluation findings will meaningfully inform strategic decisions about the future of the HDP nexus approach at UNICEF.

## 6. Evaluation team composition and requirements

The evaluation will be carried out by a team of external consultants, supported by the Evaluation Manager, and two Evaluation Officers from UNICEF's Evaluation Office. The external team is expected to comprise up to three members (incl. a senior evaluation specialist, a senior subject-matter expert and a data scientist), each with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and time allocations. Together, the team should demonstrate the following qualifications and experience:

- **At least 10 years of experience leading complex, multi-country, and multi-stakeholder evaluations** in humanitarian, development and peacebuilding contexts, with strong knowledge of UNEG norms and standards;
- **Subject-matter expertise** in humanitarian action, development cooperation, peacebuilding, or related nexus approaches, with strong knowledge of systems resilience, risk management, and institutional effectiveness;

- **Proven experience** in organizational and institutional effectiveness evaluations, particularly in multilateral or international organizations (e.g., UN agencies, IFIs, INGOs), including familiarity with governance and organizational change processes;
- **Experience in mixed-methods evaluation designs**, including participatory and utilization-focused approaches, and the ability to conduct evaluability assessments and reconstruct theories of change;
- **Demonstrated skills in data collection and analysis**, including quantitative review of programme expenditure and qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, document reviews);
- **Familiarity with digital tools or AI-supported techniques** for data synthesis;
- **Expertise in communicating findings**, including strong report writing, data visualization, and the ability to present complex issues in clear, engaging formats for diverse audiences;
- **Commitment to gender equality, equity, and inclusion**, ensuring that these principles are systematically integrated into all stages of the evaluation; and
- **Fluency in English and French** is required; knowledge of another UN language is an asset.

The team composition should ensure a balance of skills and experience, and, where possible, reflect gender and regional diversity. This will complement the role of the UNICEF Evaluation Office, which will support the process through a blended model, with the Evaluation Manager providing oversight, coordination and day-to-day support, and two Evaluation Officers supporting data collection, analysis and reporting.

All external team members will be required to:

- Sign a conflict-of-interest declaration;
- Comply with UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation; and
- Adhere to UNICEF's data sharing, confidentiality, and ethics policies.

In case of disagreement between the external team members and the Evaluation Manager, the Director of Evaluation will mediate and make the final determination, in line with UNICEF's quality assurance procedures.

## 7. Evaluation process and deliverables

The evaluation will follow a structured and participatory process, ensuring coherence with the mixed-methods approach, Theory of Change (ToC) reconstruction, and utilization-oriented focus. The process is planned for **January–July 2026** and is organized in four phases, as follows:

### 1. Orientation and inception (January–February 2026):

- Orientation session with the Evaluation Office and introductory consultations with hubs and key partners;
- Desk review of key documents and data, including monitoring and evaluation data and programme expenditure;
- Reconstruction of the ToC in consultation with stakeholders through a participatory online workshop;
- Refinement of evaluation questions, framework, and methodological tools;
- Development of a sampling strategy for case studies; and

- First meeting with the ERG, AG and YAG to review the draft inception summary.

*Deliverables:*

- **Draft inception summary** (presentation format, max. 25 slides);
- **Comment matrix**, showing how feedback was addressed; and
- **Final inception summary**, incorporating feedback, with confirmed design, tools, and workplan.

## 2. Data collection (March–April 2026):

- Semi-structured interviews and/or small focus groups with key stakeholders;
- Implementation of targeted surveys;
- Case studies in selected countries/contexts to capture in-depth perspectives on nexus programming (The expectation is that data collection in each case study country will take approximately one week, with one member of the external evaluation team participating in the piloting of data collection tools in one country and conducting two additional country visit, while the Evaluation Office will cover the remaining two countries.);
- Review of financial data, monitoring data, and partnership documentation; and
- Targeted online participatory workshops or consultations to validate data.

*Deliverables:*

- **Completion of all planned data collection activities;** and
- **Data collection summary note**, highlighting progress and emerging insights.

## 3. Analysis and reporting (May 2026):

- Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, including case study findings and expenditure analysis;
- Sensemaking workshop with ERG, AG, YAG and key stakeholders to test and refine emerging findings; and
- Drafting of the evaluation report based on triangulated evidence and validated conclusions.

*Deliverables:*

- **Sensemaking workshop materials;** and
- **Draft evaluation report** (max. 35 pages / 17,500 words, excluding annexes; standalone executive summary of max. 5 pages).

## 4. Finalization and communication (June–July 2026):

- Online validation workshop with ERG, AG, YAG and stakeholders to co-create recommendations;
- Finalization of the evaluation report following quality assurance; and
- Preparation of tailored communication products to maximize uptake.

*Deliverables:*

- **Final evaluation report**, incorporating feedback;
- **Comment matrix**, showing how feedback was addressed;
- **Evaluation brief** (max. 5 pages) synthesizing key insights in a user-friendly format; and
- **Final presentation deck** (max. 20 slides).

A detailed work plan and internal milestone calendar will be developed during the inception phase to confirm realistic dates for deliverables, reviews, and stakeholder workshops.

**Additional requirements:** All deliverables must meet UNICEF Evaluation Office quality standards, comply with the UNICEF Style Book and Brand Book, and be submitted in editable formats (e.g., Microsoft Word, PowerPoint). All graphs, charts, maps, and other visual elements must likewise be provided in editable formats.

In the course of the evaluation, all documentation will be managed and stored on the UNICEF server. Access will be provided to the external evaluation team members. Upon conclusion of the evaluation, the UNICEF Evaluation Office will retain all the documentation collected in the course of the evaluation. This will include:

- **All primary data collected** (e.g., interview notes, coded transcripts), retaining role-based attribution to ensure contextual understanding;
- **Key analysis products** (e.g., coding frameworks, analytical matrices, draft findings tables, synthesis outputs);
- **Any tools, templates, or digital assets** developed for the evaluation (e.g., data collection instruments, codebooks, visualizations); and
- **A summary handover note**, describing the structure and contents of the handover package, including any instructions or caveats for future reference.

**Review processes:** The Evaluation Manager will review each deliverable within 72 hours of submission for quality assurance. The ERG will be provided with at least two weeks to review and comment on the draft inception summary and the draft evaluation report.

**Public disclosure:** Key final products – such as the evaluation report, management response, evaluation brief, and presentation deck – will be made publicly available in line with UNICEF’s Evaluation Policy (2023) and Information Disclosure Policy (2010).

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> UN General Assembly and Security Council Twin Resolutions on the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture ([A/RES/70/262PDF](#) and [S/RES/2282 \(2016\)](#))
- <sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly and Security Council Twin Resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace [A/RES/75/201](#) and [S/RES/2558 \(2020\)](#)
- <sup>3</sup> References to the HDP Nexus are embedded in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, its 2020 'Cooperation Framework Companion Piece on Humanitarian–Development–Peace Collaboration,' and the 'Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System (MAF).
- <sup>4</sup> Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations System : resolution adopted by the General Assembly ([A/RES/75/233](#); 75th sess. : 2020-2021)
- <sup>5</sup> UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, October 2020 ([CCCs](#))
- <sup>6</sup> UNICEF Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus ([link](#))
- <sup>7</sup> UNICEF, Formative evaluation of UNICEF work to link humanitarian and development programming ([Main Report](#))
- <sup>8</sup> UNICEF, Formative evaluation of UNICEF preparedness in humanitarian action (2013-2024) ([Main Report](#))
- <sup>9</sup> UNICEF, Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025 ([Main Report](#))
- <sup>10</sup> UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2026-2029 : draft decision submitted to the Executive Board ([E/ICEF/2025/L.19](#))
- <sup>11</sup> UNICEF, Plan for global evaluations, 2026–2029: draft for review ([E/ICEF/2025/30](#))
- <sup>12</sup> Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP), Adapting the OECD criteria for the evaluation of humanitarian action ([Report](#))