UNICEF

CHS Benchmarking Report

UNICEF-BENCH-2019

Date: 2019-10-01

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1. General information

Organisation	UNICEF		
Type	☐ National ☒ International ☐ Membership/Network ☐ Federated ☒ Direct assistance ☒ Through partners		
Mandate	☒ Humanitarian	☒ Development	☒ Advocacy
Verified Mandate(s)	☒ Humanitarian	☒ Development	☒ Advocacy
Size	190 countries and territories (150 country offices, headquarters and other offices), 34 National Committees, 2272 staff in 8 global HQs and specialised offices	Sampling Rate	5 field visits 7 remote assessments of sites
Lead	Johnny O'Regan	Team members	Marie Grasmuck Nik Rilkoff
		Others	--
	Head Office	Country Programme(s)	
Location/Dates	New York 27–31 May Geneva 20 June	Ethiopia 8–12 July Jordan 30 June – 4 July Peru 3–6 June South Sudan July 11–18 Vanuatu 29 July – 2 August	

2. Schedule summary

2.1 Verification Schedule

Name of Programme sites/members/partners verified	Location	Mandate (Humanitarian, Development, Advocacy)	Number of projects visited	Type of projects
Ethiopia				
Ministry of Health, BoWCYA, local authorities	Fedis	Humanitarian/ development	2	Health/SAM, Health/SAM
Ministry of Health, BoWCYA, Water Bureau, local authorities	Midhega	Humanitarian/ development	2	Health/SAM, WASH, IDP
Peru				
CSO partner	Tumbes	Humanitarian	1	Health
CSO partner	Tumbes	Humanitarian	1	WASH
CSO partner	Tumbes	Humanitarian	1	Protection
Jordan				
Partner	Za'atari	Humanitarian	1	Refugee and host community-health, education, WASH
Partner	Amman (EAC) and Irbid	Humanitarian	2	Refugee and host community - Life skills, education
South Sudan				
Niall Hope	Juba	Humanitarian	1	Refugee (WASH, education)
Rescue Initiative South Sudan	Rumbek	Humanitarian	1	C4D
Chado	Yei	Humanitarian	1	C4D
Vanuatu				
Department of Water Resources	Santo	Humanitarian/ Development	3	WASH
World Vision	Santo	Development	1	WASH

2.2 Opening and closing meetings

2.2.1 At Head Office:

	Opening meeting	Closing meeting
Date	18/4/19	21/8/19
Location	Skype	Skype
Number of participants	3	5
Any substantive issue arising	No	No

2.2.2 At Programme Site(s):

	Opening meeting	Closing meeting
Date	3/6/19	6/6/19
Location	Lima	Lima
Number of participants	3	6
Any substantive issue arising	No	No

	Opening meeting	Closing meeting
Date	30/6/19	4/7/19
Location	Amman	Amman
Number of participants	4	5
Any substantive issue arising	No	No

	Opening meeting	Closing meeting
Date	8/7/19	11/7/19
Location	Addis Ababa	Addis Ababa
Number of participants	2	3
Any substantive issue arising	No	No

	Opening meeting	Closing meeting
Date	11/7/19	18/7/19
Location	Juba	Juba
Number of participants	4	18
Any substantive issue arising	No	No

	Opening meeting	Closing meeting
Date	29/7/19	2/8/19
Location	Port Vila	Port Vila
Number of participants	1	1
Any substantive issue arising	No	No

3. Recommendation

In our opinion, UNICEF met 53 out of the 64 assessment indicators. It did not however meet 10 indicators, denoting weaknesses that do not immediately compromise the integrity of the commitments and 1 indicator which denotes a significant weakness in the organization.

Detailed findings are laid out in the rest of this report.

Team Leader's Name and Signature   Date and Place:

Johny o' Rega

                                                     Dublin, September 23, 2019

4. Approval of the report

Report Validity	
This report reflects the situation of UNICEF at the time of the benchmarking exercise.	
Pierre Hauselmann Executive Director Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative	Date: 2019-10-01

5. Quality Control

First Draft	2019-08-28
Final Draft	2019-10-03

6. Background information on the organisation

6.1 General

In December 1946, the General Assembly of the United Nations announced the creation of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to provide relief programmes for children in Europe affected by World War II. In 1950, its mandate was broadened to address the long-term needs of children and women in developing countries everywhere. UNICEF became a permanent agency of the United Nations in 1953 with responsibility for safeguarding child health generally, not solely in the context of humanitarian emergencies. In addition to nutrition assistance, UNICEF began work on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the 1950s and on formal and non-formal education and psychosocial needs in the 1960s. UNICEF's work has evolved since then to support survival, protection and development of children with special focus on those most vulnerable.

Vision

A world where the rights of every child are realized. In everything we do, we work to achieve a world where all children, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, have equal opportunities to survive and thrive.

Mission

UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children.

UNICEF insists that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress.

Strategy and area of operations

UNICEF operates in 190 countries and territories to deliver its Strategic Plan (2018–2021), which has five Goal Areas: (a) Every child survives and thrives; (b) Every child learns; (c) Every child is protected from violence and exploitation; (d) Every child lives in a safe and clean environment; and (e) Every child has an equitable chance in life. UNICEF works across ten thematic areas, health; HIV & AIDS; nutrition; education; child protection; WASH; safe and clean environment; social protection; inclusion and governance; gender equality; humanitarian action. UNICEF's Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) are a critical part of its policy framework that are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action and are intended to promote predictable, effective and timely collective humanitarian action.

UNICEF leads the Global Nutrition Cluster, Global WASH Cluster, co-leads (with Save the Children International) the Global Education Cluster (GEC) and leads the Child Protection Area of Responsibility.

UNICEF's activities are funded through three main streams that totalled USD6.6bn in 2018: Regular Resources ($1.8bn) are unearmarked funds. Other Resources - regular ($2.9bn) are earmarked for specific, non-emergency programme purposes and strategic priorities. Other Resources – emergency ($1.9bn) are earmarked funds for specific humanitarian action and post-crisis recovery activities. Governments contribute to two - thirds of its resources; private groups and some 6 million individual donors contribute the rest through its 34 National Committees, which are non-governmental organisations that promote children's rights, raise funds, and sell UNICEF products.

6.2 Organisational structure and management system

UNICEF's 36-member Executive Board of government representatives is responsible for guiding and monitoring its work by establishing policies, approving programmes and deciding on administrative and financial plans and budgets. Members are elected by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, usually for three-year terms.

Overall management and administration of the organisation take place at headquarters, where global policy on children is shaped. Specialised offices include the Supply Division, based in Copenhagen, which provides essential items such as vaccines. The UNICEF Global Shared Services Centre in Budapest provides HR administration, payroll, invoicing, and global help desk services to UNICEF staff and offices worldwide. UNICEF also operates the Innocenti Research Centre in Florence and Offices for Japan and Brussels, which assist with fundraising and liaison with policy-makers.

The following UNICEF divisions and offices, key for the delivery of the CHS, are line managed by the Executive Director and four Deputy Executive Directors:

- Programme Division works with all goals and thematic areas of the strategic plan, provides global technical leadership and influences global policy issues.

- Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) provides strategic and coordinated support to Country Offices preparing for and responding to humanitarian crises, in collaboration with Regional Offices, to ensure that they have the right capacities to respond effectively. EMOPS is leading the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) agenda in UNICEF.

- Division of Analysis, Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting (DAPM) drives, shapes and guides UNICEF's evidence-informed analysis, strategic planning, monitoring and reporting.

- Evaluation Division aims to drive results for children by fostering evidence-based decision-making in UNICEF.

- Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI) is mandated to provide Internal Audits (assurance and advisory services), and investigations services.

- Human Resources Division (DHR) is responsible for staff selection, HR administration, staff development and learning, policy advice, and staff/management relations.

- Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division oversees public partnerships, private fundraising and data research and policy.

The Executive Director also line manages seven regional directors: Europe and Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, East Asia and Pacific, East and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Decision-making is highly decentralised to regional and country offices. Each country office carries out UNICEF's mission through a programme of cooperation developed with the host government. This five-year programme focuses on practical ways to realise the rights of children and women. Their needs are analysed in a situation report produced at the beginning of the programme cycle. Regional offices guide this work and provide technical assistance to country offices as needed. UNICEF's work is also part of other United Nations activities in a country, for example the Humanitarian Country Teams.

At CO level, the Country Management Team (CMT) leads the programming within a country. Emergency management teams (EMTs) are established during all emergencies as an extension of the CMT, often including emergency focal points from ROs and HQ. The team's terms of reference depend on UNICEF's level of response to the emergency: for a Level 2

response there is a defined Regional Emergency Management Team structure; for a Level 3 response there is a different EMT structure including a Global Emergency Coordinator (GEC), as per UNICEF Simplified Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPS).

6.3 Organisational quality assurance

UNICEF has several organisational mechanisms and processes to ensure quality assurance:
- Global quality assurance:
    o Different levels of oversight and validation exist within the head offices, regional offices, country offices and between them, and policy-type documents usually describe the accountability level of internal stakeholders and their expected duties in regard to the implementation and quality assurance of their content.
    o The office of internal audit and investigation (OIAI) undertakes regular internal audits and, where necessary, investigations. All audit reports are accessible publicly on UNICEF's website.
    o Specialised human resources: UNICEF has sector or area specific HR in both its emergency and programme divisions, and at different level in the structure (HO, RO and FO, but also cluster and global coordination related), in order to ensure that each section has sufficient expertise on a range of topics, and the capacity to deliver relevant programmes and advice.
    o UNICEF develops guidance and shares lessons learnt to drive quality implementation at field level.
- Quality assurance at CO level:
    o Each CO builds a Country Programme Document (CPD) and Strategy Notes (SN), which are reviewed and agreed on by the UNICEF's Executive Board. The CO reports annually on its performance in regard with the CPD, and for emergency programmes if appropriate.
    o The CO reports annually on the Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQ), which contain several cross-cutting issues and sector specific strategic questions, in order to identify areas of improvement.
    o Contextualised tools, such as monitoring templates or implementation checklists, are also developed at CO level to follow up on quality assurance, implement data collection and ensure reporting.
    o Some platforms or management documents embed green/red lights systems in order to make sure they are being used, such as the Emergency Preparedness Platform (EPP).
- Quality assurance of programmes: UNICEF's evaluation policy describes the rate and kind of evaluation expected per country type. All evaluations have to be followed by a management response; whose agreed actions are followed up every 6 months. Management response and follow up plans are accessible on the intranet.
- Quality assurance of implementing partners: Implementing partners are submitted to specific scrutiny and processes of the Harmonized Approach for Cash Transfer (HACT) before entering a Programme Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with UNICEF. UNICEF organises monitoring visits to the IP and the project, the number of which is determined by the risk assessment of the IP. Monitoring visits are recorded in order to be able to follow recommendations.
- Quality assurance of contractors: Contractors are managed by the supply department and a set of rules exist to ensure they comply with UNICEF's commitment and values. If the contractor has direct implementation duties, the work is overseen by the programme section.

- Quality assurance of clusters: UNICEF uses its Cluster Milestone Monitoring (CMM), Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM) tool and online surveys in order to monitor the performance of clusters and act upon the feedback from the surveys.

6.4 Work with Partners

Partnerships between UNICEF and both governments and civil society organisations (CSOs) contribute to results for children in development and humanitarian contexts, and UNICEF also procures supplies or services directly from the private sector. In 2018, UNICEF transferred US$1.04 billion to 3,800 civil society implementing partners: 847 international and 2,953 national NGOs, community-based organisations and academic institutes. During this same period of time, UNICEF transferred $1.15 billion to governments.

In each of the 190 countries that UNICEF supports and has a presence in, five-year country programmes are planned with governments, based on situation analyses and programme strategies, and confirmed in agreements signed with host Ministries. Country programmes are realised through annual work-planning processes where joint objectives and shared priorities are agreed and budgeted for.

UNICEF identifies CSOs either through open selection (a call for proposals and application package) or direct selection based on corporate experience or knowledge. UNICEF's CSO partnerships are decentralised and most are with local CSOs, in line with UNICEF's commitment to the localisation agenda. Localisation is explicit in the UNICEF 2018-21 Strategic Plan and the organisation's global results framework. The target of 34% of assistance to be delivered through local actors by 2021 was exceeded in 2018 (36%).

Partner due diligence is undertaken at the country office level for local CSOs and in the global Communications Division for international CSOs. This process, as described above, is carried out through HACT, comprising set of 96 questions that assess governance, programmatic, administrative and financial capacities. Each partner receives a risk rating based on their overall score under the HACT assessment, which determines the level of monitoring scrutiny of programme and financial implementation (in terms of frequency, spot checks and audits).

Partner risk ratings also direct the types and frequencies of capacity support and training interventions, detailed in partner capacity assessments. UNICEF intends to continue to increase implementation through, and capacity building with, local partners. UNICEF also prioritises transferring capacity developed during emergencies to local or national authorities. In the nexus between development and humanitarian interventions, UNICEF works to build long term capacity or to reinforce existing systems by supporting protocols and policies and utilising and strengthening local capacities in emergency and development programmes to create linkages and increase resilience.

Partnership Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) are umbrella agreements co-created with IPs in what is intended to be a consultative approach that extends to regular meetings and programme and partnership reviews. PCAs consider both the needs of populations and organisational mandates. In the case of development programming, PCAs fit within UNICEF's five-year country programme document with the government, even aligning dates where possible, to feed into the national development outcomes. They include overarching requirements including PSEA and Codes of Conduct.

Programme Documents (PDs) are individual funding agreements between UNICEF and the IP, within an umbrella PCA. CSOs can have multiple PDs and discussions to agree these include details on how projects will be implemented and monitored. Once this is signed, funds are transferred for implementation and UNICEF staff or third-party monitors (3PM) conduct programmatic visits and do field monitoring based on frequencies determined in the HACT risk assessment. PDs include a paragraph (Question 2.6) where IPs are to explain how they will meet the IASC Commitments to Affected Population (that UNICEF has endorsed) in five

areas: 1) Leadership and Governance; 2) Transparency; 3) Feedback and complaints; 4) Participation; and 5) Design, monitoring and evaluation.

UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP have simplified and moved to an online format for their harmonised UN Partner Portal, in line with the Grand Bargain commitment, which reduces the paperwork and costs associated with conducting due diligence. The merged system requirements include PSEA, AAP, CRM and community feedback mechanisms and each UNICEF section carries out the due diligence of prospective IPs according to standardised checklists.

UNICEF also partners with the private sector to deliver infrastructure, services and innovations or specific technical expertise, through standard procurement processes. Private sectors partners are primarily monitored by operations staff in a 'contractor' modality, whereas CSOs are monitored by programme and finance staff. Monitoring assesses key performance indicators as described in contracts and are outside the HACT system and processes. UNICEF recently amended the General Terms and Conditions (GTC) in PCAs with implementing partners and contractual/tender provisions with vendors to ensure compliance with the PSEA policy.

6.5 Certification or verification history

N/A

7. Sampling

7.1 Rationale for sampling

The team randomly selected 12 country programmes as per HQAI guidance on sampling.

Seven of the initial 12 countries randomly sampled were visited or remotely assessed (Haiti, Indonesia, Jordan, OPT, Peru, South Sudan, Yemen); the remaining programmes were replaced because of scheduling conflicts or could not support the process. The five countries that replaced them (Chad, Ethiopia, India, Ukraine, Vanuatu) were agreed between the benchmarking team and UNICEF to ensure a geographic and programmatic balance. Partners were selected based on the programmes to be visited. Affected populations were self-selected, based, for example on their attendance at services and to that extent were random.

Disclaimer:

It is important to note that the benchmarking findings are based on the results of a sample of the organisation's documentation and systems as well as interviews and group discussions with a sample of staff, partners, communities and other relevant stakeholders. Findings are analysed to determine the organisation's systematic approach and application of all aspects of the CHS across the organisation and in its different contexts and ways of working.

7.2 Interviews:

7.2.1 Semi-structured interviews (individual interviews or with a small group <6)

Position of interviewees	Number of interviewees	
	Female	Male
Head Office		
New York	14	13
Geneva	8	9
Programme site(s)		
Ethiopia		
Country Office staff - Addis Ababa	6	5
Partners Addis Ababa	3	5
Programme site Fedis- local authorities and focal points	1	4
Programme site Fedis - users of the health post/centre and health staff	7	
Programme site Midhega- local authorities	0	3
Peru		
Country office and management staff - Lima	6	3
Field office staff - Tumbes	2	1
Government and partners - Tumbes	5	5
Affected population - Tumbes	12	6
Jordan		
Country office management & staff - Amman	7	5
Regional office management & staff - Amman	5	3
Partners	2	7
South Sudan	7	2
Country office management & staff - Juba	6	8
Field office staff- Rumbek	4	3
Partners	3	2
Vanuatu		
Multi-Country Office staff – Suva, Fiji	1	1
Field office management & staff - Port Vila	2	6
Government and partners – Santo	3	3
Government and partners - Port Vila	5	4

Affected population	7	3
Remote sites		
Chad	1	1
Haiti	1	
India	1	1
Indonesia		6
OPT	1	1
Ukraine	2	
Yemen	3	4
Total number of interviews	**125**	**114**

7.2.2 Consultations with affected populations (interviews with a group>6)

Type of Group	Number of participants	
	Female	Male
Ethiopia		
Fedis, health centre patients	7	0
Midhega, community members	5	0
Midhega, community members	0	13
Midhega, community members	7	0
Jordan		
Refugee children	15	17
Refugee incentive volunteers	13	15
Refugee parents	12	10
Host community parents	8	
Host community children	10	
Mixed host & refugee	4	7
South Sudan		
Community mobilisers- Rumbek	1	6
Field staff- Rumbek	2	4
Affected population- Rumbek	15	10

Affected population - Juba	6	7
Community mobilisers - Yei	5	2
Affected population - Yei	10	8
Total number of participants	**120**	**92**

8. Report

8.1 Overall organisational performance

UNICEF is an equity-focused organisation that strives to be needs-led by serving the most vulnerable and it frequently delivers on these goals, for example through leadership in mass vaccination campaigns and in coordination mechanisms. However, it has not been delivering programmes in line with its resources, capacity and aspirations. UNICEF is a decentralised organisation, which is important for local ownership and delivering context-appropriate programmes. However, this decentralisation and the need for consensus compounds issues related to its scale, competing priorities and a traditional risk aversion. The result is an inconsistent application of standards and guidance and delays in the roll out of proven good practice and systems. During the benchmarking exercise, the team observed very good practices in some countries that were not replicated in other countries.

UNICEF struggles to achieve sectoral integration (both within UNICEF and with other relevant agencies) and between its own humanitarian and development programmes. UNICEF is aware of these issues and is attempting to address them through, for example, developing intersectoral objectives, engaging in joint needs assessments and developing a procedure to enhance linkages between development and humanitarian work.

Across country programmes, Accountability to Affected Populations is the area of greatest concern. UNICEF's commitment to local leadership and governance is clear, but is inconsistently implemented. There are policy and practice gaps around providing communities with information on their rights and entitlements and UNICEF struggles to meet its commitment to implementing robust complaints mechanisms for affected populations. UNICEF does not systematically ensure participation of affected populations in design, monitoring and evaluation. These issues reveals a tension that exists in much of its work- delivering programmes at scale while supporting a range of partners of varying capacities to deliver theirs. Nonetheless, UNICEF performs strongly in some aspects of the standard such as learning. UNICEF's own systems identified many of the issues highlighted in this report and the team's sense is that UNICEF is an organisation that is keen to learn and improve.

8.2 Summary of Weaknesses (see Annex 1 for the scoring methodology)

Weaknesses	Type
2019-2.5 UNICEF does not systematically identify and address poor performance.	Minor
2019-3.3 UNICEF does not systematically enable the development of local leadership and organisations in their capacity as first responders.	Minor
2019-3.6 UNICEF does not systematically identify unintended potential or actual negative effects in the areas of a) people's safety, security, dignity and rights, b) sexual exploitation and abuse by staff, c) culture, gender, social and political relationships, d) livelihoods, e) the local economy, and the environment.	Minor
2019-3.8 There are no systems in place to systematically safeguard personal information collected from the affected population.	Minor
2019-4.1 UNICEF does not systematically provide, or support or require partners to systematically provide information to affected populations and people affected by crisis about the organisation, the principles it adheres to, the expected behaviours of staff.	Minor
2019-5.1 The affected population and expected users are not consulted on the design, implementation and monitoring of complaints-handling processes.	Minor
2019-5.2 UNICEF does not systematically communicate externally on how its complaint mechanism can be accessed and does not provide guidance or support to its partners on how to communicate about complaints mechanism.	Minor
2019-5.3 UNICEF does not support partners to ensure that complaints mechanisms are timely, fair and appropriate.	Minor
2019-5.4 The complaints handling mechanism for the affected population is not systematically documented and in place, and UNICEF's own complaints handling mechanism does not cover programming related complaints.	Major
2019-5.5 There is a lack of confidence in the integrity of UNICEF's complaints mechanism.	Minor
2019-5.6 Affected populations are not aware of organisational commitments made on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.	Minor
TOTAL Number	10 Minor 1 Major

8.3 Strong points and areas for improvement:

Commitment 1: Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant

Score: 2.5

UNICEF commits to delivering programmes based on needs and context analysis and is working towards its Grand Bargain commitment to engage in joint needs assessments. However, inter-agency joint sectoral planning is at an early stage and strategic plans and cluster strategies typically have not included cross-sectoral objectives. The result is that programmes are more likely to be convergent than integrated.

UNICEF utilises a range of tools to analyse context and collect data but has not rolled out a range of potential tools for context analysis and data collection in access challenged areas. This compounds UNICEF's traditional risk aversion, and means that programmes frequently do not adequately address the totality of needs, risks and vulnerabilities, particularly for the disabled and affected populations in access challenged areas. Nonetheless, stakeholders consider UNICEF to be a flexible partner and it adapts programmes based on changing needs, capacities and context.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 1

The affected populations stated that UNICEF delivers impartial assistance that generally meets their needs and they consider that the assistance is appropriate to vulnerabilities and capacities with some exceptions, such as people with disabilities and people living in remote areas. They stated that UNICEF adapts programmes when needs and circumstances change if there is an available budget.

Commitment 2: Humanitarian response is effective and timely

Score: 2

UNICEF engages with a range of actors to address constraints to ensure that its programmes are realistic and safe. UNICEF's systems and procedures generally result in timely action, particularly to significant crises and sudden onsets. However, it is frequently reactive rather than proactive in responding to slow onset crises and country offices with traditionally development portfolios are generally less timely in responding to emergencies; UNICEF's range of processes and procedures to ensure timely action partly fill these gaps. Forgotten crises and less visible development programmes do not attract the same level of human or financial resources, which presents a risk for protracted crises as they recede in profile. There is consensus that UNICEF is programmatically under-stretching relative to its capacity.

UNICEF has strong technical resources and identifies and refers unmet needs, primarily through its leadership in coordination mechanisms. However, it has not fully clarified when it will act as provider of last resort (i.e to meet critical gaps in humanitarian response) in those areas where it is a Cluster Lead Agency. Monitoring systems are generally well functioning but gaps exist in systems to identify and address poor performance and UNICEF does not systematically analyse qualitative monitoring data or provide capacity building support for partners to develop their own monitoring systems.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 2:

Affected populations stated that UNICEF generally delivers timely and effective services. They were satisfied with UNICEF's level of technical expertise and found that UNICEF adapts programmes in line with monitoring results. However, affected populations stated that UNICEF monitoring and other processes does not always identify and/or address

poor performance and would appreciate greater contact with UNICEF country office and global staff.

Commitment 3: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects

Score: 1.8

UNICEF commits to strengthening local capacities and pursues its resilience goals through the localisation, the risk-informed programming and the humanitarian-development nexus agendas. Policies, strategies and guidance exist, as well as communities of practice and learning activities on the topic. However, the level of implementation of this commitment strongly differs from one country to another, and UNICEF faces several internal and external constraints in ensuring the link between humanitarian and development programmes, such as a lack of flexibility for HR to move across mandates or funding processes and requirements. In terms of preparedness and developing local leadership and organisations to be the first responders, UNICEF anticipates and plans for preparedness. When possible, UNICEF fosters early recovery and aligns its CPD with the governments' national strategies, including development plans. While these processes are well rooted internally, they have not systematically translated into external coordination or preparedness for governments to be first responders in the event of future crises.

UNICEF has different ways to identify potential or actual unintended negative effects: its risk assessments, its own monitoring, and partners' monitoring. UNICEF identifies risks in its different risk analysis documents; however, most of this documentation focuses on compliance and performance, rather than on a comprehensive identification of unintended negative effects, for which there is minimal guidance or processes. The identification of unintended negative effects is mainly the responsibility of partners and their capacity vary significantly. Due to the directives and training on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) (see also C5 and C8), UNICEF staff is aware and trained on identifying and acting upon SEA occurrences; however the engagement with PSEA is recent and no evidence was gathered than the identification of actual or potential unintended negative effects in the area of SEA is effective at the time of this benchmarking exercise.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 3:

The affected populations stated that the assistance they were receiving was helping them recover and was beneficial to the local economy. They stated that UNICEF's assistance was very beneficial to their community and that numerous activities strengthened their capacities. However, they felt they remained dependent on UNICEF's assistance, in peaceful times as well as in the event of a future crisis.

Commitment 4: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback

Score: 1.9

UNICEF has a strong set of policies guiding participation and inclusion and respectful interaction with affected populations. Co-leadership in the IASC result group on accountability and inclusion also helps ensure that participation informs and adapts humanitarian responses. However, policies for information sharing with affected populations are not in place in UNICEF and are not systematically in place in partners. There is no common practice in UNICEF to guide staff or partners on providing information on the organisation, the principles it adheres to, the expected behaviours of staff, its programmes and deliverables.

UNICEF is field-testing standardised guidance to country teams on participation and feedback in both development and humanitarian contexts in an effort to support coherence. UNICEF's Communication for Development (C4D) approach is used for behaviour change in development and humanitarian interventions. C4D is a method to listen to, analyse, use and respond to feedback from affected populations, but it is not standardised in AAP initiatives. Gathering and responding to feedback is not systematic, partially because there are differing understandings internally about what AAP means and who is responsible for it.

As a cluster lead agency, UNICEF supports cluster members to bring affected people's voices into humanitarian response, in many cases through joint needs assessments and joint monitoring, but this is not systematic.

UNICEF has demonstrated its capacity to make strong connections between inclusion, participation and advocacy and engagement of people for wider social change: several examples were identified where UNICEF successfully brings children's voices in national policy and practice.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 4:

Most of the affected populations spoken to did not recall being asked about their satisfaction with the programmes, although some had given positive feedback. Some gave feedback and were still waiting for responses, and some of those who knew that UNICEF was part of the programme expressed a strong preference for greater engagement with UNICEF. Very few members of affected populations spoken to could recall being informed of the behaviour they could expect from UNICEF or partner staff. Where there was information from partners and UNICEF about programmes, they were generally satisfied with the format of it, including the use of Facebook and WhatsApp.

Commitment 5: Complaints are welcomed and addressed

Score: 1

This benchmarking exercise considers 3 potential complaints mechanisms: UNICEF's own complaint mechanism (mainly used by its staff but can be used by third parties), the partner's complaints mechanism (accessible by the communities), and joint complaints mechanism between UNICEF and other structures (accessible by the communities).

UNICEF's own complaints mechanism is documented and in place; however, it does not cover programming-related complaints. The ED office has strongly communicated on its commitment to welcome and address complaints. To this end, UNICEF has dedicated resources to review and improve its processes and organizational culture regarding the handling of complaints, such as commissioning independent reviews to better understand the practices in place or hiring additional staff. Those reports state that the organizational culture on reporting complaints has improved in recent years, but they also point to a series of dissuasive practices that are in place and to a fear of retaliation amongst the staff. While the ED office has launched several action points to resolve those issues, the culture change was still in progress during the benchmarking exercise.

The complaints mechanism for the affected populations is primarily the responsibility of UNICEF's IPs, which are required to comply with UNICEF's core values, AAP principles and UNICEF policies through their Partnership Cooperation Agreement and Project Document. However, the existence of a functioning complaints mechanism is not a mandatory requirement and it is not systematically verified by UNICEF, before or during programme implementation. UNICEF does not provide guidance or support to its IPs on how to set up a complaint mechanism, and the capacities of IPs vary significantly across

contexts. Amongst the sampled IPs, many of them did not have a documented and functioning mechanism.

In some COs, UNICEF advocated putting in place joint or interagency complaint mechanisms through its lead in clusters and participation to coordination and learning fora; however this advocacy and engagement is not systematic, and many countries experience a duplication of effort when it comes to design and implementing responsive complaints mechanisms.

UNICEF has dedicated financial and technical resources for the prevention of SEA, including specific funds to strengthen the approach and systems in place for PSEA at CO level. However, this is not a systematic approach at UNICEF (only 16 CO benefited from these additional resources), and it does not cover other abuse of authority (non-related to PSEA) and programming complaints.

<u>Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 5:</u>

The affected populations stated that they were not consulted on the design, implementation or monitoring of the complaints-handling processes. Some affected populations interviewed considered the design of the complaints-handling mechanism to be suboptimal in relation to needs and/or context. Many communities expressed satisfaction and had no cause for complaint; regardless, they frequently did not know how to complain or the scope of the complaints mechanisms. Some members of affected populations expressed fear of retaliation if they complained. Furthermore, affected populations were generally not aware of organisational commitments made by UNICEF (or IPs) on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Commitment 6: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary

Score: 2.5

With a long-term presence in countries, UNICEF has an understanding of the capacities of different stakeholders to prepare for and respond to emergencies. UNICEF's role in coordination within the Global Cluster system is recognised and appreciated by governments for strengthening capacity and attempting to reinforce, rather than replace, national and local systems. However, UNICEF's standard emergency response is not systematically adapted to fit around national response mechanisms in middle-income countries.

UNICEF establishes pre-agreements with government and across agencies, ensuring coordination and complementarity in emergencies. The UN Partner Portal minimises demands on CSOs' time when applying for IP status, but the application process does not clearly support or explain AAP requirements. Partners appreciate joint partnership reviews for receiving feedback from UNICEF, but have not always been asked for their feedback on the partnership.

Cluster and Working Group structures facilitate strong networks for technical standards and learning during an emergency. As a cluster lead agency, UNICEF is able to maximise service provision through integration, but staff feel HQ could demonstrate this more practically. There are good examples of integration and AAP in clusters.

Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (including AAP) is not undertaken systematically in all responses and joint needs assessments and joint monitoring are not yet standard in all responses, although the increasing use of eTools does make the latter easier to achieve.

<u>Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 6:</u>

Affected people indicate that organisations including UNICEF work well together and there were no overlaps, but overwhelmingly, people speak of gaps and unmet needs due to the scale of crises.

Commitment 7: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve

Score: 2.3

UNICEF has strong guidance and policies around results-informed programming and dedicates numerous resources to evidence gathering, particularly through its evaluation department. Evaluations are followed by a mandatory management response and recommendations are addressed, transformed into action points and followed-up regularly.

UNICEF has several mechanisms to record and share knowledge and experience throughout the organisation, such as intranet platforms, webinars, interactive manuals, and examples of best practices. At programming level, the CPD draws on lessons learnt and innovative projects to further plan and improve programming; some stakeholders noted that UNICEF's risk-aversion is a constraint to developing innovative projects.

UNICEF is a strong contributor to learning in the humanitarian sector and shares its finding with external stakeholders. Through its lead in global clusters and national clusters, UNICEF directly disseminate results of some of its work and encourages experience sharing amongst peers. National clusters develop HNOs and HRPs for countries where they exist, which highlight knowledge gaps and learning opportunities within sectors However, UNICEF has no specific processes or activities to share learning and innovation with communities.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 7:

Affected populations stated that assistance evolved and changed following feedback gathering activities (see also C4); however, they were not aware of any findings being shared with them.

Commitment 8: Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably

Score: 2.2

UNICEF seeks staff who will embody the organisation's mandate and meet expected accountability standards and the Division of Human Resources (DHR) has developed extensive resources for recruitment and onboarding. Technical support is available at all levels, and learning gaps are identified in individual learning plans, although not all staff have these in place.

UNICEF is committed to the professional development of all staff, although many staff say they do not have the time to take online courses, indicating that taking training means working extra hours. General Services staff indicate there are fewer learning opportunities for them, compared with professional staff. DHR does not provide an equivalent level of guidance for staff handovers as they do for inductions, and variable practice can interrupt continuity in work flow and relationships.

A significant proportion of staff interviewed spoke of UNICEF's mandate and values with notable pride and were aware of UNICEF's stance on PSEA and fraud, although the UN Code of Conduct and the UN Staff Rules and Regulations are not part of mandatory trainings. UNICEF's national government partners do not systematically have codes of conduct, child safeguarding policies or standards of acceptable staff behaviour in place.

Although there are challenges to advocating with governments on these issues, some UNICEF staff felt they could do more.

UNICEF options for emergency surge staff in sudden-onset emergencies include an internal roster of trained staff and secondments from standby partners. Surge deployments are viewed by hosting COs as frequently helpful, and often instrumental to emergency responses.

UNICEF ensures essential policies and guidance, including personal safety and security, are covered in onboarding and that staff receive a mandatory security briefing. To look after staff, UNICEF provides online self-guided coping resources, staff counselling, and wellbeing workshops. Staff wellbeing and work-life balance are policy-level priorities for UNICEF, although staff do not uniformly experience this balance and sense of wellbeing. Staff feel pressured to work after hours although UNICEF is trying to shift from office time to more emphasis on results and accountability, allowing staff to balance their professional and personal lives, to support health and productivity. UNICEF offers flexible working arrangements but this provision is not well known, and as with training, time pressure prevents staff from exploring online resources that promote wellbeing.

The findings of the benchmarking team bear out the findings of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority on organisational culture and issues of transparency, fairness, harassment and fear around speaking up safely about problems.

<u>Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 8:</u>

Affected populations indicate that UNICEF staff are competent, trusted and effective in their work. They appreciate their technical support for community-level committees and also the way that UNICEF staff treat them with dignity and respect. Interactions between UNICEF and partner staff, and UNICEF and community members were generally observed to be friendly and productive.

Commitment 9: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose

Score: 2

UNICEF's resource management policy base is strong although it is not always implemented rigorously. Systems and procedures for designing and implementing programmes generally balance quality, cost and timeliness. However, geographic spread and lack of sectoral integration reduces efficiency. UNICEF does not analyse the efficiency of its relative expenditure at HQ, regional, country office and field office level and data constraints make it difficult to measure efficiency.

UNICEF recently began co-convening the Grand Bargain commitment to reduce earmarking of donor contributions and increase multi-year planning and funding; the annual independent review recommends increased investment in order to deliver this commitment, which is critical to the success of the overall agenda.

UNICEF's focus is on climate change rather than resource usage and it does not systematically support/oversee partners to undertake environmental impact analysis. However, it has a strong programme for reducing the environmental impact in its offices.

The internal audit function and investigation function publishes disciplinary proceedings and anti-fraud training is systematic in UNICEF but it has provided very limited anti-fraud training to partners and its control over supplies (particularly in access challenged areas) are not robust.

<u>Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 9:</u>

Affected populations were not aware of resources invested in programmes and did not express an opinion on how they were utilised. However, they were also not aware of any misuse or inappropriate use either.

8. Organisation's report approval

Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Findings

For Organisation representative – please cross where appropriate

I acknowledge and understand the findings of the benchmarking exercise	☑
I accept the findings of the benchmarking exercise	☑
I do not accept some/all of the findings of the benchmarking exercise	☐

Please list the requirements of which you do not accept the findings

Name and Signature

Charles-Antoine Hofmann

Date and Place

28/10/2019 Geneva

2019-09-24

Annex 1: Explanation of the scoring scale

0	**A score of 0 denotes a weakness that is so significant that it indicates that the organisation is unable to meet the required commitment. This is a major weakness to be corrected immediately.**
	EXAMPLES:
	Operational activities and actions contradict the intent of a CHS commitment.
	Policies and procedures contradict the intent of the CHS commitment.
	Absence of processes or policies necessary to ensure compliance at the level of the commitment.
	Recurrent failure to implement the necessary actions at operational level make it impossible for the organisation to ensure compliance at the level of the commitment.
	Failure to implement corrective actions to resolve minor non-conformities in the adequate timeframes (for certification only)
	More than half of the indicators of one commitment receive a score of 1 (minor non-conformity), making it impossible for the organisation to ensure compliance at the level of the commitment. (for independent verification or certification only)
1	**A score of 1 denotes a weakness that does not immediately compromise the integrity of the commitment but requires to be corrected to ensure the organisation can continuously deliver against the commitment.**
	EXAMPLES:
	There are a significant number of cases where the design and management of programmes and activities do not reflect the CHS requirement.
	Actions at the operational level are not systematically implemented in accordance with relevant policies and procedures.
	Relevant policies exist but are incomplete or do not cover all areas of the requirement/commitment.
	Existing policies are not accompanied with sufficient guidance to support a systematic and robust implementation by staff. A significant number of relevant staff at Head Office and/or field levels are not familiar with the policies and procedures.
	Absence of mechanisms to monitor the systematic application of relevant policies and procedures at the level of the requirement/commitment.
2	**A score of 2 denotes an issue that deserve attention but does not currently compromise the conformity with the requirement.. This is worth an observation and, if not addressed may turn into a significant weakness (score 1).**
	EXAMPLES:
	Implementation of the requirement varies from programme to programme and is driven by people rather than organisational culture.
	There are instances of actions at operational level where the design or management of programmes does not fully reflect relevant policies.
	Relevant policies exist but are incomplete or do not cover all areas of the requirement/commitment.
3	**The organisation conforms with this requirement, and organisational systems ensure that it is met throughout the organisation and over time.**
	EXAMPLES:
	Relevant policies and procedures exist and are accompanied with guidance to support implementation by staff.
	Staff are familiar with relevant policies. They can provide several examples of consistent application in different activities, projects and programmes.

	The organisation monitors the implementation of its policies and supports the staff in doing so at operational level.
	Policy and practice are aligned.
4	**The organisation demonstrates innovation in the application of this requirement/commitment. It is applied in an exemplary way across the organisation and organisational systems ensure high quality is maintained across the organisation and over time.**
	EXAMPLES:
	Field and programme staff act frequently in a way that goes beyond CHS requirement to which they are clearly committed.
	Relevant staff can explain in which way their activities are in line with the requirement and can provide several examples of implementation in different sites. They can relate the examples to improved quality of the projects and their deliveries.
	Communities and other external stakeholders are particularly satisfied with the work of the organisation in relation to the requirement.
	Policies and procedures go beyond the intent of the CHS requirement, are innovative and systematically implemented across the organisation.