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Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies

VOLUME ONE
MAIN EVALUATION REPORT

EVALUATION OFFICE

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ACRONYMS

AMISOM	Africa Union Mission in Somalia
CCCs	Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action
CO	Country Office
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EMOPS	UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FO	Field Office
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IHL	international humanitarian law
INSO	International NGO Security Office
KII	key informant interview
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MAM	moderate acute malnutrition
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

MRM	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
RO	Regional Office
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SAM	severe acute malnutrition
SAVE	Secure Access in Volatile Environments
SSOP	Simplified Standard Operating
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department for Safety and Security
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNSOM	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

In March 2018, thousands of people reportedly left Hammouriyeh in eastern Ghouta, Syrian Arab Republic, following reports of fierce fighting that resulted in civilian deaths and injuries, as well as damage to civilian infrastructure.

PREFACE

UNICEF has been responding to humanitarian crises since 1946 and has global responsibility for advocating for the protection of children's rights, meeting the basic needs of children and working to enable all children to reach their full potential. While the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child underpins overall UNICEF programming, the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action are the foundation for the UNICEF humanitarian response. UNICEF also has direct responsibility and accountability as the lead agency for the water, sanitation and hygiene and nutrition clusters; co-lead with Save the Children on the education cluster; and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility.

Since 2005, UNICEF has responded to an average of 300 humanitarian situations in more than 90 countries each year. In 2018, conflicts, natural disasters, epidemics and other crises continued to undermine development gains and block the path towards sustainable development. To meet the growing demand for assistance in multiple, simultaneous, complex and large-scale emergencies, UNICEF has invested considerable resources in its humanitarian action, from $600 million in 2006 to approximately $2.8 billion in 2018.

An evaluation of UNICEF coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies was undertaken in 2018 and considered 11 country case studies. Its purpose was to generate, through robust and systematic analysis across a range of country contexts, practical solutions to inform the ways in which UNICEF could improve the coverage and quality of its humanitarian response. It is anticipated that both the evaluation process and the results will contribute

to a body of evidence and learning regarding the enablers and barriers to delivering high-quality humanitarian action in complex humanitarian emergencies, and how such barriers have affected UNICEF performance and its ability to reach affected populations.

The evaluation findings reveal that UNICEF showed organizational courage and tenacity in sustaining its work in complex humanitarian emergencies, despite significant challenges. Across all the country case studies, UNICEF was among the largest and most important providers of humanitarian assistance and protection, and often worked in some of the most challenging areas. UNICEF programme coverage in these environments has been significant, and large populations have benefited greatly from the organization's humanitarian action.

However, to enhance and facilitate the provision of effective assistance and protection in complex humanitarian emergencies, the evaluation highlights several areas that require improvement. For example, it notes that UNICEF can do more to reach those in greatest need of assistance and who are least accessible. There is scope for UNICEF to ensure that it more routinely has the data, analysis, staff, partners and programme approaches to facilitate the provision of effective assistance and protection in complex humanitarian emergencies. UNICEF can also further promote internal change in its methods of designing and delivering integrated programmes and of disseminating, interpreting and acting upon policies and procedures. UNICEF is already testing or proposing several new initiatives and course corrections; and this evaluation has attempted to identify additional opportunities and necessary improvements.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Representatives and staff in the case study countries for participating in the evaluation and providing invaluable insights into their complex humanitarian programming – Ukraine, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Mali, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic and Burundi. The evaluation team also interacted with various UNICEF headquarters and regional office staff – their expertise and extensive knowledge of complex humanitarian emergencies and national perspectives have greatly enhanced the evidence used in this evaluation. I also appreciate the cooperation and inputs by government staff, United Nations and civil society partners and donors in the respective case study countries.

The evaluation was carried out by an independent, five-person team from ITAD. On behalf of the Evaluation Office, I would like to thank Andy Featherstone, the team leader, for his dedication, expertise and professionalism. Other members of the evaluation team include: Tasneem Mowjee (Deputy Team Leader), David Fleming (Itad Project Manager), Katie Tong, Clemens Gros and Leonora Evans-Gutierrez. The core team was assisted by Abhijit Bhattacharjee, Kate Hale and Richard Burge. I am grateful to them for their excellent work.

Thanks are also due to the members of the Reference Group for their willingness to guide and assist the ITAD evaluation team. The members include: Ayda Eke, Kate Alley and Majid Atwal (EMOPS); Hamish Young and Cecilia Sanchez Bodas (PD); Silvia Chiarucci and Frankie Chen (Field Results Group); Stephane Arnaud and Ana Cristina Matos (Supply Division); and Riccardo Polastro (EAPRO).

Finally, I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Evaluation Office who managed this work, namely, Koorosh Raffii and Jane Mwangi, supported by Laura Olsen; and to Celeste Lebowitz, Geeta Dey, Dalma Rivero and Carlotta Tincati for their administrative support during the various phases of the evaluation process.

George Laryea-Adjei
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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acceptance approach	Actively building and cultivating good relations and consent as part of a security management strategy with local communities, parties to the conflict and other relevant stakeholders, and obtaining their acceptance and consent for the humanitarian organization's presence and its work.[1]
Accountability to affected populations	The ability of all vulnerable, at-risk and crisis-affected girls, women and men supported through UNICEF humanitarian actions to hold UNICEF as an organization to account for promoting and protecting their rights and generating effective results for them, taking into account their needs, concerns and preferences, and working in ways that enhance their dignity, capacities and resilience.[2]
Access culture	For the purposes of the report, the term 'access culture' refers to a deep organizational understanding and commitment to humanitarian principles and the delivery of assistance to those in greatest need of assistance.
Complex humanitarian emergency	A humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single and/or ongoing United Nations country programme.[3]
Corporate emergency activation procedure	An Executive Directive issued by UNICEF in order to strengthen its capacity to respond immediately and effectively to a Level 3 (i.e., large-scale) emergency. It outlines the chain of command and operating procedures to be activated in the event of an L3 emergency.
Core Commitments to Children	A global framework for humanitarian action for children undertaken by UNICEF and its partners. This framework is guided by international human rights law, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child and, in the case of complex emergencies, also by international humanitarian law (IHL). On an operational level, the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.[4]
Coverage	UNICEF defines coverage as 'the extent to which major population groups facing life-threatening suffering are being (or were) reached by humanitarian action'.[5] Guidance provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) expands this definition to include the provision of 'impartial assistance and protection proportionate to need',[6] which addresses the concern raised in the Scoping Report about the breadth of assistance and also the periodicity which should be consistent with the need.
UNICEF's equity-based approach in humanitarian action	UNICEF is committed to an equity-based approach in humanitarian action. Equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias or favouritism. Equity also means identifying risks and underlying vulnerabilities, targeting humanitarian action to and prioritizing the needs of those most vulnerable and disadvantaged.[7]
Hard-to-reach or access-constrained	For the purpose of this report, 'hard-to-reach' or access-constrained areas are locations that are remote or insecure, which make them difficult for members of the humanitarian community to reach.
Humanitarian access	Humanitarian access entails the ability of humanitarian actors to reach populations affected by crisis, as well as an affected population's ability to access humanitarian assistance and services.[8]

1   Egeland, Jan, Adel Harmer and Abby Stoddard, *To Stay and Deliver: Good practice for humanitarians* in complex security environments, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, New York, February 2011.

2   United Nations Children's Fund, 'Putting People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action: Integrating accountability to affected people', UNICEF, New York, March 2017.

3   Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Definition of Complex Emergencies', IASC Working Group XVIth Meeting, 30 November 1994.

4   United Nations Children's Fund, *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action*, UNICEF, New York, May 2010.

5   This definition of coverage was used in the Scoping Report and is taken from Buchanan-Smith, Margie, John Cosgrove and Alexandra Warner, *Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide*, ALNAP/ODI, London, October 2016, p. 114.

6   World Food Programme, 'Technical Note: Evaluation criteria and questions', WFP, April 2016, p. 3.

7   United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Reference Document for Emergency Preparedness and Response*, UNICEF, New York, September 2017.

8   United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'OCHA on Message: Humanitarian access', Version 1, OCHA, New York, April 2010.

Humanitarian action	Humanitarian action comprises assistance, protection and advocacy in response to humanitarian needs resulting from natural hazards, armed conflict or other causes, or emergency response preparedness.[9]
Humanitarian principles	Underlining all humanitarian action are the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. These principles, derived from IHL, have been taken up by the United Nations in General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114. Their global recognition and relevance are furthermore underscored by the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. The CCCs are grounded in humanitarian principles and UNICEF is committed to applying humanitarian principles in its humanitarian action.[10]
Levels of emergency response	Level 1: The scale of an emergency is such that a country office can respond using its own staff, funding, supplies and other resources, and the usual regional office/headquarters support. Level 2: The scale of an emergency is such that a country office needs additional support from other parts of the organization (headquarters, regional office and country offices) to respond and that the regional office must provide leadership and support. Level 3: The scale of the emergency requires organization-wide mobilization.
Non-state entities	Non-state entities include armed or unarmed groups and, depending on the context, could include militias, armed opposition groups, guerrillas, pandillas (e.g., gangs) and paramilitary groups; or state-like groups (e.g., a self-declared state that is not recognized, or only partially recognized, by the international community); or 'de facto authorities', which have effective control of territory and self-governing administration but do not seek independence or secession.[11]
Programme criticality	An approach that involves determining which programmes are the most critical in a given part of a country (in terms of saving lives or requiring immediate delivery) and therefore warrant accepting a greater level of risk or a greater allocation of resources to mitigate these risks.[12]
Programme integration	The intentional combining of one or more sector interventions by UNICEF to achieve improved humanitarian outcomes.[13]
Quality	The extent to which UNICEF is adhering to the benchmarks of its CCCs, plus its supplementary commitments to 1) the Core Humanitarian Standard (including related Commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations), 2) technical standards for humanitarian programming (primarily Sphere, Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, and the Child Protection Minimum Standards), and 3) the high-level common themes of the World Humanitarian Summit and accompanying Grand Bargain commitments, as reflected in the new UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021.
Remote programming	UNICEF defines remote programming as programming without the presence of staff due to unacceptable security risks or denial of access by authorities.[14]
Risk-informed programming	An approach to programming that aims to reduce the risk of hazards, shocks and stresses on children's well-being, their communities and systems, contributing to resilient development.[15]
United Nations security risk management	A United Nations Security Management System tool to identify, analyse and manage safety and security risks to United Nations personnel, assets and operations. The tool is risk-based, not threat-based. While threats are assessed as part of the process, decisions are taken based on the assessment of risk.[16]

9   Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *Introduction to Humanitarian Action: A brief guide* for resident coordinators, OCHA, New York, October 2015.

10 UNICEF, *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action*.

11 United Nations Children's Fund, *Engaging with Non-State Entities (NSEs): Programme guidance note,* forthcoming.

12 Egeland, Harmer and Stoddard, *To Stay and Deliver*.

13 United Nations Children's Fund, *Study on Integrated Programming in UNICEF Humanitarian* Action, Final report, UNICEF, February 2014.

14 United Nations Children's Fund, *Remote Programming in Humanitarian* Action: Programme guidance, UNICEF, New York, 2012.

15 UNICEF, *UNICEF Reference Document for Emergency Preparedness and Response*.

16 <www.un.org/undss/content/risk-management>.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and background

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation is to generate, through robust and systematic analysis across a range of country contexts, practical solutions that can inform how UNICEF improves the coverage and quality of its humanitarian response. It is anticipated that both the evaluation process and results will contribute to a body of evidence and learning about the enablers and barriers to delivering high-quality humanitarian action in complex environments – and how these have impacted on UNICEF performance and ability to reach affected populations.

The first phase of the evaluation included three pilot case studies, one field mission (Nigeria) and two desk reviews (Pakistan and Ukraine). The second phase included a further four field missions (Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Philippines and Somalia) and four desk reviews (Burundi, Mali, State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic).

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach for data collection and analysis. Qualitative data were collected through a literature review, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Quantitative programme performance data and funding information were collected and analysed. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with UNICEF staff, government and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, and United Nations agencies. Focus group discussions were conducted with communities receiving UNICEF-funded assistance.

METHOD	DETAILS
Document analysis	Internal documents: Policies, guidance, training materials, evaluations, project reports and audits.
	External documents: Policies and guidance of comparator organizations, academic literature, and grey literature (see annex 3). In total, 619 documents were cited (37 per cent internal and 63 per cent external).[17] In addition to this, more than 1,400 documents were reviewed (53 per cent internal, 47 per cent external). See annex 2.
Field missions and desk reviews	Headquarters and Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office.
	Field missions: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia.
	Desk reviews/KIIs: Burundi, Mali, Pakistan, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic,[18] Ukraine.
Key informant interviews	504 interviews in total: 30 per cent women and 70 per cent men.
	292 UNICEF staff, 153 United Nations and NGO staff, 46 authorities and 13 others (see annex 4).
Community engagement	Focus group discussions with communities in receipt of UNICEF assistance were conducted in Afghanistan (Herat and Jalalabad), the Central African Republic (Bambari), Nigeria (Maiduguri) and the Philippines (Mindanao). A total of 402 community members were consulted, comprising 52 per cent women and 48 per cent men (see annex 8).
Coverage and quality analysis	Quantitative data on UNICEF reach against targets for selected CCCs were collected and analysed for each of the case study countries (see annex 6).

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17   This number may include some overlap for documents that were common across the case studies.

18   The desk review for the Syrian Arab Republic comprised the operations managed out of Damascus. It did not include cross-border operations.

Evaluation Question 1:
To what extent is UNICEF achieving coverage and quality in humanitarian action in an equitable way?

Country office (CO) response strategies and reports suggest that UNICEF coverage in complex humanitarian emergencies is significant in its reach. Where the funding, access and capacity permits, UNICEF uses its Cluster Lead Agency responsibility as Provider of Last Resort as a means of determining its expected coverage. Although UNICEF is inconsistent in how it determines vulnerability, it frequently prioritizes the collection and analysis of sex- and age-disaggregated data that inform its approach to equity. It is less consistent in its analysis of other factors that contribute to vulnerability. COs most frequently take an approach that endeavours to strike a balance between reaching large numbers of affected people that are easier to access, with smaller numbers of the most in need that are harder (and cost more) to reach, although different COs calculate this algorithm differently.

Programme quality is consistently guided by UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCC), which are contextualized to strengthen their relevance, in addition to global quality standards. What is more difficult to determine is the consistency with which UNICEF is meeting these quality standards – which is dependent on the frequency of its access, as well as its funding and capacity. Evidencing UNICEF's attainment is dependent on the strength and reach of its own monitoring, which can be variable. As a consequence of these factors, it is not possible to determine whether UNICEF is consistently adopting programme approaches that deliver the most appropriate and best-quality services to affected people. Approaches such as one-off distributions or periodic support may provide essential assistance to communities in crisis when more sustained support is not possible, but UNICEF does not routinely collect or report these data and, therefore, changes in programming approach are difficult to track. The greater the experience and capacity of staff members, the more agile they are likely to be

in shifting between different programme approaches to ensure the greatest quality possible in the context.[19]

Evaluation Question 2: In what ways and how effectively has UNICEF influenced others to strengthen the quality and coverage of humanitarian action?

UNICEF is a bold advocate for children affected by armed conflict and often prioritizes its Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) responsibilities despite the resourcing challenges that these present. UNICEF has achieved notable successes in securing the release of children engaged by armed groups and in subsequently supporting them through its programmes. It has taken a broadly relevant approach to how it has engaged with duty bearers, which has been guided by issues such as government sensitivities, partner capacity to collect and report violations, and the existence of an integrated United Nations presence.

UNICEF has used its role as Cluster Lead Agency to strengthen the coverage and quality of the response of other agencies to complex humanitarian emergencies. The case studies highlighted good practices in identifying and filling gaps in the humanitarian response, promoting contextualized standards and strengthening the capacity of partners to meet these standards. There are, however, areas for improvement. Findings from recent inter-agency evaluations are consistent with the findings of this evaluation in raising concern about the veracity of cluster assessment data and coverage figures. They also note challenges in the adequacy of cluster monitoring systems.

UNICEF's performance in advocating for access has been variable. The organization has significant profile among United Nations agencies for its advocacy on access, but local, national and international NGO partners were more critical. This may in part be a reflection of the different interlocutors that NGOs and United Nations agencies engage with, but there is also a common perception that UNICEF's access advocacy is often focused on seeking to strengthen its own access rather than that

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19   There are also external determinants, the most significant of which are security, access, partner capacity and funding.

Millions of children across Yemen face serious threats due to malnutrition and a lack of essential health services caused by the ongoing war in the country.

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of its partners. There is scope for UNICEF to 'champion' access, particularly in contexts where its knowledge of, and engagement with, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) and governments places it in a privileged position to prompt change.

Evaluation Question 3a: What programme approaches has UNICEF employed at the field level to gain principled access and improve coverage and quality, and with what success?

UNICEF has a broad range of strategies and approaches that it uses to provide assistance to affected people in complex humanitarian emergencies. While humanitarian principles are at the core of UNICEF policies and procedures, there is some variability in staff and partners' levels of understanding and interpretation. UNICEF staff tend to place the principle of 'humanity' above other principles, which is frequently (and incorrectly) interpreted as achieving humanitarian access and assistance 'at all costs', but the more complex principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence

are equally important. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of all UNICEF field staff to use the full menu of principles to make structured decisions on access. There is similar scope to strengthen capacities for humanitarian negotiation with State and non-State entities, keeping in mind that this is frequently undertaken by field staff at checkpoints and project sites. Above all else, UNICEF must strengthen its engagement with partners on issues of gaining and maintaining principled access.

UNICEF has a mature understanding of the challenges that it can face when working in the context of a United Nations integrated presence. While a wider United Nations presence in complex humanitarian emergencies can be beneficial, it also presents challenges; an integrated presence can blur distinctions, compromise principles and negatively influence perceptions of principled assistance.

To address these challenges and those more broadly associated with complex, high-threat environments, UNICEF uses a range of measures to expand presence and monitor quality, which includes the use of remote management modalities and Rapid Response Mechanisms

(RRMs). While these approaches offer only partial solutions, they have been effective in strengthening coverage as well as offering scope to better monitor and support programme delivery. The evaluation found that integrated programmes frequently strengthen outcomes for communities affected by complex humanitarian situations, and that social protection approaches including cash transfers have the potential to increase programme relevance and cut across sector siloes. For both remote management and RRMs, the findings of this evaluation serve to strengthen existing evidence of the contribution they make to strengthening cover and quality.

Of greater challenge to UNICEF's work in complex humanitarian emergencies is the United Nations security management system and the role of the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) more specifically. While there are structural and policy foundations for productive relations between UNICEF and UNDSS that can permit it to 'stay and deliver', the conclusion of this evaluation (and similar studies) is that working relationships with UNDSS are frequently governed by personality and background. Until these deficiencies are addressed, it will be important for UNICEF to maintain its own security risk management capacity. While the deployment of high-calibre staff will best position UNICEF to expand its access and improve its coverage, the nature of the relationship with UNDSS means that this is no guarantee of success.

Evaluation Question 3b:
What partnership strategies has UNICEF employed at the field level to gain principled access and improve coverage and quality, and with what success?

UNICEF's partnerships with governments, NGOs and other United Nations agencies are a key strength, because in access-constrained environments, they often constitute UNICEF's eyes, ears and hands 'on the ground'. The evaluation highlighted the effect that different partners had on programme coverage and quality at different times during a crisis. It found that UNICEF frequently has a good mix of partners;

however, there is a need for UNICEF to be more agile in reviewing this when there are significant changes in context – be it due to conflict, access, security or needs. It is in dynamic contexts that UNICEF may need to change its partnerships to exploit opportunities to access new areas or to strengthen technical quality. Managing UNICEF's partnerships with governments in conflict situations can be particularly challenging, as it requires a willingness to moderate relationships where this is necessary to manage perceptions, defend principles, or remind States of their obligations to IHL.

There is also scope for UNICEF to engage more strategically in capacity strengthening of its partners, particularly local and national NGOs. While this may not deliver improvements in coverage and quality in the short term, the nature of complex humanitarian emergencies means that UNICEF maintains partnerships for many years, which justifies the longer-term focus. For UNICEF to make a contribution to furthering localization, it needs to address the misapprehension that exists among some staff that a Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) can achieve this objective and that it should take the opportunity to engage more strategically with its partners and more systematically assess and strengthen capacity. It should also engage more deeply on issues of access, both to support the efforts of its partners to gain access in volatile contexts, but also to ensure that its partners share a common understanding and approach towards achieving principled access.

Evaluation Question 4:
To what extent is UNICEF's humanitarian response designed to be relevant and adapted to ensure its ongoing relevance, evolving needs and priorities?

UNICEF uses a range of formal tools and informal networks to maintain its context analysis, although the focus of these is frequently on strategic analysis rather than operational analysis. The evaluation recognizes that a shift to lighter, operationally focused processes of context analysis is already being promoted through the roll-out of UNICEF's access framework. This framework

is more relevant to identifying and exploiting opportunities to improve access and increase coverage. Where there is also room for improvement is in how UNICEF engages with communities. Despite the development of a comprehensive approach, UNICEF staff have found it challenging to deliver in practice. There is a lack of understanding at the field level as how to routinely engage with communities to ensure programme relevance and quality and elicit the views of those receiving UNICEF-funded assistance. This is particularly important given the links that exist between the delivery of quality programmes and community acceptance, which is an important strategy for achieving humanitarian access. UNICEF must clarify what its partners need to do to fulfil institutional aspirations and moral obligations for accountability to affected populations.

An area where UNICEF's practice has improved is in strengthening the linkages between its humanitarian and development programmes. The evaluation found that at both a strategic and operational level, UNICEF is more consistently seeking to reduce vulnerability and mitigate risks, as well as identify opportunities for systems strengthening. This shift offers a foundation to strengthen humanitarian-development linkages in the long term, although short-term benefits – in addressing gaps in humanitarian coverage, or strengthening programme quality – were difficult to identify. While recent evaluations have documented deficiencies in UNICEF's preparedness that have affected the coverage and quality of its response, the roll-out of the new Preparedness Platform, linked to strengthened planning and the adoption of 'no regrets' procurement policies offer opportunities to strengthen practice. While nexus-related concerns have attracted some criticism in the sector as a consequence of the tensions implicit in conflating humanitarian and development objectives, at the CO level, UNICEF field staff tended to take a pragmatic approach, which recognized the fundamental limitations of short-term humanitarian assistance and considered the current focus on resilience as an opportunity to try to find durable solutions that have proved elusive in many of the case study countries.

Evaluation Question 5:
In what ways do UNICEF's inputs enable or constrain coverage and quality?

The important influence that leadership and management have on effectiveness are often overlooked, but they play an essential role in influencing coverage and quality. UNICEF's decentralized structure and model of empowered CO leadership provides a strong foundation for decision-making on complex issues linked to principled access. Where country-level capacity may be more variable, or staff may lack experience, the evaluation also highlighted the important role played by the regional office (RO) in mentoring and supporting decision-making. What was less evident in UNICEF was the existence of an 'access culture'. While UNICEF's multi-mandate may make it challenging to articulate and institutionalize this, there is certainly scope for it to more clearly outline its strategic aspirations for accessing those most in need of assistance to offer a frame of reference.[20] It also places important emphasis on ensuring that representatives and key staff in conflict-affected countries have a core set of skills and competencies so they can meet these aspirations.

Selection, recruitment and retention of staff is a frequent challenge in complex humanitarian emergencies, and the evaluation found significant variations in the approach of COs in institutionalizing humanitarian access and identifying staff profiles that may promote access. The recruitment of female staff was an area of challenge, particularly in volatile environments and conservative cultures. However, in these contexts female staff play an essential role in UNICEF's ability to gain access, address issues of equity and deliver programme quality. The evaluation documented the efforts that UNICEF have taken to address this gap in several of the case study countries.

While COs frequently had funding shortfalls in their humanitarian portfolio, many had been comparatively successful in fundraising. Where there were disparities in the access that different sections had to funding, this presented challenges for integrated programming and

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20 It is noteworthy that the work being undertaken on developing an access framework for UNICEF should make an important contribution to this, although as it was being developed concurrently with the evaluation, it is too early to make any judgments on this.

in delivering programme quality. UNICEF has also had some measure of success in managing donor conditions in contexts where un-earmarked funding was available and could be used to support its response in areas where conditions would have precluded this. Where the issue became more acute was where there was a greater predilection for donors to put in place conditions and less access to un-earmarked funding; in these contexts, UNICEF had less flexibility to '*dilute*' donor conditions.

The evaluation found that UNICEF's systems and procedures are comprehensive and, where applied, invaluable to staff engaged in humanitarian response. However, the evidence also points to inconsistencies in how the procedures are understood and implemented and where the simplification of procedures is granted; this held for human resources procedures and Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCA)/Programme Documents, both of which have the potential to significantly strengthen the speed and quality of the UNICEF response if simplified procedures are used. An area where there was greater clarity was procurement, supply and logistics. The evaluation documented several examples of the ways in which the actions of logistics staff in-country or the Supply Division more broadly had strengthened preparedness or the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Conclusions

The evaluation question – to determine the coverage and quality of UNICEF's assistance in complex humanitarian emergencies – is important both to UNICEF and its partners and those they seek to assist, but it cannot easily be answered with the data that are available.
Between 2015 and 2018, UNICEF showed organizational courage and tenacity in sustaining its work in complex humanitarian emergencies, despite significant challenges. However, while the central question posed in this evaluation is of great importance to UNICEF, its partners and those they seek to assist, it is not easily answered. While the findings of the evaluation show that humanitarian services have been extended to many of those in greatest

need, one of the most important findings of the evaluation is that the data do not permit a detailed and consistent examination of what proportion of needs was met or whether the greatest needs were met.

The lack of adequate data collection, disaggregation and reporting means that UNICEF cannot reliably calculate its coverage in relation to need. Neither can it determine accurately enough whether it is targeting those whose needs are the greatest.
UNICEF (and the broader humanitarian system) lacks measures to adequately track coverage due to contextual challenges and time constraints that prevent sophisticated data collection methods. Estimates of people in need lack accuracy and they mostly fail to differentiate between different levels of vulnerability. The imbalance between humanitarian demand and supply, donor priorities and efficiency measures all reinforce an approach that prioritizes coverage over equity and quality. From an institutional perspective, UNICEF's focus on targets rather than people in need, variability in the capacity of its staffing, and an institutional pressure (and Cluster Lead Agency responsibility) to deliver at scale tends to reinforce this focus.[21] Practice was varied in terms of how expected funding, capacity and access constraints are factored into the targets, and there was no established process for readjusting targets based on actual funding received.

While UNICEF routinely uses quality standards to guide its work, the delivery of these are affected by a range of internal and external factors that tend to push UNICEF towards prioritizing the most visible and accessible needs in complex humanitarian emergencies – albeit at large scale.
In complex humanitarian emergencies, coverage and quality are achieved only through access to those in need of assistance and protection, and in these contexts, those most in need are almost always the least accessible and most costly to reach. UNICEF often struggles to reach these places. There are several reasons for this, which include a range of external factors that may be difficult to overcome. However, there are also a number of internal factors that influence access, which UNICEF can address. These include inconsistencies in the

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21   While the evaluation was being undertaken, UNICEF introduced an initial set of measures t included a revision of the Humanitarian Action for Children process and intensified training and quality assurance to strengthen the clarity of rationale on the relationship between people in need and targets.

knowledge and understanding of staff about humanitarian principles, the limited capacity that exists for humanitarian negotiation and for finding solutions to ethical dilemmas, and weaknesses in engaging with communities affected by crises. Addressing these capacity gaps, particularly among front-line staff, will provide an important frame of reference and set of competencies for UNICEF to more consistently gain and maintain principled access. This will be further strengthened if UNICEF uses its profile and networks to routinely advocate for principled access.

The system that the United Nations security management system, which is meant to assist UNICEF to 'stay and deliver' often fails to fulfil its function. One finding was that the working relationship between the Department of Safety and Security and UNICEF was frequently governed by personality and background, which meant that there was no guarantee of success. Therefore, it is important for UNICEF to continue to maintain its own security risk management capacity.

External to UNICEF, an integrated United Nations presence and broader engagement with the military or armed groups can influence how UNICEF is perceived, and this can be a significant constraint in conflict contexts. Across the case studies, the impact of the United Nations security management system on UNICEF's coverage was extremely variable, and in some contexts was a considerable constraint. Examples of constructive ways of working, innovative approaches to facilitating access, and scope for negotiation for UNICEF to 'stay and deliver' that were observed in some countries suggest a lack of consistency in how procedures are interpreted and applied. It is important that blockages are systematically documented and addressed. Overcoming these challenges will also require ongoing investment from UNICEF in developing adequate internal capacity and, wherever possible, collaborating with other United Nations agencies.

However, it is the access of UNICEF's partners that is of greatest importance, since they are tasked with delivering its humanitarian assistance and protection, and UNICEF can do more to support them in this regard.

Given the constraints that UNICEF faces in accessing

Volunteers unload UNICEF supplies from a truck, in the flood-ravaged town of New Bataan in south-eastern Mindanao in the Philippines.

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affected people in volatile environments, its partners play an essential role in filling UNICEF's 'access' gap by virtue of the role they play (Government), their proximity to communities (local/national NGOs), or their institutional capacity or mandate (international NGOs). However, the access of partners is still highly context-dependent. There is potential for UNICEF to strengthen partner access through its advocacy, by taking a greater interest in how its partners understand and utilize humanitarian principles, and by engaging more strategically in capacity development. Strengthening operational context analysis will best position UNICEF to identify and exploit access opportunities as they arise, as well as improve the understanding of which partners are best placed to gain principled access.

At the CO level, UNICEF has a wealth of good practice in accessing those in greatest need, which is either transferrable or which can be taken to scale.

The case studies provided some good examples of ways in which UNICEF has expanded coverage that have the potential to be used more broadly. Integrated programming, the use of cash assistance and RRMs all have an important influence on coverage or quality, but

they also suffer from internal challenges that may restrict their wider use. Evidence of the contribution that each of these approaches can make to coverage and quality already exists and is known to UNICEF. Risk-informed programming, preparedness and resilience are all areas of growing competence for UNICEF, and have the potential to play an important role in strengthening the speed of response and bridging the humanitarian-development divide. UNICEF must ensure, however, that a principled approach to humanitarian action is consistently adopted for all its programming.

UNICEF's systems and procedures are consistent with its access aspirations, but there is scope to apply them more widely and adapt them for greater effectiveness.
UNICEF's internal resources, systems and procedures have an important influence on coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies. UNICEF's decentralized internal architecture is appropriate for decision-making on access and ROs play an important role in providing support and in ensuring that CO strategies are in line with corporate aspirations. However, the retention of high-performing teams is a persistent challenge. Establishing national staff teams with the diversity, capacities and networks to facilitate access can also be difficult, and is an area that requires particular attention. Quality and quantity of funding are consistent challenges for COs, although the evidence suggests that UNICEF has had some measure of success in navigating donor conditions. Where it has struggled though, there is scope to clarify the conditions under which funding should be refused – with a focus on using a principled lens to drive decision-making. While there are some specific procedures that appeared to be consistently problematic, there was general support by COs for the routine use of simplified procedures in contexts outside of L2/L3 emergencies.

Recommendations

UNICEF has shown courage and tenacity in providing assistance to those affected by complex humanitarian emergencies, often at significant risk to its own staff and partners. Across all of the country case studies,

UNICEF was among the largest and most important providers of humanitarian assistance and protection, and often worked in some of the most challenging areas. However, there is more that it can do to reach those that are in *greatest need of assistance* and that are *least accessible*, and there is scope for UNICEF to ensure that it more routinely has the data, analysis, staff, partners and programme approaches to facilitate the provision of effective assistance and protection in complex humanitarian emergencies.

Overarching recommendation	
A strategic vision for achieving coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies	
Recommendation	The overarching recommendation of this evaluation is for UNICEF to articulate and implement a strategy for accessing those people who are in greatest need of assistance in a timely and principled manner, particularly in contexts with limited funding. This should address the dilemmas associated with meeting UNICEF's mandate in complex, high-threat environments that are outlined in the recommendations below.
Responsible	Programme Division, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) and Field Results Group

UNICEF's response to the overarching recommendation will provide a framework for the implementation of five clusters of recommendations:

1. EVIDENCE: The generation and use of evidence to determine coverage and quality;

2. ETHICS: Principled decision-making to strengthen humanitarian access;

3. ACCOUNTABILITY: Improving accountability to promote partnerships and community acceptance;

4. ARCHITECTURE: Influencing the external humanitarian architecture; and

5. APPROACH: Adapting internal approaches and systems to maximize coverage and quality.

TO STRENGTHEN UNICEF'S GENERATION OF EVIDENCE, AND EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MADE:

1. The generation and use of evidence to determine coverage and quality	
Assessing and reporting coverage (section 3.1)	
Problem statement	The data collected by UNICEF do not permit a detailed examination of what proportion of needs were met or whether the greatest needs were met. As a consequence, UNICEF is unable to determine its reach against the total number of people in need. Moreover, there is a lack of clarity in how UNICEF reports changes in its targeting.
Recommendation	1.1 UNICEF, and the clusters it leads, should calculate targets based on an assessment of people in need. Changes in targets should be consistently monitored and transparently reported. This will provide the strongest evidence base for advocating adequate resources for humanitarian response.[22]
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should seek to achieve greater consistency in assessing, monitoring and reporting its humanitarian coverage by routinely measuring coverage as a proportion of the people in need for each of its sectors. b. UNICEF should use its role as Cluster Lead Agency to advocate to the IASC for the consistant measurement of coverage as a proportion of people in need to be adopted across clusters. c. To improve evidence of its humanitarian results, UNICEF should strengthen its investments in innovation and technology so that it can more consistently monitor the coverage and quality of its programmes at a disaggregated level. Where progress is made, it should seek to work with its partners and clusters to strengthen practice at the inter-agency level. d. Acknowledging that UNICEF's targets will change as a consequence of internal and external constraints (e.g., access, capacity, funding, security), UNICEF should be more transparent in documenting and reporting the basis on which initial targets have been calculated and how these change throughout the year.
Responsible	1a, 1c and 1d – EMOPS and UNICEF Cluster Coordinators, 1d – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support)
Prioritizing coverage with equity (section 3.2)	
Problem statement	With only a few exceptions, the evaluation found that when a trade-off between equity and coverage is required, coverage is prioritized. Equity programming often requires additional activities or programme areas, which makes it less cost-effective to deliver.
Recommendation	1.2 UNICEF should clarify its corporate expectations for the delivery of coverage with equity in complex humanitarian emergencies. This should explicitly address the concern highlighted in the evaluation of how COs should balance reaching the greatest number of people with reaching those in greatest need.
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should resolve the dilemma of how to balance coverage and equity in complex humanitarian emergencies, with a view to clarifying its approach. b. In their response strategies, UNICEF COs should include a vulnerability analysis that draws on the relevant HNO and clearly identifies the people most in need and provides a justification for the targeting of certain groups rather than others. c. In L3 and humanitarian evaluations, UNICEF should routinely include an examination of coverage with equity to build an evidence base for assessing its performance.
Responsible	1.2a EMOPS, 1.2b Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support), 1.2c Evaluation Office and EMOPS
Using context analysis to ensure the relevance of programme approaches and partnership choices (sections 3.4 and 7.1)	
Problem statement	The evaluation found few examples of UNICEF undertaking light operational context or conflict analysis that could assist in identifying the dynamics that influence access to those in greatest need, as well as offer UNICEF the opportunity to exploit changes in the context to access vulnerable communities.
Recommendation	1.3 UNICEF should undertake regular analysis to adapt programme approaches and partnerships to maximize their relevance and their potential to reach those in greatest need. Underpinning this should be an approach that consistently prioritizes agency presence and ensures the greatest proximity to affected people.

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22 While the evaluation was being conducted, UNICEF circulated revised guidance on setting humanitarian response target levels, which may go some way to meeting the recommendations. See UNICEF, *Brief on Setting Humanitarian Response Target Levels*.

Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should routinely develop light operational analysis to permit evidence-based planning and programme delivery in complex humanitarian emergencies. At a minimum, this should include actor mapping; conflict, needs, coverage and gap analyses; and changes in access.[23]
	b. Context analysis should be used as a lens to regularly review programme approaches to ensure their relevance and to critically assess the scope that may exist to adapt or expand programmes to exploit changes in access (coverage), address new or unmet needs (equity), or to adapt approaches to strengthen quality.
	c. Context analysis should also be used as a means of regularly reviewing UNICEF partnerships with a view to ensuring that partners are best able to provide principled assistance, maintain the greatest presence and proximity to affected people, and have the skills and capacity to deliver programme quality.
	d. ROs should monitor and support COs in this task and trigger periodic strategy reviews and shifts, if required.
Responsible	1.3a, 1.3b, 1.3c – Country Offices (including through RO support), 1.3d – Regional Offices (including through EMOPS support)

TO STRENGTHEN UNICEF CAPACITY TO DELIVER PRINCIPLED HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND RESOLVE ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MADE:

2. Ethical and principled decision-making to strengthen humanitarian access	
Supporting principled humanitarian decision-making (section 4.2, 5.1, 6.2, 8.1)	
Problem statement	The understanding of UNICEF's staff of humanitarian principles is variable, and the evidence suggests that principles are not routinely used as a framework for decision-making in volatile environments. The evaluation also found that UNICEF tends to prioritize its own access above that of its partners.
Recommendation	2.1 There is a need to strengthen the understanding and capacity of all UNICEF staff (at both the headquarters and CO levels) and partners about the practical use of humanitarian principles to make structured, ethical decisions on programme access, coverage and quality.[24]
Detailed recommendations	Actions to be taken by COs
	a. UNICEF must ensure that its front-line staff understand and can use humanitarian principles to make operational decisions. Any knowledge gaps that exist should be identified and addressed through training.
	b. At the CO and FO levels, UNICEF should designate a staff member to lead on access to provide specialist support and maintain an overview of the UNICEF approach. Staff selection for these roles should prioritize understanding of context, conflict and power dynamics as well as personal networks and integrity.
	c. UNICEF should strengthen its engagement with partners on humanitarian principles and access. Commitments should be routinely referred to in programme documents, training should be provided if required, and UNICEF should monitor how its partners and third-party service providers achieve access.
	d. UNICEF and its partners should also more deliberately and consistently communicate the use of principles with communities as a means of strengthening acceptance.
	e. UNICEF should be more consistent in using its HCT membership and broader networks with governments to advocate, when required, for principled access for itself and its partners.
	Actions to be taken by headquarters
	f. UNICEF should foster an organizational culture that recognizes, discusses and documents significant ethical dilemmas and decisions to build knowledge, promote transparency and permit consistency in decision-making.
	g. EMOPS should produce a short guidance note that outlines the dilemmas inherent in the UNICEF mandate and provide a decision-making framework to assist in prioritizing principled assistance in complex humanitarian emergencies.
	h. Acknowledging that decision-making will be context-specific, it is recommended that a framework to guide principled decision-making on donor conditions is developed by the UNICEF Public Partnerships Division.
	2.1a, 2.1b, 2.1c, 2.1d, 2.1e – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support), 2.1f, 2.1g – EMOPS 2.1h – Public Partnerships Division

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23 This list is not comprehensive. Guidance on UNICEF's approach is provided in the *Access Field Manual*. See UNICEF, *Access Field Manual*.

24 At the time the evaluation was closing, UNICEF was in the process of rolling out new guidance on humanitarian access that included a systematic approach to developing CO access strategies, which may go some way to addressing the recommendations.

Strengthening competence in negotiating access (section 5.2)	
Problem statement	UNICEF most frequently engages in humanitarian negotiations at the local level, but front-line staff frequently lack specific skills and training. Staff who have been involved in negotiations, particularly those that are unsuccessful, can face increased risks as a consequence.
Recommendation	2.2 UNICEF should take a more structured approach to identifying, equipping and supporting staff at the country level who engage in humanitarian negotiations with non-State entities and host Governments.
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF's revised guidance on Engaging with Non-State Entities[25] provides an enhanced framework for decision-making and includes an accountability and decision-making tree. It is recommended that this is widely disseminated among staff working in complex humanitarian emergencies.
	b. At the CO and FO levels, UNICEF should designate staff members to lead on negotiations; selection for this role should draw on personal knowledge, experience, integrity, networks and profiles. Where appropriate, these responsibilities should be merged into the humanitarian access role (see recommendation 2.1b).
	c. UNICEF should take a more structured approach to training and supporting staff who are tasked with negotiating access – both at the operational and strategic levels – and should engage with staff in advance of, during, and after negotiations in order to assess risk and to provide support (see recommendation 2.1a).
Responsible	2.2a – EMOPS, 2.2b – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support), 2.2c – EMOPS and Regional Offices
Resolving ethical dilemmas in development – humanitarian linkages (section 7.3 & 6.1)	
Problem statement	UNICEF's multi-mandate can lead to challenges and dilemmas, particularly linked to its engagement with the State on issues of principled humanitarian action.
Recommendation	2.3 In fragile and conflict-prone countries, UNICEF must ensure that its engagement with the Government is consistent with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law (IHL). This is particularly important in situations when the Government is party to the conflict, is not meeting its responsibilities under IHL or is otherwise contradicting humanitarian principles.[26]
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should communicate the importance and value of humanitarian principles and IHL as part of its engagement with the State on systems strengthening for preparedness and response.
	b. To preserve its adherence to humanitarian principles, UNICEF should adopt a risk-informed approach when engaging with the State in countries in which the State is a party to the conflict.
	c. In cases in which the State makes demands of UNICEF and the wider humanitarian community that undermine humanitarian principles, UNICEF should collaborate with others in the UNCT or HCT to defend principled assistance and advocate for the State to meet its responsibilities as outlined in IHL.
	d. As part of its context analysis in complex humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF should routinely elicit and monitor community and partner perceptions about its engagement with the State and its impact on the way it is perceived in conflict-affected areas.
Responsible	2.3a – Country Offices (including through EMOPS support), 2.3b, 2.3c, 2.3d – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support)
Security risk management and risk transfer: Ethical decision-making in unsafe environments (section 5.3)	
Problem statement	Across the case study countries, UNICEF transferred significant responsibility to its partners, third-party service providers and contractors that frequently took on significant additional security risks, often with insufficient support for security risk management.
Recommendation	2.4 UNICEF has a moral obligation to ensure that its partners (including NGO partners, third-party service providers and contractors) have measures in place to ensure duty of care for their staff in complex humanitarian emergencies.
Detailed recommendations	a. In complex humanitarian situations, as part of due diligence, UNICEF section staff should determine that partners have adequate security risk management systems in place and explicitly include this as part of its selection criteria.
	b. While UNICEF engagement with third-party service providers is governed by the long-term agreements that it has in place, as part of its due diligence, UNICEF should assess the risk management systems and explicitly include this as part of its selection criteria.
Responsible	2.4a, 2.4b. – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support)

25   UNICEF, *Engaging with Non-State Entities: A field practitioners' manual*.

26   This recommendation is consistent with UNICEF, *Study on Linking Development and Humanitarian Action*, January 2016.

TO STRENGTHEN UNICEF ACCOUNTABILITY TO KEY RIGHTS-HOLDERS IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MADE:

3. Improving accountability to promote partnerships and community acceptance	
Engaging with communities to strengthen accountability and quality (section 7.2)	
Problem statement	At a CO level, UNICEF does not have a structured approach to accountability to affected people or a routine way of gauging community satisfaction with the coverage or quality of its programmes. This is important in complex humanitarian emergencies, as the provision of good-quality and accountable assistance can enhance an organization's ability to sustain safe access.
Recommendation	3.1 UNICEF staff in humanitarian crises need to better understand and act on their accountability commitments to people receiving their assistance[27] and ensure that these are being routinely met.
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF must ensure that its staff are familiar with how it defines its accountability to vulnerable communities and the responsibilities that this entails.
	b. Linked to the recommendation above, it is important that UNICEF clarify the practical steps required for it to meet these obligations in the context of working in partnership.
	c. UNICEF has used innovative approaches to support its staff and partners to engage with affected people targeted by UNICEF-funded assistance. There would be value in determining whether these are relevant to complex humanitarian emergencies and scalable as a means of meeting its accountability obligations as well as for increased programme effectiveness.
	d. One of the key purposes of engaging with communities is to gauge satisfaction with the appropriateness and effectiveness of assistance. At the CO level, UNICEF has a responsibility to routinely collect, analyse and use this information to address concerns that are raised. To achieve this, UNICEF must ensure that there is latitude within its programmes to make course corrections to address communities' concerns about coverage and quality.
Responsible	3.1a, 3.1b, 3.1c – Programme Division and EMOPS, 3.1d – Country Offices (including through RO support)
Strengthening localization and investing in partnerships (section 6.2)	
Problem statement	UNICEF makes insufficient investment in genuine partnerships with local and national actors, even where they have proven essential for access. There is a tendency for emphasis to be placed on one-off trainings or workshops over seeking to strengthen institutional capacity, despite the fact that this offers the greatest potential for strengthening coverage and quality over the long term.
Recommendation	3.2 UNICEF should provide greater and more sustained support to local and national NGO partners in complex humanitarian emergencies, particularly in contexts in which these organizations are best placed to strengthen coverage and quality.
Detailed recommendations	a. In line with the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF should ensure clarity among its staff about its commitment to localization as a strategic engagement with local and national partners and its implications for the ways in which UNICEF seeks to support and strengthen such partners.
	b. In access-constrained environments, UNICEF Partner Review Committees should assign priority to partners with the profile, contacts and networks to gain access to communities in greatest need of assistance, even when this means that UNICEF will need to address capacity weaknesses.
	c. With a view to strengthening coverage and quality, UNICEF should routinely undertake capacity assessments of its NGO partners in complex humanitarian emergencies as a means of identifying priorities for implementing capacity development strategies with partners.
	d. As outlined in the recommendation on humanitarian principles above, UNICEF should (i) strengthen its engagement with partners on issues of gaining and maintaining principled access; (ii) be more proactive in using its network of interlocutors to advocate for partner access where assistance is requested and required; and (iii) strengthen the provision of support to partners for managing risk.
Responsible	3.2a – Programme Division and EMOPS, 3.2b, 3.2c, 3.2d – Country Offices (including through RO support)

27   As defined in UNICEF, *Putting People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action*.

IN ORDER FOR UNICEF TO INFLUENCE INTER-AGENCY HUMANITARIAN ARCHITECTURE TO IMPROVE COVERAGE AND QUALITY, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MADE:

4. Influencing external humanitarian architecture	
Supporting the United Nations security management system to assist UNICEF to stay and deliver (section 5.3)	
Problem statement	Positive working relationships between UNDSS and humanitarian agencies tends to be influenced by personality and background rather than structure or policy, which leads to inconsistencies. To navigate the challenges posed by participation in the United Nations security management system, UNICEF has employed its own security staff. The evaluation found that the varying levels of success that have been achieved are linked to staff profile and personality as well as the roles and responsibilities given to these staff.
Recommendation	4.1 UNICEF should bring to the attention of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network the evidence from this evaluation, the recent WFP access evaluation and the *Presence and Proximity*[28] study to promote greater consistency in how UNDSS applies its policies. Concurrently, UNICEF should continue to recruit and deploy high-capacity security officers to complex humanitarian emergencies to strengthen its access.
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should seek allies in the Inter-Agency Security Management Network with which to promote positive change in the United Nations security management system.
	b. Until change occurs, it will be important for UNICEF to continue to select high-calibre, senior security officers to liaise with the HCT and UNDSS, and to support COs in their role of engaging with the Designated Official to find relevant and principled approaches for humanitarian access.
	c. If the use of the Programme Criticality Framework and the decisions of the Designated Official are considered to be overly restrictive, UNICEF should consistently document instances in which access requests are rejected to have evidence to escalate concerns and to support its advocacy on expanding access.
	d. In complex humanitarian situations, there is scope for Country Representatives to provide clearer guidance about expectations for staff travel to FOs and programme locations for the purposes of monitoring programme progress and providing support to partners.
	e. The use of low-profile missions are considered good practice in volatile environments and has played a key role in permitting UNICEF to support and monitor its programmes, but their use is limited to a small number of countries. UNICEF should seek to distil and share practice in order to promote this approach more widely.
Responsible	4.1a – EMOPS, 4.1b – Country Offices (including through EMOPS support), 4.1c, 4.1d – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support), 4.1e – EMOPS
Partnership with WFP to strengthen the continuity of care (section 6.4)	
Problem statement	One of the most significant partnerships from a quality and coverage perspective was between UNICEF and WFP for the delivery of integrated MAM and SAM services in the Somalia pre-famine response. The integration encompassed an unprecedented level of collaboration between UNICEF and WFP, including efforts to harmonize approaches and overcome institutional barriers. There was a strong investment in preparation and in coordinated services, including delivery at shared sites using shared partners. Despite the existence of significant evidence about the benefits of the approach, it is not routinely used in complex humanitarian situations.
Recommendation	4.2 UNICEF should coordinate with WFP and WHO to strengthen the institutional basis for and to provide technical direction on the continuum of care for acute malnutrition cases (i.e., the integration of SAM and MAM treatment).
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF, WFP and WHO should share evidence and lessons from the integrated approach adopted in Somalia to strengthen the evidence base for joint action.
	b. These should be reviewed alongside similar practices elsewhere to provide a benchmark for the adoption of integrated SAM/MAM programmes in contexts that are characterized by poor continuity of care.
	c. To provide a foundation for the promotion of integrated programming, the memorandum of understanding between UNICEF, WFP and WHO should be revised to strengthen institutional support for the approach.
Responsible	4.2a, 4.2b, 4.2c – Programme Division and EMOPS

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28   Jackson and Zyck, *Presence and Proximity.*

IN ORDER FOR UNICEF TO ADAPT ITS APPROACHES AND SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE COVERAGE AND QUALITY, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MADE:

5. Adapting internal approaches and systems to strengthen coverage and quality	
Clarifying the use of Simplified Standard Operating Procedures (section 8.4)	
Problem statement	The SSOPs were widely endorsed by COs during the evaluation although there was significant variation in their use in L2/L3 and other L1 emergencies. While some UNICEF COs with an L3 activation did not make use of the simplifications, several offices of countries for which there was no Corporate Emergency Activation were benefiting from their use.
Recommendation	5.1. As part of the revision of the SSOPs, UNICEF should seek to determine the reasons for not applying the simplifications. It should also consider the use of specific simplifications to support humanitarian response outside of L2/L3 emergencies.
Detailed recommendations	a. Given that the SSOPs strengthen the humanitarian effectiveness of UNICEF, the variability in their uptake should be explicitly addressed in the revisions currently under way. b. Given the broader use of SSOPs outside of L2/L3 emergencies, it is recommended that UNICEF strengthen the transparency and consistency of its decision-making by outlining broader humanitarian criteria under which the SSOPs may be applied. Included in this should be a requirement to document the reasons that COs choose not to adopt the simplifications. c. Linked to the recommendation above, it is suggested that UNICEF should define a light approval process for L1 emergencies to provide the CO with simplified fast-track Human Resources procedures and to give the Country Representative the option to activate, with a well-documented justification approved to the RD, full access to any L2/L3 simplifications pertaining to the CO level deemed critical for the coverage and quality of the humanitarian response. d. The slow pace of Programme Document submission and approval led to significant delays in humanitarian responses across all the case study countries. Although the simplifications offer time reductions, they are not consistently applied. It is recommended that UNICEF review the PCAs/Programme Document processes with a view to streamlining the process.
Responsible	5.1a, 5.1b, 5.1c – EMOPS, 5.1d – Field Results Group
Strengthen staff engagement with and understanding of key policy documents (section 8.4)	
Recommendation	5.2 UNICEF should develop more coherent, modular humanitarian learning and knowledge management mechanisms to ensure that staff working in complex humanitarian emergencies have adequate knowledge, skills and capacities to address the challenges that UNICEF experiences in achieving coverage and quality.
Detailed recommendation	a. Based on the findings of the evaluation, key areas of focus should include the following: • Delivering coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies – key principles, UNICEF commitments and approach and how to resolve common dilemmas; • Operationalizing the approach of UNICEF to equity in the context of complex humanitarian emergencies; • Understanding and operationalizing humanitarian principles and IHL in complex humanitarian situations; • Engagement with States and non-State entities in contexts of conflict and fragility; • The challenges of leadership in humanitarian action; • Community engagement and translating the UNICEF accountability framework into practice; • Understanding programme integration in UNICEF and laying the foundations for it in complex humanitarian emergencies; • Risk-informed programming; and • Principled approaches to strengthening humanitarian-development linkages in complex humanitarian emergencies; b. The adopted strategies must take into consideration the specific challenges faced by COs in these contexts which include high turnover, the need to onboard staff with modest prior humanitarian experience and the significant responsibilities held by national staff. Prioritization for learning should be placed on: • Minimum levels of individual skills/knowledge differentiated by function (with the potential of links to individual testing); and • Minimum capacities/functions at the level of the CO team (with links to CO self-diagnosis and RO quality assurance, triggering team-based learning on challenging skills application).
Responsible	5.2a, 52b – EMOPS, Programme Division and Division of Human Resources

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In the Central African Republic, a child returns with his father for his follow-up outpatient treatment at the Centre de Santé Saint Joseph, on the outskirts of Bangui.

The need to promote integrated programming within UNICEF (section 5.5)	
Problem statement	UNICEF has developed a wealth of policies, procedural guidance and tools to provide direction to staff in planning, managing and evaluating programmes in complex humanitarian contexts. However, the case studies provided limited evidence that, beyond the most experienced humanitarian staff and some senior managers, UNICEF's global guidance documents are not consistently known and used in the field.[29]
Recommendation	5.3 The case for strengthening UNICEF programme integration in complex humanitarian emergencies has been made in previous studies and evaluations. It is now urgent that UNICEF create a policy and practice environment that enables progress to be made in achieving integration where it will strengthen humanitarian outcomes.
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should update key texts – including the CCCs,[30] the Programme Policy and Procedures Manual and, in emergency preparedness and response planning guidance, guidance on partnerships, to reflect the expectation that the integrated approach will be applied where it has potential to strengthen humanitarian outcomes and can be achieved in a timely way.
	b. Drawing on examples from recent practice, UNICEF should document models of programme integration typically used to address humanitarian situations.
	c. In order to lay the foundations for programme integration, COs in complex humanitarian emergencies should routinely examine opportunities as part of their preparedness planning and, where these exist, lay the foundations for integrated assessments.
Responsible	5.3a, 5.3b – Programme Division and EMOPS, 5.3c – Country Offices (including through RO, PD and EMOPS support)

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29 It is important to note that a lack of familiarity with policies and guidance does not necessarily result in obvious mismanagement or misconduct. The evidence from this evaluation shows a subtler pattern of missed opportunities owing to staff not being fully comfortable with or unwilling/unable to use the full range of flexible policies and procedures that UNICEF already has in place.

30 The ongoing revision of the CCCs offers an important opportunity to ensure that they are consistent with this recommendation.

Aisha Mohammed, a UNICEF-supported polio team vaccinator, walks through Muna Garage IDP camp, Maiduguri, Borno State, north-east Nigeria.

PART ONE:
INTRODUCTION AND EVALUATION BACKGROUND

This section provides an introduction to the evaluation, summarizes its purpose and objectives, and provides an overview of the methodology.

1.1 Evaluation purpose and objectives

1.1.1 PURPOSE OF THE GLOBAL EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation is to generate, through robust and systematic analysis across a range of country contexts, practical solutions that can inform how UNICEF improves the coverage and quality of its humanitarian response. It is anticipated that both the evaluation process and results will contribute to a body of evidence and learning about the enablers and barriers to delivering high-quality humanitarian action in complex humanitarian emergencies – and how these have impacted on UNICEF's performance and ability to reach affected populations. It will generate practical solutions and recommendations that enable UNICEF to scale up good practice and introduce innovations that will ultimately contribute to improving the coverage and quality of its humanitarian response.

The evaluation has three objectives:

» Assess UNICEF performance in achieving coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies based on a sample of countries, including identifying internal and external enabling factors and challenges to UNICEF's performance.

» Identify internal and external enabling factors and challenges to UNICEF fulfilling its protection mandate and role in complex humanitarian emergencies, including its designated role in the MRM resulting from United Nations Security Council resolutions on children affected by armed conflict.

» Capture good practice and innovations that are improving humanitarian action and analyse their potential for more general application by UNICEF.

The map below outlines the countries in which the evaluation was conducted (figure 1).

FIGURE 1: UNICEF COUNTRY OFFICE PARTICIPATION IN THE EVALUATION

1.2 Analytical framework

Given that the primary focus of this evaluation was on practical solutions rather than theory, an analytical framework was used to articulate the critical building blocks and enablers of coverage and quality in humanitarian response (figure 2). The framework uses three lenses to examine UNICEF's performance: the **outcomes or results** of UNICEF's humanitarian action with regard to coverage and quality; and the **ways of achieving results** and approaches that are applied across a range of field contexts, as well as at a global level to support its operations in complex humanitarian emergencies. This includes the ways in which UNICEF delivers its programmes, works in partnership, advocates and uses other approaches to strengthen coverage and quality; and the **inputs** that UNICEF provides – specifically human, financial and procedural – which enable or hinder the ways of working. These building blocks individually and collectively affect the quality and coverage of UNICEF's humanitarian assistance, and ultimately contribute to the performance of UNICEF's response to humanitarian crises.

The evaluation explored which of these building blocks were present in particular case study contexts, the extent to which they have enabled or hindered success, and where good practice and innovation existed, that could be applied elsewhere.

1.3 Evaluation matrix and questions

Based on the analytical framework, an evaluation matrix was developed consisting of five headline evaluation questions (*see below*) and 16 evaluation sub-questions, to assist in assessing performance and identifying how good practice and innovations at the field level were contributing to coverage and quality outcomes.

» EVALUATION QUESTION 1 – OUTCOMES: To what extent is UNICEF achieving coverage and quality in its humanitarian action, in an equitable way; and what good practice, lessons and practical solutions can be identified to inform improvements across UNICEF's response?

» EVALUATION QUESTION 2 – WAYS OF ACHIEVING OUTCOMES: In what ways and how effectively has UNICEF influenced others to increase the quality and coverage of humanitarian action?

» EVALUATION QUESTION 3 – WAYS OF ACHIEVING OUTCOMES: What programme approaches and partnership strategies has UNICEF employed at the field level to gain principled access and improve coverage and quality, and with what success?
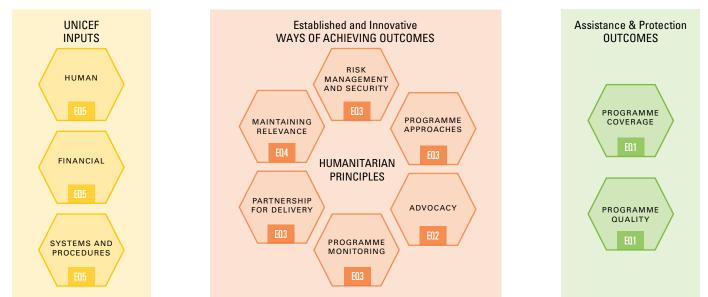
FIGURE 2: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE EVALUATION

» **EVALUATION QUESTION 4 – WAYS OF ACHIEVING OUTCOMES:** To what extent is UNICEF's humanitarian response designed to be relevant and is adapted to ensure its ongoing relevance, evolving needs and priorities?

» **EVALUATION QUESTION 5 – INPUTS:** To what extent do UNICEF's human and financial resource management, and systems and procedures support an effective response in complex humanitarian emergencies?

The analytical framework and the five evaluation questions provide the basis for the structure of this report. The full evaluation matrix is reproduced in annex 2 of this report and includes the evaluation questions and sub-questions, alongside indicators, evaluation methods and tools for data collection and analysis.

1.4 Overview of the methodology, data collection and analysis tools

A mixed-methods approach was used for data collection and analysis. While most of the data collected were qualitative, the team collected quantitative data in the form of sectoral results from the coverage and quality analysis tool. The evaluation ensured methodological rigour through i) the use of a combination of evaluation tools and multiple analytical methods, as well as the collection of both primary and secondary data across the evaluation period; ii) rigorous comparative qualitative analysis through the use of an evidence assessment framework; and iii) triangulation of evidence across multiple data sources. The pilot phase offered an opportunity to test the approach and tools, as well as offered an opportunity to harvest and examine initial findings (*see the following box*).

The use of the pilot phase to test the approach and build the evidence base

The inception and pilot phase was used to test the data collection tools; the interview protocols were tested during the inception visit to headquarters and was subsequently adapted. The coverage and quality analysis tool and community engagement approach were tested in the first field mission to Nigeria before being fully rolled out and used in the other field missions. The interview summary sheets and evidence assessment tools for systematically analysing documentary evidence were reviewed internally and piloted during the Nigeria field mission.

The pilot phase culminated in the preparation of an initial synthesis report and country case study reports for the Nigeria field mission and the Pakistan and Ukraine desk reviews, which highlighted findings against each of the evaluation questions. A preliminary set of results and presentation of conclusions and recommendations informed the subsequent case studies and global interviews. A lessons learned paper was produced at the end of the pilot phase, which reflected on the relevance and effectiveness of the methodology and proposed a series of modifications to further strengthen it.

The methods of data collection, analysis and reflection were as follows (a summary is provided in figure 5):

» Document and literature review;

» Semi-structured KIIs;

» Community engagement and focus group discussions;

» Quantitative coverage and quality analysis;

» Desk and field-based case studies; and

» Evaluation reports.

1.4.1 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The evaluation team conducted an initial review of relevant documentation to inform the inception report and refine the evaluation design and tools. The team then conducted a more extensive review of country-

level and global documentation relevant to the coverage and quality of humanitarian assistance in advance of each of the country case studies. The purpose of these reviews was to build on the work already conducted during the scoping and learning phases, and to identify where there was already documented evidence relating to the key evaluation questions and sub-questions. In particular, evidence of coverage, quality and protection outcomes; successful ways of working and approaches to achieving coverage, access and quality; and lessons learned from how UNICEF applies humanitarian principles, commitments and standards (a bibliography is provided in annex 4). Recent evaluations were also reviewed (*see the box below*). The evaluation took into consideration findings from the synthesis of UNICEF's evaluations of its humanitarian action between 2010 and 2016, which draws on findings and analysis from 30 evaluations.[31] Relevant findings disaggregated by each of the sections in the analytical framework are outlined in section 2.2.2.

RELEVANT UNICEF EVALUATIONS OF COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN 2015 AND 2018

L3 evaluations	Other humanitarian evaluations
Syrian Arab Republic (2016),[32] Central African Republic (2016),[33] Yemen conflict response (2016),[34] Yemen cholera response (2018)[35]	Kenya drought response real-time evaluation (2016),[36] Darfur (2016), Somalia pre-famine real-time evaluation (2017)[37]

1.4.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured KIIs were conducted with UNICEF headquarters, RO and CO staff. In each of the case study countries, KIIs included the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, United Nations agencies, national and local government authorities, local communities and concerned populations, NGOs and donor representatives (*see annex 4 for a list of interviewees*). The approach of the evaluation to ethics and confidentiality is outlined in section 1.6.

1.4.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The evaluation team conducted sex- and age-disaggregated focus group discussions with community members in the field missions at subnational level in order to explore perceptions of the quality and coverage of UNICEF programmes. A participatory approach was used to explore what quality of service means to communities, which will be followed by a discussion of the equity of service coverage (the approach is summarized in annex 7 and a summary of participation is provided in annex 8).

1.4.4 HUMANITARIAN COVERAGE AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT

A coverage and quality analysis tool was used to generate quantitative and qualitative data on UNICEF's performance in accessing those in greatest need of assistance. The tool comprises a set of five questions for each of UNICEF's core areas of programming (nutrition; health; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); education; and child protection). The data were validated during country visits and desk reviews through KIIs with programme sections at national and subnational levels, as well as through a review of programme documents. This provided a platform to explore the qualitative aspects of the different factors that enabled or inhibited the attainment of the standards. The coverage and quality tool is described in annex 5. The assessment summary sheets are provided in annex 6.

31 United Nations Children's Fund, *Towards Improved Emergency Responses: Synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016 – Synthesis report*, UNICEF, New York, June 2017.

32 Avenir Analytics, *Evaluation of UNICEF's Humanitarian Response to the Syria Crisis: Volume 1 – Main report*, UNICEF, 2015.

33 Lawday, Andrew, et al., *The UNICEF Response to the Crisis in the Central African Republic: Final report*, DARA/UNICEF, 2016.

34 Haider, Nadeem, et al., *Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance, UNICEF Yemen Country Office, 2016: Final report*, AAN Associates/UNICEF, 2016.

35 Darcy, James, et al., *Evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 Response to the Cholera Epidemic in* Yemen: A crisis within *a crisis – Evaluation report*, UNICEF, June 2018.

36 Crook, Paul, Mohamed Haji Ibrahim and Giorgio Ferrari, *Real-Time Evaluation of UNICEF SCO Humanitarian Response to the Pre-Famine Crisis*, MDF Training and Consultancy, January 2018.

37 Haily, P. et al., *Real-Time Evaluation on the Emergency Drought Situation Response in Kenya, 2017: Final report*, Global Emergency Group, Centre for Humanitarian Change, Humanitarian Response Consulting, March 2018.

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Aided by modern puppets and a traditional Somali wooden bell, Mushara Hassan, a professional storyteller from Awjama Omar Culture Centre, brings stories of Somali history to the children. "When I speak they laugh and want more. It's very important to tell the stories of Somali history to our children," says Hassan.

1.4.5 DESK AND FIELD-BASED CASE STUDIES

The evaluation team conducted 11 country case studies (six desk reviews and five field missions) across a range of complex humanitarian contexts, with the purpose of: i) identifying good practice, challenges, innovations and lessons at the field level to inform improvements in the coverage and quality of UNICEF's response in each of the 11 country contexts; and ii) to build an evidence base to inform the evaluation. Sampling was guided by the identification of potential countries which met agreed criteria outlined in the terms of reference (*see annex 9*). Within this group, countries were purposively selected according to their willingness to participate, the availability of senior staff and the absence of other, similar evaluative activities.

1.4.6 EVALUATION REPORTS

An inception report was prepared soon after the commencement of the evaluation, which provided an initial context analysis, outlined the methodology and approach in more detail, presented the findings of a light evaluability assessment and summarized the limitations and mitigation measures. During the pilot and evaluation phase, a series of internal country case study reports was prepared according to a common format outlined and agreed during the inception phase of the evaluation. The reports provided the basis for analysis and comparison. An initial synthesis report was produced at the end of the pilot phase, the findings of which informed the evaluation phase and provided a foundation for this report. Lessons learned from the pilot studies were documented in a methodological lessons note, which was used to refine the methods and tools prior to the commencement of the second phase.

Holding a UNICEF textbook, a girl stands outside a UNICEF-supported Temporary Learning Centre in the village of Basti Bhaya in Rajanpur, Pakistan.

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DETAILS OF THE METHODS USED IN THE EVALUATION

Method	Details
Document analysis	Internal documents: Policies, guidance, training materials, evaluations, project reports and audits.
	External documents: Policies and guidance of comparator organisations, academic literature, and grey literature (see annex 3). In total, 619 documents were cited (37 per cent internal and 63 per cent external).[38] In addition to this, more than 1,400 documents were reviewed (53 per cent internal, 47 per cent external). *(see annex 2)*.
Field mission and desk reviews	Headquarters and Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office.
	Field missions: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia.
	Desk reviews/KIIs: Burundi, Mali, Pakistan, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic,[39] Ukraine.
Key informant interviews	504 interviews in total: 30 per cent women and 70 per cent men.
	292 UNICEF staff, 153 UN and NGO staff, 46 authorities and 13 others *(see annex 4)*.
Community engagement	Focus group discussions with communities in receipt of UNICEF assistance were conducted in Afghanistan (Herat and Jalalabad), the Central African Republic (Bambari), Nigeria (Maiduguri) and the Philippines (Mindanao). A total of 402 community members consulted in focus group discussions, 52 per cent women and 48 per cent men *(see annex 8)*.
Coverage and quality analysis	Quantitative data on UNICEF's reach against targets for selected CCCs were collected and analysed for all each of the field missions and desk review countries *(see annex 6)*.

38 This number may include some overlap for documents that were common across the case studies.

39 The desk review for the Syrian Arab Republic comprised the operations managed out of Damascus. It did not include cross-border operations.

1.5 Data analysis and synthesis

The terms of reference for the evaluation requested the use of an inductive approach to data collection and analysis and to assessing UNICEF's contribution to results. With this in mind, a three-step process was designed to systematically and transparently gather data on how and why UNICEF has been able to overcome challenges to deliver coverage and quality in its humanitarian assistance in a way that sought to minimize bias. This was complemented by the adoption of a pragmatic, but systematic, approach to analysing a substantial volume of qualitative and quantitative data and evidence across the case studies (figure 3).

FIGURE 3: THREE-STEP PROCESS FOR SYSTEMATIC EVIDENCE GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

1. Preliminary assessment of coverage and quality
   • Secondary data
   • Interviews

2. Field-level assessment
   • Verification of preliminary analysis
   • Field-level interviews to explore how and why

3. Data analysis
   • Triangulation
   • Systematic analysis of patterns

For each case study (field mission and desk review), an evidence summary table was prepared which summarized key evidence against each of the five evaluation questions. After all the case studies had been conducted, these summaries were then consolidated to support the identification of emerging issues, common themes and patterns. These formed the basis for the final synthesis report.

1.6 Ethics, confidentiality and quality assurance

1.6.1 ETHICS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The main ethical issues encountered in this evaluation relate to the stakeholders that the evaluation team engaged with, particularly affected communities, and involved considerations of confidentiality, data protection, protecting vulnerable respondents, and ensuring that the evaluation team avoided causing harm.

Initial interviews during the inception phase highlighted sensitivities regarding information about access negotiations and humanitarian principles. In order to mitigate risks for participants and to enable the evaluation to gain access to relevant information while balancing the requirement of the terms of reference for COs to receive written reports, it was agreed that country case study reports would remain internal. For published reports, it was agreed that analysis would be decontextualized to avoid disclosure where it was considered to be sensitive.

During the evaluation process, the evaluation team adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the United Nations System,[40] and the UNICEF's procedures, guidelines and tools to ensure the human dignity of children is honoured and that their rights and well-being are respected in all research,

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40   United Nations Evaluation Group, 'UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System', UNEG, March 2008, <www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>, accessed 2 November 2018.

irrespective of context.[41] As a result, interviews were undertaken based on agreement that details would not be attributed to a specific person or agency. A similar approach was taken for the community focus group discussions. Notes from the interviews and discussions were kept digitally in secure online storage.

Also, because this evaluation included data collection from vulnerable groups, the inception report and the data collection tools were reviewed and approved by an external review board. This ensured proper protocols were in place for informed consent, data protection, safeguards to protect the rights of vulnerable subjects, among others.

1.6.2 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Itad's role: The evaluation was carried out by an independent evaluation team from Itad. To ensure the quality of results, the evaluation team applied the UNICEF Global Evaluation Report Oversight System. The evaluation report was peer reviewed by Lewis Sida (Consultant) and Richard Burge (Itad Director). The evaluation team integrated comments from the UNICEF Evaluation Office, the Reference Group, CO, RO and headquarters evaluation participants. Feedback on the draft was also elicited by the evaluation team during a technical feedback workshop held in New York in December 2018 and a presentation to directors in January 2019.

UNICEF's role: The evaluation was overseen by an Evaluation Manager from UNICEF's Evaluation Office, who played a key role in ensuring quality. The Reference Group also played a quality assurance role through the provision of advice to the evaluation, with members responsible for receiving and responding to progress updates and evaluation products. The Reference Group reviewed and commented on the inception report, the draft country case studies and the synthesis reports.

1.7 Limitations

The purpose of the pilot phase of the evaluation was to test the relevance and feasibility of the approach of the evaluation, and the pilot phase offered an opportunity to further explore evaluability issues, limitations and mitigation measures. The findings of this study are presented in a separate report[42] and a summary is presented below. A set of recommendations were made to address the challenges that were partially successful. The remaining limitations are listed below.

» Lack of staff continuity: It proved challenging to interview CO staff present for the entire period under evaluation due to high staff turnover. Through the use of different sources of information including document review and KIIs, it was possible to partially mitigate this limitation.

» Lack of documentary evidence of key decisions: Having access to evidence of operational decision-making processes was one of the most challenging issues encountered by the evaluation team. However, through trust-building exercises, it was possible to partially overcome this limitation. Triangulation between CO, RO, headquarters and external informants also assisted in addressing this issue.

» The breadth of the terms of reference: As outlined in the terms of reference and agreed with the Reference Group, the evaluation team took an inductive approach to engaging with COs and sought to identify key issues and prioritize them.

» Quantitative coverage and quality analysis: While a consistent data set on UNICEF's sectoral targets and attainment of standards across the country case studies was obtained, numerous challenges were encountered that limited the utility of the analysis. These are discussed in section 3.1 of this report. An analysis could not be undertaken for the Syrian Arab Republic, as many of the figures were for the

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41   International Charter for Ethical Research Involving Children http://childethics.com/charter; *Ethical Research Involving Children, Innocenti Publications, UNICEF Office of Research- Innocenti, Florence*, 2013 https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/706/; *UNICEF's Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis*, 2015 https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF; *What We Know about Ethical Research Involving Children in Humanitarian Settings: An overview of principles, the literature and case studies, Innocenti Working Papers no. 2016_18, UNICEF Office of Research- Innocenti, Florence*, 2016 https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/849/

42   Itad, *Evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations: Methodology lessons report*, Itad, June 2017.

whole of the Syrian Arab Republic while the review was restricted to the Syria CO.

» Community engagement: Members of the evaluation team conducted structured focus group discussions with communities to discuss perceptions of coverage and quality in each of the field missions, with the exception of Somalia, where the evaluation team visited camps for internally displaced persons in Garowe.

» Changes in the participation of COs: Due to unforeseen developments, the desk review/KII of the Myanmar CO was not conducted. The desk review/KII of the Syria CO was limited to UNICEF staff and included only the operations managed out of Damascus. To address gaps and to broaden participation, interviews were conducted with senior management in the Iraq, South Sudan and Yemen COs.

» Missed opportunities for reflection: The sequencing of the evaluation meant that some opportunities were missed for reflection and feedback; there was no input from the Reference Group between the end of the pilot phase and the commencement of the evaluation phase. During the evaluation phase, no feedback was provided on the draft country report submissions until after the submission of the final synthesis report.

1.8 Structure of the report

» SECTION 1 of the report provides an introduction and background to the evaluation. It summarizes the purpose and objectives of the evaluation and outlines the scope.

» SECTION 2 describes the context in which the evaluation is being undertaken, including challenges in how the international humanitarian system achieves coverage and quality and ways in which UNICEF has adapted to maintain its relevance and effectiveness.

» SECTION 3 examines UNICEF's coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies and identifies strengths and weaknesses. It also identifies how UNICEF has made decisions in its relative prioritization of coverage and quality.

» SECTION 4 assesses the ways in which, and how effectively, UNICEF has influenced others to increase the quality and coverage of humanitarian action.

» SECTION 5 focuses on the relevance and effectiveness of programme approaches that UNICEF has employed at the field level to gain principled access and improve coverage and quality.

» SECTION 6 focuses on the relevance and effectiveness of partnership strategies that UNICEF has employed to gain principled access and improve coverage and quality.

» SECTION 7 assesses the means by which UNICEF has ensured that its programmes remain relevant in volatile contexts through context analysis, engagement with communities and strengthening humanitarian-development linkages.

» SECTION 8 examines how UNICEF's organization and management of its people and funds has supported or hindered the relevance and effectiveness of UNICEF's coverage and quality.

» SECTION 9 synthesizes the findings above to draw conclusions on UNICEF's effectiveness in reaching those in greatest need with programmes that meet quality standards. Based on the conclusions, a set of recommendations to strengthen coverage and quality are made.

Women and children gather at a UNICEF-supported mobile health unit in Fafin tented camp in the Syrian Arab Republic.

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PART TWO:
THE CONTEXT OF UNICEF'S RESPONSE IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

This section outlines global challenges in achieving humanitarian coverage and quality and the institutional context in which the evaluation is being undertaken.

2.1 Responding to needs in complex humanitarian emergencies
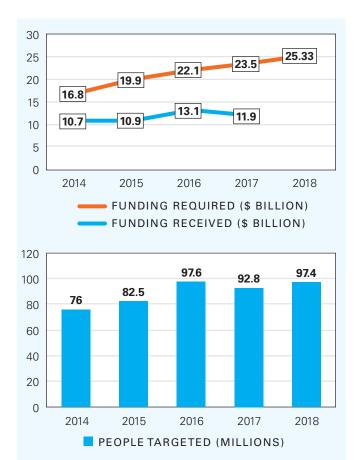
2.1.1 WHAT IS A COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY?

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) defines a complex humanitarian emergency as 'a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing United Nations country programme'.[43, 44] The glossary in the UNICEF Programme Policy and Procedures Manual uses the same definition to which it adds, '…in complex emergencies, children and women may also need legal and physical protection to prevent harm and ensure their access to humanitarian assistance'.[45]

2.1.2 RECENT TRENDS IN HUMANITARIAN NEED

An estimated 201 million people in 134 countries required international humanitarian assistance in 2017, with 60 per cent of all assistance channelled to 10 countries only.[46] Of this total, UN Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) targeted 92.8 million people (which rose to 97.4 million in 2018).[47] Conflict continues to be a significant driver of humanitarian need, with many others affected by a complex dynamic between poverty, environmental vulnerability and fragility. International humanitarian assistance continues to play a critical role in meeting the needs of people affected by crisis, and in 2017, US$23.5 billion was requested for humanitarian response, with a gap between what was requested and received of $11.6 billion.[48, 49] Figure 4 provides a summary of recent

trends in the number of people targeted by HRPs and their funding requirements over the past five years.

FIGURE 4: GLOBAL TRENDS IN FUNDING AND TARGETING FOR HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLANS, 2014–2018[50]

FUNDING REQUIRED ($ BILLION)
FUNDING RECEIVED ($ BILLION)

PEOPLE TARGETED (MILLIONS)

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43 ALNAP, *The State of the Humanitarian System 2018: Inception report*, ALNAP, April 2017, p. 9.

44 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Definition of Complex Emergencies'.

45 United Nations Children's Fund, *Programme Policy and Procedure Manual: Programme operations*, UNICEF, February 2007, p. xi.

46 Development Initiatives Ltd., *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018*, Development Initiatives, Bristol, United Kingdom, 2018.

47 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2018*, OCHA, New York, 2018.

48 Ibid.

49 It is noteworthy that total humanitarian assistance (which includes funding provided outside of HRPs, was estimated at $27.3 billion in 2017 (Development Initiatives, *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018*).

50 OCHA Financial Tracking Service. See <https://interactive.unocha.org/publication/globalhumanitarianoverview/#ataglanceposition>, accessed 23 October 2018.

2.1.3 THE LEGAL BASIS FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

International law serves as a basis for humanitarian action. It defines the legal obligations of States in their conduct with each other and their treatment of individuals, including the fundamental legal standards for the protection of individuals and the type of assistance that may be provided. Two main bodies of international law apply to humanitarian action, namely:

»   INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW: International humanitarian law (IHL) applies to situations of armed conflict. It aims to limit the effects of hostilities on both persons and objects, and to protect certain particularly vulnerable groups of people. It also establishes measures. Of importance to this evaluation is the use of IHL to advocate with State and non-State entities to meet their obligations to assist and protect civilians and to provide affected populations with rapid and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance and protection.

»   INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW: International human rights law lays down obligations that States are bound to respect. In situations of armed conflict, human rights law complements and reinforces the protection afforded by IHL.

Underpinning humanitarian action are four core humanitarian principles – humanity impartiality, neutrality and independence (*see the box below*). These principles, derived from IHL, have been taken up by the United Nations in General Assembly resolutions 46/182[51] and 58/114.[52] Their global recognition and relevance is furthermore underscored by the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief[53] and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.[54]

Definitions of humanitarian principles[55]

- HUMANITY: Upholding the principle that all girls, boys, women and men of every age shall be treated humanely in all circumstances by saving lives and alleviating suffering, while ensuring respect for the individual.

- IMPARTIALITY: Ensuring that assistance is delivered to all those who are suffering, based only on their needs and rights, equally and without any form of discrimination.

- NEUTRALITY: A commitment not to take sides in hostilities and to refrain from engaging in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. This is linked closely to independence to which UNICEF is committed under the United Nations Charter.

- INDEPENDENCE: Humanitarian action must be separate from the political, economic, military or other objectives of any actor in the areas where humanitarian action is implemented.

'Principled humanitarianism' is a commitment to providing for the assistance and protection needs of affected populations in a way that is distinct and separate from political and other motivations. It is therefore necessary for humanitarian actors to have a familiarity with these basic principles in situations of armed conflict. At the same time, when multiple actors are involved, strict adherence to core principles demands a clear division of labour between humanitarian and other actors, such as those in the political and military realm, in respect of international law.

2.1.4 EXTERNAL CHALLENGES IN RESPONDING TO COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

Humanitarian agencies operating in complex humanitarian environments face a wide range of institutional, operational, access and security challenges that affect the coverage and quality of assistance. Figure 5 provides an indicative analysis of which of these challenges applied to each of the country case studies.[56]

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51   See <www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/dms/Documents/120402_OOM-46182_eng.pdf>.

52   See <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/501/42/PDF/N0350142.pdf?OpenElement>.

53   International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and International Committee of the Red Cross, *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross* and *Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief*, IFRC and ICRC, 1994.

54   See <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>.

55   UNICEF, *UNICEF Reference Document for Emergency Preparedness and Response*.

56   Please note that the purpose of the table is to provide a broad overview of some of the external factors that constrain the provision of principled humanitarian assistance in each of the countries and that it reflects the opinions of the evaluation team.

FIGURE 5: THE PRESENCE AND SEVERITY OF EXTERNAL CHALLENGES IN THE COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

External challenges	Evaluation desk reviews and field missions										
Present in the country case study	Afghanistan	Burundi	Central African Republic	Mali	Nigeria[57]	Pakistan	Philippines[58]	Somalia	State of Palestine	Syria	Ukraine
Constrained humanitarian access	▪		▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Threats and risks for humanitarian staff	▪	▪	▪	▪		▪		▪	▪	▪	
Role of non-State entities in reducing access	▪		▪	▪	▪	▪	▪		▪	▪	▪
Presence of proscribed non-State entities	▪		▪		▪	▪	▪	▪		▪	
Role of the State in constraining access		▪				▪		▪	▪	▪	▪
Lack of State response capacity/willingness	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪		▪	▪		▪	
Bureaucratic/administrative barriers		▪	▪	▪	▪	▪		▪		▪	▪
Role of United Nations missions in blurring perceptions		▪	▪		▪			▪		▪	▪
Lack of funding for humanitarian response	▪	▪	▪		▪	▪		▪	▪	▪	▪
Donor conditionalities	▪					▪		▪	▪	▪	

» **THREATS AND RISKS FACING HUMANITARIAN STAFF:** There is a perception among humanitarian staff that security risks have increased in recent years,[59] although data from the Aid Worker Security Database suggest that major attacks on aid workers remain primarily concentrated in a small number of countries, including Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. These four countries accounted for two thirds of the 313 major incidents of violence targeted against aid workers in 2017.[60] Because these attacks took place mostly in contexts of severely constrained access for international aid organizations, 2017 also saw a steep rise in the number of victims belonging to national and local NGOs, reflecting the near universal reliance on national staff and organizations to take on the riskiest of operational roles in the most insecure areas. A second trend that has been observed is an increase in abductions and criminality.

» **THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN CONSTRAINING ACCESS OR ITS INABILITY TO RESPOND TO A CRISIS:** While the United Nations calls on member States to provide unfettered humanitarian access in crisis situations, there are an increasing number of complex emergencies where these calls are unheeded. In some cases, assertive controls by governments on humanitarian space may include administrative and bureaucratic barriers that constrain humanitarians to travel to or operate in parts of certain countries such as Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. In other contexts, the state may lack the capacity to respond in the affected areas, such as in north-east Nigeria or the Central African Republic.

» **THE ROLE OF NON-STATE ENTITIES:** The ability of populations to access humanitarian assistance in conflict areas and areas held by non-State entities, which can be extremely restricted, is one of the

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57 The assessment for Nigeria applies only to Maiduguri.

58 The assessment for the Philippines applies only to Mindanao.

59 See Jackson, Ashley, and Steven A. Zyck, *Presence & Proximity: To stay and deliver, five years on*, Norwegian Refugee Council, March 2017.

60 Humanitarian Outcomes, *Aid Worker Security Report: 2018,* 2018.

most significant challenges in complex humanitarian emergencies. Humanitarian actors are facing a complex landscape of non-State entities (and governments) with various reasons for restricting access to affected populations. Limited access impacts all aspects of programme coverage and quality, preventing high-quality needs assessment, assistance, protection, and monitoring of programming.

» INTEGRATED UNITED NATIONS PRESENCE: Where the United Nations has a mandate to provide assistance and protection, agencies are required to work as part of a broader United Nations mission. This arrangement can present challenges that include increased security risks or access constraints due to perceptions that United Nations humanitarian actors are aligned with the political or peacekeeping mission; maintaining a distinct humanitarian voice in advocacy for children's rights; a risk that decisions on humanitarian and development assistance are taken according to political imperatives rather than on the basis of needs and rights; and weakening of the United Nations–NGO humanitarian community partnership as a result of concerns over the neutrality of an integrated United Nations presence.[61]

» FUNDING GAPS AND DONOR CONDITIONALITIES: As figure 5 shows, funding appeals are frequently underfunded, which is a constraint to meeting humanitarian needs and delivering quality assistance. In addition to this, there are concerns that in complex humanitarian emergencies, donors are increasingly placing conditions on their funding that can limit funding or constrain its use in a number of ways. Of greatest significance to the evaluation are the imposition of counter-terrorism measures, which may include selective targeting and vetting/screening processes, targeting of assistance to specific areas under the control of parties to a conflict, and donor requests to vet beneficiary lists. These clauses are the result of a transfer of risk from donor agencies as a consequence of counter-terrorism legislation, and they have significant potential for

fostering community perceptions of humanitarian bias and partiality and reducing trust, which may negatively influence access and safety.

These challenges have necessitated that humanitarians use a range of approaches, tools and partnerships in order to identify, access and provide assistance to those most in need. While the humanitarian community has shown remarkable resilience and tenacity in seeking to address access constraints, there are a number of areas of practice that continue to be problematic. Some of the most important internal challenges, which will be discussed in greater detail in this report, include the following:

» SECURITY RISK MANAGEMENT TO FACILITATE ACCESS: The objective for humanitarian actors in complex security environments is not to avoid risk, but to manage risk in a way that allows them to remain present and effective in their work. Key to this shift is the concept of the enabling security approach – one that focuses on 'how to stay' as opposed to 'when to leave'. Following the publication of *To Stay and Deliver*[62] in 2011, there has been a far greater focus within the United Nations and broader humanitarian community on seeking to facilitate access, and yet the 2015 follow-up report, *Presence and Proximity*, suggests that in some of the most conflict-affected crises, significant challenges remain.[63]

» Humanitarian principles, rights-based approaches and the challenges posed for multi-mandate agencies: Humanitarian principles are recognized as foundational for effective humanitarian response and contribute to securing access and improving security; yet, some strategies to overcome access constraints and reach populations in need may entail trade-offs or prioritization between the humanitarian principles.[64] The adoption by a number of humanitarian agencies of rights-based approaches has witnessed a shift towards addressing the root causes of suffering and a focus on transforming the politics of violence and war through an approach that

61   United Nations Children's Fund, *Engaging Effectively with Integrated UN Presences: Technical note*, UNICEF 2014.

62   Egeland, Harmer and Stoddard, *To Stay and Deliver*.

63   Jackson and Zyck, *Presence and Proximity*.

64   See, for example, Global Public Policy Institute, 'Evaluation and Review of Humanitarian Access Strategies in DG ECHO Funded Interventions', GPPI, Berlin, June 2012, pp. 7–8.

includes a focus on development and social justice.[65] Efforts by multi-mandate agencies to meet these broader priorities alongside humanitarian principles has caused significant tension within the humanitarian community (*see the following box*).

A clash of principles? The challenges of humanitarian action for multi-mandate agenies

The growth in 'multi-mandate' agencies has been borne out of a refocusing on human rights and a perceived need to strengthen linkages between emergency and development assistance that gained support. Straying from a more classical conception of humanitarian action, multi-mandate agencies adopt a combination of approaches to meeting immediate needs and future development; this may include support for local services and structures; the empowerment, participation and enhancement of the populations' capacities; and the promotion of human rights, protection and peacebuilding.[66] While from a pragmatic perspective, these aspirations may be complementary, from an ethical perspective, they have different content and ambitions that make them distinct: 'Humanitarian ethics is a niche ethic designed to ensure survival and dignity in extreme circumstances. Development ethics is a very broad ethics that addresses the totality of human flourishing in a well-governed political society'.[67]

The rise of multi-mandate agencies in humanitarian action (working alongside other less-principled humanitarian actors) is considered by some to represent an erosion of humanitarian action due to the perceived incompatibility of the approach and the actors with core humanitarian principles. in contrast with classic humanitarianism, which tends to ignore political contexts, multi-mandate agencies have the complex task of seeking to balance their humanitarian action alongside broader issues of human rights and social processes.

» **HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION:** Negotiations with States and non-State entities are crucial for the overall success of humanitarian operations, yet engaging and sustaining discussions can be extremely challenging. In most countries, United Nations agencies have long-term partnerships with governments and may be reticent to compromise these. Furthermore, non-State entities that have no political ends do not need to burnish their reputations by cooperating with the United Nations in ensuring the provision of essential services. Outright rejection of cooperation and uncertainty running high as to the levels of access and the security risks involved adds complexity, while disagreement among United Nations Security Council members about how and when to intervene adds confusion. Sanctions imposed on parties to conflict can make access still more difficult to achieve, in part because of actual and perceived limitations on how agencies can work with these parties.

» **ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION:** Commitments to humanitarian accountability have been strengthened in recent years with the articulation and implementation of standards (primarily the Core Humanitarian Standard). In addition to this, there is a growing understanding of the role that community engagement plays in ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of assistance and the linkages this has to acceptance – an important security strategy. However, in conflict situations it may be difficult for agencies to ensure *meaningful* engagement with, and participation of, communities for purposes of programme design and implementation. Humanitarian actors may also find it difficult to ensure consistent provision of assistance to quality standards, leaving communities with no guarantee as to when, or even if, the provision of further assistance will be possible.

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65   Gordon, Stuart, and Antonio Donini, 'Romancing Principles and Human Rights: Are humanitarian principles salvageable?', *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 97, no. 897/898, 2016, pp. 77–109.

66   Nascimento, Daniela, 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back? Humanitarian challenges and dilemmas in crisis settings', *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, 18 February 2015.

67   Slim, Hugo, and Miriam Bradley, *Principled Humanitarian Action & Ethical Tensions in Multi-Mandate Organizations in Armed Conflict: Observations from a rapid literature review*, World Vision, March 2013.

» REMOTE MANAGEMENT: Where staff access is hindered due to unacceptably high residual security risk or as a result of restrictions imposed by authorities or other actors, remote management approaches are frequently used to maintain programme delivery. While remote programming potentially entails increased non-security risks, negative consequences of suspending humanitarian activities may outweigh the (non-security) risks of implementing the remote programming modality.

» STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SURGE: Recruitment and retention of staff in complex humanitarian emergencies can be a considerable constraint. The dilemma here is that the missions that require the most capable leaders are frequently those that struggle to attract experienced senior staff. Obtaining surge staff with the right skills in a timely way, particularly in rapid onset emergencies, can be similarly challenging. In contexts where access is constrained and there is a reliance on national staff and partners, the complexities are even greater.

2.2 The role of UNICEF in humanitarian action

UNICEF has been responding to humanitarian crises since 1946 and has global responsibility for advocating for the protection of children's rights,[68] meeting the basic needs of children, and ensuring that all children are able to reach their full potential. While the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child underpins overall UNICEF programming, the CCCs are the foundation for UNICEF's humanitarian response. UNICEF also has direct responsibility and accountability as Cluster Lead Agency for the WASH, nutrition and education clusters (co-led with Save the Children), and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility.[69]

2.2.1 TRENDS IN UNICEF'S HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Between 2005 and 2017, UNICEF responded to an average of more than 305 humanitarian situations[70] in nearly 93 countries each year. In 2017, UNICEF responded to 337 humanitarian situations that were led, coordinated and delivered through 102 COs, with support from 7 ROs (*see figure 6*). UNICEF's programmes are delivered through a diverse range of partnerships that include government, civil society and other United Nations agencies; in 2017 it was estimated that 1,328 civil society partners assisted in delivering UNICEF's humanitarian programme.[71] Programme delivery was overseen and assisted through the deployment of 599 UNICEF emergency staff deployments and 157 staff deployed through 31 standby partners and members of the rapid response team.[72]

In order to meet the growing demand for assistance in multiple, simultaneous, complex and large-scale emergencies, UNICEF has invested considerable resources to boost its capacity, with $2.1 billion in emergency expenses in 2017,[73] compared with $254 million in 2002.[74] In 2017, UNICEF's humanitarian expenses were 55 per cent of all country-level expenses (*see figure 7*), with the United States of America, Germany, the United Kingdom, the European Commission and the Central Emergency Response Fund providing approximately 68 per cent of UNICEF's total humanitarian funds.[75]

2.2.2 A SNAPSHOT OF UNICEF'S COVERAGE AND QUALITY FROM 2010 TO 2015

The temporal scope of this evaluation covers the period 2015–2018 and an analysis of UNICEF's performance during this three-year period is the subject of this report. However, prior to 2015, there have been a number of corporate efforts to learn from humanitarian practice.

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68 UNICEF has specific responsibility for the reporting of grave violations against children in conflict, through the MRM.

69 Until 2017, UNICEF also co-led the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility with the United Nations Population Fund.

70 These humanitarian situations include responses to disasters such as floods and earthquakes in addition to complex humanitarian emergencies.

71 Ibid. (Note: The original figure has been cropped to fit this report.)

72 Ibid.

73 United Nations Children's Fund, *Annual Results Report 2017: Humanitarian action*, UNICEF, 2017.

74 Thematic discussion on the work of UNICEF in humanitarian situations, UNICEF, E/ICEF/2012/CRP.28, September 2012, p. 4., in United Nations Children's Fund, *Humanitarian Action for Children: 2017 – Overview*, 2017.

75 UNICEF, *Annual Results Report 2017: Humanitarian action*.
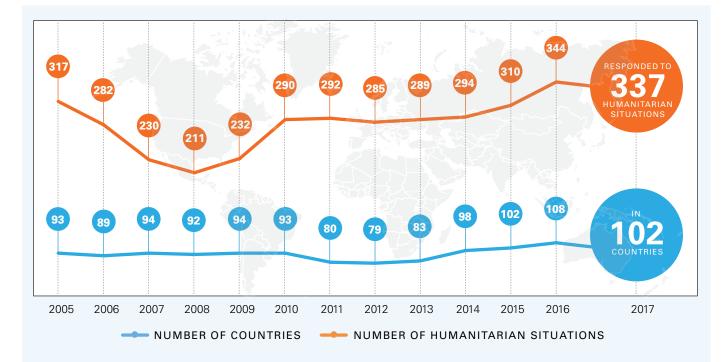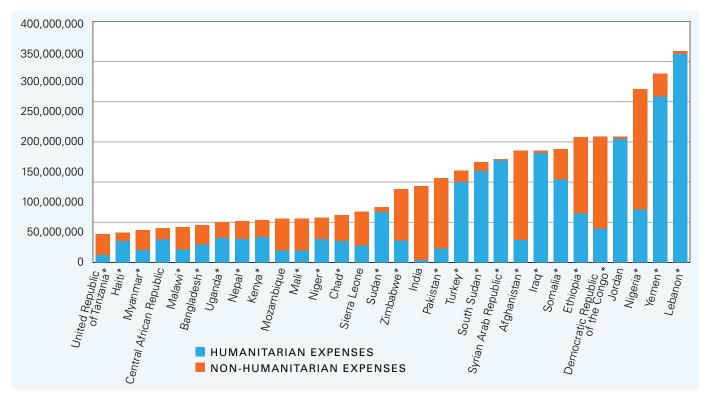
FIGURE 6: TRENDS IN UNICEF'S RESPONSE TO HUMANITARIAN SITUATIONS, 2005–2017

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES   NUMBER OF HUMANITARIAN SITUATIONS

FIGURE 7: A SNAPSHOT OF UNICEF HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE BY COUNTRY, 2017

HUMANITARIAN EXPENSES
NON-HUMANITARIAN EXPENSES

This photograph, taken by Justine 'Tin' Dacuital, 14, shows tarpaulin-covered dwellings in the town of Tanauan – one of the areas hardest hit by Super Typhoon Haiyan – in Leyte Province, the Philippines.

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Bringing together the findings of 30 evaluations of humanitarian action published between 2010 and 2016, UNICEF's evaluation synthesis report offers this evaluation an important benchmark for analysis. Findings from the report that have a bearing to humanitarian coverage and quality are highlighted below (*see the box below*).[76] These have been organized according to the analysis framework for purposes of consistency and ease of reference. References to relevant sections in this report are provided in the right-hand column to permit triangulation of findings.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SYNTHESIS OF UNICEF EVALUATIONS OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION 2010–2016

Quality and coverage outcomes: Findings of particular relevance to this evaluation		Section
Targets	The synthesis found around half of UNICEF's evaluations contain strong evidence of results, with UNICEF objectives and/or output and outcome targets for the intervention met or exceeded in half of the evaluations (15 of 30 evaluations), with the remaining 15 evaluations finding moderate or mixed performance.	3.1
Coverage	Fifteen evaluations found that UNICEF's intended results were not achieved. There were coverage limitations, particularly for nutrition interventions, WASH and education, and/or the evaluations lacked a clear sense of what the highest-priority needs were – linked to limited or weak needs assessments.	3.1
Equity	The synthesis found inconsistent attention to equity in UNICEF's humanitarian action, linked to limited needs assessments. Where equity was successfully integrated (7 of 17 evaluations), this mainly arose from strong attention to it at the planning stage.	3.2
Quality	10 of the 30 evaluations assess progress against the CCCs. Six of these argue for greater contextualization of the CCCs to the different emergency types UNICEF and other international actors currently face, including slow-onset crises; crises with strong protection dimensions, such as the Syrian Arab Republic; protracted emergencies; or public health emergencies such as Ebola.	3.3

76 UNICEF, *Towards Improved Emergency Responses*.

Ways of achieving outcomes: Findings of particular relevance to this evaluation		Section
Advocacy	Overall, 14 evaluations praise the communications and advocacy aspects of UNICEF's response.	4.1
Humanitarian principles	Evaluations of UNICEF's responses in Nepal and the Syrian Arab Republic raise concern about the effect of UNICEF's engagement with governments on perceptions of its independence. The evaluation of UNICEF's role as Cluster Lead Agency in humanitarian action also makes the same point.	5.1
Partnership	Ten evaluations found national-level capacity gains as a result of UNICEF interventions, and 12 found that UNICEF successfully built local-level capacities to deliver tangible improvements in emergency preparedness or response.	6.1/6.2
Partnership	Several evaluations point to difficulties in the availability of well-capacitated partners in emergencies, particularly where conflict is occurring and/or capacities are low, such as in the Central African Republic. However, evaluations also praise UNICEF for developing partnerships with the 'right' actors to deliver results.	6.1/6.2
Accountability to affected populations	Evaluations found that UNICEF has not systematically integrated concerns about accountability to affected people into its humanitarian action. Of the 16 evaluations that occurred after the IASC Operational Framework came into force, only five found UNICEF to have fully or gradually implemented commitments on accountability to affected people, while 11 found gaps or weaknesses.	7.2
Programme integration	Of the 14 evaluations that assessed this area, just two found well-integrated responses, and three noted gradual improvements over time. Weak integration was a result of insufficiently holistic needs assessment (Sahel), lack of integrated planning/preparedness (11 evaluations), lack of internal operational coordination (11 evaluations) and siloed approaches by sectors.	5.5
Protection integration	The evidence base on protection is limited, but, where available, evaluations found inconsistent treatment of protection concerns. In the Central African Republic, UNICEF took a strongly proactive approach despite limited analysis of protection problems. Five evaluations found insufficient integration of protection concerns, including in the Syrian Arab Republic and during the Ebola crisis.	5.5
Monitoring	The 2013 synthesis found significant weaknesses in UNICEF's monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian action. This 2017 synthesis exercise finds similar results. Of 24 relevant evaluations, just four assessed UNICF's work positively, while 20 found challenges. Recorded effects include accountability shortcomings; inability to report on performance; and inability to make a clear, data-driven case for support.	5.6
Preparedness	Ten evaluations comment (explicitly or implicitly) on preparedness issues. Three found UNICEF to be well prepared to engage in humanitarian action. The other seven evaluations raise concerns about the lack of relevant planning, a lack of emergency clauses in PCAs and a lack of staffing.	7.3
Humanitarian-development nexus	Overall, evaluations found that the linkage of UNICEF's emergency actions to recovery and resilience was weak. Four evaluations, stretching over the 2010–2015 time frame, noted successful efforts, while 17, ranging from the responses to the Sahel and Haiti emergencies in 2010 to the more recent responses to the Syrian Arab Republic and Ebola crises, all found challenges.	7.3

Inputs: Findings of particular relevance to this evaluation		Section
RO support	Eight evaluations praise the role of the RO in supporting the internal coordination of humanitarian action. Where challenges arose, these stemmed mostly from unclear roles and responsibilities of RO under Level 2 or Level 3 procedures.	8.1
Human resources	Seventeen of the 30 evaluations, as well as non-evaluative material, comment on management/ staffing/human resources including surge mechanisms, as a factor influencing successful humanitarian response. All note challenges, particularly in sourcing staff with the relevant language skills, experience and seniority.	8.2
SSOPs and PCAs	A key factor in the efficiency of immediate responses, particularly to sudden-onset crises, has been the application of the revised Level 2 and Level 3 SSOP. However, seven evaluations also report that the new SSOPs have not been universally deployed. This especially applies to PCAs, where country-level staff do not always feel confident in assuming financial accountability risks. This resulted in delayed processing (two to five months) of agreements during the Typhoon Haiyan disaster, Syrian Arab Republic emergency and Central African Republic crisis.	8.4
Supply and logistics	Eight evaluations comment on UNICEF's supply and logistics capacity in supporting humanitarian response. All found it to have positively affected the timeliness of the response: in Mali, Nepal, Somalia (WASH), Haiti and the Central African Republic, as well as during the Ebola crisis, supplies were properly planned, pre-positioned and mobilized in time according to response plans.	8.4

2.2.3 ACTIONS TAKEN BY UNICEF TO STRENGTHEN COVERAGE AND QUALITY

To address the challenges outlined above, UNICEF has embarked on a number of corporate initiatives to increase its operational response capacity, making it faster and more flexible. The announcement of the new L3 Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure in 2011 and the release of the SSOPs in 2012 were important milestones, and fast-track recruitment processes were reviewed and reinstated in 2013.[77] The subsequent simplifications that followed have reduced the administrative burden and time taken to deploy staff and contract implementing partners considerably. In 2013, UNICEF commissioned a comprehensive review of its Cluster Lead Agency performance and the resulting recommendations were integrated into UNICEF responses.[78] UNICEF first introduced Humanitarian Performance Monitoring indicators in 2011 to enable systematic corporate measurement of emergency responses and significantly strengthen its guidance materials to improve humanitarian practice, both in terms of expanding coverage and improving programme quality. Figure 14 summarizes recent initiatives and guidance.

The new UNICEF 2018–2021 Strategic Plan frames goals, objectives and strategies around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (particularly the principles of leaving no one behind and reaching the farthest behind first) and the Agenda for Humanity (including the Grand Bargain and the New Way of Working). The UNICEF results framework is structured around five outcome-oriented goals, and humanitarian action is a cross-cutting issue with emphasis on quality and reach (i.e., coverage), gendered outcomes, the Centrality of Protection, localization, improved risk management, and improved coordination through clusters.

CORPORATE INITIATIVES TAKEN BY UNICEF TO STRENGTHEN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN CRISES

Initiative	Description
Strengthening humanitarian action	From 2014, UNICEF has undertaken a major review of its approach to humanitarian action, called 'Strengthening Humanitarian Action'. The outputs of the initiative included guidance to UNICEF staff on key issues related to working in complex humanitarian emergencies.
Enhancing UNICEF support to fragile contexts	During the period May 2016–April 2017, UNICEF undertook a consultative review of its work to identify opportunities for enhancing programme and operational support in fragile contexts,[79] covering good practices and lessons learned by UNICEF and its partners, and recent policy shifts.
Humanitarian – development nexus	The UNICEF Programme Division's *'Study on Linking Development and Humanitarian Action'*[80] in 2016 captured and codified good practice examples on the humanitarian-development nexus, including countries with complex emergencies.
UNICEF 2018–2021 Strategic Plan	UNICEF's Strategic Plan places an emphasis on increasing reach and quality of humanitarian assistance; it identifies community engagement, accountability to affected people, support to national first responders and risk-informed programming as priorities.
Human resources and surge	At headquarters and RO levels, UNICEF continues to invest in strategies to strengthen surge response, which can play a key role in strengthening coverage and quality.
Corporate simplification agenda	Under the new Strategic Plan and supporting Office Management Plan of EMOPS, there is a specific focus on revisiting and updating policies and procedures (including the SSOPs) to ensure timely and effective response across the range of humanitarian situations.
Access for results framework	To more effectively address access constraints, EMOPS has prioritized the development of an Institutional Access for Results Framework to equip and support UNICEF to gain and sustain principled access. The framework is currently under development.

77   Leonardi, Enrico, Jessica Alexander and David Bassiouni, *Review of the Fast-Track Recruitment Process*, UNICEF Division of Human Resources, 2013.

78   Avenir Analytics and Everywhere Humanitarian Response and Logistics Service, *Evaluation of UNICEF's Cluster Lead Agency Role in Humanitarian Action*, UNICEF, 2013.

79   United Nations Children's Fund, *Enhanced Programme and Operational Support in Fragile Contexts*, UNICEF, November 2016.

80   United Nations Children's Fund, *Study on Linking Development and Humanitarian Action*, UNICEF, January 2016.

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Internally displaced persons (IDPs) collect water as a sandstorm approaches in Abs IDP settlement, Hajjah Governorate, Yemen.

2.2.4 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: THE RATIONALE FOR THE EVALUATION

The need to better understand, analyse and address the challenges of achieving coverage and quality in crises provides an important rationale for the evaluation and makes it a strategic priority for UNICEF. While several country-specific evaluations have highlighted challenges in achieving coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies,[81] analysis has not been deep enough to guide solid change strategies. By commissioning this evaluation, UNICEF seeks to achieve two interlinked objectives:

» To gain a deeper, more systematic and objective analysis of the extent to which it is succeeding or failing to reach affected populations with principled and high-quality programming across country contexts; and

» To better understand how this is attributable to the limits of humanitarian action vis-à-vis political spheres and the conflict dimension.

UNICEF anticipates that by meeting these objectives, the findings of the evaluation will enable it to improve the coverage and quality of its action in complex humanitarian emergencies.

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81   In particular, the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations and the evaluations of UNICEF's humanitarian responses in the Central African Republic and the Syrian Arab Republic.

A UNICEF worker plays with children at a child-friendly space in the town of Compostela in Compostela Valley Province in the Philippines.

PART THREE:
TO WHAT EXTENT IS UNICEF ACHIEVING COVERAGE AND QUALITY IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN AN EQUITABLE WAY?

This section identifies and analyses the range of coverage and quality outcomes or results that have been produced by UNICEF's humanitarian programme in the case study countries. It looks across the case studies to build an overall picture of factors that influence coverage and quality. It includes a summary of how UNICEF has managed trade-offs between coverage and quality.

Summary of findings

- **3.1 HUMANITARIAN COVERAGE:** An important finding of the evaluation is that the means of collecting and reporting humanitarian population numbers – those affected, in need, targeted for planned interventions and ultimately reached – are complex and inconsistent within UNICEF and in inter-agency guidance. While UNICEF's coverage may often be significant, it cannot be calculated using the data that are collected. As a consequence, one of the most significant challenges for UNICEF (and many of its humanitarian peers) is the inability to accurately monitor and measure coverage. While this is not an easy task, there are steps that UNICEF could take to influence the humanitarian system to better and more consistently measure coverage that would allow it to make the changes necessary to do similar itself. It is recognized that this has significant challenges, not least of all the need to more transparently account for the external factors that influence coverage (such as access, funding and capacity), but this will also permit it to more aggressively advocate for access and more transparently fundraise.

- **3.2 ACHIEVING COVERAGE WITH EQUITY:** The only means of achieving coverage with equity is to have disaggregated data about people affected by crises, the differentiated needs of different groups and the extent to which these are being met by existing services. UNICEF rarely collects these data in complex humanitarian emergencies. While gender and age are frequently disaggregated and analysed, and these data inform programmes, there is a lack of consistency in broader vulnerability analyses. There were many examples of UNICEF's approach to equity from the case study countries, but these were inconsistent across contexts. In general, when there has to be a trade-off between equity and coverage, coverage will be prioritized, particularly at the beginning of a response.

- **3.3 PROGRAMME QUALITY:** UNICEF sector staff generally have a good understanding of the CCCs in addition to relevant global quality standards, which are consistently used in programmes. The CCCs are the primary means through which UNICEF benchmarks, monitors, reports and reviews the quality of outcomes. While there have been some contexts in which the relevance of the CCCs has been questioned, in the case study countries, they were contextualized to convert them into agency or cluster operational objectives, which reduced UNICEF's ability to compare across different contexts as a quality standard, but did strengthen their relevance.

- **3.4 UNICEF'S APPROACH TO PRIORITIZING COVERAGE AND QUALITY:** The evaluation found that coverage is consistently prioritized over quality and equity, particularly at the onset of a crisis. What is of greater concern is the lack of common understanding among staff of how and when to transition from prioritizing coverage to increasing quality.

3.1 Humanitarian coverage

An important finding of the evaluation is that the means of collecting and reporting humanitarian population numbers – those affected, in need, targeted for planned interventions and ultimately reached – are complex and inconsistent within UNICEF and in inter-agency guidance. While UNICEF's coverage may often be significant, it cannot be calculated using the data that are collected. As a consequence, one of the most significant challenges for UNICEF (and many of its humanitarian peers) is an inability for it to accurately monitor and measure coverage. While this is not an easy task, there are steps that UNICEF could take to influence the humanitarian system to better and more consistently measure coverage, which would allow it to make the changes necessary to do similar itself. It is recognized that this has significant challenges, not least of all the need to more transparently account for the external factors that influence coverage (such as access, funding and capacity), but this will also permit it to more aggressively advocate for access and fundraise more transparently.

3.1.1 THE CHALLENGE OF ASSESSING PEOPLE IN NEED AND DEFINING TARGETS

Collecting population data in humanitarian contexts is fraught with challenges; approaches are inconsistent and often flawed, the terminology is often confusing and is used inconsistently (*see figure 8*), and there are frequently significant gaps in the data, which may be unsubstantiated

FIGURE 8: VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF HUMANITARIAN POPULATION FIGURES

assistance as three distinct population groups; these data are essential and provide 'the backbone to any humanitarian operation'.[87] This has led to some improvements.

Despite these efforts, there is still confusion among humanitarian organizations about the collection, collation, analysis and use of data, which presents a fundamental problem for an understanding of coverage. Part of the reason for

and unreliable. Even when quality data do exist, there is often a lack of coordination between agencies about how such data are used.[82] The 2015 ALNAP *State of the Humanitarian System Report* highlighted that the 'lack of solid data on people in need remains a major obstacle to understanding the success or failure of a humanitarian response. Without being able to measure the proportion of people who needed aid who actually received it, coverage rates cannot be estimated'.[83]

Efforts have been made to improve data quality and consistency; in 2011 the IASC Information Management Task Force developed guidelines on the Humanitarian Profile Common Operational Dataset in order to try and address gaps and confusion in terminology.[84] More recently, in 2016, guidance was published by the IASC on humanitarian figures,[85] which was complemented by the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) Guidance[86] in 2017. The first of these two documents focuses on providing guidance for estimating total populations, affected populations and populations in need of humanitarian

the confusion is that in complex humanitarian emergencies, data gathering is also complex. Different methods exist to calculate sector targets; either a 'top down' approach is most used – estimating the total people in need and then extrapolating sector targets from that – or 'bottom up' approach – aggregating sector targets calculated from different needs assessments.[88] Both have inherent challenges and frequently lack transparency and visibility as to how figures have been calculated. While people in need estimates provide the basis for an honest appraisal of humanitarian coverage, some agencies argue that such estimates glossing over the influence of factors that may constrain coverage, such as funding, capacity, access constraints and performance.

The *2018 World Disasters Report*[89] highlights exactly how meaningless numbers become when measurement of achievement loses sight of the original needs of people affected in need and measures results only against targets (*see the following figure*).

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82   United Nations, IASC Humanitarian Population Figures, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, April 2016

83   Stoddard, Abby, et al., State of the Humanitarian System: 2015 edition, ALNAP, London, 2015, p. 34.

84   United Nations, *IASC Humanitarian Population Figures*.

85   Ibid.

86   United Nations, *HNO Guidance*, Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, July 2017.

87   Ibid. p. 2.

88   ACAPS, *Compared to What? Analytical thinking and needs assessment*, Norwegian Refugee Council, Assessment Capacities Project, 2013.

89   International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *World Disasters Report 2018: Leaving no one behind*, IFRC, Geneva, 2018.

ESTIMATES OF PEOPLE IN NEED, PEOPLE TARGETED AND PEOPLE REACHED[90]

Country	Number of people in need	Number of people targeted	People targeted as per cent of people in need	Number of people reached	People reached as per cent of people in need
Syrian Arab Republic 2017 HRP	13,600,000	9,000,000	67%	7,800,000	58%
Democratic Republic of the Congo 2017 HRP	12,100,000	7,300,000	56%	2,700,000	21%
South Sudan 2017 HRP	7,600,000	6,200,000	82%	5,400,000	71%
Afghanistan 2017 HRP	7,400,000	3,600,000	49%	4,100,000	55%
Ukraine 2017 HRP	4,000,000	2,400,000	60%	1,100,000	27%

A second important finding of this evaluation is that it is often unclear how UNICEF has calculated its population figures and targeting figures. While there have been improvements in data collection and presentation, the basis on which targets have been decided is often unclear. The key issue here is not the accuracy of the figures, but transparency about how they were generated. At an inter-agency level, HNOs and HRPs often face similar challenges; an exception to this was the Afghanistan HNO (*see the following* Good Practice *box*).

Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan: 18-month-old Abdul Hamid has his mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) measured at a UNICEF-supported health clinic. The measurement is used to detect malnutrition.

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GOOD PRACTICE

Identification of vulnerability and hard-to-reach areas in the Afghanistan HNO[91]

In distinguishing between those in acute need and those suffering from chronic needs, the 2018 Afghanistan HNO has gone some way to adopting an equity approach when identifying humanitarian needs. The Afghanistan HNO makes a notable distinction in how it classifies humanitarian needs for the associated HRP. In a departure from the prevailing approach, it has sought to differentiate between emergency needs arising from specific crises, such as the armed conflict itself, and from the underlying conditions that have persisted for decades and that do not in themselves represent a sudden increase demanding immediate humanitarian action.[92] The application of a methodology to determine those that were considered to have the most 'acute' needs – a multi-layered approach that took into account projections of affected populations, complemented by a needs severity scale that aimed to distinguish between the nature and intensity of needs these groups experienced – offers a rare example of the adoption of an approach to coverage with equity.

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90   Ibid.

91   United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview: 2018–2021, OCHA, December 2017.

92   The 2018 HNO makes a distinction between the 3.3 million people deemed to require an international humanitarian response, from the much larger number who have not experienced a humanitarian shock. The HNO estimates that 8.7 million people exhibit chronic needs associated with long-term structural deficits such as limited access to livelihoods and basic services, a significant proportion of whom have been included in previous HNOs, but for which alternative development programming is considered by the HCT to be more appropriate.

As part of its classification of humanitarian needs, the distinction made in the HNO between humanitarian needs and underlying development deficits is also a departure from the norm. While interviews undertaken with humanitarian staff in Afghanistan suggest that the approach has attracted some criticism, they do provide an important tool for advocating for development aid, which is a far more appropriate way of addressing these structural and chronic needs than humanitarian assistance.

3.1.2 CHALLENGES IN HOW UNICEF DETERMINES NEEDS, TARGETS ITS PROGRAMMES AND CALCULATES COVERAGE

A number of challenges in UNICEF's knowledge about needs, the ways in which these inform its programmes and how these are articulated in terms of its coverage were encountered during the evaluation. Examples from the case study countries are used below to examine the key constraints to assessing, reporting and measuring UNICEF's coverage.

Data availability challenges in Mali: In Mali, the most recent census was conducted in 2009 and the size of the country and security issues in certain areas also pose challenges for obtaining up-to-date data. As a consequence, there is limited availability of recent, disaggregated data and information to identify actual needs and inform interventions.

Data collection challenges in Burundi: In Burundi, implementing partners frequently lacked the capacity and capability to collect accurate and timely data. UNICEF has only a limited number of field offices and so has been reliant on implementing partners for data, which has exacerbated this challenge. In contexts such as these, programmes and planning are informed by theoretical estimates and data available from certain partners, sections and clusters, which are not sufficiently disaggregated for precise targeting (*see the following* Lesson *box*).

📖 LESSON

I don't trust this – The reality of assessing needs in Afghanistan

The 2018–2021 Afghanistan HRP confirms the limited knowledge that the humanitarian community has about humanitarian needs, reporting that only a third of all assessments carried out in 2017 took place in hard-to-reach areas. Moreover, only a small proportion of these assessments, estimated to be as low as 12 per cent, took place in areas outside district administrative centres, and none of them were undertaken in locations controlled by non-State entities.[93] Given that the HRP is based on data collected by the clusters, it shows the limitations that exist in complex humanitarian emergencies. From the perspective of this evaluation, the disclosure of the limited reach of humanitarian assessments is both laudable and important.

Programming based on partner-presence in the Philippines: In the Philippines, a lower-middle-income country, comprehensive sector-wide needs assessments were not conducted during the Marawi response by UNICEF or other agencies, except for child protection.[94] As a consequence, UNICEF relied on its partners and on information shared by other agencies in sector coordination groups. This fragmented approach, and the scarcity of data, meant that UNICEF tended to programme where partners already had a presence and had access to information.

The use of fund availability to determine targets in the State of Palestine: The State of Palestine HNO draws on a number of data sources to identify levels of humanitarian need, but the HRP coverage targets are based on assumptions about funding levels.[95] The HNO cites the range of data sources and surveys used to identify levels of humanitarian need, including data from clusters. In 2016–2017, the UNICEF-led WASH cluster conducted a comprehensive statistically representative survey in Gaza that assessed more than

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93   United Nations, *Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan: 2018–2021*, December 2017.

94   Philippines Child Protection Working Group and Gender-Based Violence Working Group Philippines, *Child Protection Rapid Assessment Report: Marawi displacement*, October 2017.

95   State of Palestine key informants.

20 indicators in the WASH sector to derive its needs overview, but planning was based on assumptions of funding. There is a danger that the use of funding data at the inter-agency level to determine targets misrepresents actual needs.

Variability in the targeting by sector in the Central African Republic: In the Central African Republic, an evaluation of the humanitarian response found that UNICEF lacked an overall strategy for targeting and, as a consequence, programmes targeted different populations, sometimes with little prioritization. The health and nutrition sections adopted a universal approach, targeting their services nationwide, instead of specific geographic areas or crisis-affected populations; the education section targeted safe learning spaces and some activities at affected communities (Bangui, Bossangoa, Bouar and Bambari), but others nationwide, such as the distribution of learning materials; the WASH section prioritized internally displaced persons and host communities, and return areas where water points and networks were known to be damaged; and child protection activities were concentrated in 12 priority prefectures.

Challenges in accurately determining UNICEF's presence: Coverage mapping and access tracking is still poorly managed across the humanitarian community. Research undertaken for UNICEF suggests that humanitarian coordination mechanisms (the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Cluster Lead Agencies, including UNICEF) nominally have the primary responsibility to obtain and compile this information – but it tends to focus on programme planning and impediments to humanitarian access rather than the actual activities delivered or an agency's presence itself.[96] The case studies highlighted a tendency in access-constrained environments for significant generalizations to be made when discussing coverage; coverage maps were frequently large scale and agency claims overstate the extent of presence (i.e., there may be coverage in a single district in a province rather than across the whole province). The risk here is that this may hide coverage gaps that could be filled by others. The Afghanistan case study highlighted good practice in this regard, with UNICEF having undertaken a detailed district-level mapping of its coverage in selected hard-to-reach areas.

UNICEF's approach of reporting on 'targets' rather than 'need': UNICEF's results against its CCCs are generally expressed as a numerator of people who have either been 'reached' against a denominator of those who have been 'targeted', which has limited value without a global figure for people in need for each of the sectors. It also provides a more optimistic picture, as targets are lower than the total number of people in need. For each of the case study countries, a review was undertaken of the humanitarian results achieved by each of UNICEF's sector for the period under evaluation, which provides an analysis of UNICEF's coverage against its targets (*see annex 6*). However, these are of limited utility, as it is not possible to determine coverage against needs. Examples from the Somalia field mission highlight the challenges of data collection and reporting (*see the following box*).

Challenges associated with calculating coverage: An example from the Somalia field mission

The Somalia field mission found that UNICEF's reporting shows high coverage of people reached against the number of people targeted, but the lack of consistency in how UNICEF and others report humanitarian numbers means that it was not possible to accurately assess the de facto coverage of UNICEF's humanitarian response. The figures reported in the Consolidated Emergency Report for 2017[97] and the Situation Reports that were published between May and September 2017 aggregate UNICEF's sectoral achievements at a high level against its own targets, but there was no systematic reference to needs. While the findings of the field mission are that UNICEF achieved good coverage in an extremely challenging context, it is difficult to use the data to evidence this.

96   Harmer, A., and H. Fox, *Research on Good Practices on Humanitarian Access and its Relevance for UNICEF, Humanitarian Outcomes*, July 2018.
97   UNICEF Somalia, *2017 Consolidated Emergency Report*, March 2018.

The examples above highlight a range of challenges and concerns that serve to compromise the quality of UNICEF's targeting and its ability to prioritize those in greatest need of assistance. The key issues for UNICEF include the following:

» The presence of gaps in baseline data on population numbers and, as a consequence, estimates of people in need (e.g., Mali);

» A lack of transparency in the criteria used for setting targets in relation to people in need (e.g., Afghanistan, Burundi, the Central African Republic and the Philippines;

» Weaknesses in programme monitoring data provided by UNICEF's partners (e.g., Burundi);

» The lack of a clear and consistent targeting strategy to assist in prioritization (e.g., the Central African Republic); and

» An organizational approach within UNICEF that de-links targeting from estimates of people in need.

3.1.3 UNICEF'S APPROACH TO COVERAGE: NEEDS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The findings of the evaluation show that UNICEF's coverage is determined by three inter-connected factors which serve to guide a pragmatic, and frequently justified, approach to coverage. The influence that needs, responsibilities and opportunities has on UNICEF's coverage is outlined below.

Needs: UNICEF tends to target its assistance towards areas and population groups that are included in the HNO and HRP as a result of sector-wide assessments or analyses of needs. All of the case studies showed a strong correlation between UNICEF's programming areas and areas included in the HRP.

Responsibilities: The evaluation found that within the HNO/HRP priorities, UNICEF frequently uses its Provider of Last Resort responsibilities as a means of defining its own programming targets (i.e., UNICEF programme targets were calculated as a percentage of total cluster needs).[98] Examples of this are given in the following box.

The use by UNICEF of its Provider of Last Resort responsibilities to determine its targets

In Nigeria, UNICEF aimed to cover a high percentage of cluster targets due to a lack of cluster member capacity (more than 80 per cent in education, for example), while in Pakistan, UNICEF sections aimed to cover 50–60 per cent of the relevant cluster target. In the Philippines, the WASH cluster – while openly acknowledging the substantial information gaps – set an arbitrary target of aiming to serve 55 per cent of the displaced population,[99] of which UNICEF then agreed to cover 10–20 per cent.

Opportunities: Beyond the use of assessment data and cluster priorities, the evaluation found that a pragmatic approach was taken to determining where UNICEF should focus its assistance and that COs sought to achieve a balance between working with those who are in greatest need and working with those who are accessible. This is consistent with the findings of UNICEF's 2010–2016 evaluation synthesis, which found that despite gaps in needs assessment and the fundamental challenge with coverage data, UNICEF programme responses were broadly aligned with needs, but that there was evidence that response was sometimes 'opportunity-based rather than needs-based'.[100] UNICEF's humanitarian response in the Central African Republic provides an example of this (*see the following box*).

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98 The challenge here is when cluster priorities do not fall under UNICEF's CCCs. In such circumstances, it may become problematic for UNICEF to fully meet its Provider of Last Resort responsibilities.

99 UNICEF Philippines, Marawi Conflict Emergency After Action Review: Final report, 3 November 2017, p. 16. The document does allude to a rationale for the geographic targeting of the response: 'Special attention to be accorded to informal/unrecognized/unofficial evacuation centres – and home-based settings (mostly in Lanao del Sur), on the main in the municipalities listed below, i.e. with highest concentration of evacuees'.

100 UNICEF, *Towards Improved Emergency Responses*, p. 15.

UNICEF's approach to targeting in its response to conflict in the Central African Republic[101]

The evaluation of UNICEF's response in the Central African Republic reports that the most accessible populations tended to be targeted for assistance, in areas that were secure and had established international implementing partners present. UNICEF's Strategic Response Plan and 100-Day plan were perceived to give priority to the needs of displaced populations congregating on sites, such as those in Bangui and Bossangoa, in preference to areas that were less secure and hence harder to reach. Strategic partners felt that UNICEF's prioritization was guided by the number of people in a given area. Such prioritization raised concerns about impartiality, although it was reported that UNICEF did use mobile teams to reach newly secure areas as levels of access changed.

3.1.4 THE NEED TO IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS GAPS AND MORE ACCURATELY AND TRANSPARENTLY ARTICULATE COVERAGE

Some of the challenges that UNICEF faces in accurately determining needs and targeting programmes that have been identified by the evaluation are in large part common to all humanitarian organizations and, like others, UNICEF's coverage is uneven as a consequence. This is not helped by the tendency for organizations to overstate their coverage, which is particularly problematic in access-constrained environments where assistance is frequently in short supply. It is in seeking to address the variability in coverage that UNICEF has significant potential to improve practice generally through its Cluster Lead Agency role. The good practices identified in this report, such as the identification and mapping of hard-to-reach areas and more accurate reporting of agency presence, if implemented more widely, would offer significant improvements.

There is also an opportunity for UNICEF to make internal changes; in its programme monitoring and reporting, UNICEF only presents targets and does not seek to measure these against the total population in need. Moreover, it is frequently unclear on what basis these
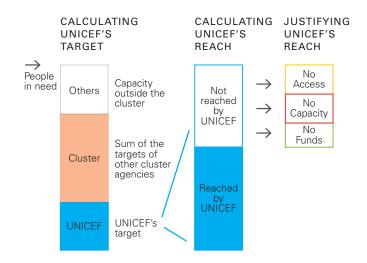
FIGURE 9: STRENGTHENING THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR COVERAGE

targets have been generated. The evaluation found that these were sometimes ambitious and other times not, and they may have been reduced to take account of funding gaps or lack of access. As a consequence, it is not possible to determine UNICEF's coverage against total need, and even a calculation of UNICEF's coverage against targets is of limited value. The sources of data UNICEF uses to determine needs varies, as does the quality and reliability of those data. There is considerable scope for UNICEF to more accurately articulate its own coverage and more transparently document how this changes with time, which would strengthen practice. Key to achieving this will be greater consistency in calculating and using people in need to determine coverage, and greater transparency in documenting and reporting UNICEF's reach, and changes that affect it due to access, capacity and funding. A model of how these challenges could be addressed is provided in figure 9.

Making these changes would permit a more objective understanding of UNICEF's coverage and how it has been moderated as a consequence of internal and external factors (such as access, capacity and funding). The approach would also offer a more transparent process for identifying residual needs that cannot be met, for the purposes of advocacy for funds, access

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101 Lawday, Andrew, et al., *The UNICEF Response to the Crisis in the Central African Republic: Final report*, DARA/UNICEF, 2016.

and capacity to be mobilized. It would also permit a more objective analysis of UNICEF's coverage. There is recognition within the organization that change is required, and while the evaluation was being undertaken, the Humanitarian Action for Children process was revised and the relationship between people in need and targets was reviewed, and so it is anticipated that the findings presented in this evaluation will complement and strengthen these initiatives.

3.2 Achieving coverage with equity

The only means of achieving coverage with equity is to have disaggregated data about people affected by crises, the differentiated needs of different groups and the extent to which these are being met by existing services. UNICEF rarely collects these data in complex humanitarian emergencies. While data on gender and age are frequently disaggregated and analysed, and inform programmes, there is a lack of consistency in broader vulnerability analyses. There were many examples of UNICEF's approach to equity from the case study countries, but these were inconsistent across contexts. In general, when there has to be a trade-off between equity and coverage, coverage will be prioritized, particularly at the beginning of a response.

The five fatal flaws

OUT OF SIGHT: The people we fail to see;
OUT OF REACH: The people we can't get to;
OUT OF THE LOOP: The people we unintentionally exclude;
OUT OF MONEY: The people we don't prioritize; and
OUT OF SCOPE: The people who aren't our problem.

A 2011 study highlighted the absence of sufficient investment by the humanitarian community in collecting and utilizing sex- and-age disaggregated data to inform

and monitor its response. It underscored the fact that if the differential needs of people affected by crises are not understood, then there is no way to tell if those needs have been met.[102] Seven years later, the *2018 World Disasters Report* outlines the five 'fatal flaws'[103] that are contributing to the failure of the humanitarian community to reach those furthest behind first, resulting in a lack of equity in addressing coverage (see the box to the left).[104]

3.2.1 APPROACHES TAKEN BY UNICEF TO STRENGTHEN COVERAGE WITH EQUITY

In practice, UNICEF does not have a consistent understanding of how to translate its equity principles into humanitarian practice. While data are frequently disaggregated by gender and age, and programmes often take account of these factors, there is a lack of broader vulnerability analysis in UNICEF programming. The UNICEF 2010–2016 evaluation synthesis found that in less than half of the evaluations, equity issues had not been satisfactorily integrated into responses.[105] The report noted that while at section level there is often some understanding of exclusion factors, this is inconsistent within responses and across responses. The performance of UNICEF in incorporating vulnerability analysis in the case study countries was similarly uneven.

Strategies to strengthen gender equity

In Afghanistan, the low number of female staff outside of Kabul was found to have significant repercussions for the quality of aid and reaching female beneficiaries. UNICEF has sought to address this to the extent possible in key programmes such as health and education by seeking to recruit women locally as well as engaging with local elders and community influencers in the longer term to promote changes in behaviour. In Pakistan, the WASH section has been able to maintain high coverage rates, including for hygiene activities. One reason for this is its strategy of training female health workers and working with women's religious groups to access women and promote hygiene.

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102 Mazurana, Dyan, et al., *Sex and Age Matter: Improving humanitarian response in emergencies*, OCHA, Tufts University and Care International, August 2011, p. 7.
103 IFRC, World Disasters Report 2018.
104 Ibid., p. 10.
105 UNICEF, *Towards Improved Emergency Responses*.

A United Nations vehicle on the main street in Bangui in the Central African Republic. The peacekeeping force in the country, known as MINUSCA, numbers about 12,000.

Conversely, gender has not been integrated into UNICEF's Central African Republic humanitarian programming at a level consistent with the CCCs, the UNICEF Strategic Plan or the UNICEF Gender Action Plan. Also, the lack of female staff impacts heavily on equitable programming. This is reflective of the wider humanitarian environment in the Central African Republic that struggles to routinely prioritize gender. Equity is also a major challenge in Somalia. A May 2017 Gender Programmatic Review[106] found only modest evidence that UNICEF had purposefully addressed the Gender Action Plan and gender mainstreaming priorities. Even though there was some indication of the importance of focusing on services that will benefit women and children, UNICEF's articulation of why gender matters in almost all sectors, and what will be done to address stark inequalities, was not considered strong enough to meet minimum standards. In response to the findings in both the Central African Republic and Somalia, UNICEF has created gender specialist posts.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Feedback on the appropriateness of water points for women in Jalalabad

The siting of the water point was a particularly important issue for the women who are tasked with collecting the water. There was a concern that there was no wall around the pump and hence there was no privacy. This made it impossible for the women to collect water. Instead, they sent their children to do so, but there was a concern that the jerry cans were too heavy for them and it was too hot for the children to wait in line to use the pump.

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106 IPE Africa, *Somalia: UNICEF gender programmatic review*, June 2017.

Approaches to understand and address broader vulnerability factors

In Pakistan, in addition to the disaggregation of data by age and gender, there is evidence that assessments frequently identify vulnerable groups for the provision of relevant support. UNICEF Pakistan has adopted an equity-focused and gender-sensitive approach and seeks to reduce vulnerabilities, especially for the most marginalized. In Mali, UNICEF's approach to strengthening equitable access to immunization was highlighted by a number of respondents as a success story. In 2017, UNICEF in Mali sought to strengthen its understanding and programming to address geographic, gender, education, ethnic and socioeconomic disparities, in order to improve immunization coverage nationwide. Conversely, in Nigeria, UNICEF programme sections collect and use gender- and age-disaggregated data, but do not specifically focus on vulnerable groups such as the elderly or disabled specifically. Although programme section staff generally rated their collection and analysis of vulnerability data as good in response to the coverage and quality analysis tool, it was clear from interviews that this did not extend beyond collecting gender- and age-disaggregated data. Community consultations also showed the lack of a specific focus on particular vulnerable groups.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Perceptions on targeting from community leaders in Borno State

In one of the camps for internally displaced persons in Maiduguri, community leaders discussed and agreed with UNICEF the criteria used for humanitarian assistance. Though everyone was needy, there was agreement that was is important to prioritize because there were so many people in the camp. The leaders believed that there should be a focus on orphans and the disabled. Sometimes it was hard to choose, but leaders feel that they were able to assist UNICEF in identifying the most vulnerable members of the community. The community leader has an elderly grandfather but would not select him for assistance because he can provide for him.

There were relatively few examples provided of programmes that were dedicated to targeting vulnerable groups, but in the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF started a cash transfer initiative for reaching children with disabilities, as part of an overall equity approach. The selection criteria include all families with children with disabilities, targeting specifically those with complex and cerebral disabilities such as autism, Down syndrome and cerebral palsy. This was one of a small number of programmes encountered during the evaluation that explicitly sought to address the specific needs of those with disabilities.

3.2.2 APPROACHES TO REACH THOSE WHO ARE IN GREATEST NEED – AND WHO ARE LEAST ACCESSIBLE

In complex humanitarian emergencies, those who are in greatest need are often also the least accessible. It is in identifying these people and gaining access to them that one of the most significant challenges to humanitarian organizations is presented. Across the case study countries, UNICEF most frequently took a pragmatic approach to meeting the needs of (i) those who were most accessible, and (ii) those whose needs were the greatest but who were harder to reach. Implicit in this decision was an understanding that camp-based populations or those displaced into urban areas, often under government control, are easier and more cost-effective to assist than those living in rural areas or in areas controlled by non-State entities.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

'Hidden' internally displaced persons in the Philippines Marawi response

One internally displaced person complained that internally displaced persons who are home-based were not receiving assistance, and that the assistance was instead going to those in evacuation centres who were easier to identify and reach. He complained that the Government and NGOs were not prioritizing home-based internally displaced persons, although some NGOs had provided limited assistance.

The evaluation of the humanitarian response in the Central African Republic cited earlier,[107] which reported UNICEF's prioritization of accessible camps for internally displaced persons in Bangui provides an example of this, as does the Somalia pre-famine response. In a context where communities are geographically dispersed, the 2017 response performed far better than the 2011/12 famine response in providing services closer to where they were needed, but this still led to significant internal displacement into the towns where people had the best access to relief supplies. UNICEF's partnership with the Ministry of Health was successful in offering mobile coverage (*see the following* Good Practice *box*), which played a role in reducing drought-related displacement to the towns and cities. UNICEF's approach in the Syrian Arab Republic also offers good practice in seeking to target those in greatest need.

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

UNICEF's approach to targeting those with the greatest needs in Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic

UNICEF's mobile health and nutrition coverage during the Somalia pre-famine response: Partnership with the Ministry of Health in Puntland provided mobile health clinics which could provide essential health and nutrition services in remote areas. The Ministry mobilized 113 mobile health teams on Maternal and Child Health, nutrition surveillance, and treatment and referral, and UNICEF funded 9 stabilization centres. According to key informants, the extensive reach of the Ministry and UNICEF's additional support through local NGOs helped reduce mortality from acute watery diarrhoea during 2017. Key informant interviews with implementing partners (both national and international NGOs) and health authorities in Garowe indicated that these mobile clinics were a vital lifeline for health and nutrition-related assistance reaching areas where non-State entities still retained some influence.

UNICEF's approach to targeting those in greatest need in the Syrian Arab Republic: In the Syrian Arab Republic, all UNICEF sections use the changing HRP severity scales outlined in the HNO to prioritize access and to determine focus in terms of equity and reaching hard-to-reach populations.[108] This scale is embedded within successive Syrian Arab Republic HNOs and HRPs, which UNICEF both contributes to and then adheres to in determining the most vulnerable and hardest-to-reach populations. UNICEF sections use the HRP severity scale together with other factors of equity. For example, the WASH section uses the geographic areas prioritized by the severity scale as the first criteria, followed by additional criterion such as the quality and quantity of existing water and sanitation services, the cost of alternative service provision, areas with high numbers of refugees, contamination risk and safe sewage disposal, health-related statistics (diarrhoea, hepatitis, etc.), percentage of internally displaced persons within host communities, and whether the intervention would contribute to the return of internally displaced persons.

3.2.3 THE CHALLENGES IMPLICIT IN ACHIEVING COVERAGE AT SCALE WITH EQUITY IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN SITUATIONS

Despite the good (but sporadic) examples of UNICEF seeking to deliver an equitable approach, in general, the evaluation found that when a trade-off between equity and coverage is required, it is most frequently equity that loses out; equity programming often requires additional activities or programme areas, which adds to the cost of programmes. This is an important concern, as a lack of funding was most frequently cited during the evaluation as a reason for the lack of equity programming. This might be considered understandable when viewed through an efficiency lens, but the focus of the 2018 *World Disasters Report* serves as a reminder to change the way these calculations are made in light of global commitments that have been

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107 Lawday et al., *The UNICEF Response to the Crisis in the Central African Republic.*
108 Ibid.

made to 'leaving no one behind' and 'reaching the furthest behind first'.[109] It acknowledges that those furthest behind and hardest to reach are, almost by definition, also the most expensive to reach. The need to prioritize equity above the dollar amount it will cost to achieve is something for agencies to individually and collectively consider, not least of all, donors.

3.3 Programme quality

UNICEF sector staff generally have a good understanding of the CCCs in addition to relevant global quality standards, which are consistently used in programmes. The CCCs are the primary means through which UNICEF benchmarks, monitors, reports and reviews the quality of outcomes. While there have been some contexts in which the relevance of the CCCs has been questioned, in the case study countries, they were contextualized to convert them into agency or cluster operational objectives, which reduced UNICEF's ability to compare across different contexts as a quality standard, but did strengthen their relevance.

3.3.1 FAMILIARITY WITH AND USE OF PROGRAMME QUALITY STANDARDS

UNICEF sector staff have a good understanding of the CCCs and broader global quality standards, and these are consistently used by staff and incorporated into partner programmes. The evaluation found a consistent level of understanding and use of CCCs and other global standards (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies Minimum Standards, Sphere, Child Protection Minimum Standards) across all contexts.[110] UNICEF's 2010–2016 Humanitarian Evaluation Synthesis reported that only one third of evaluations systematically assessed UNICEF alignment with CCCs, highlighting the fact that CCCs are contextualized across different emergencies and therefore difficult to assess.[111] While this is true, it should not detract from the important

role they play in guiding the work of UNICEF in complex humanitarian emergencies. It is noteworthy that limited reference was made to the Core Humanitarian Standard or accountability to affected people standards by UNICEF staff.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Women's perceptions of programme quality in Jalalabad

The women felt that the children had learned a lot while they were attending the Child Friendly Space, including about child rights and standards of behaviour. Also important to them was the knowledge that they themselves had learned from their children. Some spoke of the knowledge they had gained about how to discipline their children and the effect that some forms of punishment had. It was felt that the behaviours of some adults and children had changed as a consequence of the teaching.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Feedback on the quality and coverage of education programme in Herat

About one quarter of children aged 10–15 were said to be out of school because they were working on the streets in the city. The community members attributed this to (i) the lack of a school feeding scheme that would keep children in school rather than working to earn money to be able to buy food, and (ii) the number of children who register for school at the beginning of the school year but then do not attend because of the limited space in the school and the lack of sufficient education supplies and learning materials, which they cannot afford to buy themselves.

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109 IFRC, *World Disasters Report 2018*.

110 It is noteworthy that the Scoping Report undertaken in advance of the evaluation reported that, 'several informants pointed out that UNICEF programme guidance (including the CCCs) is often not well known at country level'. This is contrary to the findings of this evaluation, which found that the CCCs were consistently well known and well understood at the country level among UNICEF staff and mostly among partner staff, with the exception of some national NGO partners.

111 UNICEF, *Towards Improved Emergency Responses*.

Despite the familiarity of UNICEF's staff with the CCCs, the literature review highlighted some concerns about their relevance in specific protracted, slow-onset crises, in public health emergencies, and in middle-income countries (*see the box below*). These concerns were not raised during the evaluation, although it is noteworthy that UNICEF is in the process of revising the CCCs in response to these findings.

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(Middle) Akbar, 13, plays with some of his younger siblings at their home in Kabul, Afghanistan. The oldest of seven children, he works at a tire repair shop for 10 Afgs a day (about US 20 cents).

Concerns about the relevance of the CCCs from the literature review

- **RELEVANCE IN PROTRACTED, SLOW-ONSET CRISES:** The synthesis of UNICEF's evaluations[112] highlighted the challenges of aligning quality against the CCCs, with the Central African Republic given as an example. The country evaluation found that shifting to a CCC approach was not necessarily appropriate in a protracted, slow-onset crisis, which had both acute and chronic dimensions; the CCCs' discrete phases of disaster preparedness, disaster response and early recovery were not fully adapted to this.

- **RELEVANCE TO PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES:** The Ebola emergency in West Africa, where it was found that UNICEF's response objectives and activities were not well aligned with the CCCs, which were not considered to be fully appropriate nor relevant to a public health emergency.[113]

- **MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES:** The country evaluation of the Syrian Arab Republic regional crisis observed the need for greater contextualization of the CCCs for a middle-income context, protracted emergency, and humanitarian crisis with a strong protection component.[114]

3.3.2 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PROGRAMME QUALITY

A comprehensive examination of the factors that influence programme quality is completed in sections four to eight of this report, but key findings from the evaluation are summarized below to provide context for this section:

- » **PROGRAMME MONITORING**: Access to good-quality monitoring data is key to the delivery of quality programmes. In Ukraine, for example, the use of systematic monitoring with quality indicators helped to inform decisions on coverage and quality. When adapted to the country context, the use of monitoring with quality indicators presents an opportunity to provide a solid evidence base for decision-making on qualitative and quantitative aspects of programme design and implementation. The participation of affected people in programme monitoring is also essential.

- » **PROGRAMME STAFFING:** The evaluation also highlighted the key role that experienced staff play in delivering high-quality programmes. In the absence of reliable data about the reach and quality of UNICEF's programmes, the Ukraine CO was dependent on having the right staff with the right experience and awareness at the right time to make strategic decisions about coverage and quality, potentially leading to more responsive programming overall.

- » **CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND PROGRAMME AGILITY:** Context analysis, reflection and review are also critical to

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112 Ibid.

113 Lawday, Andrew, et al., *Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa 2014–2015,* UNICEF, New York, March 2017.

114 UNICEF, *Towards Improved Emergency Responses.*

understanding the impact of changes in vulnerability; operational agility is important to ensure that programmes remain relevant; and adapting programme delivery modalities is also essential. In the Philippines, UNICEF convened a cross-sectoral, one-day After Action Review workshop after its humanitarian response in Marawi[115] to draw lessons, improve results for future responses, and inform preparedness planning. Conversely, in Nigeria, the evaluation team found that a lack of timely context analysis reduced the agility of the programme and was detrimental to delivering consistent quality.

An important postscript to the discussion on quality is that even when quality standards are being attained, the nature of reporting, which is frequently aggregated, can mask inequities. This is illustrated by findings from community consultations in a town affected by the conflict in north-east Nigeria, where it was reported that minimum standards for water provision were being achieved across the town. While this may be true, in several of the areas that hosted significant numbers of internally displaced persons, shortages were reported and water was not available when it was required (*see* Community Feedback *box*). The provision of water for the total internally displaced person population in the town may have achieved Sphere standards; however, there were significant pockets for which this was not the case.

💬 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
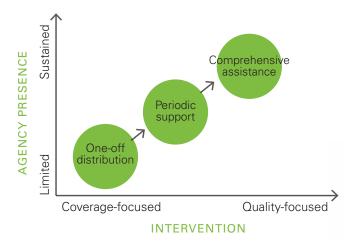
Concerns about coverage of water provision in Borno State

Water availability was considered to be a real problem. The young women wake up at 4 a.m. to place their jerry cans in the queue for water. Then they go and say their prayers and come back to collect water. The solar-powered pumps do not work until the sun comes up, so there is no water until 8 a.m. and, by this time, there is no time to eat before going to school. Those who are furthest away from the borehole queue later and might not get water until the afternoon. Most of the group do not get water until the afternoon. This means that some girls have to miss school; it also makes it difficult to prepare meals.

3.4 UNICEF's approach to prioritizing coverage and quality

The evaluation found that coverage is consistently prioritized over quality and equity, particularly at the onset of a crisis. What is of greater concern is the lack of common understanding among staff of how and when to transition from prioritizing coverage to increasing quality.

FIGURE 10: THE IMPACT OF AGENCY PRESENCE ON COVERAGE AND QUALITY

The evaluation found no common approach or guidance in the case study countries for transitioning from approaches that require limited agency presence and have a primary focus on achieving coverage and meeting basic needs (e.g., one-off distributions), to interventions that draw on sustained agency presence and deliver more comprehensive and appropriate assistance, as illustrated in figure 10.

In all the countries that participated in the evaluation, coverage-focused interventions were consistently prioritized at the beginning of a response; what differed was how and when the shift occurred towards a more sustained presence and the delivery of more comprehensive assistance. The case study visits showed that the transition is dependent on a mix of internal factors (staffing levels and competence, contextual understanding, agility of the response) and external factors (security, funding, partner capacity).

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115 UNICEF Philippines, Marawi Conflict Emergency after Action Review: Final report, November 2017.

Interviews revealed a general perception that an institutional emphasis was placed on coverage; in Ukraine, the challenges that UNICEF faced in the initial phase of the response meant that 'there was just no time to think about quality'.[116] As UNICEF's response became more coordinated, partly thanks to stronger cluster leadership, and as its human resource capacity increased, it could reflect more on a programme design that could balance quality and coverage as appropriate to the context. A number of countries argued that COs are placed under less pressure to deliver quality than to achieve coverage, which influences their prioritization. Interviewees also noted that it was much easier to quantify coverage so that this tends to be prioritized in reporting. Across the case studies, UNICEF staff felt that once they were confident that minimum levels of coverage had been reached to respond to life-threatening risks, then the focus should switch towards the quality of response.

Furthermore, in protracted crises that were poorly funded, the evaluation found that quality was frequently compromised. In contexts such as the Central African Republic, which is typified by limited partner capacity and funding, programmes struggled to attain minimum standards (*see* Community Feedback *box*). Many internally displaced persons were also found to be reliant on items that they had received several years ago in one-off distributions as coverage was prioritized in order to meet basic needs.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Feedback from internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic on the quality of humanitarian services

Feedback from internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic complained about a lack of quality in the sanitation response soon after they had been displaced, but said that it improved with time, with segregated toilets being constructed for women, men and children. However, with the passing of time, and with the protracted nature of the crisis, many were now filled up and others had become dirty over time, and now everyone must share again.

Similar issues were raised by communities displaced by the conflict in Marawi (*see the following* Community Feedback *box*).

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The reliance on short-term relief assistance in the Marawi response

In the Philippines, concerns were raised that internally displaced persons have been in temporary shelters for much longer than had been anticipated. While they had understood that the shelters were a temporary, three-month measure, they have now been living in them for more than a year. As a result, the tents are getting worn out and are becoming dangerous.

The trade-off between coverage and quality – conscious or otherwise – is rarely explicitly documented either by UNICEF or other humanitarian actors. In the Philippines, the WASH sector was an exception, as it documented trade-off decisions between coverage and quality. But on most occasions, it is unclear whether, and to what extent, UNICEF and its partners must make a judgment about how to balance these priorities. This trade-off masks an underlying inequitable approach; coverage is frequently prioritized with the aim of reaching the largest number of people with the funding available, at the expense of delivering more comprehensive interventions, or gaining access to those who are hardest to reach. What is important to stress here is the importance of tempering financial considerations with ethical ones – including the principle of impartiality. The key question that subsequent sections of this evaluation will seek to answer is the extent to which UNICEF is guided by these considerations and the strategies it uses to reach those who are in most need.

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116 Quote taken from an interview with a UNICEF staff member.

A facilitator plays with children at a UNICEF-supported child-friendly space at the Goverment Primary School Prang in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan.

PART FOUR:
IN WHAT WAYS AND HOW EFFECTIVELY HAS UNICEF INFLUENCED OTHERS TO INCREASE THE QUALITY AND COVERAGE OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION?

This section seeks to assess how UNICEF's responsibilities for monitoring and reporting grave violations, its role as Cluster Lead Agency, and its advocacy on humanitarian access has strengthened the coverage and quality of humanitarian action.

Summary of findings

- **4.1 REPORTING ON GRAVE VIOLATIONS:** During the evaluation, there was considerable praise for the role that UNICEF played in monitoring and reporting grave violations, as a consequence of which there was a general perception that it was a strong advocate, particularly in volatile environments. The challenges this responsibility poses for UNICEF is in adequately resourcing activities, ensuring adequate capacity was in place and maintaining adequate quality control. Concerns about government sensitivities and the risk of access denials mean that in some cases UNICEF was cautious in the strategies it adopted.

- **4.2 UNICEF'S INFLUENCE ON COVERAGE AND QUALITY AS CLUSTER LEAD AGENCY:** UNICEF has used its role as Cluster Lead Agency to strengthen the coverage and quality of the response to complex humanitarian emergencies. The case studies highlighted good practices in identifying and filling gaps in the humanitarian response, promoting contextualized standards and strengthening the capacity of partners to meet these standards. Findings from recent inter-agency evaluations are consistent with the findings of this evaluation in raising concern about the veracity of cluster assessment data and coverage figures. They also note challenges in the adequacy of cluster monitoring systems.

- **4.3 ADVOCACY TO EXPAND ACCESS:** While UNICEF's experience and networks means that it is well placed to advocate on issues of access, the evaluation found that its performance varied between countries. While it frequently supports inter-agency advocacy on access, in some contexts, UNICEF's partners considered it to be comparatively silent.

4.1 Reporting on grave violations and advocacy on child protection

During the evaluation, there was considerable praise from UNICEF's partners and peers for the role that UNICEF played in monitoring and reporting grave violations, as a consequence of which there was a general perception that it was a strong advocate, particularly in volatile environments. The challenges this responsibility poses for UNICEF is in adequately resourcing activities, ensuring adequate capacity was in place and maintaining quality control. Concerns about government sensitivities and the risk of access denials means that in some cases, UNICEF was cautious in the strategies it was adopted.

The MRM was established in 2005 by the Security Council to foster accountability and compliance with international law and child protection standards. It is a United Nations-led process involving a broad circle of stakeholders. The purpose of the MRM is to provide for the systematic gathering of accurate, timely, objective and reliable information on grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict. The Country Task Force for Monitoring and Reporting is co-chaired by the UNICEF Representative and country-level engagement through advocacy and programme responses is considered the 'first line of defence'.[117] In situations where peacekeeping or political missions are present, the Security Council has requested that United Nations missions increasingly play a role on certain aspects of child protection, especially in monitoring and reporting and in dialogue with parties to conflict for commitments to protect children. The country case studies listed in the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (2017) are outlined in the following table.[118,119]

The evaluation found that UNICEF has shown diligence in undertaking its MRM responsibilities and that, in most of the countries listed, it had established a network of partners and was seeking to monitor and report. This was not without challenges, which were focused in four areas:

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117 United Nations, Guidelines: Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict, June 2014.

118 The table includes those listed in annex 1 – Situations on the Council's agenda – and annex 2 – Situations that could be bought to the attention of the Council – of the Annual Report.

119 United Nations Security Council, Children and Armed Conflict: Sustaining the agenda – Research Report, 2017, no. 4, 27 October 2017.

COUNTRY CASE STUDIES LISTED IN THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT, 2017

Country	Annex 1	Annex 2
Afghanistan	•	
Central African Republic	•	
Iraq	•	
Mali	•	
Nigeria		•
Philippines		•
Somalia	•	
Syria n Arab Republic	•	

» **RESOURCES:** While UNICEF has responsibilities, it does not have specific resources for these, and so in COs where there were shortfalls in funding, it had, at times, proven to be a challenge to maintain networks. However, some innovative solutions were found, which included garnering the support of UNICEF's implementing partners to support monitoring. Partners were considered to be a key resource for UNICEF, particularly in countries where access was constrained.

» **CAPACITY AND QUALITY CONTROL:** Linked to working in partnerships, while UNICEF routinely trained partners in the collection and reporting of data, there was at least one country where capacity to adequately investigate and report had proven to be a significant issue which had led to a need to re-start the network.

» **PRESENCE OF UNITED NATIONS MISSIONS:** In the countries where there was an integrated United Nations presence, UNICEF was able to complement the activities of the mission, although it tended to have far broader networks; where there were sensitive issues, the mission offered a means for in-country advocacy that permitted UNICEF a degree of anonymity.

» **SENSITIVITIES AND THE FEAR OF ACCESS DENIALS:** In at least three countries that were listed (and at least one other that was not listed), because of the sensitivity of the issues with respective governments,

UNICEF was very cautious in how it has met its monitoring and reporting obligations and has focused on 'closed door' advocacy. In several case studies, concerns were raised about the potential for UNICEF's association with the MRM to affect government-controlled access. In some of these contexts, UNICEF continued to advocate publicly on violations carried out by non-State entities.

During the evaluation, UNICEF's partners and peers commended UNICEF for the role it played in the MRM, and there was a general perception that it was a strong advocate, particularly in volatile environments. This is to UNICEF's credit, as the available evidence in highly insecure settings finds that protection work is rare and is rarely scaled up in proportion to the need, despite its importance. It is important to add, though, that UNICEF's participation in the MRM also carries with it potential challenges; bearing witness carries risks for UNICEF and its staff, particularly in volatile environments. These may be mitigated in part by the emphasis placed on reporting issues to the Country Task Force for Monitoring and Reporting, rather than those responsible for the violations, which is done behind closed doors. However, it would be naïve to assume that those parties that commit violations, or that are listed, are not aware of UNICEF's role. This is an additional risk that UNICEF understands, manages and mitigates, to the extent possible.

Noting that the 'first line of defence' is country-level engagement, response and programming, acting on the information collected is the greater challenge for UNICEF, as it must make a judgment on whether and how to do this. Like other multi-mandate agencies that engage in advocacy in complex humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF has a formal decision-making procedure with which to inform decisions about how to advocate on grave violations in complex and high-threat environments.[120] This procedure seeks to balance UNICEF's mandate with an analysis of risk and understanding of ethics and is driven by UNICEF's mandate but also the best interests of the children. Some of the challenges associated with advocacy and neutrality are elucidated in the following box.

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120 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Decision-Making Procedure for Public Advocacy on Grave Violations of Child Rights in Complex and High Threat Environments', UNICEF, June 2016.

Advocacy and the principle of neutrality

The use of advocacy, and particularly public advocacy has long been an issue of controversy when assessing the application of neutrality; the position that is frequently taken is that advocacy should not compromise the principle of neutrality so long as the side of the victims is taken. Where this becomes more problematic is when the victims (or crisis-affected people) have views and beliefs, or may be politically engaged or part of a distinct ethnic group. In this context, taking their side could be understood as furthering a particular set of political or identity-related objectives.[121] For agencies wanting to manage perceptions of their neutrality, assessing whether particular messages cross a line in terms of taking sides or expressing political views may be challenging. In terms of UNICEF's responsibilities to the MRM, its explicit focus on children – who by nature of their status can be considered as 'victims' of conflict rather than perpetrators – provides an important point of reference and one that may permit UNICEF greater latitude to speak out when this is warranted.

Reasons given by UNICEF for not undertaking public advocacy include instances when speaking out will create a risk to children; when it would undermine impartiality or neutrality (i.e., would risk creating an association with one party to the conflict), or when it would undermine a course of action that was already being taken to resolve the issue. Importantly, the procedure includes a decision-making tree and a process for escalating decisions.[122] Detailed evidence of how decision-making was informed in the case study countries was difficult to gather, but the field missions and follow-up interviews did permit analysis of several case studies that offered some important reflections, including:

» UNICEF often feels bolder in undertaking public advocacy on violations committed by non-State entities rather than governments. In one of the case study countries, it took UNICEF several years

to feel confident in the quality of its monitoring and to accept the risk of access denials that may arise from reporting them. In a second of the case study countries, UNICEF frequently raised issues linked to non-State entities but did not engage with the government on issues linked to violations.

» In support of its commitment to the MRM and in line with its broader mandate for strengthening child protection, UNICEF engages in significant capacity-building of government or local authorities. An example of this from the case study countries is Pakistan (*see the following box*).

Initiatives taken by UNICEF to strengthen the child protection capacity of local authorities in Pakistan

UNICEF Pakistan has focused efforts to strengthen policies and embed child protection emergency responses within the overall delivery of child protective services. Throughout 2015 and 2016, UNICEF worked to integrate the concept into the strategic plans of all provincial departments, as well as the social welfare departments, and the provincial disaster management authority strategies for Balochistan, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). UNICEF also supported KP Province to finalize the Minimum Standards for Protective Spaces for Children and a training manual on child protection in emergencies for government officials, as well as standard operating procedures on separated, unaccompanied and missing children in emergencies.

» In one of the countries that participated in the evaluation, UNICEF conducts regular advocacy on the violations committed against children and attributed to non-State entities, including denial of humanitarian access. While the advocacy on using MRM data led to agreeing on actions with non-State entities, access constraints can mean that agreed actions such as the evacuation of injured

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121 Schenkenberg van Mierop, Ed, (2016) 'Coming Clean on Neutrality and Independence: The need to assess the application of humanitarian principles', *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 97, no. 897/898, 2016, pp. 295–318.

122 UNICEF, 'Decision-Making Procedure for Public Advocacy on Grave Violations'.

Students at Miya Central
Primary School, Bauchi State,
northern Nigeria.

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children out of combat zones are not viable. The
lack of access to deliver programmes that respond
to issues identified through the MRM was reported
on several occasions.

» Actions taken by UNICEF in support of its obligations
can make an important contribution to improving the
situation, but they can also consume considerable
time. In complex humanitarian emergencies, where
needs are far   than the capacity of the humanitarian
system to adequately address them, it can be difficult
for COs to provide the specialist resources required

Examining UNICEF's work in support of the MRM
is a complex responsibility. However, the evaluation
found that the responsibility given by the Security
Council to UNICEF provides important impetus and
focus. While the case studies highlighted significant
challenges and dilemmas associated with UNICEF
being able to fully meet its responsibilities, it also
found significant pride from UNICEF staff about this
aspect of their mandate, the achievement of which
offers important change for some of the most at-risk
children (*see the following box*).

UNICEF actions in support of its MRM responsibilities[123]

NIGERIA: The Civilian Joint Task Force, is a local group formed in 2013 to support the Nigerian security forces in the fight against Boko Haram in north-east Nigeria and to protect local communities from attacks by Boko Haram. In 2016, the task force was listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict for the recruitment and use of children. Following the listing, UNICEF, in its role as co-chair of the United Nations Country Task Force for the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations against children, worked with the group and the Nigerian authorities to develop an Action Plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children.[124]

SOMALIA: UNICEF and its partners have conducted extensive advocacy with the authorities in Puntland on behalf of a group of children who had been captured from territory held by non-State entities in 2016 and detained as child soldiers. These efforts secured the release of 26 children under 15 years of age. A further 40 children were transferred to the United Nations in April 2017. The children, all boys, are being supported through a reintegration programme managed by UNICEF through its partners.[125]

MALI: Over the course of the evaluation period, advocacy on MRM and child protection issues through the task force has resulted in some important achievements. In March 2017, an Action Plan was signed by the Coordination of Azawad Movements – an umbrella of armed groups – to prevent and end the use and recruitment of children, sexual violence and other grave violations by armed groups against children.[126]

4.2 UNICEF's influence on coverage and quality as Cluster Lead Agency

UNICEF has used its role as Cluster Lead Agency to strengthen the coverage and quality of the response to complex humanitarian emergencies. The case studies highlighted good practices in identifying and filling gaps in the humanitarian response, promoting contextualized standards and strengthening the capacity of partners to meet these. Findings from recent inter-agency evaluations are consistent with the findings of this evaluation in raising concern about the veracity of cluster assessment data and coverage figures. They also note challenges in the adequacy of cluster monitoring systems.

Central to the cluster approach is the role of clusters in addressing gaps in coverage of humanitarian response and improving the quality of humanitarian assistance through greater predictability and accountability, and stronger partnership among humanitarian actors. Where UNICEF is Cluster Lead Agency, it is required to lead coordination efforts in sectors or areas of responsibility. At the global level, UNICEF has the responsibility for establishing broad partnerships, and thereby promoting greater accountability for cluster results. While an examination of the coverage and quality achieved by the clusters is outside the scope of the terms of reference for the evaluation, evidence was collected during interviews with the Global Cluster Coordination Unit and, in a number of the case studies, of how UNICEF's role as Cluster Lead Agency has influenced the coverage and quality achieved by the collective humanitarian system.[127]

123　Please note that both examples used are in the public domain and links to the relevant reports and media articles have been included in the footnotes.

124　See <www.unicef.org/media/media_100837.html>, accessed 8 November 2018.

125　<www.unicef.org/somalia/reallives_20849.html>, accessed 8 November 2018.

126　UNICEF Mali, *UNICEF Country Office Annual Report 2017*.

127　A comprehensive evaluation was undertaken of UNICEF's performance as Cluster Lead Agency in 2013, albeit with a focus on its leadership responsibilities rather than its contribution to strengthening coverage and quality per se. See Avenir Analytics and Everywhere Humanitarian Response and Logistics Services, *Evaluation of UNICEF's Cluster Lead Agency Role in Humanitarian Action*.

4.2.1 COVERAGE

The IASC guidance on cluster functions includes an objective on coverage 'preparing needs assessments and analysis of gaps…to inform the setting of priorities.'[128] Across the case study countries, this evaluation documented the ways in which UNICEF-led clusters sought to identify and prioritize needs, review coverage and address gaps.

» DOCUMENTING WHO DOES WHAT, WERE, WHEN AND FOR WHOM (5W): The '5Ws Dashboard' of the Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Working Group[129] in the Marawi response was a comprehensive attempt to consolidate humanitarian response data from individual working group members. The dashboard contains information about the number, type and location of activities, and the number, sex and age of beneficiaries.

» REVIEWING CLUSTER ACTIVITY TO IDENTIFY GAPS: During the Marawi response in the Philippines, UNICEF-led clusters undertook a series of sector-specific review exercises at the national level. The protection cluster,[130] together with the national Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Working Group, used the opportunity to review key protection issues and gaps.[131]

» ADVOCATING TO ADDRESS GAPS IN COVERAGE: In Mali, it was reported that UNICEF's cluster coordination function was effective in its advocacy, particularly where gaps had been identified in the response. This was also true in the early response to displacement in north-east Nigeria, where UNICEF lobbied the clusters for greater partner capacity to meet humanitarian needs.

» EXPANDING UNICEF'S PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA TO FILL GAPS: As outlined in section 3.1.2 above, UNICEF uses its Provider of Last Resort responsibilities as one means of determining its own targets

4.2.2 QUALITY

The IASC guidance on cluster functions includes an objective on quality: 'applying and adhering to common standards and guidelines.'[132] And the country case studies highlighted the role that UNICEF's cluster coordinators have played in assessing and supporting the capacity of the humanitarian system and agreeing and disseminating contextualized sector standards among humanitarian partners. Quality has also been driven up by the role played by the cluster in monitoring and evaluating programme implementation.

» ASSESSING CAPACITY, DEVELOPING STRATEGIES AND SETTING STANDARDS: In partnership with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, UNICEF sought to strengthen the programme quality of WASH cluster partners in 2016 through the development of an Operational Plan and a capacity gap analysis. In 2017, Afghanistan-specific WASH in Emergency guidelines were published.[133]

» TRANSLATION AND PROMOTION OF STANDARDS: The Child Protection in Emergencies sub-cluster in Afghanistan adapted the Child Protection in Emergencies Guidelines to national and regional levels and translated them into Dari and Pashto. The guidelines were subsequently disseminated to sub-cluster partners through a workshop in 2017. The translation of guidelines into local languages was considered to be fundamental to efforts to strengthen programme quality.

» STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF PARTNERS TO DELIVER QUALITY PROGRAMMES: Using the cluster approach, UNICEF Central African Republic has worked closely with government line ministries to strengthen their humanitarian response capacity. Although this is currently low, the evaluation found that the inclusion of government in the leadership

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128 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level*, August 2015.

129 Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Working Group, *5Ws Dashboard for Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Working Group – Marawi Siege Response*, Excel file, July 2018.

130 The cluster system was not officially activated durin g the Marawi response, since the national government did not request international assistance. However, all interviewees stated that the coordination groups that were convened to coordinate the humanitarian response de facto functioned like clusters, albeit not being called 'clusters' but mostly 'working group' or 'coordination group'. Some documents published by the coordination groups refer to themselves as clusters; for example, the WASH Cluster.

131 Protection Cluster Philippines and Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Working Group (n.d.), *Key Protection Issues/Gaps*, presentation.

132 IASC, *IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level*.

133 See <www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/afghanistan_wash_cluster_guidelines_8_april_2018_mrrd_approved.pdf>.

of clusters has strengthened their engagement in the response and has built capacity.

»   **ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN PROGRAMME RELEVANCE AND QUALITY:** In the Marawi response in the Philippines, the subnational WASH cluster consulted religious leaders at the onset of project implementation to integrate Muslim beliefs and practices into project activities, particularly hygiene and sanitation promotion.[134] This was considered to have improved the relevance and effectiveness of the response.

»   **ESTABLISHING MONITORING SYSTEMS:** In 2017, to strengthen the quality of nutrition monitoring in Afghanistan, members of the nutrition cluster conducted four semi-quantitative evaluations of access and coverage, nine SMART surveys and three Rapid Nutrition Assessments. The results of the data collection initiatives were used to sharpen emergency nutrition interventions.[135]

»   **ADDRESSING QUALITY CONCERNS:** In the response to the Marawi conflict, the WASH cluster made the Sphere standards a mandatory reference for all implementers that were part of the Strategic Response Plan. Despite this, there were still a number of quality concerns that UNICEF sought to address through efforts to standardize programme practice. One example of this was to request all cluster partners to use a common latrine design that had been agreed with the government, but which could be tailored to community needs, in consultation with affected people.

4.2.3 TOWARDS AN ASSESSMENT OF UNICEF'S CONTRIBUTION TO COVERAGE AND QUALITY AS CLUSTER LEAD AGENCY

Given the broad scope of the evaluation and its primary focus on UNICEF, rather than the clusters, it was not

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A 13-year-old (centre) carries a bucket near a public water point in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, State of Palestine.

possible to assess the effectiveness of UNICEF-led clusters in strengthening coverage and quality, but it was evident that some functions were undertaken more consistently than others. The evaluation of UNICEF's cluster leadership[136] noted generally positive feedback from cluster partners on its effectiveness in identifying gaps in coverage,[137] and the case study visits in this evaluation suggested that an assessment of 'who does what and where, when and by whom', was fairly routine. From a quality perspective, the normative role of contextualized standard-setting was also common across the clusters that participated in the case studies. Good practices that were identified by the Global Cluster Coordinators included the use of rapid response teams in countries such as Yemen, where mobile teams were able to visit programmes and provide real-time feedback on programme quality, including cross-cutting issues such as accountability to affected people and communicating with communities.

Recent Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations have highlighted several weaknesses of the clusters (collectively, rather than specific to UNICEF) in key areas linked to coverage and quality, including the veracity of assessment data and coverage figures (South Sudan,[138] Typhoon Haiyan[139]) the consistency and effectiveness of monitoring

134 Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator *Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator Report on the Use of CERF Funds: Philippines Rapid Response Displacement 2017*.

135 UNICEF Afghanistan Country Office, *Consolidated Emergency Report 2017*, March 2018.

136 Avenir Analytics, *Evaluation of UNICEF's Cluster Lead Agency Role in Humanitarian Action*.

137 Ibid. The evaluation noted that two thirds of partners responding to country surveys said that cluster coordinators had succeeded in identifying gaps.

138 Clarke, Nigel, et al., *Report of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) of the Response to the Crisis in South Sudan: Final evaluation report*, Valid International, November 2015.

139 Hanley, T., et al., *IASC Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Typhoon Haiyan Response,* Valid International, October 2014.

(Central African Republic,[140] South Sudan,[141] Typhoon Haiyan[142]) and information management and gathering and sharing data on needs, locations and agencies (Central African Republic,[143] South Sudan[144]). While UNICEF and other Cluster Lead Agencies have significant scope to influence both coverage and quality through leadership of the clusters, an important limitation that was highlighted by cluster staff was the variable access they had to sufficient resources and the limitations of accountability within the cluster, which can significantly limit its influence.

4.3 Advocacy to expand access

While UNICEF's experience and networks means that it is well placed to advocate on issues of access, the evaluation found that its performance was far more variable between countries. While it frequently supports inter-agency advocacy on access, in some contexts, UNICEF's partners and peers considered it to be comparatively silent (Note: This aspect of access is discussed in more detail in section 5.1.)

Humanitarian advocacy is necessarily grounded in IHL, which consists of the Hague Conventions, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, as well as subsequent treaties, case law and customary IHL. It confers on States a set of rules to organize their actions during conflicts and to help balance military necessity with the protection of civilians. It defines both the positive rights of signatory States as well as proscriptions of their conduct when dealing with irregular forces and non-signatories.[145]

UNICEF's responsibilities to the MRM has resulted in the institutional prioritization of advocacy and has led to the development of policies to guide its advocacy in emergencies[146] and which are specific to its public advocacy.[147] Its programme and engagement at county

level also offers access to a large network of senior government and local authorities. There is the potential for UNICEF to use these strengths to develop its access profile as well as be an enabling donor for implementing partner access. The evaluation found limited evidence of UNICEF routinely fulfilling these functions.

Interviewees from United Nations agencies were generally positive about the role that UNICEF played in supporting access. The case studies showed that UNICEF frequently participated in OCHA-led coordination mechanisms and in joint advocacy activities – often driven by being part of an integrated United Nations system or mutual mandate-related issues such as protection and children's issues. Implementing partners that engaged with UNICEF on issues such as bureaucratic impediments believe that UNICEF could further deploy its political leverage or its advocacy voice on their behalf. Access-specific advocacy was felt to be limited or ad hoc, rather than a routine aspect of the partnership. An exception to this was Mali, where there was broad acknowledgement of UNICEF's engagement at a range of levels advocating on issues of access (*seethe following* Good Practice *box*).

> 💡 **GOOD PRACTICE**
>
> ### UNICEF's advocacy in Mali for principled access
>
> It was widely acknowledged by evaluation respondents that UNICEF is a prominent actor when it comes to advocating for increased humanitarian access in Mali. UNICEF is a critical humanitarian stakeholder in Mali and a lead agency in advocating for upholding humanitarian principles and respecting humanitarian space with the mission, including within the HCT, the Security Management Team, through OCHA and the Humanitarian Coordinator.

140 Lawday, Andrew, et al., *Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Response to the Central African Republic's Crisis, 2013-2016*, advanced unedited version, Kon Terra Group, March 2016.
141 Clarke et al., *Report of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation*.
142 Hanley et al., *IASC Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Typhoon Haiyan Response*.
143 Lawday et al., *Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation*.
144 Clarke et al., *Report of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation*.
145 See United Nations Children's Fund, *Non-Paper: Humanitarian policy issues relevant to operating in complex and high-threat environments*, n.d.
146 United Nations Children's Fund, *Saving Lives, Protecting Children: Advocacy in emergencies*, UNICEF, June 2008.
147 UNICEF, 'Decision-Making Procedure for Public Advocacy on Grave Violations of Child Rights'.

National Ambassador Habib Koito gives Plumpy'Nut to a 2-year-old girl in Koulikoro region, Mali.

In Ukraine, a 12-year-old, stands in front of a school canteen that was totally destroyed by shelling in 2014.

PART FIVE:
WHAT PROGRAMME APPROACHES HAS UNICEF EMPLOYED AT THE FIELD LEVEL TO GAIN PRINCIPLED ACCESS AND IMPROVE COVERAGE AND QUALITY, AND WITH WHAT SUCCESS?

This section focuses on the relevance and effectiveness of different programme approaches and ways of achieving coverage and quality outcomes that UNICEF has adopted in complex humanitarian emergencies. It critically reviews how UNICEF's ways of working either enable or constrain the delivery of high-quality programmes at scale.

Summary of findings

- **5.1 APPROACHES TO GAINING PRINCIPLED ACCESS:** Senior UNICEF staff have a good understanding of humanitarian principles and use these when taking operational decisions, but knowledge and application was much more variable for field staff, even though they were frequently faced with localized access dilemmas. When considering these, the principle of humanity tended to be prioritized above others. UNICEF lacked a structured way to make decisions on issues of principles in the case study countries, although the issuance of the *Access Field Manual*[148] has the potential to address this gap. UNICEF generally prioritizes its own access over that of its partners.

- **5.2 HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND STRENGTHEN COVERAGE:** With a few notable exceptions, UNICEF tends not to engage at a strategic level with armed groups directly, but follows the lead of OCHA or HCT-coordinated access working groups. Engagement is more likely to occur at a local level; in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, UNICEF has engaged in local-level negotiations to strengthen protection and increase coverage. There is growing recognition within the agency that negotiation requires specific skills and training, and there is considerable scope to strengthen training and support.

- **5.3 THE EFFECT OF SECURITY RISK MANAGEMENT ON COVERAGE AND QUALITY:** In crises, where humanitarian needs are extreme, the evaluation found that the United Nations security management system frequently hinders UNICEF's ability to access its programmes, which has implications for programme quality. While there are structural and policy foundations for productive relations between UNICEF and UNDSS, the conclusion of this evaluation is that working relationships with UNDSS are frequently governed by personality and background. The evaluation found similar inconsistencies with the use of the Programme Criticality framework; when it was applied effectively by the United Nations, UNICEF used it to expand its coverage. In order to try to navigate the challenges posed by participation in the United Nations security management system, UNICEF has increasingly resorted to employing its own security staff. The evaluation found that the varying levels of success that have been achieved are linked to staff profile and personality, as well as the roles and responsibilities that COs and FOs give to these staff.

- **5.4 THE EFFECT OF AN INTEGRATED UNITED NATIONS PRESENCE AND CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION ON UNICEF COVERAGE AND QUALITY:** Integrated United Nations presences compromise perceptions of UNICEF's neutrality and independence and frequently require that it takes steps to reduce risk, address perceptions and defend humanitarian principles. Despite this, and where necessary as a last resort, UNICEF engages with military actors through established civil-military coordination structures and has used military assets to expand its coverage in times of humanitarian crisis.

- **5.5 THE USE OF INTEGRATED AND ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMMING APPROACHES:** The country case studies offered a very mixed picture on integrated programming. While there were examples that had contributed to better quality or wider coverage in most of the country case studies, assessments and planning, which provide the foundations for integrated programming, these were generally undertaken by individual sections rather than jointly. Concerns were also raised by UNICEF partners about the negative effect of siloed programming on their coverage or quality. While there are external factors that may limit the potential for integrated programming, there is much more that UNICEF could do to promote its practice. The use of cash was considered to have cut across siloed programming and to have provided relevant and effective assistance; there is the potential for UNICEF to expand the use of this modality in the future. Rapid Response Mechanisms (RRMs) can deliver integrated programmes and significantly increase UNICEF's coverage in access-constrained situations and are often the first assistance that conflict-affected populations receive. The challenge lies in the quality and adequacy of the assistance that is provided, as it is relatively infrequent that RRM missions are followed with more sustained support.

- **5.6 UNICEF USE OF REMOTE PROGRAMMING MODALITIES:** UNICEF uses a range of complimentary approaches to manage and monitor its programmes where it does not have a staff presence due to security risks or access denials. In these contexts, UNICEF frequently relies on third-party service providers for programme support and monitoring. While these service providers offer a level of quality assurance, there are also significant challenges with their use, which include cost, data quantity and data quality. The challenge to UNICEF is in ensuring that there is clarity on their scope of work to ensure it matches with their capacity and that they are used as a last resort rather than an expedient option.

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148 A draft version of UNICEF's *Access Field Manual* was being prepared at the time the evaluation was being conducted. See United Nations Children's Fund, *Access Field Manual*, draft 0, UNICEF, August 2018.

Boys and men carry UNICEF-supplied hygiene kits and buckets in Jala Bela Village, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan.

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5.1 Approaches to gaining principled access

Senior UNICEF staff have a good understanding of humanitarian principles and use these when taking operational decisions, but knowledge and application were much more variable for field staff, despite the fact that they were frequently faced with localized access dilemmas. When considering these, the principle of humanity tended to be prioritized above others. UNICEF lacked a structured way to make decisions on issues of principles in the case study countries, although the issuance of the *Access Field Manual*[149] has the potential to address this gap. UNICEF generally prioritizes its own access over that of its partners.

Any discussion about UNICEF's use of humanitarian principles must first acknowledge the stresses and strains that humanitarian values are experiencing; the rise in the prominence of multi-mandate organizations (of which UNICEF is one) and growing recognition of the need to address the root causes of crises, as well as their effects, have served to blend and blur humanitarian response with security and development models.[150] A second challenge is the apparent denial of the principles by a growing number of non-State entities, which in turn has caused them to be further undermined by Western States in their 'war on terror'. Despite these challenges, the evaluation takes the position that principles remain the most pragmatic way of protecting and saving lives. Moreover, the continuing instrumentalization of humanitarianism serves only to make understanding and use of the principles by humanitarian agencies ever more important.

5.1.1 UNICEF'S UNDERSTANDING AND USE OF HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES TO GAIN ACCESS

The CCCs are a cornerstone for UNICEF's work in complex humanitarian emergencies. In addition to having a rights base, the CCCs are grounded humanitarian principles that provide a common reference point for staff and partners. Further guidance produced by EMOPS includes a more detailed explanation of UNICEF's humanitarian principles,[151] which was updated in 2017 as part of a broader Humanitarian Reference document.[152] Of note in the 2017 document is the separation of the core principles from four additional principles (do no harm, accountability, participation of affected populations and respect for culture and custom), but also the addition of the principle of independence. While the need for principled humanitarian access is implicit in the CCCs and modalities for achieving access such as engagement with non-State entities,[153] working within integrated United Nations missions and remote programming guidance, it is only in the past year that a framework and guidance on humanitarian access have been prepared.[154] The decision

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149 UNICEF, *Access Field Manual.*

150 Gordon, Stuart, and Antonio Donini, 'Romancing Principles and Human Rights.

151 United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF's Humanitarian Principles*, UNICEF, July 2003.

152 United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Reference Document for Emergency Preparedness and Response*, UNICEF. September 2017.

153 The 2011 Guidance Note was updated in 2017.

154 The Access for Results Framework has benefited from an extensive process of consultation and review at the same time as this evaluation was being undertaken.

to develop this was predicated on weaknesses that had been observed by EMOPs in UNICEF's approach to access *(see the following box)*.

The rationale for a greater focus in UNICEF on strengthening humanitarian access[155]

The development of an access framework has identified a series of challenges in the way that UNICEF ensures that vulnerable children have access to principled humanitarian assistance and protection:

- Lack of a common understanding on the scope of humanitarian access for UNICEF.

- Uncertain and undefined role and comparative advantage of UNICEF in access efforts.

- Varying levels of familiarity with, and ability to navigate and make best use of, the United Nations security management system, Programme Criticality and other policies and guidelines, such as on civil-military coordination and United Nations integrated missions.

- The increasing use of implementing partners and remote management, and less community engagement by UNICEF staff.

- The lack of situational awareness and integrated analysis and prioritization.

- Limited awareness of key considerations and good practice in applying different implementation modalities.

- Unclear and untested assumptions of the skills, capacities, accountabilities and support required of different staff.

An important finding of the evaluation concerns '**who**' in UNICEF discusses humanitarian principles and '**where**' these discussions occur; during the evaluation, staff in COs referred obliquely to the importance of principles, but it tended to be only at the most senior levels of COs that the challenges posed by meeting UNICEF's

obligations or the compromises that had been made were discussed. Engagement on issues of principles travelled up the management line, through ROs and headquarters. In contrast, in many of the FOs and during most of the interviews conducted with national staff, access was discussed from a more operational perspective, with few references made to principles. While access was considered important for achieving results for children, there was limited evidence that humanitarian principles were used in a practical way to determine the benefits of different approaches to access or to scrutinize and debate the compromises and contradictions inherent in them.[156]

A second finding relates to 'which' principles are prioritized by UNICEF. During the field missions, there was consensus among UNICEF staff about the importance of ensuring that humanitarian assistance reached those in need; this reflects the strong humanitarian ethos within the agency. As a consequence, the principle of humanity tended to be the pre-eminent principle, with references also made to impartiality (with its links to equity, also a UNICEF priority). In contrast, very few references were made to the principles of neutrality or independence. Given the challenges that integrated United Nations missions[157] pose to both the independence and neutrality of United Nations agencies, and given the proximity that UNICEF frequently has to the government, which in many of the case study countries was considered to be a party to the conflict,[158] this perhaps, should not be surprising, but it does present risks in how UNICEF seeks to promote access to those in need. Research on European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operation (ECHO) partners in the Iraq response offers one of the starker examples of how principles are applied in practice. The Afghanistan field mission also provided an example *(see the following* Lesson *box)*.

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155 UNICEF, *Access Field Manual*.

156 Harmer and Fox, *Research on Good Practices on Humanitarian Access*.

157 Integrated United Nations missions were present in the Afghanistan and Somalia field missions and the Mali and Syrian Arab Republic desk reviews.

158 Internal conflict was common to all the evaluation field missions and desk reviews.

📖 **LESSON**

Principled decisions and dilemmas in Iraq and Afghanistan

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON MOSUL:[159] The research, undertaken by HERE-Geneva, found clear evidence that the humanitarian principles play a role in the decision-making of ECHO partners in Iraq. However, there is great divergence in the extent to which ECHO partners use the principles strategically to preserve their humanitarian identity, and in how they operationalize, understand and weigh them in practice. Emblematic of these differences is the finding that the principles are used as a justification both to intervene and not to intervene in the same location. Some agencies push to enter areas that others consider to be off limits. These efforts seem to emphasize the principle of humanity, but are at odds with neutrality when they require, or are perceived to require, travel with armed escorts from military forces that are a party to the conflict. Others invoke neutrality to justify their non-intervention, and/or prioritization of other (easier to reach) areas. Some of them also point to possible implications in terms of perceptions for their operations in other parts of the world.

AFGHANISTAN FIELD MISSION FINDINGS: Given the complexity of delivering humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan and the focus of the evaluation on access, it was surprising how infrequently humanitarian principles were raised by informants during interviews. It is possible that this was because they are implicit in how all agencies work, although the evidence suggests that at best there is a mixed picture when it comes to applying principles in practice. While numerous examples were given of local NGOs negotiating principled access to Taleban-controlled areas via community Shuras, there were also discussions about programmes that were being delivered in non-State entity areas that were deeply unprincipled; where access was literally being 'paid for'; where the provision of assistance was being determined by the Taleban; or simply by not asking questions of third-party contractors about how they access areas under the control of non-State entities. Even day-to-day dilemmas such as the blanket use of police escorts for United Nations convoys have important implications for the principled provision of assistance and perceptions of United Nations agencies. The approach that was observed was more one of doing what was required to get the job done in the best way possible and accepting that any response would have its flaws. And perhaps this should not be surprising given that there are no easy answers to the dilemmas and compromises that members of the humanitarian community in Afghanistan face on a day-to-day basis.[160]

As the example above suggests, there is an acknowledgement that making judgments about access requires a structured decision-making process (albeit one that is light and rapid), and while there was evidence that UNICEF took strategic access decisions internally (mostly by senior staff, often in consultation with the RO) or in collaboration with others (most frequently as part of OCHA-led Access Working Groups such as in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Somalia), there was no common reference document that provided a framework for making such decisions. This is one of the gaps that the *Access Field Manual* and

Framework has started to fill (*see figure 11*).[161] Of the countries participating in the evaluation (including those that were interviewed), access frameworks have been developed or are in the process of being developed for Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. While it is too early to gauge their contribution to strengthening quality and accountability, the evaluation recognizes that they have the potential to fill some important gaps in UNICEF's engagement in complex humanitarian emergencies.

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159 The text in the box is taken from Schenkenberg, Ed, and Karin Wendt, *Principled Humanitarian Assistance of ECHO partners in Iraq*, HERE-Geneva, Norwegian Refugee Council and European Commission, May 2017.

160 These findings echo those of the Secure Access in Volatile Environments (SAVE) research, which found that 'aid agency staff routinely described having to choose between several bad options to get the job done. However, they tend not to frame these difficult choices in the language of principles. Rather, most staff (and agencies as a whole) retain a simplistic view of humanitarian principles. They tend to "recite them as a mantra and treat them as moral absolutes". Across all four countries, both international and national staff spoke of the importance of humanitarian principles in their work, but with reflexive and generic enthusiasm. While some interviewees, particularly at senior levels, described general threats to principled humanitarian action in their particular context, few appeared to grapple with the specific tensions and dilemmas that adherence to the principles created for their organisation, in operational terms' (see Haver, Katherine, and William Carter, *What It Takes: Principled pragmatism to enable access and quality humanitarian aid in insecure environments*, SAVE, November 2016.

161 Since the evaluation was undertaken concurrently with the development of the framework, it was not evaluated, but outputs from its development have been incorporated into the analysis.

FIGURE 11: OVERVIEW OF UNICEF'S *ACCESS FIELD MANUAL*[162]

Access Field Manual

REFERENCE MANUAL, NOT GUIDANCE. A collection of good practice and tools to be consulted independently depending on interest.

The Reference Manual

UNICEF'S APPROACH: Support collective approaches were possible, engaged directly where necessary.

RISK MANAGEMENT: Act to assist and protect children when the criticality of the needs outweigh the risks.

SCOPE OF ACCESS: to reach and have vulnerable people reach assistance and services in manner that is rapid, unimpeded, consistent and principled.

NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK: summary of IHL and IHRL as relevant to access.

ACCESS STRATEGIES:

- Analysis
- Planning & Preparation
- Implementation
- Enablers

Menu of Options to Enable Access

CORE ELEMENTS

- Building acceptance
- Access negotiations
- Private & public advocacy
- Programme modalities

IN SPECIFIC SETTINGS

- High-security risk
- Political impediments
- UN Integration
- Counter terrorism
- De-facto authorities
- Field monitoring

Access Toolkit

- **TOOL 1:** List of Access Terms and Definitions
- **TOOL 2:** Access Challenge Categories
- **TOOL 3:** Access Mandates and Roles
- **TOOL 4:** Methodology for Access Tracking
- **TOOL 5:** Methodology for Accessibility Mapping
- **TOOL 6:** Relationship Mapping
- **TOOL 7:** Typology Mapping
- **TOOL 8:** Network of Influence Mapping
- **TOOL 9:** SWOT Analysis
- **TOOL 10:** Template Access Strategy Document
- **TOOL 11:** Access Strategy and Action Plan
- **TOOL 12:** Managing Risks and Dilemmas
- **TOOL 13:** Access roles and capacities of key staff

A third finding of the evaluation linked to access is the issue of access for 'whom'. While UNICEF was considered by many of those interviewed during the evaluation to benefit from reasonable access to those in need, there is an important qualification to this, as only in exceptional circumstances does UNICEF deliver humanitarian assistance; rather, it is UNICEF's partners that do this on its behalf.[163] As a consequence, it is the access achieved by these entities that is key to UNICEF achieving coverage and quality. In an access study undertaken in parallel with this evaluation,[164] this distinction was highlighted on a number of occasions; UNICEF's operational access credibility was weak among interviewees from implementing partners. Moreover, there was a perception that UNICEF tended to focus on its own access when it should be seeking to support and strengthen that of its delivery partners (*see also section 5.2*). The evaluation also revealed weaknesses in how UNICEF engages with its partners on humanitarian

principles; in a review of a sample of PCAs, Programme Documents and Small Scale Funding Agreements from the case study countries, no reference is made to these. Given that these documents govern the relationship between UNICEF and its implementing partners, the implication of this is that accountability for the delivery of principled assistance is weak.

The development of the Manual and Framework offers UNICEF an opportunity to more clearly articulate an ethical approach to gaining and maintaining principled access – of UNICEF's staff, partners and affected communities – to protection and assistance. An initial review of the documents suggest that they offer an opportunity to strengthen the promotion of the humanitarian principles in order for them to become a common language across all staff members as part of a broader shift towards a 'culture' of access.

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162 UNICEF, *Access Field Manual*.

163 While the discussion here focuses attention on the access that humanitarian agencies have to people in need of assistance, it is important to clarify that humanitarian access is equally concerned with the ability of affected people to access humanitarian protection and assistance.

164 Harmer and Fox, *Research on Good Practices on Humanitarian Access*.

5.2 Humanitarian negotiations to improve access and strengthen coverage

With a few notable exceptions, UNICEF tends not to engage on a strategic level with the State and non-State armed groups directly, but follows the lead of the OCHA or HCT-coordinated access working groups. Where engagement is more likely to occur is at a local level; in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, UNICEF has engaged in local-level negotiations to strengthen protection and increase coverage. There is growing recognition within the agency that negotiation requires specific skills and training, and there is considerable scope to strengthen training and support.

IHL provides the framework that underpins UNICEF's engagement in humanitarian negotiations with State and non-State actors for four main reasons:[165]

» To advocate for and to secure access to populations needing assistance;

» To mitigate risks to staff security;

» To secure commitments on goals fulfilling the rights of all children, including preventing and ending grave child rights violations; and

» To pursue UNICEF's humanitarian and development mandate in peacebuilding contexts.

At the time the evaluation started, UNICEF's policy for engagement with non-State entities was informed by a 2011 Guidance Note.[166] During the evaluation, a revised Guidance Note and a Field Practitioner's Manual were developed. It is noteworthy that the revised guidance offers far greater clarity about accountability for decision-making processes[167] and promotes the documentation of key decisions.

The evaluation case studies revealed a mixed picture regarding UNICEF's engagement in humanitarian negotiations, but found that it tended not to engage with armed groups directly. In contexts where proscribed groups were active, such as in Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF tended to follow the lead of OCHA or HCT-coordinated access groups.[168] Engagement with States on issues of access tended to be undertaken in a similarly collaborative way. While UNICEF's guidance underscores the necessity for it to coordinate with the in-country United Nations system, in several of the case studies there was more that it could have done to give stronger support for humanitarian access or to facilitate those outside the United Nations system to do so. This was most acute in instances when the State had itself proscribed negotiations with non-State entities (such as in Nigeria) or was itself hindering humanitarian access when the risks of speaking out were weighed up against the potential for UNICEF's relationship with the State to be adversely affected.

Humanitarian negotiation is more likely to occur at the local level. In the Central African Republic, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, UNICEF has engaged in local-level negotiations to strengthen protection and provide assistance. Again, it tends to be front-line workers who most frequently engaged, given their greater exposure in complex humanitarian emergencies. In particularly volatile contexts such as South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, negotiations to access hard-to-reach and militarily encircled areas often begin at FO level and have been effective in finding local solutions to certain challenges. Access is facilitated by different staff at different levels based on their personal profile, knowledge of the area, experience and contacts. There was some concern about a lack of clarity about the security of the staff involved in negotiating access and engagement with non-State entities, as this is not clearly outlined, and while successful outcomes from access negotiations

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165 United Nations Children's Fund, *Engaging with NSE: A field practitioners manual,* draft, 2017.

166 United Nations Children's Fund, *Programme Guidance Note on Engaging with Non-State Entities in Humanitarian Action*, UNICEF, July 2011.

167 In the 2011 guidance, decisions were 'shared' by the Representative with senior leadership, whereas in the revised guidance, all new engagement with non-State entities must be authorized by the Executive Director and there is a chain of accountability from the Regional Director to EMOPS to the Executive Director.

168 This holds true for the vast majority of examples that the evaluation team encountered. However, there are a small number of exceptions to this where UNICEF has entered into bilateral access negotiations.

are praised, there are no formal mechanisms to address potential problems that arise for staff, which may include threats of physical violence, personal safety or visa restrictions.

UNICEF's polio programme offers the best learning opportunity on negotiating access (*see* Good Practice *box*).[169] The programme, which UNICEF implements jointly with WHO, has a very structured approach to engagement and negotiation. Interviews revealed the

careful preparations (risk assessment and mitigation), communication and networking that are undertaken with all non-State entities in environments that are highly volatile. It also highlighted the value of national facilitators with good relationships with communities and officials that can strengthen context analysis and build local-level acceptance. In access-challenged contexts, the recruitment of national staff and partners should take into specific consideration their profile and how it can strengthen – as well as potentially create risks – for UNICEF's access.

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A front-line health worker administers polio drops to a baby in Sindh Province, Pakistan.

169 The evaluation encountered the polio programme in the Afghanistan and Nigeria field missions and in the Pakistan desk review.

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

The approach taken by the polio programme in Afghanistan to gain access

Afghanistan was the first country to develop an access approach for polio and, as a result, the reporting protocols in place are robust, allowing the means to collect the numbers of missed children and analyse trends and local issues that can help or hinder programme delivery. In late 2015, a small number of priority districts were identified, predominantly in West, South and Eastern regions, as well as a larger number of second-priority districts countrywide. The approach that was adopted to improve access was well thought out, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder. It was underpinned by a number of key activities, including:

• Develop and implement area-specific plans for priority regions, and for the rest of country;

• Maintain programme neutrality;

• Support negotiations through partners for full access in high-risk districts;

• Undertake sub-district-level mapping of access and area-specific approaches completed for high-risk districts; and

• Engage relevant stakeholders, including NGOs, which have access for delivery of vaccine and monitoring of campaign, local communities and elders, and ensure the use of locally appropriate vaccinators.

While the polio programme also has its limitations,[170] it offers an example of good practice. What is less clear is why this good practice has not been replicated more broadly across UNICEF's programme in the countries where the polio programme is being implemented – this question was raised on a number of occasions, including by UNICEF's own staff.

At a global level, there is growing acknowledgement of the need to build specific skills and competencies in humanitarian negotiation after many years of comparative inattention. There is also a well-developed body of literature on this area of humanitarian practice,[171] in addition to training programmes. One of the most significant is the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation, which has partnered with WFP, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). UNICEF chose not to participate as a core partner in the initiative, but it has sent staff for training (142 staff had participated at the time the evaluation was being undertaken), with the Middle East and North Africa Regional Office having engaged most frequently. Reflections from WFP's participation in similar training programmes are positive, albeit with challenges in translating the knowledge gained by individual staff members to the organization, which it was felt would require more structured engagement.[172]

5.3 The effect of security risk management on coverage and quality

In crises, where humanitarian needs are extreme, the evaluation found that the United Nations security management system frequently hinders UNICEF's ability to access programmes, which has implications for programme quality. While there are structural and policy foundations for productive relations between UNICEF and UNDSS, the conclusion of this evaluation is that working relationships with UNDSS are frequently governed by personality and background. The evaluation found similar inconsistencies with the use of the Programme Criticality Framework; when it was applied effectively by the United Nations, UNICEF used it to expand its coverage. In order to try to navigate the challenges posed by participation in the United Nations security management system, UNICEF has

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170 Operating in a context where there is significant corruption and a lack of rule of law has been particularly problematic, especially given the limited reach of monitoring mechanisms.

171 See, for example, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, *Humanitarian Access in Situations of Armed Conflict: Practitioners' manual* – Version 2, Swiss FDFA, Geneva, 2014, and Grace, Bob, *Understanding Humanitarian Negotiation: Five analytical approaches*, ATHA White Paper Series, ATHA, Humanitarian Academy at Harvard and Sida, November 2015.

172 Steets, Julia, et al., *Evaluation of WFP's Policies on Humanitarian Principles and Access in Humanitarian Contexts: Evaluation report*, WFP, Rome, 2018.

increasingly resorted to employing its own security staff. The evaluation found that the varying levels of success that have been achieved are linked to staff profile and personality, as well as the roles and responsibilities that COs and FOs give to these staff.

5.3.1 THE INFLUENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ON ACCESS IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

The Scoping Report that informed the terms of reference for the evaluation speaks of the 'debunkerization' of the United Nations and the implementation of the programme criticality approach as being key to the United Nations achieving 'a more balanced and less risk-averse approach to security management'.[173] At the same time, feedback from United Nations humanitarian staff questions the extent to which this has been achieved; the *Presence and Proximity* study found that, 'a majority of interviewees with direct experience of the Security Management System (SMS) in the field felt that the way things function in practice often differ from the theory. Most notably, UNDSS and UN humanitarian personnel noted across numerous interviews and consultations that UNDSS's work in the majority of highly insecure environments is primarily focused on keeping staff and facilities safe – generally resulting in the constriction of humanitarian work'.[174]

The findings of a number of the field missions and desk reviews would concur with this sentiment; in crises where humanitarian needs are extreme, the prevailing view was that UNDSS was hindering the ability of the United Nations to access those in greatest need. North-east Nigeria was a particularly acute example of this. While UNDSS is not responsible for decision-making, a second finding from the *Presence and Proximity* study is instructive, as it echoes that of this evaluation: 'UN heads of agency have responsibility – in consultation with the DO [Designated Official] where warranted – for security of their personnel and programmes, but they – and some DOs – are exceptionally reluctant to go against UNDSS's advice for fear of the consequences should security incidents occur. Hence UN officials tend

to view UNDSS as a gatekeeper, providing firm approval or rejection of certain activities, even where it is not intended to function in this manner'.[175] At the time the field mission to Nigeria was conducted, interviews revealed consensus on the 'bunkerization' of the United Nations in the north-east, and yet there was little optimism about the potential to change this concern. Of note is that UNICEF did not have a permanent Security Officer in place at the time the field mission took place.

In order to try to navigate these challenges, UNICEF has increasingly resorted to employing its own security staff – which was the case in many of the case study countries that participated in the evaluation. The role of these staff members has been to provide analysis and guidance, with a view to positively influencing security risk management. This approach has met with mixed success:

» In Afghanistan, interviews strongly indicated an increasingly bunkerized United Nations, which was considered by many of their own staff and those of local, national and international NGOs to be risk-averse. UNICEF has made a significant investment in strengthening its own security capacity, but despite this, still finds it challenging to consistently obtain clearance for missions to hard-to-reach areas.

» In Mali, the United Nations security management system had been failing to promote access despite efforts to shift practice. However, progress has recently been made in influencing security risk management by UNICEF, working with a small inter-agency group to change the way UNDSS assesses and manages risks. After significant lobbying, community acceptance was recognized as a part of assessing and managing security risk.

» In Somalia, there was the most positive experience, where UNICEF and UNDSS enjoy strong collaboration on security, which had resulted in a significant expansion of access across Somalia during the pre-famine response, including modalities for undertaking low-profile missions (*see the following* Good Practice *box*).

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173 Lawry-White, S., and V. Huls, *Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex High-Threat Environments: Scoping report*, internal report, April 2017.

174 Jackson and Zyck, *Presence and Proximity*.

175 Ibid.

Consistent with the findings of the *Presence and Proximity* study, the evaluation found that the positive working relationship between UNDSS and humanitarian agencies in these countries was influenced in particular by personality and background rather than structure or policy. In Somalia, the key ingredients of the successful collaboration were considered to be the adoption of a constructive approach to dialogue by both UNDSS and UNICEF, the engagement by UNICEF of a senior and extremely experienced security staff member, a sound understanding of the context, agreement by the UNICEF Representative to underwrite risk, and a significant risk appetite.

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

Negotiation of modalities within the United Nations security management system to support low-profile missions

Low-profile missions that use local vehicles, local staff (including security officers) and are not UNICEF-branded have played a key role in enabling UNICEF staff to support and monitor programmes throughout Somalia. Low-profile missions are identified by the Zonal Offices; these are then entered into an online system for approvals, which has played an important role in enabling UNICEF staff to quickly turn around requests and facilitates the Representative to understand the mission and take a decision about accepting the risk. The Travel Authorization can then be finalized and security clearance agreed with the UNDSS Chief Security Advisor using the Programme Criticality Framework as a key frame of reference. In Mogadishu, there are two or three low-profile missions per day. In South Central Zone, there are one to three low-profile, deep-field missions per week. These missions allow UNICEF to maintain a good understanding of the situation and offer a feedback loop back to UNDSS. Personality, experience and seniority across UNICEF and UNDSS were considered to be essential ingredients for the success of the approach.

The evaluation found similar inconsistencies with the use of the Programme Criticality Framework; In Somalia, discussions about Programme Criticality played a key role in identifying life-saving activities and agreeing risk thresholds which provided an important justification for UNICEF's expanded access. Improvements in internal operational approaches linked to improvements in the wider security situation enabled UNICEF to significantly strengthen the area which its staff could access directly. This had important implications for programme quality, as it permitted UNICEF staff to support and monitor programmes directly. Conversely, in Afghanistan, the process was less fruitful, failing to identify any Programme Criticality 1 activities, with engagement varying between different agencies, some of which were content to rely on programming through their cadre of third-party service providers rather than acknowledging the benefits of their staff having access to projects. It is noteworthy that the findings in large part replicate the findings of the 2014 review of programme criticality, which noted 'in at least one setting (Afghanistan), agencies reported avoiding PC1s in part because this would require consultation with headquarters, abdicating decision-making control'.[176]

Saving Lives Together

The terms of reference for the evaluation makes reference to the contribution made by the Saving Lives Together initiative to strengthening interagency efforts to stay and deliver (*see the following box*). However, during the evaluation, only one informant referred to the initiative, and this was to query whether it was still functioning. The *Presence and Proximity* study refers to a poor understanding of its 'exact meaning and purpose' and a concern that its field-level impact 'varies widely'.[177] This echoes the findings of a review of the initiative undertaken in 2014.[178] Given that this evaluation received only positive feedback for the work of the International NGO Safety Organisation, which many informants considered as better-networked and more operationally focused than UNDSS, there continues to be a strong argument for both NGOs and United Nations agencies for a forum that seeks to strengthen collaboration on safety and security.

176 Haver, Katherine, et al., *Independent Review of Programme Criticality: Part 1 – Main report*, Humanitarian Outcomes, July 2014.

177 Jackson and Zyck, *Presence and Proximity.*

178 N.d., *Saving Lives Together: A review of existing NGO and United Nations security coordination practices in the field*, May 2014.

Saving Lives Together[179]

Saving Lives Together is a framework for enhancing UN, international NGO and international-organization-partner security collaboration on critical security and safety issues. The initiative arose out of an IASC initiative. Under Saving Lives Together, the operational decisions remain the responsibility of the individual organizations involved. It aims to foster closer links between the United Nations and NGOs through ensuring that, where appropriate, NGO representatives can participate in Security Management Team meetings or other broad-based security forums, share information about incidents, and collaborate on training and response planning. Saving Lives Together was revised in 2015 to improve clarity on roles, ease mechanisms for participation, and add new headquarters support arrangements.

5.3.2 UNICEF'S INTERNAL SECURITY RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

The findings above highlight the importance that UNICEF continues to invest in its own security capacity, as this is crucial for enabling access. However, this evaluation also underlines the need for UNICEF to be cautious in selecting the profile and determining the seniority of security officers if they are to be effective in engaging with UNDSS at a strategic level in order to prompt, challenge and change decisions. Aside from the profile, having a sound knowledge of the United Nations security management system is essential; several examples were given during the evaluation of the system being used in a way that placed undue restrictions on access which, when challenged, were overturned. It is equally important for UNICEF to consistently and strategically engage in country-level Security Management Teams in order to influence the decisions of the Designated Official, as was the case in Mali. In Somalia, agreement by the Representative to accept and underwrite risk was an important tactic for reaching agreement on exceptions.

The importance of having a permanent security presence may explain, in part, the challenges that UNICEF faced in

north-east Nigeria. However, even with these measures in place, the fact that the system is frequently personality-driven makes success far from certain. In situations where the security management system systematically fails to permit access despite adequate risk management and mitigation measures being put in place, then documenting approvals and rejections offers an important evidence base that can be used to influence change (*see the following* Lesson *box*).

📖 LESSON

The importance of systematic data collection on UNDSS responses to travel requests to build a case for expanding access and avoid bunkerization

If UNICEF wants to challenge existing travel restrictions due to an overly risk-averse Designated Official / Security Management Team and UNDSS, the CO must be able to show its credible efforts to extend the response into hard-to-reach areas, based on humanitarian needs, and that staff presence is required to strengthen the quality and accountability of the interventions. Without evidence that travel requests have been made and approved or denied by UNDSS, UNICEF's argument of being held back by the United Nations security management system will be open to challenge

5.3.3 ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN ACCEPTANCE

Community acceptance can play a critical role for humanitarian organizations working in volatile environments and, as a consequence, 'managing' these perceptions can have a significant influence on access to promote coverage. There is growing acknowledgement that humanitarian organizations can and should make continuous efforts to understand the way in which their intentions are understood and their activities are accepted by all relevant stakeholders, including governments, belligerents and crisis-affected populations. In doing this, there is strong evidence that the perception of maintaining humanitarian principles can enhance acceptance.[180]

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179 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *Saving Lives Together: A framework for improving security arrangements among international non-governmental organisations/international organisations and the United Nations*, IASC, October 2015.

180 See, for example, Macdonald, Ingrid, and Angela Valenza, *Tools for the Job: Supporting principled humanitarian action*, Norwegian Refugee Council and Humanitarian Policy Group, Oslo, October 2012.

Ideeya Jimcaale, 17, at her home in an IDP camp on the beach in Bossaso, Puntland, Somalia.

© UNICEF/UN0260172/PRINSLOO

The evaluation found limited evidence of UNICEF's engagement with communities for the purpose of strengthening acceptance. While risk at times meant that this approach was not possible, even in contexts where UNICEF could have pursued an acceptance strategy, it did not consistently do so.[181] In access-constrained environments, it is most frequently UNICEF's partners that engage with communities rather than UNICEF and, as a consequence, it is they rather than UNICEF that require acceptance. Understandably, the evaluation found far greater evidence from partners of engaging in acceptance strategies, particularly in some of the more volatile contexts, such as Afghanistan and the Central African Republic.

In some contexts, humanitarian space is shared with other actors and where this is the case, there were some examples of UNICEF participating in acceptance approaches. In Mali, UNICEF has recently embarked on a joint strategy to strengthen acceptance with communities with WFP, OCHA, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNHCR and UNDSS as a means of addressing an escalation in incidents affecting humanitarian staff. This includes strengthening engagement with communities and non-State entities, embarking on a proactive communications strategy to promote acceptance and entering into high-level negotiations. Perhaps the best example of a systematic approach to seeking to strengthen community acceptance is found in the polio

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181 An 'acceptance approach' is defined as one that actively builds and cultivates good relations and consent as part of a security management strategy with local communities, parties to the conflict, and other relevant stakeholders, and obtains their acceptance and consent for the humanitarian organization's presence and its work. See Egeland et al., *To Stay and Deliver*.

programme, which was encountered during the evaluation in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan. The programme uses local access advisors to support and engage with community influencers, whose role is to facilitate future programme access. These facilitators engage with local communities through a variety of means, such as print media or radio, through religious leaders or elders, or with community members during door-to-door visits. The purpose of engagement is to generate knowledge of the polio virus and to strengthen understanding of how children can be protected from it by vaccination.

In particularly volatile environments, however, UNICEF's presence increases the risk for its partners and beneficiary communities, which challenges the viability of the approach. In Nangarhar Province in eastern Afghanistan, UNICEF must travel in convoy with the Afghan police, which are considered a target by non-State entities. As a consequence, UNICEF monitoring visits can bring unwanted attention to communities receiving its assistance. In the areas, it is not uncommon for one community that is receiving assistance to be targeted by another that is not, and NGOs and the United Nations are considered 'soft' targets. In these contexts, the safety, security and viability of the assistance received by communities are at risk. In a similar way to agency presence, UNICEF-branded relief items are highly visible and can strengthen UNICEF's visibility, but may also increase risk.

Partners offered similarly mixed feedback on the impact of their association with UNICEF with communities. For countries with an integrated United Nations presence or in contexts where the United Nations' reputation was poor, there were concerns that the partnership might have negatively affected the perception of them as a principled actor. However, in some countries, there were benefits as a consequence of partners' association with UNICEF's brand.[182] This finding underlines the important role that perceptions play for agencies seeking to gain access in volatile environments. Humanitarian organizations can and should make continuous efforts to understand the way in which their intentions are understood and their activities

are accepted by all relevant stakeholders, including governments, belligerents and crisis-affected populations. Perceptions and acceptance are closely related.

5.4 The effect of an integrated United Nations presence and civil-military coordination on UNICEF's coverage and quality

While integrated United Nations presences have some benefits, they frequently contribute to misperceptions of UNICEF's neutrality and independence, which requires action to reduce risk, address perceptions and defend humanitarian principles. Despite this, and where necessary as a last resort, UNICEF engages with military actors through established civil-military coordination structures and has used military assets to expand its coverage in times of humanitarian crisis.

5.4.1 INTEGRATED UNITED NATIONS PRESENCE

United Nations integration is a strategic partnership between the UNCT and the United Nations mission in a specific country. The purpose of integration is to ensure a coherent and mutually supportive approach among all components of the United Nations peacekeeping/political mission and the UNCT on issues related to peace consolidation in order to maximize the individual and collective impact of the United Nations in the country.[183] The effect of an integrated United Nations presence on UNICEF's coverage and quality varies from country to country and in large part depends on the mandate and activities of the mission.[184] Where the mission has a political mandate, there is significant evidence that perceptions of UNICEF's neutrality and independence become blurred; where it has a peacekeeping or peace enforcement mandate, there is a risk that humanitarian agencies may be associated with the mission, which could make parties to the conflict less willing to support or allow the delivery of assistance, or may even lead to increased

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182 Harmer and Fox, *Research on Good Practices.*

183 United Nation Secretary-General's Decision No. 2008/24 on Integration, June 2008.

184 A technical note for UNICEF staff on engaging effectively with integrated United Nations presences was developed by EMOPS in August 2014. A set of Frequently Asked Questions was prepared in January 2015.

security risks[185] (figure 31 lists United Nations missions in the case study countries). The greatest impact of these factors is in limiting UNICEF's ability to travel, and thus its engagement with its partners and communities that it is seeking to assist. While coverage may be relatively unaffected as it is delivered by UNICEF's partners, its ability to monitor programme quality can be compromised.

COUNTRY CASE STUDIES WITH AN INTEGRATED UNITED NATIONS PRESENCE

Country	United Nations mission	Description
Afghanistan	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)	Political mission, 2002 – present
Central African Republic	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)	Peacekeeping, 2014 – present
Mali	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)	Peacekeeping, 2013 – present
Somalia	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)	Policy advice, peacebuilding and state-building, 2013 – present

More positively, the evaluation found examples of support provided by United Nations missions to gather evidence and reporting on grave violations (e.g., in the Afghanistan and Somalia case studies) as well as strengthening coordination, although UNICEF's network of partners is frequently far more extensive, particularly in areas that are disputed or are insecure. Use of the mission to lead national-level advocacy was also considered to reduce risk to UNICEF, particularly in countries where the government was sensitive to criticism.

The field mission in the Central African Republic highlighted significant misunderstanding between the 'blue' and 'black' United Nations in the country, with interviewees reporting the prevalence of negative community perception of MINUSCA. This impacts on communities' and armed groups' perception of United Nations agencies and their partners, and therefore on the safety and security of all

humanitarian actors. In Mali, the fact that MINUSMA has been targeted by non-State entities poses significant challenges to the humanitarian community, including UNICEF in maintaining principled access.

The requirement for UNICEF to use armed escorts in countries with an integrated United Nations presence is frequently considered to increase the risk of it being targeted, as well as having implications for perceptions of UNICEF's neutrality, which impacts on community acceptance. While the United Nations mission often provides the armed convoys, in some countries these can be led by regional peacekeeping troops (e.g., the Africa Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)) or the police force (e.g., Afghanistan). It is also important to note that UNICEF may also be required to use armed convoys in countries without an integrated presence, such as in Nigeria. The effect this requirement has on perceptions of UNICEF's neutrality and independence and the implications it often has for staff safety has constrained the ability and willingness of UNICEF staff to undertake road travel and has limited its ability to provide direct monitoring and support. The use of blanket security rules means that while it is considered a 'last resort' in theory, it is rarely the case for the United Nations in practice. In one of the cases, the requirement to pay a per diem and to provide fuel, and the challenges that were presented by convoys not always being available, acted as further deterrents to them being used.

A second concern is the implementation by United Nations missions of Quick Impact Projects for security and stabilization purposes in sectors that overlap with UNICEF's programme sectors (e.g., WASH and education). In these contexts, distinctions between the military and humanitarian actors have become blurred.

Given the challenges presented to UNICEF when it works in countries that have an integrated United Nations presence, there were a number of examples in the case study countries of measures that have been taken to mitigate negative perceptions or to negotiate derogations, including:

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185 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *OCHA's Structural Relationships within an Integrated UN Presence: Policy instruction*, OCHA, May 2009.

In Somalia, humanitarian actors have advocated for AMISOM to secure main supply routes rather than provide convoy escorts, and UNICEF has successfully lobbied to replace AMISOM escorts with local police escorts which are not associated with the mission and benefit from greater acceptance by communities. Efforts have also been taken to influence the United Nations security management system in order to ensure a distinction between the 'blue' and 'black' United Nations.

In Mali, UNICEF security staff have been successful in influencing security risk assessments by accompanying MINUSMA and UNDSS security officers. In 2018, United Nations humanitarian agencies in Mali (UNICEF, WFP, FAO, OCHA, UNHCR and UNDSS) embarked on a proactive strategy to strengthen acceptance and expand coverage through greater engagement and communication with communities.

In contrast to other examples, in the north-east of South Sudan, the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission has relatively high capacity and is viewed positively by the local communities and, in this context, UNICEF has benefited from its assistance in facilitating access (*see the following Good Practice box*).

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The Community Health Centre of Benkady in Koulikoro region, Mali, stores medicines for malnourished children.

» In the Central African Republic, UNICEF has invested in staff training on humanitarian access and how to effectively engage with the mission, as well as understanding and learning from the strategies employed by NGOs for accessing populations independently and without the support of the mission.

» One example was encountered of a United Nations agency successfully negotiating a derogation with UNDSS and the Designated Official, which offered the potential for others to do likewise, which at the time the review was conducted, was under consideration, but this evaluation echoes the findings of WFP's recent access evaluation in finding few examples of such practice.[186]

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

The use of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) by UNICEF in South Sudan to strengthen access and increase coverage

In South Sudan, UNICEF FOs have used UNMISS armed escorts as a last resort for force protection to enable the movement of staff and supplies in insecure areas. The mission does not have the capacity to meet all escort requirements, but it has intervened in key issues with the Government and has even been involved in joint access negotiations with OCHA at the subnational level on behalf of operational agencies.

5.4.2 CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION

In addition to the presence of United Nations peacekeepers, UNICEF engages with national militaries or regional peacekeeping bodies (*see the box below*). There are very clear guidelines about the use of military assets for humanitarian response[187] and UNICEF outlines these in its own guidance, which was developed in 2014 as part of the Strengthening Humanitarian Action initiative.[188] The evaluation encountered a range of civil-military

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186 Steets et al., *Evaluation of WFP's Policies*.

187 This is outlined in the Oslo Guidelines, OCHA, *Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief,* Revision 1.1, November 2017.

188 United Nations Children's Fund, *Basics of Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination,* 2014.

engagements between UNICEF and AMISOM, with the Nigerian armed forces in north-east Nigeria, and with the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic and Mali.

COUNTRY CASE STUDIES WHERE UNICEF HAS SIGNIFICANT ENGAGEMENT WITH NON-UNITED NATIONS MILITARY PRESENCES

Country	United Nations mission	Description
Nigeria	Nigerian Army	The army has conducted military operations against Boko Haram since 2013.
Somalia	Africa Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)	Regional peacekeeping mission created in 2007 and operated by the Africa Union, with support from the United Nations Security Council.

The field mission to Somalia offered the best example of civil-military coordination, where guidance developed by OCHA was partnered with dissemination activities with AMISOM. In the scale-up to the pre-famine response in 2017, the mission had supported transport of relief goods in Central South in addition to items required to set up a new FO in Baidoa. The use of military assets was justified by the rapid deterioration of the drought situation in Somalia and the absence of alternatives to swiftly and safely move humanitarian goods to areas of displacement. Conversely, the clarity that existed in Somalia was not evident in Nigeria, where, despite an OCHA-supported civil-military coordination mission and the development of a draft set of guidelines, the relationship between the Nigerian military and the humanitarian community still posed significant problems.

5.5 The use of integrated and alternative programming approaches to improve coverage and quality

The country case studies offered a very mixed picture on integrated programming. While there were examples that had contributed to better quality or wider coverage in most of the country case studies, assessments and planning, which provide the foundations for integrated programming, these were generally undertaken by individual sections rather than jointly. Concerns were also raised by UNICEF's partners about the negative effect of siloed programming on their coverage or quality. While there are external factors that may limit the potential for integrated programming, there is much more that UNICEF could do to promote its practice. The use of cash was considered to have cut across siloed programming and to have provided relevant and effective assistance; there is the potential for UNICEF to expand the use of this modality in the future. The RRMs can deliver integrated programming and significantly increase UNICEF's coverage in access-constrained situations and are often the first assistance that conflict-affected populations receive. The challenge lies in the quality and adequacy of the assistance that is provided, as it is relatively infrequent that RRM missions are followed with more sustained support.

5.5.1 INTEGRATION BETWEEN UNICEF'S PROGRAMME SECTIONS

A comprehensive study conducted in 2014 found that 'UNICEF does not have a definition for integration' and proposed the following; 'integration is the intentional combining of one or more sector interventions to achieve improved humanitarian outcomes'.[189] Using the integration study as a guide, this evaluation focused on three types of integration: integration by convergence, by contribution, and by outcomes (*see the box below*).

A definition of integration by convergence, by contribution and by outcomes[190]
Integration by convergence: Convergence means the geographical co-location of services. Geographical convergence is the most common understanding of the integrated approach in UNICEF, with the term *'convergence'* being used in UNICEF planning documents more often than integration, in part because there has been an effort by UNICEF over the past five years or so to promote convergence. This is the most basic form of integration.

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189 Vine Management Consulting, *Study on Integrated Programming in UNICEF Humanitarian Action: Final report*, February 2014.
190 Ibid.

© UNICEF/UN068800/KARIMI

In Afghanistan, UNICEF-supported mobile health teams provide essential basic health services to remote and isolated communities, with a special focus on maternal and neonatal care.

Integration by contribution: This occurs when one sector has prime responsibility for delivering a CCC, but other sectors can contribute to the achievement of that commitment. This requires active teamwork and a discussion leader who can facilitate understanding and agreement between sectors.

Integration by outcomes: If integration is seen as a way of achieving humanitarian outcomes, then sector interventions are intentionally combined, not for reasons of efficiency, but because without doing so, it will not be possible to reach the intended outcome. Such outcomes might include (i) reduce acute malnutrition from level x to level y, or (ii) eradicate polio. The achievement of these outcomes requires inter-sector assessment of needs, strategy development and implementation.

Since the Horn of Africa crisis in 2011, there has been growing rhetoric in UNICEF about the need to adopt an integrated approach to programming in humanitarian action. This was in part prompted by lessons from the Horn of Africa response, but it also built on significant experience from other, similar exercises. A study to examine challenges and lessons learned and to make recommendations to strengthen integration, which was published in 2014, includes significant criticism of the lack of integration in UNICEF's programming from evaluations of the response to the Haiti earthquake (2010), Horn of Africa famine (2011–2012) and the Sahel food crisis (2011–2012).

Since the integration study was undertaken, evaluations of UNICEF's humanitarian responses have indicated mixed progress, albeit with a greater number of negative findings than positive ones (*see the box below*). It is noteworthy also that in the learning phase of this evaluation, which was undertaken as an internal exercise prior to its commencement, 58 per cent of survey respondents considered that 'programme sectors working in siloes, making us less efficient' was considered to be UNICEF's most significant weakness in its humanitarian programming.[191]

REFERENCES TO INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING IN UNICEF'S HUMANITARIAN EVALUATIONS, 2015–2018

Evaluation	Finding	Positive/ Negative
Central African Republic L3 (2013–2015)	UNICEF respondents felt that integration remained a challenge for UNICEF, the means of implementation were unclear, and understanding was lacking among major UNICEF partners. Strategic partners had no clear understanding of UNICEF's integration or how it would work.[192]	✕
Darfur, Sudan (2016)	UNICEF nutrition management in North Darfur focuses on the integration of community-based management of acute malnutrition services into existing primary health-care facilities to provide a full package of health and nutrition services.[193]	✓
Yemen (2016)	The integration of health and nutrition services enabled expanded coverage and proved useful in terms of providing complementary assistance to mothers, new-borns and children.[194]	✓
Kenya drought real-time evaluation (2017)	Key informants … noted that there was a lack of integration among sectors and that the work was mostly done in silos, with some suggesting that 'most challenging part of the response was integrating WASH, nutrition and other sectors to have more impact.'[195]	✕
Yemen L3 cholera (2018)	Yemen L3 cholera response evaluation (2018): 'The UNICEF strategy is built on [the] key principles of integration of WASH, health and Communication for Development response; and partnership and coherence with health and WASH clusters…'[196]	✓

The country case studies undertaken during the evaluation also offered a mixed picture on integrated programming; where there tended to be good practice was in integrating the provision of health and nutrition services, which was considered to have strengthened programme effectiveness in Somalia.[197] However, the failure to adequately link protection and education programmes in the pre-famine response (albeit largely due to funding constraints) was considered to be a missed opportunity, particularly given the potential for this to strengthen coverage with equity. Nigeria offered a good example of integrating programmes by convergence in the Local Government Areas garrison towns on Borno State, where it provided an integrated menu of humanitarian services, although it was also observed that the work of programme teams was siloed and that strategy development, support and monitoring tended to be planned and delivered independently, which led to missed opportunities. This was also reported in the Philippines and Ukraine and was common across many of the case studies. The polio programme in Afghanistan has recently started to use the privileged access that it has to offer a broader range of services through an integrated approach (*see the following* Good Practice *box*).

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191 In the survey, UNICEF respondents were asked to rank a pre-set list of possible UNICEF weaknesses in its humanitarian response in complex, high-threat environments. In total, 63 completed responses were received from 18 country offices and 5 regional offices. See Lawry-White, S., and V. Huls, *Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex High-Threat Environments: Learning phase synthesis report, internal report*, August 2017.

192 Lawday et al., *The UNICEF Response to the Crisis in the Central African Republi*c.

193 Majwa, P., R. Abbas and T. Abdelsadig, *Evaluation of Humanitarian Action: Child survival in North Darfur, Sudan*, 2010–2015, 2016. UNICEF Sudan Country Office

194 Haider, et al., *Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance, UNICEF Yemen Country Offic*e.

195 Haily, et al., *Real-Time Evaluation*.

196 Darcy, et al., *Evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 Response to the Cholera Epidemic in Yemen*.

197 It is noteworthy that there has been a history of joint health/nutrition programming in Somalia, which pre-dates the pre-famine response and which was initially a consequence of donor prioritization.

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

Integration by outcomes through UNICEF's polio response

Strengthening integration between the Polio programme and other sectors is still a work in progress, but efforts have been made to strengthen links with health, child protection, nutrition and WASH. On the one hand, programme interventions from sections such as health, WASH and nutrition can assist in combating the spread of the polio virus. On the other, the privileged access that the polio programme has across Afghanistan, and its approach of going house to house, has the potential to significantly strengthen public health outcomes. UNICEF's approach to integration with other sectors means that when social mobilizers visit families, they check the Mid-Upper Arm Circumference of children and refer them to routine immunization in the event that the children have dropped-out. Social mobilizers also undertake hand-washing practice and discuss the school enrolment status of children. In the context of Afghanistan, where there are significant unmet needs, particularly in areas controlled by non-State entities, the provision of additional services can also strengthen access and acceptance. In Kunar and Nangahar provinces in the eastern region, the provision of hygiene kits has been particularly well received and offers an entry point for discussions at household level and with community leaders.

📖 LESSON

Joint assessment and planning is essential for the effectiveness of integrated programming

An important lesson was that if integration is to be strengthened, then it must begin in the assessment and planning stages of a response, rather than once the work has started. This echoes the integration study, which suggests that 'At the country level, integrated planning requires a conscious effort that brings sectors, and eventually counterparts and implementing partners, together to plan for cross-sectoral interventions. Where this does not happen, integration will necessarily be limited'.[198]

A 15-year-old who attends grade CM2, the last year of primary school, holds a school kit given to children by UNICEF staff in Ndenga village, Kaga Bandoro, Central African Republic.

© UNICEF/UN0149410/SOKHIN

Both the Nigeria field mission and Ukraine desk review highlighted the challenges that siloed programming presented for UNICEF's implementing partners, which constrained either coverage or quality. A partner in Ukraine argued that it was extremely difficult to obtain an integrated PCA/Programme Document that included WASH, hygiene kits, school supplies and psychosocial support, even though this would improve the breadth of support and offer potential linkages between humanitarian and recovery interventions. In Nigeria, UNICEF refused to fund the integration of environmental sanitation into support to a health centre outside Maiduguri because this would involve a PCA/Programme Document that cut across two programme sections, despite the fact that it would strengthen the quality of the programme. While there are no procedural blockages to integrated programmes in UNICEF, the challenge for COs appears to be in managing partnership planning processes across sections. Potential benefits of integrated programming, as evidenced in the evaluation case studies, are outlined below.

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198 Vine Management Consulting, *Study on Integrated Programming*.

COVERAGE AND QUALITY GAINS FROM INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING OBSERVED IN THE EVALUATION

Benefits	Example	Country
Less likelihood of gaps and improved understanding of vulnerability as a result of field staff looking across a range of sectors, rather than focusing on one	RRM assessments	Central African Republic
Improvement in humanitarian outcomes as a consequence of integrating the delivery of two or more services	Health and nutrition	Somalia
Creating a multiplier effect by co-locating services such that the total take-up of services and/or behaviour change is greater than if each service had been provided separately	Humanitarian services in Borno State	Nigeria
Strengthening the coverage of under-funded sectors by linking them to better-resourced sectors	Protection mainstreaming	Somalia
Using successful access strategies of one sector to benefit other sectors, thereby increasing coverage	Polio programme	Afghanistan

However, there were also factors that blocked or hindered programme integration. In one of the case studies, there were challenges due to the perceived inability of partners to work cross-sectorally. In the Philippines, UNICEF staff regarded most NGO implementing partners as having a single core competence (e.g., in WASH or nutrition), which could not be expanded to deliver interventions in a different sector, or only with a longer-term investment. In Afghanistan, one of the reasons given for continuing to work in siloes was that this was consistent with the approach of government line ministries that UNICEF worked alongside. On several occasions, humanitarian reform, and the existence of single-sector clusters, was considered to hinder integrated programming, and in the Central African Republic, it was reported that donors were not willing to fund multi-sectoral programmes outside of the clusters. Some of these challenges are more significant than others,[199] but given the benefits, it is difficult to construct a strong case against integrated programming. While it is unlikely to be appropriate in all sectors and at all stages of an emergency response, it is very likely to add some value in aspects of all humanitarian responses.

5.5.2 THE USE OF CASH AND VOUCHERS TO DELIVER INTEGRATED PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

The use of cash and vouchers in emergencies is still a relatively new programme approach in UNICEF and, as a consequence, it does not benefit from the same breadth of knowledge and practice as many other aspects of UNICEF's programming. However, these gaps in evidence are rapidly being filled with a growing number of interventions and the development of programmatic guidance.[200] The use of cash in the country case studies was limited to Somalia, Ukraine and the State of Palestine, but UNICEF has also gained significant experience from its programmes in Yemen and from Iraq staff who participated in the evaluation.

UNICEF's experience of cash programming in complex humanitarian emergencies suggests that it has significant potential to provide relevant and effective assistance, which can contribute to the achievement of sectoral objectives as set out in the CCCs or as a multi-sectoral response. When used with existing government services, cash can also be used to remove the barriers between development and humanitarian response. In Somalia, cash-based assistance, which included cash and vouchers, played a key role in strengthening the coverage and relevance of its pre-famine joint cash-based response focusing on the regions of Bay and Bakool (*see* Good Practice *box below*). In line with the Grand Bargain commitments,

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199 For example, regarding the concern about donors funding a single sector, while a given donor might not want to fund a multi-sector programme with partners, UNICEF is able to use donor funds to cover one sector of a multi-sector programme, and so from a procedural perspective, this challenge can be managed by a CO.

200 United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Humanitarian Cash Transfers Programmatic Guidance*, UNICEF EMOPS, 2017.

UNICEF complemented its sectoral programmes with cash-based assistance; it achieved this through working collaboratively with WFP, building on a joint initiative in response to refugees returning to Somalia in 2016. UNICEF used WFP's platform to provide safe water through water vouchers, cash grants to support affected schools, as well as monthly cash transfers to support affected households to access services in the most affected regions. The benefits of the programme are listed in the box below. A similar partnership with WFP in the State of Palestine on the latter's e-voucher scheme has enabled UNICEF to quickly and easily scale up coverage in Gaza.

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

Strengthening the coverage of UNICEF's pre-famine response in Somalia[201]

COVERAGE WITH EQUITY

• Significant numbers of people were reached with cash transfers and other support to food security, support to access health care and clean water and treatment for malnutrition.

• The targeting of marginalized groups remains a challenge. Whether cash could have been used differently to reach the marginalized groups has not been well explored.

• Some agencies have undertaken training on gender, and many target women as cash recipients. The SCOPE card may help women and marginalized groups retain control, as they have to be present to redeem cash or other support. However, no clear evidence has been shared of differential impacts on men and women.

PROGRAMME QUALITY

• Both third-party and agencies' own monitoring suggested that ambitious targets for scaling up support across the four key sectors were met and that people received timely support.
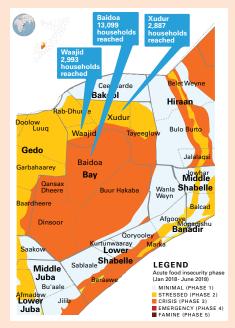
• Beneficiary feedback systems have been strengthened, but it is unclear how well the data are being used to strengthen the overall response. Multiple systems exist, some of which are not fully understood or trusted by all agencies.

Evidence on the appropriateness of cash in access-constrained environments is mixed, although the recent review of WFP's policies on humanitarian principles[202] and the Secure Access in Volatile Environments (SAVE) study were optimistic,[203] finding that cash-based responses are under-used, relative to the presence of functioning markets in some contexts, and yet affected people have a strong preference for cash as a more flexible and lower-profile modality. It concluded that cash programming should be systematically considered alongside other modalities of delivery, and other programmatic approaches must be developed for use in highly insecure contexts.

5.5.3 THE USE OF RAPID RESPONSE MECHANISMS TO DELIVER INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES AND IMPROVE COVERAGE

The RRM is designed to enhance UNICEF's capacity to respond in a timely, coordinated and predictable manner to the needs of populations made vulnerable by displacement, disease or disasters in humanitarian settings. Based on the pre-positioning of funds, partners and supplies, the RRM provides life-saving assistance to people affected by a disaster, targeting hard-to-reach locations where other stakeholders are unable to adequately respond.[204] Through the RRM, UNICEF and its partners provide critical multi-sectoral emergency response in a wide range of

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201 UNICEF Somalia, *Humanitarian Cash Transfer,* May 2018.

202 Steets, et al., *Evaluation of WFP's Policies.*

203 Haver and Carter, *What It Takes.*

204 United Nations Children's Fund, *Rapid Response Mechanism: Past, present and future*, UNICEF EMOPS, May 2017.

sectors, including nutrition, WASH, non-food items, health, education, protection and cash modalities. The RRM also establishes a framework for humanitarian access and includes a strong component related to inter-agency and cluster coordination.

Developed 13 years ago in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, RRMs operated in a number of the case study countries, including in the Central African Republic and Nigeria. Evidence of the contribution made by RRMs to strengthen coverage and quality was also gathered during document review and interviews with UNICEF staff in Iraq and South Sudan. This evaluation found that RRMs have significantly strengthened access to, and coverage in, complex humanitarian emergencies. An important asset of RRMs is their operational flexibility and the potential they offer to identify, target and reach communities recently affected by crises or which have the greatest needs of assistance. Inter-agency processes of assessment and targeting in the RRMs reviewed during the evaluation included strong processes of needs assessment in order to target assistance. The RRMs also demonstrated some success in overcoming sectoral silos and delivering multi-sectoral assistance, as the field mission to the Central African Republic highlighted (*see the following* Good Practice *box*).[205]

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

The use of the RRM in the Central African Republic to increase coverage and contribute to improved access

The greatest benefit of the RRM in the Central African Republic is the extended humanitarian coverage for non-food items and WASH, including in areas that have previously been out of reach for humanitarian actors. The investment of RRM actors in relationship-building at the local level, pre-positioning of staff and supplies, and the geographic division of labour among RRM partners has been critical in achieving greater coverage[206] with WASH and non-food item assistance, and increasing access to vulnerable populations.

The geographic division of labour between organizations within the RRM has contributed to improving the coverage of UNICEF and its partners. It is structured so that each organization within the RRM is responsible for monitoring and response in clearly defined areas. RRM partners maintain bases across their areas of responsibility, creating an agile, predictable and effective monitoring and response network, thus facilitating increased coverage throughout the country. This has made coordination within the RRM more efficient and predictable, and served to clearly define responsibilities between partners and avoid duplication.

Elsewhere, in Yemen, Iraq and South Sudan, RRMs are routinely used to strengthen programme coverage in access-constrained areas:

» In Yemen, the RRM has been effective in increasing coverage and enabling humanitarian response on front lines in places like Al Hudaydah, Hajja, Sa'ada and Taiz. The mechanism has provided rapid emergency assistance to a range of humanitarian needs and has provided a range of services including non-food items, shelter, WASH and supplementary feeding.

» In Iraq, where new and secondary displacements have affected large numbers of children and their families, the RRM has proved to be an effective mechanism to reach people when in greatest need of assistance —on the move, stuck at checkpoints, caught between front lines and in hard-to-reach areas, giving them initial access to life-saving assistance (food, water, dignity kits) as well as other humanitarian assistance.

» In South Sudan, reports show that a total of 2 million beneficiaries were reached by the WFP/UNICEF RRM between March 2014 and August 2017, 20 per cent of which were children under 5, through 123 missions. It has also been used to address food insecurity, with more than 500 missions deployed to deliver more than 200,000 metric tons of food.[207]

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205 While the findings of the evaluation suggested that sectoral silos were overcome, the 2017 rapid review conducted by UNICEF suggests that this may not be entirely true; a minority of respondents noted that internally, UNICEF continues to struggle with a siloed approach and a lack of genuine integration of emergency activities into 'regular' programming, which was considered to impede the success of the RRM.

206 Rapid Response Mechanism, United Nations Children's Fund and European Union, Rapid Response Mechanism: République centrafricaine. Grille d'évaluation rapide des dégâts et des besoins, UNICEF Central African Republic CO, n.d.

207 South Sudan Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster, *South Sudan: Food Security and Livelihood Cluster Bulletin,* August 2017.

While it was not referred to as an RRM, the establishment and use in the Somalia pre-famine response of Integrated Emergency Response Teams offered significant learning about what it takes to strengthen inter-agency collaboration in access-constrained environments (*see the following Lesson box*).

📖 **LESSON**

Rapid learning on inter-agency collaboration in the Somalia pre-famine response

In establishing the Integrated Emergency Response Team, the key challenge faced was in the use of protocols, standards and quality assurance of an integrated multi-sector response plan and its implementation in the absence of clear guidance, common accountability and results framework at all levels. Field manuals are sector-specific and were very detailed, and simplification was required to make integration feasible at the ground level. Moreover, there was limited capacity for a multi-sector integrated approach, compounded by resource mobilization challenges. There have also been issues around sensitivity to organizational mandate versus collective approach on integration; agencies have sector-specific mandates and agendas that may conflict with an integrated approach.

The case studies also highlighted an important challenge linked to the short-term nature of assistance provided through RRMs; from both a quality and sufficiency perspective, the lack of a strategy to transition to other sources of humanitarian assistance is a significant challenge. In the Central African Republic, this was considered particularly problematic given that the short-term relief assistance that was distributed was frequently used for several years as a consequence of the poor coverage. This underlines the importance of ensuring the quality of the relief supplies in addition to carefully considering their composition of relief kits,

which has prompted a review by UNICEF. The concern about the lack of continuity of services is also flagged in EMOPS' recent review of the RRMs;[208] a key part of the original RRM strategy was to facilitate the identification and return of partners to RRM locations to support the re-establishment of assistance. While the RRM in South Sudan has, at times, been able to facilitate the return of partners, results have been uneven across sectors, with nutrition and child protection managing to assist the return of a small number of partners.[209]

5.6 UNICEF's use of remote programming modalities

UNICEF uses a range of complimentary approaches to manage and monitor its programmes in situations where it does not have a staff presence due to security risks or access denials. In these contexts, UNICEF frequently relies on third-party service providers for programme support and/or monitoring. While these services provide a level of quality assurance, there are also significant challenges with their use, including cost, data quantity and data quality. The challenge to UNICEF is in ensuring that there is clarity on their scope of work for third-party service providers to ensure it matches their capacity and that they are used as a last resort rather than an expedient option.

UNICEF defined remote programming as 'programming without the presence of UNICEF staff due to unacceptable security risks or denial of access by authorities'.[210] In these contexts, UNICEF frequently works through third-party service providers to provide technical support and programme monitoring as a last resort. The contribution this makes to identifying and addressing gaps in UNICEF's coverage and quality is of key interest to the evaluation. UNICEF has developed significant guidance for Cos, which includes a Programme Guidance Manual[211] and a literature review[212] that provides a management decision-making chain, technical guidance notes and examples of good practice. Two distinct modalities

208 UNICEF, *Rapid Response Mechanism: Past, present and future*.

209 United Nations Children's Fund, *Internal Review of the South Sudan Rapid Response Mechanism*, UNICEF, April 2015.

210 United Nations Children's Fund, *Remote Programming in Humanitarian Action: Programme guidance*, UNICEF EMOPS, 2012.

211 Ibid.

212 Chaudhri, Simran, Kristina Cordes and Nathan Miller, *Humanitarian Programming and Monitoring in Inaccessible Conflict Settings: A literature review*, WHO Health Cluster, February 2017.

were encountered during the evaluation; the use of third-party service providers to provide management support and technical advice (e.g., Afghanistan and Nigeria) and third-party monitors (e.g., Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic).

5.6.1 THE USE OF THIRD-PARTY SERVICE PROVIDERS/FIELD EXTENDERS TO PROVIDE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT AND TECHNICAL ADVICE

Where either UNICEF or the Designated Official /Security Management Team consider the risks to UNICEF staff or property to be excessive, then UNICEF may use third-party service providers to provide oversight and technical support (i.e., consultants hired by a third party but under UNICEF supervision). What makes these distinct from third-party 'monitors' is that they have a coordination and oversight role. Figure 36 provides some examples of UNICEF's use of third-party service providers to oversee programme delivery from the case study countries.

From an access perspective, the added value of the facilitators to UNICEF are that they are independent of the United Nations and, hence, are not bound by the United Nations security management system. This means that in complex humanitarian emergencies, they are far more mobile. In some of the case studies,

facilitators were recruited from the local area, and, as a consequence, benefited from greater acceptance. The risks they face may also be reduced, although in particularly volatile environments, association with UNICEF may significantly expose them to new and different risks (e.g., Afghanistan). While the nature of the contractual relationship limits the ability of third parties to represent UNICEF, in certain contexts they have been used to negotiate local-level access and they can play a liaison role with UNICEF's partners.

Consultations during the evaluation also revealed issues of concern. Interviews with humanitarian agencies working in the same areas suggest that this lack of a broader knowledge may be a shortcoming, with several examples given of how humanitarian practice may have fallen short of principles. In several of the case study countries, the consultants were UNICEF's de facto representatives in access-constrained areas, which poses a dilemma for the agency. While UNICEF has been able to use them to significantly expand its humanitarian services and has done so without increasing the risk to its own staff, the consultants do not possess either the authority or the broader skillset to do more than deliver the programme. For this reason, they may not be used as a strategic resource to expand UNICEF's networks and, as a consequence, can make a relatively small contribution to expanding humanitarian access beyond

EXAMPLES OF THE USE OF THIRD-PARTY CONSULTANTS TO OVERSEE PROGRAMMES IN THE EVALUATION CASE STUDY COUNTRIES

Country	Term used	How the role strengthens coverage and quality
Afghanistan	Field extenders	Interviewees confirmed that the use of field extenders helped UNICEF to maintain a more realistic understanding of the situation and needs in hard-to-reach areas and, when needed, take corrective actions much sooner than before. For example, when extenders in the Southern region noted a large number of classrooms having been closed, UNICEF was able to work with its partners to resolve the challenge, which may previously have gone unnoticed. Extenders are also used to improve the quality of response interventions – for example, in the Western region, where the nutrition section uses qualified counsellors to provide in-service training and supportive supervision to health facility staff treating severe acute malnutrition.
Nigeria	Third-party consultants	The consultants were an essential part of UNICEF's September 2016 scale-up plan and have played a key role in expanding UNICEF's programme coverage as well as being tasked with delivering programme quality. UNICEF staff provide consultants with technical support via field visits when these are possible.
Syrian Arab Republic	Third-party technical facilitators	Third-party facilitators have enabled more consistent access to hard-to-reach areas where UNICEF staff are restricted due to prevailing security conditions and restrictions. These facilitators have played a central role in gathering information on needs and dynamics to support context analysis and advocacy, as well as supporting needs assessments and distributions, building relationships with local stakeholders and negotiating access arrangements at the local level.

the locations where they are based. In one instance, the nature of the contracting process was extremely problematic, and the consultants were accommodated in very difficult circumstances without security infrastructure or risk management plans. Furthermore, many had not received their salaries and had no safe way to travel in and out of their area of deployment. While the responsibilities for these shortcomings rested with the institutional contractor, the limitations of this particular modality for the consultants in question and for UNICEF were considerable. A second case study country stopped using third parties in facilitation roles for a period of time due to contractual problems but has recently started using them again.

5.6.2 THE USE OF THIRD-PARTY MONITORS

Programme monitoring plays an important role in strengthening programme quality by providing regular information about the attainment of programme standards by UNICEF's partners. UNICEF has a range of different means of gathering monitoring data and in areas where its staff cannot access, which often includes the use of third-party monitors. Monitoring by third-party monitors is most frequently focused at the input and output level[213] and they may also play a broader quality assurance role in addition to identifying further needs that are not covered or groups that are not receiving assistance.

The case studies revealed that while the decision to use third-party monitors was usually triggered when access to project areas became difficult for UNICEF staff, they were also used in other situations to complement monitoring by UNICEF staff. The Somalia field mission provided the best insights into the basis on which monitoring responsibilities were allocated, and the Syrian Arab Republic desk review provided an overview of the activities that monitors undertook (*see the following box*).

Roles and responsibilities of third-party monitors in Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic

FACTORS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WHEN DETERMINING THE USE OF THIRD-PARTY MONITORS IN SOMALIA
Despite the challenges of access in Somalia, UNICEF staff have managed to travel to large parts of the country for purposes of monitoring and programme support. What is more difficult to determine is the frequency of the visits and the coverage at a subregional level. In addition to direct monitoring, UNICEF uses third-party monitors. Third-party monitors collect routine reporting information from implementing partners, besides independently verifying their claims of results. UNICEF undertook a mid-year analysis of the overlap between the two, which revealed a number of trends. Many of the complex field visits are conducted by section staff and third-party monitors may monitor the more basic programmes; there are also difficult partners which may be monitored by 'undercover' third-party monitors for purposes of assessing capacity or competence as well as results. There are also programmes that have sensitive issues (e.g., gender outcomes), which are often monitored by third-party monitors.

THE ROLE OF THIRD-PARTY MONITORS IN UNICEF'S SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC PROGRAMME[214]
Up to July 2015, 67 facilitators were deployed by the UNICEF CO in 13 of the 14 governorates in the Syrian Arab Republic. Their main responsibilities were:

- Situation monitoring (in specific areas for specific requests), to assess the overall situation and any unmet needs, particularly of women and children.
- Field visits to monitor projects and programmes, focusing on: (i) assessing implementation according to the PCA or small-scale funding agreement; (ii) verification of supplies delivered and identification of delays and bottlenecks; and (iii) post-distribution monitoring of supplies to assess beneficiaries' opinions in terms of the quality, timeliness and relevance of supplies delivered.
- Monitoring and reporting on the overall performance of project and programme implementation, and validation of progress reports prepared by implementing partners.
- If needed, coordination with implementing partners in consultation with the respective UNICEF chief of the FO or his/her delegate.

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213 Feedback provided by EMOPS on the draft report asserted that the provision of monitoring data at the outcome level by third-party monitors is <u>not</u> an expectation.

214 Avenir Analytics, *Evaluation of UNICEF's Humanitarian Response to the Syria Crisis.*

Hinda Hussain Johal, 21, fills water containers with clean water from a UNICEF and ECHO-supported clean water tank in a camp for internally displaced persons in Galkayo, Somalia.

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5.6.3 THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF USING THIRD-PARTY MONITORS

There are some important benefits of using third-party monitors, the most compelling of which is that it permits UNICEF access to monitor projects that it would not have otherwise been able to access in a way that reduces risks to staff, partners and beneficiaries. It also goes some way to validating partner reports and detecting bad practice or fraudulent behaviour. The use of third-party monitors can also provide a flexible means for UNICEF to swiftly scale up field monitoring in rapid-onset response. The field missions and literature review also revealed a range of challenges with UNICEF's use of third-party monitors that are summarized below:

» LACK OF SKILLED MONITORS: The relatively low skills base of local labour markets often means that there are limitations in the skills that can be harnessed through long-term agreements for third-party monitors. For example, while it may be possible to find monitors with health or nutrition experience due to the high prevalence of these programmes, it is far harder to find specialist skills such as child protection. This limits the quality of the monitoring that can be achieved. The growth in the use of third-party monitors carries a risk that firms become stretched, and quality (that is already low) is further compromised.

» **LACK OF FEMALE MONITORS:** In some countries, it can be difficult to engage female third-party monitors. In Afghanistan, this was a significant challenge, the implications of which were that it was problematic engaging women as men would not be permitted to do so. In Somalia, there had been more success although retaining female third-party monitors staff was a challenge, as they were highly sought after and, as a consequence, there was high turnover, which affected the quality of the monitoring.

» **CLAN-BASED OR ETHNIC DIVISIONS:** Interviews highlighted variability in the capacities of different service providers, which is frequently linked to the presence of dominant ethnic groups or clan divisions. As a consequence, it has been necessary for UNICEF to contract several companies in order to achieve countrywide coverage and address the potential for bias. Where third-party monitors are predominantly from a particular group, this can mean that access to minorities is difficult to achieve.

» **LACK OF REAL-TIME FEEDBACK:** With a small number of exceptions (*see the following* Good Practice *box*), third-party monitors are rarely able to provide real-time feedback, which means that by the time third-party monitors have returned back to their office, finalized reports and submitted them to UNICEF, it can be relatively late for changes or course corrections to be made.[215]

» **DATA QUALITY AND QUANTITY CHALLENGES:** While there can be challenges with the quality of the data collected by third-party monitors, concerns were also raised about the quantity. In several case studies, the high volume of reports collected went beyond the analysis capacity of UNICEFs Programme Monitoring and Evaluation team.[216]

» **POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** A relatively recent issue is the growing use of third-party monitors by UNICEF's donors, which presents a risk of conflict of interests when donors and operational agencies use third-party monitors from the same company. The SAVE research also notes the potential for conflict of interests to occur when third-party monitors monitor the same project sites time and again.[217] The Somalia field mission also highlighted the risk of bias as a consequence of clan affiliation.

» **RISK TRANSFER:** The SAVE research also highlighted issues of risk transfer. It is common for contracting agencies to assume that third-party monitors providers have their own internal procedures and risk mitigation measures in place, and that they require less elaborate systems due to their local networks and community acceptance. For the majority of third-party monitors providers consulted, no evidence was found that they had robust security procedures in place or any dedicated staff for security management.

» **COST:** All of the field missions highlighted the high cost of third-party monitors; the exact cost is dependent on the type of project being monitored, the location, the overhead paid to the company and the salary level. Rather than paying per monitoring activity, UNICEF enters into long-term agreements with companies, with agreed rates for different services. It is important to add that in the absence of alternatives, the benefits were considered to outweigh the costs.

While there are numerous challenges associated with the use of third-party monitors, good practice also exists in UNICEF, particularly in the Pakistan CO, which has a long history of remote monitoring. There are also certain advantages that Pakistan has, which increases the effectiveness of the approach. There is good mobile coverage, which makes the use of innovative technologies possible. Pakistan has an educated workforce, which provides a larger talent pool to draw from, and access constraints are largely bureaucratic, which allows greater potential for third-party monitors to spend longer at field sites and to engage more deeply with UNICEF's partners (*see the following* Good Practice *box*).

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215 This issue was identified in the Humanitarian Programme Monitoring Review undertaken in 2016 and was the rationale for the eTools FM module under development. See Perry, S (2016) *Review of Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Approach, Formative Assessment,* December 2016.

216 It is anticipated by UNICEF that this issue will be addressed by the eTools module that is under development *(see above)*.

217 Sagmeister, Elias, and Julia Steets, *The Use of Third-Party Monitoring in Insecure Contexts: Lessons from Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria*, Resource paper, Secure Access in Volatile Environments, October 2016.

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

Innovative use of third-party monitors in Pakistan where UNICEF's access is constrained[218]

The UNICEF Mobile Monitoring System is a smartphone app that enables real-time third-party field monitoring of humanitarian interventions in areas where access is challenging, enabling geolinked monitoring reports to be immediately generated to ensure partner and project accountability on the ground, track third-party field monitors, and ensure that gaps are quickly identified and addressed, even in contexts where access is otherwise difficult. This system came into use in 2016, and improved monitoring and accountability of field monitors and UNICEF interventions. The app is available from the Google Play Store[219] and UNICEF servers, and may be installed on Android smartphones. It provides a simple form for monitoring feedback, with a free text field in which monitors can identify matters for urgent action. It also allows photos taken with the smartphone to be attached. Once completed and submitted, the data (which include Global Positioning System coordinates for the site where it was collected) are uploaded to the UNICEF Mobile Monitoring System website the next time the device has internet connectivity. Through the website, users can conduct further analysis using various filters and predefined reports, as well as view monitoring visits on a map.

The pilot UNICEF Mobile Monitoring System reduced the time for third-party field monitoring reports to arrive at the UNICEF field office in Peshawar from up to two days to minutes. It also provided a means of 'monitoring the monitors' by tracking sites that field monitors visited. UNICEF was able to check summary reports daily to compare visits with approved monitoring plans, follow up on discrepancies and ensure accountability and oversight. About 15 per cent of site visits led to 'red alerts' requiring immediate action, which were followed up and resolved.

Back-dropped by a camp for people affected by the floods, a girl looks on in Sukkur, Pakistan.

© UNICEF/UNI93709/RAMONEDA

218 Case study taken from UNICEF Pakistan, *Pakistan Consolidated Emergency Report 2016*, March 2017.
219 See <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.unicef.umms>

Good practice was also observed in Afghanistan, where the polio programme mobilizes a range of approaches in order to understand the progress that has been achieved (*see the following* Good Practice *box*).

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

Approaches adopted by the polio programme in Afghanistan to monitor performance in access-constrained areas[220]

The Polio Section has introduced a monitoring system to overcome the limitations due to the security situation. For areas accessible with limitations, the programme introduced a number of strategies, which include remote monitoring (e.g., telephonic checks and remote sensitization) and engagement of a neutral third party to monitor the programme's reach to maintain and further improve campaign quality. Specifically for communications, an accountability and performance framework has been developed, with internal monitoring conducted by UNICEF, and with reporting in real time using the Open Data Kit, including: monitoring performance of the Immunization Communication Network; monitoring meetings and trainings; monitoring routine immunization; monitoring vaccines and cold chain; independent third-party monitoring of the Immunization Communication Network; random verification: mobilizer self-reporting on training and payment via mobile phone; and telephonic surveys of community influencers on the work of the mobilizer and triangulation of monitoring findings. Results of the Immunization Communication Network and communications interventions are assessed through Knowledge, Attitude and Practice surveys.

5.6.4 TOWARDS AN ASSESSMENT OF UNICEF'S REMOTE MONITORING PRACTICES

There can be little doubt of the benefits that direct monitoring by UNICEF staff has over the use of third-party monitors, which is a compromise. As a consequence, the two key questions for the evaluation are the extent to which UNICEF has achieved a balance in monitoring practices, and whether monitoring practices in complex humanitarian emergencies ensure adequate rigour.

On the first question, the evaluation found that where access challenges exist, due to the variability in the application of the United Nations security management system, which made it difficult for United Nations staff to travel, and with the growth in acceptance and use of third-party monitors, there is a risk that the use of third parties is becoming the default approach in many complex humanitarian emergencies. The challenge to UNICEF is in ensuring that it is doing all that it can to obtain access to directly monitor its programmes. In both Afghanistan and Somalia, analysis of third-party monitor use was shared by UNICEF with the evaluation team, which provided assurance that the balance was being monitored. Linked to this is a question of whether programme monitoring in access-constrained locations was adequate. This is more difficult for the evaluation team to answer due to variations in the data that were received. What can be said is that UNICEF is doing what it can to ensure the effectiveness of monitoring, but that gaps remain. Several of the L3 evaluations speak to the limitations of monitoring practices and the lack of coherent monitoring data.[221] However, during interviews with donors during the field missions, there was generally positive feedback about UNICEF's efforts given the challenging context.

Finally, it is important to note that the reliance on third-party monitors by UNICEF in insecure contexts is best suited for ensuring accountability to donors, for verifying outputs and for providing information to section staff. The approach is largely inadequate for achieving accountability to affected populations, and there were no examples encountered by the evaluation team in the case study countries where third-party monitors had been given this responsibility. While there is potential for third-party monitors to obtain feedback from targeted communities about the quality and adequacy of assistance that could support accountability to affected people, the evidence from the case studies suggests that this would be a challenge.[222]

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220 Case study taken from UNICEF Afghanistan, 'UNICEF Afghanistan Health and Polio Programme Strategy Note (2017–2019)', 2018.

221 The Central African Republic evaluation noted that UNICEF's monitoring of the response 'left room for improvement'; the evaluation of UNICEF's cholera response in Yemen noted that this was an area where UNICEF was 'challenged', although it notes the difficult context and praises the high quality of third-party monitor reports; the evaluation of UNICEF's Syria response notes the lack of 'comprehensive' or 'consistent' programme monitoring.

222 Accountability to affected populations is discussed in greater detail in section 7.2 below.

A boy looks through an opening in stacked boxes filled with essential hygiene supplies, in Gaza City.

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PART SIX:
WHAT PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES HAS UNICEF EMPLOYED AT FIELD LEVEL TO GAIN PRINCIPLED ACCESS AND IMPROVE COVERAGE AND QUALITY, AND WITH WHAT SUCCESS?

This section focuses on how UNICEF's partnerships with governments, NGOs and United Nations agencies has strengthened its access to those in greatest need of assistance and has delivered programmes that meet quality standards.

Summary of findings

- **6.1 GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS:** UNICEF frequently works with government partners, which can play an important role in expanding humanitarian coverage. The evaluation found three key challenges with these partnerships: in some situations, the government can have limited capacity, which can compromise quality; in some contexts, the government may seek to control or constrain humanitarian operations; and, where it is engaged in internal conflict, working with the government can have implications for the perception of UNICEF's neutrality and independence. It is in these situations where there may be a need for UNICEF to moderate its engagement with the State and advocate for it to meet the responsibilities it has under IHL.

- **6.2 LOCAL AND NATIONAL NGO PARTNERSHIPS:** Local and national NGOs have stronger community links and are at lower risk in complex humanitarian emergencies, or have higher risk tolerance. As a consequence, they have better access to communities. The country case studies revealed the limitations that some of these partners had in their technical capacity, which meant that delivery of programme quality was more variable. While UNICEF provides training in key areas of perceived weakness, it does not systematically seek to address institutional capacity, which is a missed opportunity from a perspective of strengthening localization and promoting long-term change. UNICEF should also focus greater attention on understanding how its local and national partners gain and maintain access and in actively supporting them to do so.

- **6.3 INTERNATIONAL NGO PARTNERSHIPS:** A number of the case studies revealed a shift in UNICEF's partnerships from international NGOs to local and national NGOs. While international NGO staff travel may often be restricted in complex humanitarian emergencies, their local staff more readily use low-profile approaches to gain access, which permits international NGOs to have closer links to programmes and maintain closer supervision. Some international NGOs also have a strong commitment to localization and strengthening partnerships and, as a consequence, provide significant investment in capacity development of their local and national NGO partners, which has the potential to offer a stronger delivery model. With this in mind, while international NGO partnerships may have additional costs associated with them, they retain the potential to deliver both coverage and quality, either directly or in partnership with local/national NGOs.

- **6.4 PARTNERSHIPS WITH UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES:** At a CO level, UNICEF collaborates with a range of United Nations partners to deliver humanitarian assistance in access-constrained environments. Although the focus of these partnerships varies widely, one of the most promising, from a quality and coverage perspective, was the delivery of integrated MAM and SAM services with WFP, which offers significant benefits to those in need of assistance.

As UNICEF's programme is delivered through partners, it is in large part these partners that determine UNICEF's coverage and quality. In terms of coverage, with a few RRM-related exceptions.[223] UNICEF tends only to deliver where its partners are willing and able to work. UNICEF can select partners that work in access-constrained areas or that have access to those people who have the greatest needs; they can also support them in gaining access – however, ultimately, there are limits to what UNICEF can do to strengthen their coverage. UNICEF has greater latitude to influence programme quality through its participation in assessments, programme design, by selecting the most relevant partners, by agreeing results in PCAs and Programme Documents, through capacity development and through direct and third-party monitoring and follow-up. This section of the report

will provide findings from the case studies about how different partnerships can influence coverage and quality and UNICEF's role in strengthening this.

6.1 Government partnerships

UNICEF frequently works with government partners that can play an important role in expanding humanitarian coverage. The evaluation found three key challenges with these partnerships: in some situations, the government can have limited capacity, which can compromise quality; in some contexts, the government may seek to control or constrain humanitarian operations; and, where it is engaged in internal conflict, working with the government can have implications for the perception of UNICEF's neutrality and

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223 The evaluation found that UNICEF does play an operational role in the South Sudan RRM and it has in the past delivered humanitarian services in the Central African Republic in instances where partners could not be identified.

independence. It is in these situations where there may be a need for UNICEF to moderate its engagement with the State and advocate for it to meet the responsibilities it has under IHL.

The State has four roles in relation to humanitarian aid: it is responsible for 'calling' a crisis and inviting international aid; it should provide assistance and protection; it is responsible for monitoring and coordinating external assistance; and it sets the regulatory and legal frameworks governing assistance.[224] The country case countries provided numerous examples of UNICEF working with government partners to expand programme coverage in complex humanitarian emergencies. This was a core strategy in north-east Nigeria to expand UNICEF's humanitarian response in Borno State, in Somalia to scale up the health and nutrition response, and in Pakistan to work in parts of the country where access restrictions constrained travel by United Nations staff and NGOs (*see* Good Practice *box*).

6.1.1 THE CAPACITY OF THE STATE

Where concern was expressed in the ability of the government to routinely deliver quality programmes, the variability in the capacity of the State to deliver quality assistance across the country case studies was significant.

» In its response to the Marawi conflict in the Philippines, UNICEF's partnership with the municipality and the regional government in Mindanao has provided a foundation to ensure that short-term interventions can also reduce vulnerability.

» Similarly, in Pakistan, there has been a shift across UNICEF's programmes in FATA to strengthen engagement with, and the capacity of, the FATA secretariat and responsible government departments, which has been accompanied by a move away from the provision of basic services and infrastructure to support to strengthen community resilience.

» These two examples contrast with findings from the Nigeria field mission, where there is significant government capacity nationally, but this has been slow to be deployed in a way that is proportionate to the humanitarian needs in the north-east of the country.

» In the Central African Republic, where the State has been weakened as a consequence of years of conflict, UNICEF is seeking to work with government departments where possible, but along with its humanitarian partners, is finding it difficult to move away from the provision of basic services.

UNICEF has sought to address and overcome these capacity constraints through systems strengthening, although this is a long-term process and yields modest results in the short term; the case studies offered examples from Pakistan and the State of Palestine (*see the following boxes*).

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

The role of government partnerships in strengthening coverage in Pakistan

In order to address the failure of NGO partners to obtain No Objection Certificates in Pakistan, UNICEF's WASH team initiated a partnership with the line department to discuss capacity issues and to look at how UNICEF could support it to take on the additional workload through secondments of staff into the department. It was agreed that the Government would lead the response and UNICEF would support it by paying salaries. UNICEF also provided seven engineers to increase government capacity. The Government was able to implement because it did not require a No Objection Certificate. The only challenge with this arrangement was that it was temporary. When the additional capacity that UNICEF provided departed at the end of the programme, there were gaps in government capacity. Sustainability is a key challenge, but the current priority of the Government is to deliver services.

The evaluation found three key challenges that UNICEF faces in partnering with the government in complex humanitarian emergencies. The first is linked to the capacity of the government; the second is the control exerted by the government over humanitarian operations, particularly when it is a party to the conflict; and, the third is the effect the government can have on perceptions of principled assistance.

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224 Harvey, Paul, *Towards Good Humanitarian Government: The role of the affected state in disaster response*, Humanitarian Policy Group, Report 29, September 2009, ODI, London, 2009.

UNICEF's role in systems strengthening of the Government in the State of Palestine

UNICEF works closely with the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah to provide technical and capacity strengthening support to the latter. This can only have partial impact, since the Gaza authorities' human and financial resources and capacity remain limited.

CHILD PROTECTION: UNICEF has provided significant support to the Gaza authorities on child protection in particular. This includes the development of the child protection referral pathways; development of case management standard operating procedures for child protection and gender-based violence; training and mentoring of child protection counsellors on case management; training on dealing with sexual abuse cases; establishment of the child protection information management system; and providing training on child protection minimum standards and child-friendly justice procedures.

EDUCATION: UNICEF has also strengthened the Ministry of Education's engineering and architectural capacities to enable it to build child-friendly spaces and to use a new technique, mixing soil and sand, rather than cement, to repair schools. This has included the development of manuals and the provision of training. UNICEF has also been training recently graduated teachers in new skills and building the capacity of school principals and teachers to strengthen the overall education system.

HEALTH: In the health sector, UNICEF is using technology to strengthen capacity in Gaza. The restrictions on the movement of goods and people into and out of Gaza makes capacity strengthening a challenge, because trainers cannot go in and those inside Gaza cannot travel outside for workshops or training. Therefore, in 2017, UNICEF provided teleconferencing equipment to link neonatal intensive care units with a hospital in Jerusalem, which is available to answer questions and provide second opinions.

Strengthening engagement and capacity-building of government departments in the FATA in Pakistan

Between 2015 and 2018, there was a shift across UNICEF's programme in the FATA to strengthen engagement with the FATA secretariat and government departments. In its WASH, health, education and child protection programmes, UNICEF has increasingly moved from traditional NGO partnerships to working with government departments. This has also necessitated a change in UNICEF's approach to capacity development due to government capacity limitations. Rather than focus solely on project-based training, UNICEF has increasingly sought to also work more strategically in strengthening government institutions.

6.1.2 THE CONTROL EXERCISED BY THE STATE

In countries affected by complex humanitarian emergencies, the host government may choose to restrict the operations of humanitarian organizations. United Nations agencies are governed by Members States and, apart from in exceptional circumstances,[225] can only provide assistance when this has been requested. A challenge occurs when the State chooses not to request assistance, when it refuses to permit assistance or when it creates bureaucratic impediments that restrict assistance. Included in the country case studies were a number of these contexts, which have had a significant impact on UNICEF's ability to deliver impartial assistance.

» In Pakistan, in the face of bureaucratic impediments from the Federal Government which have significantly constrained the access of international organizations to communities in need of assistance, UNICEF struggled to maintain its support to 'temporarily displaced people' in KP. More recently, it has only been able to support the needs of returnees to the FATA, by strengthening its partnerships with local NGOs and handing over significant programme responsibilities to a range of district-level government departments.

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225 Assistance can be provided by United Nations agencies without the agreement of the host government if a Security Council resolution authorizes it to do so, such as in the case of the Syrian Arab Republic.

PART SIX

WHAT PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES HAS UNICEF EMPLOYED AT FIELD LEVEL TO GAIN PRINCIPLED ACCESS AND IMPROVE COVERAGE AND QUALITY, AND WITH WHAT SUCCESS?

Young Syrian refugees are bracing for the winter in camps in the town of Ersal, East Lebanon, near the Syrian border.

© UNICEF/UN0264875/AL MUSSAWIR

» In Nigeria, UNICEF is grappling with the challenge of a government policy prohibiting the provision of assistance to areas occupied by non-State entities despite the presence of an estimated 900,000 people.

» In the Syrian Arab Republic, assistance was given by United Nations agencies to large parts of the country outside of government control in the early years after the conflict started. The Syrian Arab Republic offers a more recent example, where it took a number of years for a United Nations resolution to permit the provision of cross-border assistance into the Syrian Arab Republic to overcome access denials.

More challenging still are contexts where the State is a party to the conflict – which was the case in each of the field missions (e.g., Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, north-east Nigeria, the Marawi conflict in the Philippines and Somalia). Managing relationships and partnerships with governments in the context of conflict is an area in which UNICEF has limited guidance. Of greatest relevance is the study undertaken by the Programme Division and EMOPS on working in fragile contexts,[226] which outlines the importance of UNICEF engaging in a way that is 'is based on humanitarian principles, diversified and decentralized (support subnational governance and emerging civil society to engage), one that strengthens State accountability and

one that is built on effective advocacy that encourages States to live up to their responsibilities'.[227] This tacitly accepts UNICEF's multi-mandate and promotes a pragmatic approach that balances humanitarian principles with supporting State institutions where they are able to meet humanitarian needs. The challenge that COs face is in successfully maintaining this complex balance, which requires robust engagement and rigorous analysis – but it also requires a willingness to moderate relationships with government ministries and departments where this is necessary to manage perceptions, defend principles and promote States' obligations to IHL.

The case of Afghanistan offers a good example of a context where UNICEF is seeking to balance these divergent priorities. Interviews highlighted the considerable challenges this entailed, which suggests that the task is less about balancing and more about deciding which to prioritize. Given the range of non-State entities that hold territory in the country, UNICEF's partnership with the Government undermines perceptions of its neutrality and independence. A number of those interviewed in Kabul, Jalalabad and Herat spoke of the challenges that this posed for perceptions of UNICEF, which significantly constrained its ability to provide assistance as well as exposed the organization to significant security risks.

It is in these contexts that UNICEF's engagement with the State can place it in a strong position to advocate for it to meet its responsibilities under IHL, although the case study countries provided quite limited evidence of UNICEF adopting a robust position either alone or in support of inter-agency initiatives. While the evaluation recognizes the challenges that this may pose to UNICEF, interviews with its peers and partners revealed a desire for the organization to make better use of its networks and opportunities.

6.1.3 PERCEPTIONS OF PARTNERING WITH THE STATE

There were also broader concerns about UNICEF's work through governments that were linked to the risk of fraud and corruption. The Afghanistan field mission provided a particularly challenging context where the country is

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226 UNICEF, *Enhanced Programme and Operational Support in Fragile Contexts.*
227 Ibid.

ranked 169th out of 176 countries listed in the Perception of Corruption Index.[228] Given the role that government ministries and departments play in directing and delivering humanitarian assistance in areas where UNICEF has no access and very limited monitoring capacity, the high levels of corruption pose significant problems for programme quality and effected perceptions of UNICEF, both among peer agencies, but more importantly, with communities that received its assistance. Similar concerns were raised in other case study countries, as this example from the Marawi response in the Philippines indicates (*see the following* Community Feedback *box*).
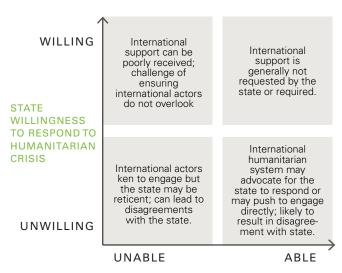
💬 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Challenges of engaging with the Government in the Marawi response

One participant had been travelling from place to place in search of assistance. He had returned to an evacuation centre in Marawi City, but was having difficulty proving his eligibility for assistance because the local government official had refused to provide him with an internally displaced person profile. He does not understand why this has been refused, but it means that he cannot get access to humanitarian assistance. There were a number of other concerns raised by people who had not received the assistance that they were eligible to receive from the Government as a consequence of alleged corruption. One family was given the key to a temporary (semi-permanent) shelter only to find it was already occupied by someone who is not an internally displaced person. The family was still waiting for a response by the local government representative to the complaint.

6.1.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF MODERATING UNICEF'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE STATE

Research undertaken by ALNAP offers a framework to describe engagement between the State and humanitarian agencies, which may assist in making judgments about how to engage (*see figure 12*).[229] Where a State has good international and political relations and a strong social

FIGURE 12: ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE STATE AND HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES

STATE WILLINGNESS TO RESPOND TO HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

WILLING

UNWILLING

International support can be poorly received; challenge of ensuring international actors do not overlook

International support is generally not requested by the state or required.

International actors ken to engage but the state may be reticent; can lead to disagreements with the state.

International humanitarian system may advocate for the state to respond or may push to engage directly; likely to result in disagreement with state.

UNABLE

ABLE

STATE CAPACITY FOR HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

contract with its citizens, acknowledges its responsibilities in disaster and invests in its capacity to fulfil them, there is considerable scope for collaboration between the State and the international humanitarian system. Conversely, where state capacity is weak, there will be a greater role for international agencies both to develop state capacity and provide disaster services. A situation in which a State does not meet its responsibilities under IHL and is not willing to assist and protect its citizens offers the greatest opportunity for advocacy to encourage it to uphold its commitments. There may also be a need for humanitarian agencies to disengage as they seek to protect their independence and manage perceptions of their political neutrality.

It is in the bottom right quadrant of the figure that the case studies highlighted the challenges that UNICEF faces in achieving a balance between maintaining partnerships with state entities and more robustly defending the provision of principled humanitarian assistance and advocating on the responsibilities of the State. An analysis of the examples cited in 6.1.2 above (Pakistan, Nigeria, the Syrian Arab Republic) suggest that there are a number of different factors that may negatively influence this, which include the following:

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228 See <www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016>.

229 Featherstone, Andy, *Learning from Disaster: How governments gain insight and how regional and international bodies can help,* ALNAP/ODI, London, 2014.

» A prioritization of UNICEF's long-term relationship with the Government over humanitarian principles;

» Concern about the potential for reprisals (bureaucratic impediments, access denials, expulsions);

» Insufficient understanding of, or acknowledgement of, the importance of principled programming; and

» Pressure from donors.

While the evaluation recognizes the responsibility that the State has for leading and coordinating humanitarian response, the findings do highlight the importance of UNICEF being able to reconcile how it moderates this relationship when the State is unwilling or unable to respond. Of key importance in this is that it has a decision-making framework that draws on humanitarian principles and is consistent with IHL.

6.2 Local and national NGO partnerships

Local and national NGOs have stronger community links and are at lower risk in complex humanitarian emergencies, or have higher risk tolerance. As a consequence, they have better access to communities. The country case studies revealed the limitations that some of these partners had in their technical capacity, which meant that delivery of programme quality was more variable. While UNICEF provides training in key areas of perceived weakness, it does not systematically seek to address institutional capacity, which is a missed opportunity from a perspective of strengthening localization and promoting long-term change. UNICEF should also focus greater attention on understanding how its local and national partners gain and maintain access and in actively supporting them to do so.

In particularly volatile humanitarian contexts, UNICEF frequently works more directly with local and national NGOs, which have stronger community links and higher risk tolerance and, as a consequence, have better access. Interviews highlighted the passion and commitment that these organizations have, which has significantly improved UNICEF's humanitarian coverage. Examples include:

» In Somalia, in order to scale up its pre-famine response, UNICEF rapidly scaled up its partnerships with local and national NGOs, which have played a key role in expanding service delivery. Local and national NGOs tend to have much better access than their international counterparts, in addition to having a better understanding of local context and needs.

» In the Philippines, UNICEF adopted a strategy of implementing through selected local partners that engaged with the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao government to gain programmatic access to people in need of assistance. These trusted, local NGO partners had an established presence in Mindanao, a wealth of contextual knowledge and strong community acceptance. The combination of these factors allowed them to coordinate directly with local authorities and the Armed Forces of the Philippines to gain access to crisis-affected populations inside the restricted areas whenever possible.

» In the Central African Republic, the evaluation found that partnerships with national NGOs has tended to become the default strategy; it requires less resources and has been successful in accessing areas where international NGOs are reluctant to work. Through this approach, national NGOs have assisted UNICEF to increase its coverage. Partnerships with community-based organizations, particularly faith-based groups, have increased community ownership of activities by communities on the ground and achieved significant impact, particularly in areas where there have been tensions between religious groups.

The country case studies also revealed the limitations that some of these partners had in their technical capacity, which meant that delivery of programme quality was more variable. Where they had access to project areas, UNICEF section staff provided technical assistance and oversight and there were numerous examples of trainings that had occurred on quality standards and programme delivery.

Discussions with UNICEF staff across the case study countries revealed a perception that the increase in the number of partnerships with local and national NGOs, and the trainings that had been provided, were part of a broader strategic commitment to strengthening localization. While

UNICEF has a large number of partnerships with local and national NGOs, the findings of the evaluation suggest that this is motivated by issues such as cost-effectiveness, risk tolerance and access, rather than an institutional shift towards localization per se. The dissonance in these views seems to stem from a fundamental misunderstanding of the definition of localization, which is provided below (*see the following box*).

> ## Towards a definition of localization[230]
>
> LOCALIZATION: Localizing humanitarian response is a process of recognizing, respecting and strengthening the leadership by local authorities and the capacity of local civil society in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations and to prepare national actors for future humanitarian responses.
>
> LOCALIZED RESPONSE: A humanitarian response is considered localized when a local humanitarian responder is involved in the entire programme cycle: needs assessments, programme design and delivery, and final review and evaluation. A mere transfer of in-kind items from an international organization to a local humanitarian responder does not follow the spirit of the Grand Bargain commitments on localization.

Discussions with members of UNICEF's Partnership Review Committee in several of the case study countries highlighted challenges in the process of partners' selection, which limited the Committee's scope. In most instances, the competitive nature of the process requires that selected partners should be considered 'fit for purpose'. While UNICEF frequently provides technical training or, as a consequence of its Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) checks, may provide training on financial management or other aspects of delivery, there were few examples found of UNICEF undertaking a strategic approach to partnerships with local and national NGOs that were 'in the spirit of the Grand Bargain Commitments on localization'.[231]

Given that UNICEF outsources access to its partners, the evaluation found that it had quite limited engagement with its partners on issues related to access. In this respect, the findings of a recent access study undertaken on behalf of UNICEF is informative. Most implementing partners, however, tended to see UNICEF firstly as a donor, sometimes as a programme partner and/or advocate, and rarely as an access partner. This group described a low level of engagement with UNICEF on access issues. While some implementing partners described using UNICEF as a resource for access to problem-solving or decision-making, more often than not they handled access problems on their own. These implementing partners tended to describe a passive and or advisory role for UNICEF on access. Local partners' knowledge of humanitarian principles was similarly mixed, with many unable to name the key principles or explain how they operationalized them. While most partners espoused a community acceptance approach, they frequently came into contact with non-State entities, and it was often unclear how access was negotiated. The findings from a recent evaluation of WFP's humanitarian principles and access paints a similar picture (*see the following* Lesson *box*).

📖 LESSON

The fate of principled access in a competitive funding environment – Lessons from WFP[232]

The evaluation of WFP's policies on humanitarian principles and access found that while partners found it difficult to describe the WFP's approach to access, they all agreed that partner organizations must be able to deliver and must have access to relevant areas. For the most part, they therefore saw it as their own responsibility to gain and maintain access, and some noted they were primarily selected due to their ability to access a specific area. In a competitive environment, many partners felt compelled to maintain this access, even when this required significant compromises regarding principles. Many partners depend financially on WFP and therefore accept these compromises.

230 Fabre, Cyprien, *Localising the Response: World Humanitarian Summit – Putting policy into practice – The Commitments into Action Series*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, 2017.

231 Ibid.

232 This excerpt is taken from Steets et al., *Evaluation of WFP's Policies*.

The evaluation case studies revealed a similar finding for risk management. Interviews found that UNICEF provides limited support to its local and national NGO partners and largely transfers the risk associated with working in volatile environments. In the Central African Republic and north-east Nigeria, interviews with local partners highlighted that they had suffered a considerable number of attacks and kidnappings in delivering UNICEF's programme. As a consequence, they were keen to receive greater support. The challenge here is that while these concerns were raised during interviews with the evaluation team, it was unclear whether they had been directly communicated to UNICEF. It is important to add that this finding did not apply to all of the field missions. In Afghanistan, the Philippines and Somalia, the opposite trend was observed. In these countries, partners were keen to maintain a distance from UNICEF and had far more confidence in their own risk mitigation strategies. In Afghanistan, links between local NGOs and communities tended to be very strong and community acceptance strategies were frequently used, and in Somalia clan protection significantly reduced risks for local NGOs (although they only applied to NGOs from the local clan). On a more cautionary note, this level of proximity can also have important implications for the extent to which local NGOs may be willing or able to deliver principled assistance.

The most important issue is that partners have a good understanding of humanitarian principles and how to operationalize them, which underlines the importance that UNICEF prioritizes these issues in their partnerships. This should include monitoring access, encouraging open dialogue on access challenges, reporting access constraints and taking collective responsibility for access outcomes.[233]

The Somalia field mission offered a lesson in accessing particularly volatile environments through partnerships with 'hyper-local' NGOs or community-based organizations that have narrow access in certain parts of a country and limited security infrastructure. These organizations relied heavily on international partners for funding and also for operational support (*see the following* Lesson *box*).

📖 LESSON

The use of hyper-local NGOs to target hard-to-reach areas

An international NGO working in Somalia has developed a map of hard-to-reach areas using data from cluster needs assessments, security and political data, infrastructure existence, remoteness and road access. In these areas, community structures are frequently in place, and these are used to deliver community-driven projects. The international NGO provides training and funding, as well as the materials, and the community-based organization organizes the work. In some of the areas, it may be possible for the Government to travel to support monitoring. A model such as this could be an access enabler for UNICEF, with a focus on smaller, agile organizations that could target specific vulnerable or at-risk communities. The key challenge to partnerships such as these would be the extent to which UNICEF's model of partner support would be able to deliver this level of assistance.

Reports show that the UNICEF South Sudan CO has used similar approaches to those described above, recognizing that working with the right partners can be a key enabler of access. In addition to government and international NGO partners, the CO has partnered with a number of local NGOs. While this can present certain capacity limitations, it is considered to be more effective in gaining access to hard-to-reach locations due to the lower risk profile and greater acceptance with local communities and stakeholders. The CO is also working to expand its partnerships with community and faith-based organizations, which have large networks and often better capacities to negotiate access and navigate the complex operating environment in South Sudan.

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233 Harmer and Fox, *Research on Good Practices on Humanitarian Access*.

A nutrition officer weighs a young child at a UNICEF-supported Outpatient Therapeutic Programme in Baidoa, Somalia.

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6.3 International NGO partnerships

Interviews with some staff suggested a shift in UNICEF's partnerships away from international NGOs. However, while international NGO staff travel may often be restricted in complex humanitarian emergencies, their local staff more readily use low-profile approaches to gain access, which permits international NGOs to have closer links to programmes and maintain closer supervision of their partners. Some international NGOs also have a strong commitment to localization and strengthening partnership and, as a consequence, provide significant investment in capacity development of their local and national NGO

partners, which has the potential to offer a stronger delivery model. With this in mind, while international NGO partnerships may have additional costs associated with them, they retain the potential to deliver both coverage and quality, either directly or in partnership with local and national NGOs.

UNICEF works extensively through international NGOs, although among the sample of countries included in the evaluation, there were several in which there had been a perceptible shift towards local and national NGOs.[234] These were most evident in extremely volatile contexts

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234 This is based on feedback received from UNICEF staff during interviews with the evaluation team members rather than from an analysis of partner portfolios of funding trends over time.

PART SIX

WHAT PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES HAS UNICEF EMPLOYED AT FIELD LEVEL TO GAIN PRINCIPLED ACCESS AND IMPROVE COVERAGE AND QUALITY, AND WITH WHAT SUCCESS?

Grade 8 students practice reading at secondary school number 5, in Krasnohorivka, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine.

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where access for international agencies was considerably constrained. In contexts such as these, there was a widely held view that international NGOs were not cost-effective since they added an additional layer of administration. Moreover, as many of them worked with the same pool of partners as UNICEF, they were considered to have limited added value. In contexts such as the Central African Republic and Somalia, international NGOs were considered to lack access. In north-east Nigeria, the use of local and national partners were considered to be driven by cost, but also by a perceived lack of operational capacity among international NGOs. In Pakistan, international NGOs were hindered by the same bureaucratic impediments as United Nations agencies, which meant that they struggled to have access to areas where the needs were greatest.

The international NGOs that participated in the evaluation tended to view UNICEF as a donor and considered that its association with the United Nations limited its ability to work independently. International NGO staff tended to have a clearer understanding of humanitarian principles and invested more deeply in disseminating these within the organization. Several agencies had a specific focus on accessing hard-to-reach areas (e.g., in Afghanistan and Somalia) and had established elaborate access strategies to achieve this; they frequently also had well-established satellite offices in access-constrained areas (e.g., Local Government Areas in Borno State, Nigeria), which permitted them to exploit access opportunities when they arose. International NGOs generally had an independent security risk management capacity and frequently had close links to the International NGO Safety Organisation,[235] which is mandated to support NGOs to gain access to those in need. In countries where the United Nations security management system required that UNICEF travel in armed convoys (such as Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Mali), or where an integrated United Nations presence negatively influenced perceptions, international NGOs most frequently sought to maintain distance in an effort to avoid association. International NGOs valued UNICEF's cluster coordination role and saw potential in its HCT role, but did not consider it a front-line delivery agency and did not look to the organization for support in obtaining access.

While international NGO staff travel was frequently restricted in the case study countries, local staff more readily used low-profile approaches to gain access, which permitted international NGOs to have closer links to programmes and maintain closer supervision of their programmes. Some international NGOs also had a corporate commitment to strengthening partnership and, as a consequence, provided significant investment in capacity development of their local and national NGO partners, which offered a stronger delivery model. Taking these factors into account, while international NGO partnerships may have additional costs associated with them, they frequently have greater potential to deliver both coverage and quality, either directly or in partnership with local/national NGOs.

235 The International NGO Safety Organisation is a British charity that supports the safety of aid workers in high-risk contexts. It provides registered NGOs with a range of services, including real-time incident tracking, analytical reports, safety-related data and mapping, crisis management support, staff orientations and training. The organization's services assist NGOs with their day-to-day risk management responsibilities and improve their overall situational awareness to support evidence-based humanitarian access decisions.

6.4 Partnerships with United Nations agencies

At a CO level, UNICEF collaborates with a range of United Nations partners to deliver humanitarian assistance in access-constrained environments. Although the focus of these partnerships varies widely, one of the most beneficial, from a quality and coverage perspective, was the delivery of integrated MAM and SAM services with WFP, which offers significant benefits to those in need of assistance.

UNICEF is perceived by many of its United Nations partners as being comparatively more operational and outspoken on issues of access and, as a consequence, others look to UNICEF for leadership and expertise.[236] At a headquarters' level, initiatives to strengthen humanitarian effectiveness among UNICEF's access partners has prompted a convergence of interest on issues of inter-operability,[237] such as data-sharing and management, on developing collaborative systems for cash assistance and on strengthening partnership for resilience (*see section 7.3.3*). While UNICEF was considered a potential partner in each of these work streams, discussions suggested that it often maintained some distance and there was considered to be scope for it to engage more deeply. Where it has played a more transformational role is in working with United Nations partners to strengthen preparedness (*see section 7.3.2*).

At a CO level, UNICEF worked with a range of United Nations partners to deliver humanitarian assistance in access-constrained environments. From a coverage and quality perspective, the most significant partnership was with WFP in delivering integrated SAM/MAM services in Somalia. Globally, the mandate to manage acute malnutrition is divided between WHO, UNICEF and WFP. However, in certain situations, the strict adherence to the above mandates may not be possible due to a variety of factors such as access restrictions, insufficient resources and insecurity. Therefore, flexibility in mandates and support is essential to ensure that emergency life-saving nutrition services are provided, especially in complex and insecure

environments. Against this background, in late 2017, UNICEF and WFP in Somalia agreed to implement expanded admission criteria for children with acute malnutrition in selected inaccessible areas due to a high risk of insecurity. In other locations where either outpatient or therapeutic and supplementary feeding programmes are absent, WFP and UNICEF agreed which of the two agencies had the capacity and resources to fill the gap using the global nutrition cluster decision tool for emergencies and the UNICEF interim guidance. In the context of the pre-famine response in Somalia where access was constrained, agency operations were stretched and the needs were acute, the partnership made a significant contribution to improving coverage and provided a much higher-quality service *(see the following* Lesson *box).*

📖 LESSON

The potential benefits of strengthening the evidence base for the integration of SAM and MAM

For 30 years or more, the management of moderate and severe acute malnutrition has largely been managed through distinct programmes. This is reflected in (and increasingly a reflection of) United Nations institutional arrangements whereby WHO provides technical guidance on the provision of care for inpatient care of complicated SAM, UNICEF oversees uncomplicated SAM management in the community, and WFP is responsible for MAM. While the different institutional responsibilities can represent a barrier to harmonized programming, those working on the ground have moved to effect change in acute malnutrition management in order to improve continuity of care. This is reflected in several significant strands of research and pilot programmes currently under way (e.g., expanded protocols, simplified protocols for acute malnutrition treatment), implementation of combined protocols in some countries (e.g., the Sahel region) and increasing attention to prevention coupled with treatment. Despite a handful of initiatives, there is no global estimate of either the extent of 'joined-up' programming or, conversely, the extent of disconnect between SAM and MAM treatment programming. There would be value in consolidating the evidence base for integration as a means of assessing the contribution that it can make to improving coverage and quality.

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236 Harmer and Fox, *Research on Good Practices on Humanitarian Access*.

237 Interoperability describes the effort to optimize the response to the needs of affected people by making systems that are very different work better together in a predictable way, based on their respective comparative advantage, without co-opting them and while accommodating different values. See Hussein, Pia, *Interoperability: Humanitarian action in a shared space – OCHA Fit for the Future Series*, OCHA Policy and Studies Series, July 2015.

At the Timbuktu hospital, Harzatou Boucar Maïga and Zenebou Haïdara hold their children, Ibrahim, 7 months old, and Addramane, 6 months old. The children were both admitted to the hospital for severe acute malnutrition with complications and are taking therapeutic milk provided by UNICEF.

PART SEVEN:
TO WHAT EXTENT IS UNICEF'S HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE DESIGNED TO BE RELEVANT AND ADAPTED TO ENSURE ITS ONGOING RELEVANCE, EVOLVING NEEDS AND PRIORITIES?

This section examines the means by which UNICEF has ensured that its programmes remain relevant to those in need of assistance by undertaking context analysis, by engaging with communities and by linking humanitarian and development programming.

Summary of findings

- **7.1 CONTEXT ANALYSIS TO STRENGTHEN ACCESS:** Context analysis is essential for supporting and strengthening operational agility, but while UNICEF conducts and collects situational information, there was less evidence that it develops lighter, more operational analysis. The collection, synthesis and analysis of these data is an ongoing rather than a one-off task, but it can play an important role in assisting UNICEF to best position itself to identify and access those in greatest need, as well as offering the organization the opportunity to exploit changes in the context to allow short-term access.

- **7.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO STRENGTHEN ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY:** While UNICEF aspires to engage with communities in receipt of its assistance, it does not have a structured approach to accountability to affected people or a formal means of gauging community satisfaction with the coverage or quality of its programmes either directly or through its partners. This has important implications for the relevance and effectiveness of its programmes. In contexts where UNICEF does not have access or has periodic access to those that it works with, opportunities to strengthen acceptance are often missed.

- **7.3 LINKAGES BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES:** An area where UNICEF's practice has improved is in strengthening the linkages between its humanitarian and development programmes. The evaluation found that at both a strategic and operational level, UNICEF is more consistently seeking to reduce vulnerability and mitigate risks, as well as identify opportunities for systems strengthening. This shift offers a foundation to strengthen humanitarian-development linkages in the long term, although short-term benefits – in addressing gaps in humanitarian coverage or strengthening programme quality – were difficult to identify. While recent evaluations have documented deficiencies in UNICEF's preparedness that have affected the coverage and quality of its response, the roll-out of the new Preparedness Platform, linked to strengthened planning, and the adoption of 'no regrets' procurement policies offer opportunities to strengthen practice. While nexus-related concerns have attracted some criticism in the sector as a consequence of the tensions implicit in conflating humanitarian and development objectives, at a CO level, UNICEF field staff tended to take a pragmatic approach, which recognized the fundamental limitations of short-term humanitarian assistance and considered the current focus on resilience as an opportunity to try to find durable solutions, which have proved elusive in many of the case study countries.

In its 2014 research on 'Responding to Changing Needs', ALNAP paints a picture of a humanitarian sector not in crisis, but under severe strain as result of a 'perfect storm' of challenges.[238] In such dynamic contexts, essential strategies for humanitarian agencies to position themselves to respond to change included paying attention to context (section 7.1), being accountable, being shaped by recipients (section 7.2), and being connected to the longer-term perspective (section 7.3). The evaluation considers that each of these approaches is essential for UNICEF to maintain its relevance in complex humanitarian emergencies, and findings are given for each below.

7.1 Context analysis to strengthen access

Context analysis is essential for supporting and strengthening operational agility, but while UNICEF conducts and collects situational information, there was less evidence that it develops lighter, more operational analysis. The collection, synthesis and analysis of these data is an ongoing rather than a one-off task, but it can play an important role in assisting UNICEF to best position itself to identify and access those in greatest need, as well as offering it the opportunity to exploit changes in the context to allow short-term access.

238 See <www.alnap.org/blogs/responding-to-changing-needs-can-the-humanitarian-sector-adapt-to-the-new-normal>. See also Ramalingam, Ben, and John Mitchell, Responding to Change Needs? Challenges and opportunities for humanitarian action, Montreux XIII Meeting Paper and ALNAP, Montreux XIII Humanitarian Retreat, Convenors Conclusions, 2014.

The importance of context analysis and operational agility in volatile environments was a focus of UNICEF's Strengthening Humanitarian Action initiative.[239] Its importance was also emphasized in UNICEF's recent Access Study, which found that 'more than any other area, undertaking integrated analysis that is driven by field staff involved in access decision-making (rather than outsourced to headquarters or consultants), was identified by interviewees in this study as key to enabling access. Analysis should also be dynamic and iterative – which requires sustained investment in key informant networks and continuous, real-time updating of analysis tools'.[240]

The case studies revealed a number of analysis products that had been undertaken by UNICEF, which included conflict trends (e.g., Afghanistan), clan mapping (e.g., Somalia), strategic reflection (e.g., Yemen), as well as drawing on assessment data from humanitarian partners. Situation analysis is also obtained from the clusters and through specific assessments and surveys, which included the following:

» Situation assessment of Palestinian refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic, which provided information and data on the status and needs of this particular demographic population to inform its programming.[241]

» Also in the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF, in partnership with UNDP, supported the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour to conduct a national survey on people with disabilities and their inequitable access to services.[242]

» In Somalia, analysis on the drought and food security situation was obtained from the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit.[243]

However, across the case study countries, there was less evidence that UNICEF was developing lighter, more operational context analysis, a gap that several FO Chiefs raised during interviews. The implications of not undertaking this type of analysis are not easily observable as the result is the absence of action and missed opportunities rather than quantifiable outcomes, however, Nigeria offered some insights as to the gap that it presents (*see the following box*).

Missed opportunities to strengthen quality and expand access in north-east Nigeria

In responding to emerging humanitarian needs in Nigeria, UNICEF has had to extensively adapt its response. Its history of programming in north-east Nigeria has meant that it is better positioned than many – but the scale of the displacement has meant that UNICEF has had to continually expand its presence and programme as needs and access have increased. The shift over to a programme approach that links operational delivery through a cadre of third-party consultants alongside support to government staff was a pragmatic response to the challenge presented by insecurity and the scale of need, and it was informed by a scale-up plan. The scale-up went a considerable way to expanding the coverage of the programme. However, attaining and maintaining quality standards has been a slower process, and there were concerns voiced during the evaluation that UNICEF had not been able to deliver the expected level of quality. A range of stakeholders, including affected communities, humanitarian agencies and donors, raised a range of programme quality concerns. While the programme had a strong team that had performed well to scale-up delivery, the findings of the evaluation suggested that the context had shifted and a shift in partnerships and programme approaches offered it greater potential to strengthen quality and to position itself to exploit changes in access.

An example of good practice in context analysis was in South Sudan, where UNICEF has taken steps to strengthen its analysis and planning for access. In mid-2016, the CO developed a Humanitarian Access Tracker to monitor access incidents, analyse trends and their impact on children, and better plan strategies to address them. These products require investments in analysis and networking, but they ensure that UNICEF is well positioned to identify and access those in greatest need, as well as offer them the opportunity to exploit changes in the context to allow short-term access.

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239 See United Nations Children's Fund, Strengthening Humanitarian Action Initiative, W1-1 – Adaptability to Context, n.d.

240 Harmer and Fox, *Research on Good Practices on Humanitarian Access.*

241 Ibid.

242 UNICEF Syria key informants and UNICEF Syria *Country Office Annual Report*, 2017.

243 See <www.fsnau.org/>.

7.2 Community engagement to strengthen accountability and quality

While UNICEF has a draft framework to guide its community engagement, it does not have a structured approach to accountability to affected people or a means to routinely gauge community satisfaction with the coverage or quality of its programmes, either directly or through its partners. This has important implications for the relevance and effectiveness of its programmes. In contexts where UNICEF does not have access or has periodic access to those that it works with, opportunities to strengthen acceptance are often missed.

It is important to note that there is now considerable evidence of the value of community engagement and accountability, particularly in complex humanitarian emergencies where access is constrained. In these contexts, regular communication with communities can enable agencies to gain local support and to improve programme quality.[244] Where agency staff are not able to meet face-to-face, there is a need to strategically engage with communities at critical points in the planning cycle and offer feedback loops in order to respond to suggestions and complaints.[245] While accountability can be considered an end in itself, in the context of complex humanitarian emergencies, it must also be borne in mind that there are close links between the engagement of crisis-affected populations and acceptance (see section 5.3). Regular and sustained engagement with communities about their experiences of assistance builds important understanding of how humanitarian response is perceived and accepted.

In 2017, UNICEF outlined its vision of accountability; 'all vulnerable, at-risk and crisis-affected girls, boys, women and men supported through its humanitarian action are able to hold UNICEF to account for promoting and protecting their rights and generating effective results

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A former child soldier who was shot through the leg while fighting and left for dead by his colleagues walks through a Protection of Civilians (POC) camp in South Sudan.

for them, taking into account their needs, concerns, preferences, and working in ways that enhance their dignity, capacities and resilience'.[246] This comprehensive articulation of accountability reflects the emphasis placed on strengthening community engagement and accountability in UNICEF's 2018–2021 Strategic Plan.[247] A conceptual framework has been developed by UNICEF, which articulates six components that are listed in the table below alongside the relevant section in this report where each issue is addressed *(see the following box)*.[248]

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244 Haver and Carter, *What It Takes*.

245 Steets, Julia, Elias Sagmeister and Lotte Ruppert, *Eyes and Ears on the Ground: Monitoring aid in insecure environments*, Secure Access in Volatile Environments, October 2016.

246 United Nations Children's Fund, *Putting People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action: Integrating accountability to affected people*, draft, UNICEF, June 2017.

247 UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021, Informal Briefing to the Executive Board, August 2017.

248 Noting that UNICEF's accountability framework and the Analytical Framework for the evaluation are mismatched, those parts of the framework that are linked directly to engagement and accountability will be examined in this section, while broader aspects linked to context analysis, coordination and partnership and capacity-building are dealt with elsewhere in this report.

SIGNPOSTING OF THE COMPONENTS OF UNICEF'S ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK IN THE EVALUATION REPORT[249]

Conceptual framework	Section reference
1. Evidence-based contextual analysis	7.1
2. Communication and information	This section
3. Community engagement in design and management	This section
4. Dialogue, feedback and complaints	This section and 5.3
5. Coordination and partnership	6.1, 6.2, 6.3
6. Strengthening local capacity	6.1, 6.2
7. Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse	Outside the scope of the evaluation

The evaluation found broad support from UNICEF staff on the principle of accountability, and there was consensus that UNICEF should be accountable to people who receive its assistance. What was far less clear to staff was how these obligations could be met in the context of UNICEF's partnership model, particularly in access-constrained environments. The assessment of key components of UNICEF's accountability framework below serves to underline the need to further strengthen this area of UNICEF's practice.

7.2.1 COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Information provision was felt by many UNICEF staff to be an area of competence, with the caveat that where access was constrained, the timeliness and completeness of information was a challenge. Information linked to programme delivery (e.g., WASH or health

activities) and for behaviour change via UNICEF's Communication for Development teams was considered to be a particular strength. In contrast, information for the purposes of accountability – such as providing contact details, outlining project plans, describing the existence of complaints mechanisms and how to use them – was far more variable and largely depended on the approach of the implementing partner. The challenge in seeking to gauge the adequacy of UNICEF's information provision was that UNICEF did not monitor this itself and hence was ill-positioned to comment. There was also some concern that the approaches used were often fairly rudimentary due to a lack of time and the limited options that were available. Despite this, some innovative approaches to communicate with affected communities in access-constrained environments were noted in the Syrian Arab Republic, where feedback

FIGURE 13: A SNAPSHOT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PROGRAMME DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT IN THE EVALUATION FIELD MISSIONS

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON IN MARAWI CITY, PHILIPPINES, MALE
We asked the NGO to take account of family size when planning their assistance and they agreed to do so

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON IN HERAT PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN FEMALE
The NGO talked to a community counsellor who informed them of our priority needs

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON IN MAIDUGURI, NIGERIA, MALE
No one has told us how the programme works although on average one in every three children has received a school kit. I've got 6 children and 3 of them have a kit

We're part of a cash programme but we still don't understand how the programme works. Some of us have received cash and some of us haven't

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON IN MARAWI CITY, PHILIPPINES, MALE

249 This box contains an examination of UNICEF's performance against the framework outlined in its draft framework on accountability to affected people, June 2017.

channels were advertised on labels that were stuck on to relief items, and in Iraq, where religious leaders were enlisted as mobilizers to raise awareness during the cholera response.

7.2.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

The evaluation team engaged with communities in four field missions and found that the diversity in the ways that communities experienced UNICEF's practices, programmes and partnerships meant that it was difficult to identify patterns. Snapshots from discussions with affected people during the evaluation provide a mixed picture of how communities have engaged in the design and management of UNICEF-funded programmes.[250]

While the feedback received during focus group discussions was mixed, the team found that very few people who were interviewed had directly participated in the design and management of programmes. Of greater concern is that they frequently did not understand the basis on which decisions had been made about how the programme had been targeted or the nature of their entitlements. Where consultation had occurred, it tended to be via community leaders; in the Central African Republic, Nigeria and the Philippines, concern was expressed that community representatives either did not represent all parts

of the community (and in particular, women) or that they prioritized their own needs above others. When aspects of the programme were discussed, it was frequently the case that communities had limited information about key aspects of their design and implementation, such as targeting and entitlements. The findings of the evaluation are consistent with the 2018 *State of the Humanitarian System* report,[251] which noted that while there have been improvements in the level of participation of affected communities, it was a 'limited form of participation' that '[did] not seem, in most cases, to have been influential in creating or changing humanitarian plans'.

The findings are also supported by the evidence from recent UNICEF humanitarian evaluations, which suggest that the engagement by UNICEF and its partners of communities in design and management is a considerable challenge, particularly in complex humanitarian emergencies where access is constrained, which often precludes active participation. The 2016 evaluation of UNICEF's Central African Republic response found that 'UNICEF strategies provided little space for consultation with communities'. In the Central African Republic, the terms of PCA did not require that beneficiary communities are involved in planning and implementation, although a checklist for PCA approval stipulated that the partner must be willing to involve the beneficiary in the planning and

FIGURE 14: COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES OF FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS MECHANISMS IN THE FIELD MISSIONS

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON IN HERAT PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN, MALE

We're often asked to fill in surveys and assessment forms but we're still waiting to receive feedback

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON IN MARAWI CITY, PHILIPPINES, MALE

We'd like to have direct contact with those providing assistance so we can raise concerns about how relief is distributed but we've been told this isn't possible

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON IN BAMBARI, CAR PROVINCE, FEMALE

We aren't able to feedback to the NGO but we are sometimes able to raise concerns with the staff in the health centre who pass our complaints on

A Community volunteer tells us to wash our hands but there is no soap in the camp. We have requested some but she tells women to use ash from the cooking fire

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON IN MAIDUGURI, NIGERIA, FEMALE

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250 The content reproduced in the figure was obtained during focus group discussions with communities receiving assistance provided by UNICEF's partners. The feedback was translated from the local language into English. It provides an indication of the type and range of comments received.

251 ALNAP, *The State of the Humanitarian System.*

management of projects and partner interviews suggested that UNICEF programme priority areas are determined by UNICEF policies, not consultation with communities.[252] The Yemen Humanitarian Assistance evaluation gave similar findings about the lack of consultation with communities, albeit as a consequence of insecurity and lack of access, which resulted in programme design based on 'existing information or from what government and media sources were providing'. Lack of community mobilization on the part of UNICEF's partners was noted during implementation.[253] The Real-Time Evaluation of the Kenya drought response is of interest, as access was not constrained; however, the report notes that feedback collected from the communities indicates 'a lack of community engagement, accountability to communities, and weaknesses in enabling communities to participate in many aspects of the programming cycle (especially in community based early warning, contingency planning, phased response planning, and in utilizing communities' capacities and knowledge)'.[254] Evaluations of the Somalia pre-famine response and Yemen cholera evaluation do not elaborate on UNICEF's engagement with communities.

7.2.3 DIALOGUE, FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

Interviews with UNICEF's local and national NGO partners in the case study countries revealed a mosaic of different approaches to eliciting feedback and complaints which included vastly varying practice. At one end of the spectrum, there were a number of examples given of different Complaints Response Mechanisms, such as the use of dedicated phone lines and complaints boxes. At the other end of the spectrum, affected people spoke of being ill-informed about their entitlements and felt powerless to raise this, or did not know how to do so. During the field missions, the evaluation team collected a snapshot of community experiences, which are reproduced in figure 14.[255]

Community consultations with internally displaced persons and conflict-affected communities in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Nigeria and the Philippines highlighted the challenges faced by people who sought to ask questions or complain about the assistance that they were receiving. While some participants said they knew how to raise concerns with the agency implementing the programme, there were very few examples given of issues that had been raised that had received a response or redress. It is noteworthy that contexts where governments were playing a role in the distribution of assistance attracted considerable criticism for the lack of accountability.

The evaluation did also find good practice in engaging with communities. Programmes in Mali, Pakistan and Somalia offered good examples of UNICEF operating project-level Complaints Response Mechanisms using RapidPro, including in contexts where UNICEF staff were unable to access communities.[256] In Yemen, an innovative approach termed the WhatsApp Communication Tree is being used to share information and solicit feedback, especially in locations with 3G telephony services. Key messages are drafted centrally and sent through a platform of community mobilizers (which include community volunteers, religious leaders, youth initiatives and partners) in targeted districts, who further share with local WhatsApp groups they manage. The role of the WhatsApp group managers is to share information at the community level and to flag feedback back to the national WhatsApp group. Most recently, this has been used for the cholera and diphtheria response.

Findings from the State of the Humanitarian System research suggestion that while Complaints Response Mechanisms such as these are increasingly being used, there is still significant progress that needs to be made. Some 36 per cent of participants in the practitioner survey that accompanied the study reported that their organization

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252 Lawday et al., *The UNICEF Response to the Crisis in the Central African Republic*.

253 Haider et al., *Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance, UNICEF Yemen Country Office*.

254 Haily et al., *Real-Time Evaluation*.

255 The content reproduced in the figure was obtained during focus group discussions with communities receiving assistance provided by UNICEF's partners. The feedback was translated from the local language into English. It provides an indication of the type and range of comments received.

256 Produced by UNICEF's global Innovations Labs in collaboration with Nyuruka, a Rwandan software development firm, and drawing on eight years of experience with SMS-based applications, RapidPro is a an open-source platform of applications that can help governments deliver rapid and real-time information and connect communities. See <www.unicef.org/innovation/innovation_75975.html>, accessed 6 November 2018.

routinely used complaints mechanisms.[257, 258] It is important to note that Complaints Response Mechanisms can only can make a contribution to strengthening accountability if they are linked to a formal process to review and respond to the concerns that are received, and take action such as making changes to programmes. The evaluation encountered few such systems, the implication being that even in instances where complaints are systematically collected, they are rarely systematically responded to.

While the patchwork of approaches that were discussed with UNICEF staff and its partners during the evaluation provide a means of eliciting feedback and determining satisfaction levels for some of UNICEF's humanitarian services, it is still some way from achieving the aspirations outlined in UNICEF's draft framework on accountability to affected people.[259]

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

Improving accountability in humanitarian action using RapidPro

Strengthening accountability through the use of RapidPro in Pakistan[260]

In 2015, UNICEF pioneered a new feedback mechanism for those in humanitarian situations. Recognizing the high penetration of mobile phones, including in Temporary Displaced Populations, UNICEF's WASH programme developed a real-time feedback system based on RapidPro. This solicited real-time feedback from communities who received hygiene kits provided as part of humanitarian response, requesting views on the contents and condition of these kits as well as potential improvements. While this case study focused on feedback for a single supply item, the experience has since been used to develop other feedback systems for more complex programmes.

Strengthening two-way communication in UNICEF's cash response in Somalia[261]

In partnership with UNICEF Somalia, Africa's Voices Foundation developed an innovative approach to build accountability into humanitarian programming by using technologies that are accessible to affected populations. Beneficiaries received assistance by topping up their biometric registration (SCOPE) card at an NGO's office, and then redeeming their cash at a financial service provider. Africa's Voices Foundation supported this through the following:

1. Using the WFP's SCOPE database, voice messages were sent to all registered cash transfer beneficiaries in Bay, Gedo, Lower Juba and Mogadishu. Recipients were told about their cash entitlement, how to claim it, and how to raise an issue by sending an SMS (free).

2. SMS received through UNICEF's RapidPro platform were automatically directed for analysis.

3. The messages were categorized and manually labelled by Somali-speaking research assistants, according to categories established in collaboration with UNICEF.

4. Automated SMS responses, designed with UNICEF, were sent to beneficiaries based on the category of their message.

5. Emerging incidents and urgent cases were reported immediately to UNICEF Somalia.

6. Africa's Voices Foundation subsequently developed an interactive dashboard to allow UNICEF near-time insight into systemic programme bottlenecks.

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257 ALNAP, *The State of the Humanitarian System.*

258 The research included an online survey aimed at humanitarian staff working in country programmes, which received 1,170 responses.

259 UNICEF, *Putting People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action.*

260 McBride, Elliot, *Hygiene Kit Feedback in Rural Pakistan Using the RapidPro SMS System*, UNICEF Pakistan, May 2016.

261 Africa's Voices Foundation and United Nations Children's Fund, *Using Digital Communications for Accountable and Adaptive Humanitarian Programmes*, October 2017.

Two girls read through their notebook at the Accelerated Learning Centre (ALC) in Sharak e Muhajireen village in Darikundi Province, Afghanistan.

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Towards an assessment of UNICEF's performance

UNICEF does not routinely require partners to engage with communities, nor does it receive feedback from partner mechanisms systematically. Discussions with staff highlighted that there is an 'assumption' that it works with NGOs that have good links to communities or means of eliciting feedback that can assist in strengthening humanitarian responses. However, UNICEF does not explicitly require its partners to involve communities in project design and implementation or ensure accountability to affected people through feedback/complaints mechanisms. Feedback obtained from staff and partners during the evaluation suggested that community engagement often focused on providing information to communities about projects or on promoting behaviour change rather than eliciting feedback. However, even when partners had feedback mechanisms in place (such as a hotline for nutrition programmes in the Marawi response in the Philippines), UNICEF did not systematically receive information from these. The implication of this is that UNICEF would not necessarily know if there were serious complaints or quality issues raised by communities which it needed to follow up on. Linked to this, there was limited evidence from partners that the feedback received from communities was systematically used to adapt their programmes. The findings of this evaluation serve to underline the recommendation made in UNICEF's 2010–2016 Evaluation Synthesis, which considered that

meeting UNICEF's commitments on accountability to affected people 'requires a more proactive, consistent and strategic approach [and] should be a fundamental requirement for all UNICEF's humanitarian action – not an added bonus'.[262]

7.3 Linkages between humanitarian and development programmes

An area where UNICEF's practice has improved is in strengthening the linkages between its humanitarian and development programmes. The evaluation found that at both a strategic and operational level, UNICEF is more consistently seeking to reduce vulnerability and mitigate risks, as well as identify opportunities for systems strengthening. This shift offers a foundation to strengthen humanitarian-development linkages in the long term, although short-term benefits – in addressing gaps in humanitarian coverage or strengthening programme quality – were difficult to identify. While recent evaluations have documented deficiencies in UNICEF's preparedness that have affected the coverage and quality of its response, the roll-out of the new Preparedness Platform, linked to strengthened planning and the adoption of 'no regrets' procurement policies, offer opportunities to strengthen practice. While nexus-related concerns have attracted some criticism in the sector as a consequence of the tensions implicit in conflating humanitarian and development objectives, at a CO level, UNICEF field staff tended to take a pragmatic approach, which recognized the fundamental limitations of short-term humanitarian assistance and considered the current focus on resilience as an opportunity to try to find durable solutions that have proved elusive in many of the case study countries.

UNICEF's 2018 briefing paper on its approach to the humanitarian-development nexus, notes that the issue is one that has received attention over many years, but suggested that it was not done systematically by COs. In order to address this, UNICEF's 2018–2021 Strategic Plan places far greater emphasis on integrating UNICEF's humanitarian

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262 Ibid.

and development mandates with a view to reaching 'reach better "collective outcomes" for children through enhanced humanitarian and development programming'.

Given the breadth of the framework and the fact that the changes were rolled out after the period under evaluation,

this section will be restricted to an assessment of how risk-informed programming, preparedness and nexus programming in complex humanitarian emergencies have strengthened UNICEF's coverage and quality. Key programme and operational strategies and financing are addressed in other parts of this report *(see the figure below)*.

SIGNPOSTING OF THE COMPONENTS OF UNICEF'S HUMANITARIAN/DEVELOPMENT NEXUS FRAMEWORK IN THIS REPORT

Humanitarian-development nexus in UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021	Section reference
Key programme and operational strategies	
• SYSTEM STRENGTHENING AND LOCALIZATION of humanitarian and development crisis response to improve the delivery of essential services to the most disadvantaged children.	6.1
• STRENGTHENING SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS to be ready to scale up cash transfers in emergencies.	5.5
• COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/putting people at the centre of humanitarian action, building on development programming community engagement, including investments in real-time monitoring at scale to support collective feedback mechanisms and strengthen accountability to affected populations.	7.2
Enablers for programme and operational strategies	
• RISK-INFORMED PROGRAMMING to focus development efforts on areas and populations most vulnerable to risks, and humanitarian action to contribute to longer-term resilience of systems.	This section
• PREPAREDNESS, investing both in shorter-term activities to get ready to respond to crisis and in longer-term shock-responsive and risk-informed national systems.	This section
Inter-agency system-wide strategies	
• Leadership and coordination with the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, UNCT and HCT, as well as IASC mechanism and United Nations Joint Steering Committee; multi-year inter-agency humanitarian response strategies and plans that contribute to collective outcomes, shared with development plans, towards reducing people's needs, risks and vulnerabilities and increasing their resilience; coordinated needs assessments and joint analysis between humanitarian and development actors inform inter-agency humanitarian and development planning processes.	Not included
• Innovative, principled, predictable and flexible financing in support of UNICEF programmes and advocacy for children, including for preparedness, humanitarian action linking to longer-term programming, and localization.	8.3

7.3.1 RISK-INFORMED PROGRAMMING

In UNICEF, risk-informed programming aims to 'strengthen resilience to shocks and stresses by identifying and addressing the root causes and drivers of risk, including vulnerabilities, lack of capacity, and exposure to various shocks and stresses'.[263] It necessitates a robust risk analysis of the multiple hazards faced by households and communities, and requires governments and other partners to be involved in the design or adjustment

of programmes to ensure that they make a proactive commitment to reducing risk. UNICEF's engagement stems from its endorsement of key global initiatives that address issues of risk, such as the Sustainable Development Goals,[264] the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction,[265] the Paris Climate Agreement[266] and the World Humanitarian Summit.[267] In support of this, UNICEF's 2014–2017 Strategic Plan prioritized risk-

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263 United Nations Children's Fund, *Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming,* UNICEF, April 2018.

264 *See* <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>, accessed 17 January 2019.

265 *See* <www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework>, accessed 17 January 2019.

266 *See* <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>, accessed 17 January 2019.

267 *See* <www.agendaforhumanity.org/summit>, accessed 17 January 2019.

informed programming, and in 2017 a three-part guidance module was published.[268] This builds on the evidence base that was constructed in a study commissioned by the Programme Division in 2014.[269]

Across the case studies, it was not possible to comprehensively assess the extent to which programmes routinely identified, assessed and addressed priority risks, particularly in countries where UNICEF was engaged in scaled-up humanitarian response, which tended to draw resources away from broader analysis and planning. However, a review of Country Programme Management Plans provided reassurance that risks were frequently identified and that programme plans sought to mitigate many of these. What was harder to evidence was the extent to which UNICEF's planning aspirations were being realized in practice.[270]

Where the strongest evidence exists in practice is in those countries where UNICEF's risk-informed programming module is being rolled out,[271] including Pakistan, which offered an opportunity to examine the shift that was occurring – albeit in a context of transition from humanitarian response to longer-term programming in the northwest of the country *(see the following* Good Practice *box).*

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

The approach of the Pakistan CO to risk-informed programming

In 2017 and 2018, initiatives by the UNICEF Peshawar Field Office to integrate preparedness and risk-informed programming across sectoral programmes included:

- HEALTH: Capacity development included training of trainers in each of the four provinces UNICEF works in on community-based disaster risk reduction, with support for district roll-out. To strengthen the Government's disaster preparedness and resilience, health-care providers were trained on community-based disaster risk management in FATA.

- NUTRITION: To enable the Government to respond effectively to the nutrition needs during and after a disaster, health-care professionals from FATA were trained on nutrition in emergencies.

- WASH: In 2017, focus shifted towards community-based risk management plans to support local resilience. Risk mapping was completed in four disaster-prone districts, with 123 community maps completed. To enhance the capacity of government and humanitarian partners for emergency preparedness and response.

- EDUCATION: UNICEF is supporting federal, provincial and district authorities and communities to develop and implement child-centred disaster risk reduction, risk mitigation and disaster risk management plans. UNICEF supported schools in five districts of KP to develop and implement community-based disaster risk reduction mechanisms, including School Safety Plans as a model for future scale-up linked to the new National Disaster Management Authority's School Safety Framework.

- CHILD PROTECTION: The shift in the implementation modality of the Child Protection Van project from NGO partners directly to the Social Welfare Department seems to have greater potential for strengthening the institutional capacity of the government department in managing community-based projects. It is anticipated that this will strengthen institutional resilience.

In 2017, UNICEF Pakistan updated its multi-hazard cross-sectoral Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan to guide preparedness actions and potential response for the year, resulting in 40 Contingency PCAs being signed with implementing partners. Contingency stock was pre-positioned for 100,000 people and 27 long-term agreements for goods and services were established to mobilize humanitarian services and additional supplies for potential response.

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268 United Nations Children's Fund, *Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming (GRIP) Module*, UNICEF, 2017.

269 Vine Management Consulting, *UNICEF Study on Linking Development and Humanitarian Programming: Final report,* January 2016.

270 For example, the Afghanistan field mission found that UNICEF's programme strategies each contained a risk analysis and an associated output on strengthening humanitarian response in light of these. However, there was insufficient time and documentary evidence to determine the extent to which each programme had used these to develop practical risk mitigation strategies.

271 The approach was initially piloted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, India and Malawi and is now being rolled out more broadly.

Good practice was also identified in Ukraine, where UNICEF's comprehensive Water Risk Assessment has generated strategic insights that guide the sector's investments in sustainable water and sanitation service provision well beyond immediate humanitarian needs. Similarly, in education, the Ukraine CO has tailored and piloted a 'safe school'[272] concept in conflict-affected schools near the contact line, and successfully used this experience to mainstream the concept in national education reform. The Somalia field mission noted good practice in seeking to strengthen the focus on risk-informed programming as a means of seeking to support the country to move out of the cycle of environmental and conflict-related crises. A central pillar of UNICEF's strategy to achieve this is to develop the capacity of staff, partners and government for risk-informed programming in order to support and protect results in high-risk and fragile contexts.[273]

7.3.2 PREPAREDNESS[274]

The evaluation sought to examine how preparedness had contributed to improving the coverage and quality of response, with recent humanitarian evaluations offering an important source of evidence. Summary findings are documented below (*see the figure below*).

THE CONTRIBUTION THAT PREPAREDNESS HAS MADE TO UNICEF'S HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN RECENT CRISES

Event	Description of how preparedness strengthened the coverage and quality of UNICEF's response
UNICEF's response to the Syrian Arab Republic crisis, 2011–2015[275]	UNICEF's ability to respond was limited by a lack of preparedness and the absence of a clear UNICEF-specific strategy, as well as an inability to actively inform programmes with situational analysis. As a result, the effectiveness, relevance and coverage of the response were to some extent hampered.
UNICEF's response to the crisis in the Central African Republic, 2013–2015[276]	Preparedness has been a major weakness in the Central African Republic. UNICEF lacked a plan to deal with a rapid deterioration of the emergency, and this resulted in late sectoral responses. The UNICEF CO and partners interviewed recognize that preparedness was weak and lacked proper contingency planning.
UNICEF's response to the Yemen conflict, 2015–2016[277]	The Early Warning Early Action document identifies potential hazards and vulnerabilities in Yemen. Some of the areas identified include conflict/civil war, drought and acute nutritional crisis. However, it had not anticipated the situation in Yemen to turn into an international conflict, affecting more than 21 million people, including more than 9 million children.
UNICEF's response to the Yemen cholera outbreak, 2018[278]	By general agreement, UNICEF was not well prepared to respond to the 2017 epidemic, nor was the response system as a whole. The possibility of an epidemic had been foreseen in the contingency planning exercises of 2016, but not cholera specifically, and nothing on this scale. No particular action was specified, and planning for epidemic response was not given priority among the competing humanitarian priorities. In short, UNICEF had not planned for this eventuality and, along with the rest of the humanitarian system, it was taken by surprise when it occurred.

The four evaluations are consistent in linking a lack of preparedness with delays in UNICEF's response, which adversely affected both its coverage and the effectiveness of its response in the short-medium term, as it was necessary to build analysis, plan a response and procure relief items. In the case of Yemen, UNICEF had a plan in place, but it did not adequately cover the scale (in the event of the conflict) or the nature of the crisis (in the case of cholera). This evidence suggests that UNICEF has progress to make in its preparations and anticipation of crises, although similar findings apply to the humanitarian community more broadly.

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272 'Safe schools' aim to ensure quality and inclusive learning for all Ukrainian children, especially the most vulnerable. The concept of school safety includes prevention of, preparedness for and, when necessary, recovery from all threats to children's lives and well-being, whether they occur at school or on the way to and from school. It integrates principles of child-friendliness, physical school safety and a protective learning environment.

273 UNICEF Somalia, *Draft Country Programme Document:* Somalia, United Nations, E/ICEF/2017/P/L.13, 2017.

274 Please note that the focus of this section is on programme preparedness; preparedness measures for logistics and supply will be addressed in section 8.4.4.

275 Avenir Analytics, *Evaluation of UNICEF's Humanitarian Response to the Syria crisis.*

276 Lawday et al., *The UNICEF Response to the Crisis in the Central African Republic.*

277 Haider et al., *Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance, UNICEF Yemen Country Office, 2016.*

278 Darcy et al., *Evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 Response to the Cholera Epidemic in Yemen.*

An adolescent is in the second to last grade of primary school and attends a temporary learning space in Bangui, Central African Republic.

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UNICEF has responded positively to these lessons and has revised its approach to preparedness planning in 2016 and 2017 with the development of an online platform that was rolled out to all COs in 2018. the Emergency Preparedness Platform is underpinned by the corporate Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response and a new humanitarian learning package.[279] It includes mandatory minimum preparedness actions and standards for analysing risks and systematic contingency planning and monitoring of progress towards agreed preparedness standards.

While it is too early to assess the results of UNICEF's new preparedness platform, UNICEF's performance in strengthening its preparedness is examined in a number of sections of this report, including:

» An essential aspect of preparedness is capacity-building so that country programmes can flex from development to emergency action when conditions merit (action 4.2).[280] While there was evidence that the process of preparing contingency PCAs was happening at a country level, evaluation findings suggest that investment in strategic capacity-building is less well advanced. UNICEF's focus on seeking to strengthen government systems and departments for humanitarian response (such as in Pakistan) is positive. However, in other contexts (for example, north-east Nigeria), the non-governmental sector may be best placed to deliver as first responders in the short term *(see sections 6.1, 6.2 and 8.4).*

» The case study countries highlighted the significant progress made by Supply and Logistics in the adoption and use of a 'no regrets' policy (e.g., north-east Nigeria), in strengthening local procurement for nutrition response (e.g., the Somalia pre-famine response), and in country-level analysis and contingency planning for transportation and supply of relief goods (e.g., Afghanistan and the Philippines). These issues are examined in greater detail in section 8.4.4.

» The evaluation found UNICEF's Simplified Standard Operating Procedures to be comprehensive and, where applied, invaluable to staff engaged in humanitarian response. However, there is scope to strengthen these further by addressing inconsistencies in how the procedures are understood, implemented and where simplifications are granted *(see section 8.4.1).*

» The use of surge staff to fill gaps in humanitarian experience and technical knowledge played a pivotal role in strengthening the coverage of the humanitarian responses in Nigeria and Somalia. The use of experienced surge staff was also found to be instrumental in assisting programmes to adopt more relevant approaches, which assisted in delivering higher-quality services to affected people.

» UNICEF's preparedness work has also benefited from the use of innovative technologies, such as in Mali *(see the following* Good Practice *box).* The use of drones and SMS platforms have the potential to strengthen planning, analysis of risk and alerts, particularly in relation to natural disasters such as floods – although there are discussions about the relevance of these approaches to more complex emergencies also.

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279 See United Nations Children's Fund, *Preparedness for Emergency Response in UNICEF: Guidance note 2016,* UNICEF, December 2016, and United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response,* UNICEF, December 2016.

280 Highlighted under action 4.2 in UNICEF's evaluation synthesis; see UNICEF, *Towards Improved Emergency Responses.*

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

The use of drone technology for flood preparedness in Mali

In 2016, in collaboration with the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, the Directorate of Civil Protection and Alcyon, UNICEF Mali launched an innovative pilot project designed to support decision-making for emergency response and preparedness using online data generated through a geomatics platform using drone technology – the first project of its kind worldwide.[281] The platform was intended to support the analysis of different aspects of vulnerability from diverse risks (predominantly flooding and other climatic factors), and allows UNICEF and partners to predict how populations would potentially be affected, as well as develop a response based on the geomatics assessment. Over the course of the pilot, data were collected through drone flights hovering over the flood-prone area of Markala (Segou) and an SMS tool was set up, serving as an early warning system. UNICEF and partners provided support to strengthen the capacity of its partners to use the technologies. The pilot was made possible through Global Thematic Humanitarian Funds and although promising, it was concluded at the end of 2017.

The challenges faced by the humanitarian community in preparing and adequately responding to emergencies underlines the importance of working at an inter-agency level, and UNICEF has contributed to strengthening practice in its partnership with, OCHA, UNHCR and WFP in the 2014 United Kingdom Department for International Development-funded Ready to Respond project. The project sought to strengthen emergency preparedness and forecast returns on investment generated by emergency preparedness in relation to the time and funds spent on emergency response (*see the following box*).

UNICEF's role in building the evidence base for investment in preparedness[282]

Across the four agencies, the Ready to Respond project analysed preparedness investments of $11.1 million across a diverse range of early interventions, including supply pre-positioning, contingency contracting with partners, infrastructure development and data systems. This investment generated $20.3 million in net savings towards future emergency responses, representing a significant return on investment. For the 34 UNICEF investments analysed through Ready to Respond, on average, more than $4 was saved for every $1 spent, and operational speed in the emergency response improved by 12.8 days. In addition, preparedness increased the speed of response by 14 days on average.[283, 284] While the findings are encouraging, the most important question is the extent to which the shifts in practice have been institutionalized, which the evaluation was unable to determine.

7.3.3 ASSESSMENT OF THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF LINKING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The evaluation sought to assess the complementarity between UNICEF's humanitarian and development work and the effect of linkages on coverage and quality outcomes. It also sought to identify programmes through which UNICEF was seeking to address chronic vulnerabilities, and in so doing, address some of the factors which drive conflict and instability. UNICEF has significant guidance and case study material to assist COs in this. key reference documents include the 2014 case studies on 'Flexible Humanitarian – Development Programming', the 2016 'UNICEF Study on Linking Development and Humanitarian Programming' and the 2016 Study on 'Enhanced Programme and Operational Support in Fragile Contexts' and associated case studies.

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281   United Nations Children's Fund, *Consolidated Emergency Report: Mali 2016*, UNICEF, 2017.

282   OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, *Return on Investment for Emergency Preparedness Study: Methodology and findings,* November 2017.

283   UNICEF Executive Board, *Update on Humanitarian Action with a Focus on Emergency Preparedness*, First regular session 2018, UNICEF, 2017.

284   The Boston Consulting Group, *UNICEF/WFP Return on Investment for Emergency Preparedness Study: Final report,* UNICEF and World Food Programme, January 2015.

Despite the challenges presented by complex humanitarian emergencies, findings from the case studies show that significant attention has been placed by UNICEF on strengthening the nexus between its short-term and long-term support. They offered a range of different strategies that UNICEF has used to strengthen linkages and reduce vulnerabilities, with an important success factor being the willingness of the state to engage and its capacity to do so, which echoes a key finding from UNICEF's 2014–2015 study[285] (this issue is examined in more detail in section 6.1 of this report).

While nexus-related concerns have attracted some criticism in the sector as a consequence of the tensions implicit in conflating humanitarian and development objectives, at a CO level, UNICEF field staff tended to take a pragmatic approach, which recognized the fundamental limitations of short-term humanitarian assistance and considered the current focus on resilience as an opportunity to try to find durable solutions, which have proved elusive in many of the case study countries. This interest was reflected in the breadth of initiatives that had been taken to find innovative or workable strategies to address longer-term vulnerabilities through support to resilience programming, as the following examples demonstrate:

» In Mali, UNICEF has taken the initiative to work with others to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus. In May–June 2018, OCHA and UNDP co-organized the second regional multi-stakeholder workshop on the 'New Way of Working'[286] for West and Central Africa, with participation from a broad range of stakeholders.[287] The recent visit of the UNICEF Executive Director to Mali has assisted in focusing attention on the potential opportunities for UNICEF to engage. The increased attention to the nexus is reflected in Mali's 2018 HRP, which identifies five key clusters to develop initial nexus strategies (food security, nutrition, health, WASH and education).[288] In the context of government and state fragility, it is through concerted and joint initiatives that there may be greater progress made in addressing vulnerability in chronic crises such as these.

» In Somalia, resilience has been an area that UNICEF has shifted towards, recognizing the importance of strengthening the fragile structures that exist.[289] UNICEF's approach to resilience lays emphasis on strengthening national systems and capacities to sustain basic services for the most vulnerable on the one hand, and developing capacity of staff, partners and government for risk-informed programming in order to support and protect results in high-risk and fragile contexts,[290] on the other. UNICEF has engaged in joint efforts to build resilience with FAO and WFP, although internal and external interviews highlighted the fact that beyond the proposal, initial efforts at integration were modest at best. This has now been superseded by a Joint Resilience Action,[291] which goes much further in delivering a 'truly' integrated approach, but it will take significant time before its contribution to strengthening resilience can be assessed.

While there are tensions implicit in the nexus and New Ways of Working, it is important to note that there is also space for the two to co-exist, albeit in an organizational context that is founded on humanitarian principles, as a recent ICRC blog suggests: 'where there is space for a humanitarian response to urgent needs and to the

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285 The study concluded that 'the determination of governments to improve their capacity to respond, usually in the aftermath of a major crisis, is a key driving factor in their willingness to adopt an approach that preserves assets and presents additional gain'. See Vine Management Consulting, *UNICEF Study on Linking Development and Humanitarian Programming.*

286 The New Way of Working is grounded in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity and Commitment to Action, endorsed by humanitarian and development workers as well as several governments and donors during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. It can be described as working towards achieving collective outcomes that reduce need, risk and vulnerability, over multiple years, based on the comparative advantage of a diverse range of actors. See <www.unocha.org/es/themes/humanitarian-development-nexus>.

287 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Development Programme, *Multi-Stakeholder Regional Workshop on the New Way of Working: West and Central Africa – 31 May and 1 June 2018 – Dakar,* 2018.

288 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Mali Humanitarian Response Plan,* 2018.

289 United Nations Children's Fund, *Accountability for Delivering Results for Children through Managing Risk in Somalia,* UNICEF, n.d.

290 UNICEF Somalia, *Draft Country Programme document:* Somalia.

291 Recognizing that many factors contribute to household and community vulnerability, the Joint Resilience Action is a multi-sectoral (food security, nutrition, health, education, WASH, child protection), collaborative, area-based approach to building resilience. To achieve this, the three agencies have agreed to a joint results framework that addresses the needs of 250,000 vulnerable and at-risk households in Somalia over a five-year period (2018–2022).

needs of those who are—for political or other reasons—out of reach or left out. There may be contexts where humanitarian and development operational models will co-exist and complement each other, so that ultimately, country-wide, all needs are addressed, and no one is left behind. This complementarity is particularly valuable for humanitarian actors as they navigate the practical challenges of impartiality, for instance when they need to scale down activities in certain places and scale them up in others where needs are higher'.[292]

The challenge for UNICEF is in consistently achieving this balance, which will require that there is strong internal understanding and adherence to humanitarian principles, linked with a willingness to also promote the approach with partners – particularly those from government. While the principle may have appeal, it is far more difficult to achieve in practice, as a recent WFP evaluation suggests (*see the following* Lesson *box*).[293]

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Children play in front of their tents at Batbu camp in western rural Aleppo, Syrian Arab Republic.

📖 LESSON

The challenges of decision-making for multi-mandated agencies in conflict-affected countries

A recent evaluation of WFP's policies on humanitarian principles and access found that WFP does not make much distinction between its development and emergency operations. The policy on humanitarian principles applies to all WFP activities and therefore does not help in defining different approaches in development or humanitarian, disaster or conflict settings. In practice, WFP is heavily path-dependent in its relationships with governments. When conflict erupts or escalates, WFP often continues using the same approach to collaboration with the government, since there is no clear guidance on this issue, and it often takes time for emergency specialists to take on management responsibilities within the country team. Later on, however, it is often very difficult to change this approach.

The evaluation found that UNICEF's recent shift in its approach to humanitarian and development needs in one of the case study countries is instructive. in Afghanistan, UNICEF has historically adopted an approach that prioritized development programming in a fragile context over humanitarian response. However, based on a review of its country programme, UNICEF shifted its focus to prioritize a humanitarian response while seeking to find opportunities to build longer-term programme linkages. An approach that explicitly recognizes the humanitarian nature of needs offers an important lens through which to determine and design longer-term support based on humanitarian principles. That is not to say that the shift has been easy; while the field mission observed the efforts of UNICEF's programme sections to link their humanitarian programmes to longer-term solutions, there have been significant challenges to implement programme plans due to the limited capacity of government service providers and the short-term nature of funding.

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292 See <https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2018/06/21/humanitarian-development-nexus-that-works/>.

293 This excerpt is taken from Steets et al., *Evaluation of WFP's Policies*.

In Barryzi, outside of Timbuktu, a group of women fetches water at a water point rehabilitated by UNICEF.

IN WHAT WAYS DO UNICEF'S INPUTS ENABLE OR CONSTRAIN COVERAGE AND QUALITY?

This section examines how UNICEF's leadership, organization and management of its staff, its ability to mobilize people and funds, and its systems and procedures have enabled or constrained its coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies.

Summary of findings

- **8.1 THE INFLUENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT ON COVERAGE AND QUALITY:** UNICEF has a highly decentralized structure which permits decisions about security risk management and access to be made at country-level, albeit in consultation with ROs which places UNICEF in a privileged position in terms of its decision-making structure. What is less evident in UNICEF is the existence of an 'access culture'. While the breadth of UNICEF's mandate and commitments may make it challenging to articulate and institution-alize this, there is certainly scope for it to more clearly outline its strategic aspirations for accessing those most in need of assistance to offer a frame of reference. Within teams, there is similar scope to ensure that roles and responsibilities for decision-making on access and negotiations are clear. This is an area where UNICEF has strengthened its guidance, which has the potential to fill this gap.

- **8.2 HUMAN RESOURCES:** UNICEF has been able to attract talented international staff to COs in complex humani-tarian emergencies, but it is a consistent challenge and gaps inevitably occur. The use of consultants and temporary appointments to fill these can strengthen UNICEF's ability to deliver coverage, but there can be skills gaps, which affects quality. The short duration of contracts can also be a challenge. In complex contexts, staff selection may not adequately balance the challenges of local conflict and power dynamics. Additionally, skills and knowledge may not include sufficient understanding of humanitarian principles or negotiation despite the important need for these. Despite the important role that women play in strengthening coverage and quality, recruitment has been a challenge for UNICEF, particularly in some of the country case studies, although there were good examples of initiatives that have been taken to try to address this.

- **8.3 RESOURCE MOBILIZATION:** The evaluation found funding shortfalls in all the case study countries in addition to funding disparities between different sectors. A number of the case study countries acknowledged the potential for donor conditionalities to compromise UNICEF's ability to target funding based on need; however, in countries which were well-funded, or which had access to un-earmarked funding, these conditions could generally be navigated. The issue became more acute where there was a greater predilection for donors to put in place con-ditions and less access to un-earmarked funding. In these contexts, UNICEF had less flexibility to 'dilute' donor conditions. There was considered to be a lack of clarity in determining when to accept conditions and when to reject them.

- **8.4 SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES:** The evaluation found that UNICEF's systems and procedures are comprehen-sive and, where applied, invaluable to staff engaged in humanitarian response. However, the evidence also points to inconsistencies in how the procedures are understood, implemented and where simplifications are granted; this held for human resources procedures and PCA/Programme Documents, both of which have the potential to significantly strengthen the speed and quality of UNICEF's response if they are used. An area where there was far greater clarity was procurement, supply and logistics, and the evaluation documented a number of examples of how the actions of logistics staff in-country, or the Supply Division more broadly, strengthened pre-paredness or the speed of response. While UNICEF benefits from a wealth of global guidance across all aspects of policy and practice in complex humanitarian emergencies, which are available in a range of media, the case studies suggested these are not consistently referred to or used by over-burdened and time-poor field staff.

8.1 The influence of institutional factors, its leaders and their management on coverage and quality

UNICEF has a highly decentralized structure that permits decisions about security risk management and access to be made at country level, albeit in consultation with Ros, which places UNICEF in a privileged position in terms of its decision-making structure. What is less evident in UNICEF is the existence of an 'access culture'. While the breadth of UNICEF's mandate and commitments may make it challenging to articulate and institutionalize this, there is certainly scope for it to more clearly outline its strategic aspirations for accessing those most in need of assistance to offer a frame of reference. Within teams, there is similar scope to ensure that roles and responsibilities for decision-making on access and negotiations are clear. This is an area where UNICEF has strengthened its guidance, which has the potential to fill this gap.

8.1.1 INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT UNICEF'S COVERAGE AND QUALITY IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

Delegation of decision-making, institutional culture and operational coherence are critical factors in determining the effectiveness of humanitarian action and have an important influence on how organizations operate in complex, high-threat environments. These factors will influence how decisions are made, they will impact on how teams operate, and they will contribute to determining risk appetite and operational access. As such, they have the ability to enable or constrain UNICEF's staff in their task of reaching those in greatest need of assistance.

Organizational structure

The literature on decision-making in crises emphasizes the importance of delegating responsibility close to the point of impact, as this is where the best information is available, which in turn frequently leads to the best decisions.[294] Translated into the context of a United Nations agency with offices at the global, regional and country levels, this suggests the value of having a decentralized structure. Linked to this, and specific to issues of access, the *Presence and Proximity* study found that progress in staying and delivering has at times been hindered by the lack of empowered senior figures at field level with integrated responsibility for programming and security decision-making.[295] UNICEF's structure permits decision-making about security risk management and access to occur at country level, albeit in consultation with ROs. This places UNICEF in a privileged position in terms of its decision-making structure, although it is important to note that this can be compromised by the need to comply with the decisions of the Designated Official and the United Nations Security Management Team.

Institutional culture and change

Institutional culture is an issue that is receiving growing attention as organizations seek to better analyse and understand how to influence access. While there is a tendency for humanitarian agencies to focus on external factors that enable or constrain, there is now greater acknowledgement of the internal factors that influence

this. An important aspect of this has been the identification of organizations that are considered to have an 'access culture'; the ICRC and MSF are routinely held up as exemplars of many of these attributes, which are listed below (*see the following* Lesson *box*).

📖 LESSON

**Institutionalizing access:
The examples of MSF and ICRC**

One of the key findings of the SAVE research is that 'institutional culture and mandates matter in enabling access'.[296] Organizations successful in achieving a predictable presence in high-risk settings do so based on a strong organizational ethos of reaching those people most in need, not just those who are the most easily accessible. The most important elements of this are considered to be as follows:

- **PRIORITIZATION OF PRINCIPLES:** This means having the courage to put humanity and the humanitarian mission above other considerations.

- **PRINCIPLED PRAGMATISM:** A culture of internal and external debate that permits the organization to confront dilemmas and predicaments more head on and more honestly, which can help to minimize unnecessary compromises and to take risks when appropriate to enable access.

- **FINANCIAL FLEXIBILITY:** Access to significant private or unrestricted funds, which offers greater potential to deal with corruption and compromises that may occur as a consequence of gaining access.

While this evaluation does not consider that UNICEF can or should seek to model itself on either MSF or the ICRC, they do possess some attributes – such as a culture of open and honest internal debate on issues of access – that UNICEF may wish to strengthen.

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294 Knox Clarke, Paul, *Between Chaos and Control: Rethinking operational leadership,* ALNAP Study, ALNAP/ODI, London, 2014.

295 See Jackson and Zyck, *Presence and Proximity.*

296 Haver and Carter, *What It Takes.*

Aside from examples of agencies that have already institutionalized access, the evaluation team also examined an example of an organization that was seeking to further develop these attributes. Under Jan Egeland's leadership, the Norwegian Refugee Council has significantly strengthened its ambition to 'be the lead displacement organization in hard-to-reach areas'. The evaluation team met with the Norwegian Refugee Council in several of the field missions and in each, it was among the agencies that were considered to have the best access to hard-to-reach areas. In order to guide this ambition, a '*Hard to Reach Roadmap'* has been developed, which outlines key aspirations and associated institutional changes that will be required for success to be achieved. This is part of a wider strategic planning process that cuts across multiple departments within the Norwegian Refugee Council in order to engage and align its resources in support of this common ambition.

This is an innovative example of seeking to shift institutional culture and programming approaches to support access. While this evaluation considers that UNICEF has a strong commitment to addressing humanitarian need, given its broad mandate, it may have less latitude to make such a bold statement of intent. This presents an important challenge to UNICEF – to articulate the level of its strategic ambition to achieve access.

8.1.2 COUNTRY OFFICE LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

Leadership

Significant research has been undertaken on humanitarian leadership and the specific competencies required to operate effectively in complex humanitarian emergencies.[297] The short duration of the field missions did not permit a detailed study of how UNICEF's leadership affected access and decision-making, although interviews with management at CO, RO and headquarters levels placed significant importance on specific competencies, which included analysing complexity, deciding and initiating action, and negotiation and advocacy. Linked to the importance

of having the right leader, there was also recognition that significant change in the country context (such as the outbreak of conflict) may require changes in leadership in order for UNICEF to maintain its effectiveness. There was one example given of such a change being made.

Beyond the individual leader, there is growing emphasis being placed on recruiting a strong leadership team, and research undertaken by ALNAP shows that people engaged in humanitarian operations believe that some form of group or distributed leadership is more effective than individual leadership.[298] Rather than selecting the best individuals for each post, a UNICEF Representative leading one of the most complex COs spoke of seeking to select a Country Management Team that not only had the skills required for their specific posts, but also skills that could strengthen the overall capacity of the leadership team. As the section in this report on human resources shows, this can be extremely difficult in category E duty stations (e.g., Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen), but it is also in these locations that high-performing teams are all the more important.

Recent research also underlines the importance of diverse teams, including both visible (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, age) and invisible diversity characteristics (i.e., differences in perspective – how people perceive or see an issue, and differences of approach – the mental frameworks people use to solve identified problems). In such teams, decision-making may be slower, but it often leads to better outcomes, with less risk for cognitive bias and groupthink.[299] The diversity of UNICEF's Country Management Teams was not analysed during the evaluation, but this could present a valuable line of enquiry for the future.

Decision-making on access and responsibilities within the CO[300]

At CO level, the UNICEF Representative is ultimately responsible for 'formal' decision-making on access, although this is often undertaken in consultation with the

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297 See, for example, Knox Clarke, *Between Chaos and Control.* See also Campbell, L. and Knox Clarke, Paul, *Making Operational Decisions in Humanitarian Response: A literature review,* ALNAP/ODI, 2018.

298 Knox Clarke, *Between Chaos and Control.*

299 Sutton, K., et al., *Drawing on our Diversity: Humanitarian leadership,* Humanitarian Advisory Group, August 2018.

300 This section should be read in conjunction with section 5.1.1, which includes an examination of UNICEF's staff's knowledge and use of humanitarian principles.

Regional Director. Interviews with regional staff revealed the key role that the RO played in supporting decision-making. During the period under evaluation, UNICEF had few mandatory reporting processes,[301] but with the preparation and dissemination of revised guidance, there are now decision-making trees for decision-making on high-risk access, humanitarian negotiations and public advocacy linked to UNICEF's MRM responsibilities. Because these are relatively new, it was not possible to assess their effectiveness, but the clearer chain of responsibilities through the organizational structure offers greater consistency in how decisions are made, as well as documentation of those decisions. Having clearly documented decisions is considered good practice, although the evaluation team received very little documentation on historical decision-making on access or the resolution of principled dilemmas. The failure to document decisions means that there is little institutional memory, which can be important when precedents are set or if compromises are made, particularly given the frequency of staff turnover and/or rotation in UNICEF.

While the ultimate responsibility of the Representative on issues of access and principles was clear, there was less clarity about how issues were dealt with elsewhere in the CO and FOs. These responsibilities were rarely allocated to a single position and in practice, different positions – management, security, logistics or programme – took on responsibilities relating to access. It is only recently that COs have begun to articulate access strategies that document staff roles more clearly, including the use of specific access staff. Feedback from several COs suggested that this lack of clarity may reflect a lack of structural integration between programme, security[302] and logistics. Each of these has a role to play in successfully gaining access and delivering humanitarian services, but joint planning seemed to be infrequent. The result of this incoherence was programme plans that failed to consistently take account of access or logistics challenges. The lack of integrated planning and monitoring was considered to result in programme plans that were divorced from the operational realities of access.

8.2 Human resources

While UNICEF has been able to attract talented international staff to COs in complex humanitarian emergencies, it is a consistent challenge and gaps inevitably occur. The use of consultants and temporary appointments to fill these can strengthen UNICEF's ability to deliver coverage, but there can be skills gaps, which affects quality. The short duration of contracts is also a challenge. In complex contexts, staff selection may not adequately balance the challenges of local conflict and power dynamics. Additionally, skills and knowledge may not include sufficient understanding of humanitarian principles or negotiation, despite the important need for these. Despite the important role that women play in strengthening coverage and quality, recruitment has been a challenge for UNICEF, particularly in some of the country case studies, although there were good examples of initiatives that have been taken to try to address this.

8.2.1 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION
While UNICEF's ability to mobilize staff with the right expertise and experience at the right time is highly context-dependent, the evaluation identified several common factors across the case study countries.

Staffing humanitarian programmes with qualified and experienced international staff
The evaluation found significant variations in the case study countries' ability to staff their humanitarian programmes with well qualified, experienced national and international personnel. Unsurprisingly, insecure non-family duty stations that often imply significant movement restrictions and, in some cases, basic living conditions, particularly in sub-offices, face the greatest challenges in attracting qualified staff (particularly to Afghanistan, the Central African Republic and north-east Nigeria). Interviews confirmed that security was the most important factor in limiting interest, which has important implications for the quality and quantity of candidates that apply.

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301 The most significant reporting requirement related to access was linked to the deployment of UNICEF staff to high-risk locations, which requires the authorization of the Executive Director.

302 It is noteworthy that one of the challenges highlighted by the *Proximity and Presence Study* is the 'functional separation of programming from security in the UN', which is considered to contribute to greater risk aversion and the likelihood of agencies 'staying' without necessarily 'delivering'.

For international posts, there is a relatively small pool of senior candidates who are willing to work in high-risk contexts, which requires that COs make compromises. For these staff, there is the potential to become 'stuck' in a cycle of humanitarian posts, which presents a double jeopardy to UNICEF: working under difficult security conditions makes it all the more important for staff to be able to rotate elsewhere and to avoid the potential for burn-out. It is also essential that UNICEF staff with humanitarian experience are able to take on roles in more normal settings. One consequence of this limited pool of senior humanitarian staff is the need to recruit people into humanitarian programmes who have predominantly development profiles or who lack experience; several case study countries hired staff who were considered to be less than ideal in a specific area of expertise but with the potential to be trained in the post, and spent considerable time and energy on-boarding them into a humanitarian role, with mixed results. This practice may be unavoidable if UNICEF wants to increase its pool of staff with humanitarian experience and give its emergency experts the opportunity to rotate so they can work and live in non-emergency family duty stations.

A number of the case study COs cited lengthy and administratively cumbersome hiring processes as a hindrance to recruiting qualified candidates in a timely manner. While all countries for which a corporate emergency was declared have access to fast-track human resources procedures and RO/headquarters human resources support[303] and found this helpful, some non-L2/L3 case study countries were also allowed to use the simplified procedures (e.g., Burundi, Ukraine) but not others for which human resources fast-tracking could have helped expedite slow hiring processes (e.g., the State of Palestine). This suggests that to attract potentially interested national and international candidates from a limited pool of suitable individuals to a high-risk environment, particularly for senior roles, it may not be sufficient anymore to pursue the usual recruitment channels and to offer improved benefits packages, whether rest and recuperation or hardship allowances, or investments in living conditions, such as the Afghanistan CO's compound upgrades. Given that

the universe of suitable candidates is ultimately limited, it may be more promising for UNICEF to switch to a more targeted 'head-hunting' talent sourcing modality whereby individuals with potentially matching profiles are approached by UNICEF's human resources staff, or their agents directly. This evaluation found that highly skilled leaders with deep humanitarian experience make an invaluable difference to the quality but also coverage of UNICEF's programmes in complex, high-threat environments. Put simply, UNICEF needs to do all that it can to consistently attract exceptional staff into posts that are frequently considered to be unattractive.

Growing acknowledgement of the importance of national staff for gaining access

Across the case study countries, UNICEF appears to have found a balance of using international and increasingly national staff in pivotal programme management roles. While the programme section chiefs in COs have typically been international positions, the officers in charge of managing programmes at field level can be national staff. This shift is supported by research that has highlighted the limitations of international staff in high-risk settings due to their limited mobility, which constraints their ability to supervise and monitor programmes. International staff frequently have a higher risk profile and weaker contextual knowledge, and may not be able to speak the local language.[304] This strengthens the case for investing in supporting senior national staff who can move more freely in the local context and can interact directly with affected people to oversee activities at a high level of quality and management responsibility.[305] That said, some of the case study countries with sub-offices have found it extremely difficult to recruit and retain strong candidates in field locations, and turnover has been high; senior national staff willing to work in remote locations appear to be similarly scarce as international staff.

UNICEF tends to choose its local staff based on competence and does not systematically consider ethnic, political or other affiliations. Since national staff can play a pivotal role in context analysis and access negotiations, among others, this approach to recruitment may hinder the ability of local

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303 United Nations Children's Fund, *Recruitment and Staffing in Emergency Situations,* CF/EXD/2010-005, 2010.

304 Haver and Carter, *What It Takes.*

305 Belliveau, Joe, 'Red Lines and al-Shabaab: Negotiating humanitarian access in Somalia', Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, March 2015.

staff to negotiate access. Of equal concern are cases where staff were predominantly from a single ethnic group or clan, which may introduce a risk of bias, although there was evidence that some COs sought to manage this. The case studies also revealed that once on board, COs rarely build and maintain an institutional memory of contextual knowledge, relationships and affiliations, which constitutes a risk for securing and managing access, coverage and quality. External research has found that recruitment of national staff in humanitarian contexts should consider relevant personal networks beyond family and ethnic ties, and the ability to build relationships and negotiate for impartial access, based on strong communication skills, personal integrity, courage and a supportive organizational culture.[306]

The importance for female staff for achieving coverage and quality

Being able to draw on high-quality female field staff is essential, but it is particularly important in humanitarian programmes that are implemented in conservative cultures. At least two case study countries, Afghanistan and the Central African Republic, have found it difficult to recruit female – especially local – staff members. In Afghanistan, the conservative culture plays an important part in this, as it reduces the pool of candidates with language skills and professional qualifications and places barriers for movement outside of offices. This limits UNICEF's ability to engage with women in communities where they are working, and hence has an important impact on their ability to deliver quality programmes, as men do not have the same level of access at household level as women. UNICEF has sought to try to strengthen the pool of candidates by developing skills and ensuring that the working environment is supportive of the specific needs of women. UNICEF has an internship programme for women in Kabul, it has adopted flexible working practices and provides transport to work, and it has made creche facilities available in the United Nations compound. In the Central African Republic, where female staff only make up between 20 per cent and 29 per cent of the CO, depending on the category, and in other countries with a strongly skewed gender ratio, there may be a need to make similar investments to attract more female staff as a means of strengthening programme quality.

8.2.2 STAFF KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY

The evaluation found that staff deployed in country or sub-office positions are not systematically trained in humanitarian principles and access negotiations, whether in managerial or programme officer roles. There is little peer exchange and support on these issues. This constitutes a missed opportunity, given that other research has shown that the majority of organizations with strong access credentials operate with a decentralized approach to decision-making that relies on empowered front-line staff with clearly articulated responsibilities to negotiate access.[307] Where training and skills support related to humanitarian principles and access negotiations are provided, priority is frequently given to international staff rather than national staff who tend to carry out the front-line roles.

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

(Re-)establishing an Emergency Task Force in the Central African Republic to strengthen humanitarian capacity

In the Central African Republic, the Emergency Section has re-established the internal UNICEF Emergency Task Force in the second quarter of 2018 to support improved humanitarian capacity across sectors. Given the development profiles of many of the sector staff, there are internal challenges linked to lack of knowledge of the humanitarian sphere and some lack of willingness to shift gears in the ways necessary to deliver a quality humanitarian response in order to achieve coverage and quality. The Task Force is composed of the UNICEF emergency team and the emergency focal points from each UNICEF section. The purpose of the Task Force is to increase the humanitarian capacity of sections and strengthen UNICEF's humanitarian response. Although re-establishing the Task Force to address internal challenges is, in theory, good practice, at the time of the evaluation it was still too early to assess the benefits. When consulted, the emergency team felt that the Task Force was not producing immediate results commensurate with the level of energy and effort invested, and that the process would take time to yield significant benefits to the coverage and quality of UNICEF's humanitarian response.

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306 Harmer and Fox, *Research on Good Practices*.

307 Ibid.

There was also concern voiced about the limited use of guidance material in strengthening staff's knowledge. Despite being easily accessible online via the intranet, front-line staff are frequently time-poor, and written guidance does little to help staff members understand when and how to approach negotiations, and what the humanitarian principles mean in practice when addressing dilemmas or trade-offs. Many staff interviewed during the evaluation felt that there was already too much guidance to take in and felt that additional guidance would not assist them to do their jobs better. Other organizations similarly struggle with a broader uptake of policy and guidance and the effectiveness of training, particularly when disseminated from headquarters.[308] The challenge for UNICEF is to identify relevant ways in which staff knowledge can be strengthened.

8.2.3 SURGE

For UNICEF, the success of surge capacity is predicated on the provision of staff that have 'a holistic, organisation-wide approach, in which agency mandate, structure, culture and leadership are just as critical as protocols, processes and systems'.[309] Most of the case study countries had drawn on surge support during the evaluation period, primarily from internal capacity (either held at country, regional or global level) but also through stand-by partners and surge staff were considered to have brought in essential or additional humanitarian experience and technical knowledge which allowed the shift to be made from a response focused on coverage to one that seeks to adopt programme strategies that can deliver quality. In Nigeria and Somalia, surge support was seen to have played a pivotal role in scaling-up the humanitarian response and in several instances, the use of experienced surge staff was instrumental in assisting programmes to adopt more relevant approaches which assisted in delivering higher quality services to affected people.

8.3 Resource mobilization

The evaluation found funding shortfalls in all the case study countries in addition to funding disparities between different sectors. A number of the case study countries acknowledged the potential for donor conditionalities to compromise UNICEF's ability to target funding based on need, however, in countries which were well funded or which had access to un-earmarked funding, these conditions could generally be navigated. Where the issue became more acute was where there was a greater predilection for donors to put in place conditions and less access to un-earmarked funding. In these contexts, UNICEF had less flexibility to 'dilute' donor conditions. There was frequently considered to be a lack of clarity in determining when to accept conditions and when to reject them.

8.3.1 AVAILABILITY OF ADEQUATE FUNDING

In the survey undertaken during the learning phase of the evaluation, funding was considered the most important constraint in complex humanitarian emergencies by UNICEF COs – with overall levels of funding, its late arrival and the inappropriately short duration of grants all raised as specific concerns. Some 67 per cent of staff that participated in the survey identified this as a the most significant challenge.[310] Given these results, it is not surprising that during the evaluation, resource mobilization was a challenge for many of the case study countries; while some were better funded than others, raising adequate funding was a persistent concern (*see following figure 15 for funding trends for the case study countries*).

For countries that had experienced new crises (e.g., the Somalia drought), UNICEF had benefited from considerable increases in its funding, but for countries where the peak of the crisis had passed or where there had been some improvement in the scale of humanitarian need (e.g., the response to the conflict in north-east Nigeria), the trend was for funding to drop off within a two-year time frame. For some countries, there had been a consistent lack of funding for many years (e.g., the Central African Republic). In all these cases, the lack of predictable funding frequently constrained programme coverage and, in some cases, compromised UNICEF's ability to reach and maintain quality standards.

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308 Steets et al., *Evaluation of WFP's Policies.*

309 United Nations Children's Fund, *HR Surge Guideline: A guide to UNICEF's human resources surge modalities in humanitarian crises,* UNICEF, 2017.

310 In the survey, UNICEF respondents were asked to rank a pre-set list of challenges that UNICEF faces in its humanitarian response in complex, high-threat environments. Some 63 completed responses were received from 18 country offices and 5 regional offices. See Lawry-White and Huls, *Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of UNICEF Humanitarian Response.*
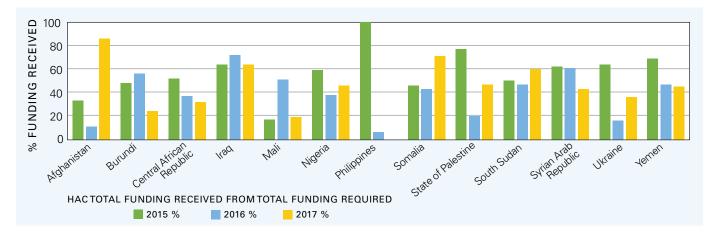
FIGURE 15: ANALYSIS OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR CHILDREN FUNDING REQUIRED AND RECEIVED FOR THE CASE STUDY COUNTRIES, 2015–2017[311]

HAC TOTAL FUNDING RECEIVED FROM TOTAL FUNDING REQUIRED

■ 2015 %   ■ 2016 %   ■ 2017 %

It is difficult to identify specific trends over a three-year period, aside from the bell curve in funding as a crisis escalates, peaks and then troughs. What is of interest, however, is the average amount of funds raised through the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal, which, over the three-year period under evaluation, is 68.3 per cent. Over the same time period, the average funding for the HRP has been 58.9 per cent *(see the following table)*.[312]

ANALYSIS OF PER CENT TOTAL REQUESTED FUNDING RECEIVED BY SECTOR FROM THE HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Year	Humanitarian Action for Children per cent funding received	HRP per cent funding received
2015	68%	55.9%
2016	72%	60.4%
2017	65%	60.3%
Average	68.3%	58.9%

While the two appeals are very different and so direct comparisons cannot be made, given the broad nature of global appeals, which can be very difficult to fundraise, UNICEF's performance seems impressive. While in absolute terms, this offers evidence of the success of the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal, the implications for UNICEF are that on an annual basis, it is required to reduce its humanitarian budget by at least one third. Interviews with UNICEF staff confirmed that the lack of predictable funding and the frequent short implementation time frames were considered particularly challenging across all of the case study countries, and were considered to militate against delivering relevant and high-quality programmes. They also constrained UNICEF's ability to put in place the foundations for longer-term sustainability of interventions, which was particularly important in the case of protracted crises. These challenges were encountered frequently. The case of Ukraine is outlined in the box below.

The lack of predictable funding for UNICEF's humanitarian response in Ukraine

From 2014, in response to the conflict in Ukraine, UNICEF received significant emergency funds compared with its previous development funding, but at levels insufficient to meet the identified needs. Having received 64 per cent of its requested funding in 2015, the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for Ukraine received just 16 per cent in 2016 and 36 per cent in 2017. UNICEF's emergency funding has also varied significantly by section, ranging from as little as 0 per cent funding against the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for nutrition in 2016 and 2017 to 72 per cent for child protection in 2015 and 86 per cent for HIV/AIDS in 2017. Despite the development of a strategic funding plan by the CO, the variability in funding has made it very difficult to plan and maintain some humanitarian services.

311 Data were obtained from UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children appeal documents (see <www.unicef.org/appeals/previous_appeals.html>). Pakistan was not included in the HAC throughout the period under evaluation; Philippines was included in 2015 and 2016.

312 Data were obtained from UNICEF's annual reports on its Humanitarian Appeal for Children (see <www.unicef.org/appeals/>) and from UNOCHA's Financial Tracking Service website (see <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/overview/2018>).

It is in more clearly articulating what the needs are and where they are greatest – the central theme of this evaluation – that might offer an opportunity to strengthen fundraising in the future. The Afghanistan HRP offered an important lesson in this regard, as it provided a methodology to explain where the areas of greatest need were, and in so doing provided a much more compelling justification for the funding that was requested (*see the following* Lesson *box*). While it is important to recognize that the motivations for donor contributions are based on a far more complex set of factors than need alone, one of the key messages from the evaluation is that the stronger the evidence base is about the nature of humanitarian needs, the greater the likelihood that funding will be directed towards meeting these.

📖 LESSON

Defining hard-to-reach areas in the 2018–2021 Afghanistan HRP

The Afghanistan HNO makes a notable distinction in how it classifies humanitarian needs for the associated Response Plan; in a departure from the prevailing approach, it has sought to differentiate between emergency needs arising from specific crises such as the armed conflict itself, and the underlying conditions that have persisted for decades and which do not in themselves represent a sudden increase demanding immediate humanitarian action.[313] The application of a methodology to determine those who were considered to have the most 'acute' needs – a multi-layered approach that took into account projections of affected populations, complemented by a needs severity scale that aimed to distinguish between the nature and intensity of needs these groups experienced – offers a rare example of the adoption of an approach to coverage with equity.
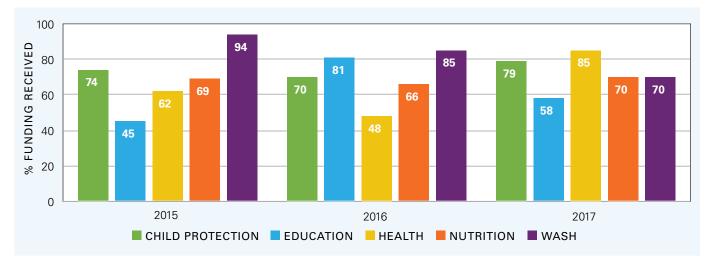
FIGURE 16: ANALYSIS OF PER CENT TOTAL REQUESTED FUNDING RECEIVED BY SECTOR FROM THE HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR CHILDREN APPEALS, 2015–2017[314]

A second issue of concern from a coverage and quality perspective was the variability in the funding UNICEF received for different sectors, as the example above from Ukraine demonstrates. Figure 16 shows considerable year-to-year variation in funding, although there are no observable trends in terms of under-funded sectors, as these changed every year.

It is at county level, however, that trends were considered to be more problematic and were frequently raised during field missions. In Somalia, for example, the education and child protection sections were significantly under-funded, which limited the potential for programme integration, but which also compromised efforts to ensure that protection

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313 The 2018 HNO makes a distinction between the 3.3 million people deemed to require an international humanitarian response, from the much larger number who have not experienced a humanitarian shock. The HNO estimates that 8.7 million people exhibit chronic needs associated with long-term structural deficits such as limited access to livelihoods and basic services, a significant proportion of whom have been included in previous HNOs, but for which alternative development programming is considered by the HCT to be more appropriate.

314 Data were obtained from the country-specific HAC appeal documents. See <www.unicef.org/appeals/previous_appeals.html> accessed on 9 November 2018.

was adequately mainstreamed in the response. From a review of UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children appeal documents, it is noteworthy that they do not offer global or sectoral priorities. Given that it is recognized that some sectors are generally better funded than others, there may be a case to be made for UNICEF being more proactive in steering donors towards sectors that tend to receive least funding. An example of an initiative that has been taken to do this is Education Cannot Wait (*see the following* Good Practice *box*).

there is significant risk that they have to accept certain conditions that may compromise or clash with humanitarian principles and good practice;[316] it is in identifying these conditions and seeking to manage them in a way that allows organizations to deliver needs-based, principled assistance that can present significant challenges. During the case studies, donor conditionalities were observed and discussed with UNICEF. The three main conditionalities that were encountered were (i) financial conditions such as earmarking and reporting, (ii) risk management measures, and (iii) disclosure requirements *(see the following box)*.

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

Changing the narrative for Education in Emergencies – Education Cannot Wait[315]

Education Cannot Wait was established during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 by international humanitarian and development aid actors, along with public and private donors, to help reposition education as a priority on the humanitarian agenda, usher in a more collaborative approach among actors on the ground, and foster additional funding to ensure that every crisis-affected child and young person is in school and learning. The initiative is a first-of-its kind fund that offers governments, multilateral institutions and the private sector the chance to finance comprehensive education programmes for children and youth affected by conflicts, natural disasters and displacement, right from the onset of crisis through recovery phases. The initiative's First Emergency Response investment window supports education programmes immediately in sudden-onset or escalating crises. The fund's Multi-Year Resilience investment window addresses longer-term needs through multi-year joint programmes in protracted crises, enabling humanitarian and development actors to work together on delivering collective education outcomes.

A summary of donor conditions[317]

FINANCIAL CONDITIONS: Financial conditions include delays to fund disbursement, restricting a contribution or part of a contribution to a specific project activity/purpose and/or geographic area or arduous reporting requirements, including excessively frequent, detailed or lengthy compared with standard reporting timelines and templates/formats used by humanitarian organizations.

RISK MANAGEMENT MEASURES: These are requirements by donors to undertake actions to reduce the risk involved in managing funds. They most frequently apply to the following areas: general risk management, due diligence and auditing, counter-terrorism and anti-corruption.

DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS: These are donor requests to disclose agreements, financial details and other contents that could be inappropriate for reasons of confidentiality, or that could jeopardize the safety and security of individuals, or run the risk of violating the due process rights of individuals.

8.3.2 DONOR CONDITIONALITIES

In any aid environment where needs are significant and funds are finite, organizations are required to compete for funding with others, which serves to strengthen the power that donors have to control how and where aid is used. If agencies wish to expand their presence,

The majority of those interviewed during the evaluation considered that UNICEF was relatively well positioned to overcome most donor conditions, albeit with some caveats. While it was acknowledged that donor earmarking and conditions related to risk management had the potential to compromise UNICEF's ability to target funding based on need, where the programme was well

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315 See <www.educationcannotwait.org/about-ecw/>.

316 Collinson, Sarah, et al., *Paradoxes of Presence: Risk management and aid culture in challenging environments*, Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI, London, 2013.

317 The definitions used in the figure were adapted from the IASC Humanitarian Financing team, *Donor Conditions and their Implications for Humanitarian Response*, April 2016.

funded and had access to un-earmarked funding, these conditions could be navigated in a way that allowed UNICEF to provide assistance where it was needed the most. Where the issue became more acute was where there was a greater predilection for donors to put in place conditions, and hence there was less access to un-earmarked funding, or where there were more limited funds and hence less flexibility to 'dilute' donor conditions. The inter-play between the different donor conditions and the realization of these two scenarios had a focus in the Middle East and North Africa region, where there have been significant challenges in balancing the provision of principled humanitarian response with the resources that were available (*see the box below*). Donor conditions frequently increased bureaucracy, which had implications for UNICEF's partnership development process.

The implications of donor conditions in Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic

SOMALIA: The issue of access continues to be problematic in the context of counter-terrorism legislation and the different risk appetites of donors. However, interviews suggested that counter-terrorism legislation has not proven to be a significant constraint, with UNICEF being able to accommodate earmarking and conditionalities within its broader portfolio of funding.

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC: Donor conditionalities are a significant constraint to UNICEF Syria in respect of principled approaches, with different donors applying conditions both geographically and in respect to partnership choices, with clear signalling that funding is being linked to the political priorities of (primarily) Western government donors rather than being based on need.

Moreover, the competitive nature of the humanitarian funding environment, the pragmatism that exists in some parts of the agency, and the scale of need that exists makes it very difficult for UNICEF to turn down funding. Similar pressures were noted in a recent evaluation of WFP, which noted that 'Only very rarely

did interviewees mention examples of WFP refusing donor funding. Interviewees also provided examples in which WFP accepted the conditions attached to donor funding despite serious concerns'.[318] Only one example was found during the evaluation of funding having been turned down as a consequence of conditions that were considered to be 'unacceptable', and this was subject to intense internal debate. It also highlighted the lack of clarity around UNICEF's 'red lines' and stimulated considerable discussion around the importance of clarifying these. While interviews suggested that the range of contexts within which funding decisions were taken might make it difficult to prescribe red lines, a set of principles to guide and govern decision-making would seem prudent.

8.4 Systems and procedures

The evaluation found that UNICEF's systems and procedures are comprehensive and, where applied, invaluable to staff engaged in humanitarian response. However, the evidence also points to inconsistencies in how the procedures are understood and implemented, and where simplifications are granted; this held for human resources procedures and PCA/Programme Document, both of which have the potential to significantly strengthen the speed and quality of UNICEF's response if they are used. An area where there was far greater clarity was procurement, supply and logistics, and the evaluation documented a number of examples of how the actions of logistics staff in-country, or the Supply Division more broadly, strengthened preparedness or the speed of response. While UNICEF benefits from a wealth of global guidance across all aspects of policy and practice in complex humanitarian emergencies, which are available in a range of media, the case studies suggested these are not consistently referred to or used by over-burdened and time-poor field staff.

Procedures generally have the purpose of ensuring that critical issues are not forgotten and have the potential to reduce the burden on decision-makers and so speed up decision-making. They are particularly important in (i) highly institutionalized organisations, (ii) in situations

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318 Steets et al., *Evaluation of WFP's Policies*.

of high turnover, and (iii) where it is crucial that decisions made are predictable and consistent across different decision makers.[319] Because procedures offer standardized ways of working, they tend to be most effective in circumstances where a generic response is required but may become more problematic for atypical situations where there is a high degree of uncertainty. The challenge that any humanitarian organization faces is in seeking to put in place systems and procedures that are relevant to a range of contexts and/or that offer a level of adaptability to accommodate a variety of settings. The section below will reflect on the adequacy and effectiveness of UNICEF's systems and procedures in situations that tend to be atypical: complex humanitarian emergencies.

8.4.1 CORPORATE EMERGENCY ACTIVATION PROCEDURES AND SIMPLIFIED STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

UNICEF has a range of policies and procedures intended to facilitate the rapid mobilisation of the organisation to mount a humanitarian response to '*emergency situations'*. There are three levels of emergency response:

» **LEVEL 1:** the scale of the emergency is such that a CO can respond using its own staff, funding, supplies and other resources, and the usual Resident Coordinator/headquarters support.

» **LEVEL 2:** the scale of the emergency is such that a CO needs additional support from other parts of the organization (headquarters, Resident Coordinator and COs) to respond and that the RO must provide leadership and support.

» **LEVEL 3:** the scale of the emergency is such that an organization-wide mobilization is called for.[320]

The declaration of an L2 gives the CO considerable procedural simplifications with human resources fast-tracking, some latitude in how PCA/Programme Document processes are managed, financial and administrative procedures, an Emergency Programme Fund allocation and support from RO and headquarters.[321] The Simplified

Standard Operating Procedures for Level 3 Emergencies (L3 SSOPs)[322] entail sweeping simplifications in virtually all areas of country office management, programming and operations, including the L2 privileges, but going well beyond them. UNICEF's SSOPs give commendable flexibility to CO management in that most features are optional to use in COs where a corporate emergency has been declared.

This evaluation found UNICEF's systems and procedures to be comprehensive and, where applied, invaluable to staff engaged in humanitarian response. However, across the case study countries, there were inconsistencies in how the procedures were understood, implemented and where simplifications are granted: Some, but not all, non-L2/L3 case study countries also used the fast-track human resources procedures *(see section 8.2.1)*. Given the importance of experienced staff both to adopting programme models that can deliver both coverage and quality, this has the potential to offer significant benefits.

If L2/L3 HR simplifications can selectively be applied in countries where a corporate L2/L3 emergency has not been declared, it begs the question of whether and why other simplifications cannot be used more deliberately where needed. For example, multiple respondents from one CO indicated that the supply function was a significant bottleneck and emergency procurement procedures could have helped to facilitate the humanitarian response. This holds particularly for a country office with no prior emergency experience where there was little understanding of how processes could have been sped up.

In contrast to this, there were examples of COs that chose not to adopt the SSOPs. This tended to be because of concerns about the increased risk of corruption. During one of the case study visits, it was apparent that the decision had had implications for the timeliness of UNICEF's assistance in the context of a crisis with significant unmet humanitarian needs. In the same way as there is a decision-making process for COs to opt in

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319 Campbell and Knox Clarke, *Making Operational Decisions in Humanitarian Response*.

320 United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF's Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure*, from the Executive Office, CF/EXD/2011-001, 2011.

321 United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Procedure for Level 2 Emergencies*, annex 1 to CF/EXD/2013-003, 2013.

322 United Nations Children's Fund, *Simplified Standard Operating Procedures for Level 3 Emergencies (L3 SSOPs)*, 2015.

to the SSOPs, there may be grounds for a corresponding decision-making process in the event that COs opt out of adopting the SSOPs given the implications that they have for the effective delivery of their programme.[323]

8.4.2 PARTNER GRANT PROCEDURES

Across the case study countries, there was considerable variation in how UNICEF COs understood and used emergency-related processes and tools, regardless of their L2/L3 status. In all offices that participated in this evaluation, the establishment and management of PCA/Programme Documents was frequently mentioned as a cause of delay to the planning and delivery of humanitarian programmes. The SSOPs give the CO, based on the Representative's approval, significant freedom to simplify the PCA/Programme Document process, including reviews and approvals. Conversely, the imposition of donor conditions tended to increase the time required for processing PCA/Programme Documents as a consequence of additional bureaucracy required before contracts can be signed.

Interviewees indicated that it was time-consuming to set up and manage a PCA/Programme Document with a partner, taking away time that could be used for supervision towards quality and coverage results in humanitarian response. Partners which could speak on the issue agreed with this assessment. Delays of two to five months were recorded across the case study countries. This places notable pressure on the implementing partners, whether they are trying to initiate a humanitarian response or to continue to provide services. In the latter case, several local NGO partners highlighted the challenges they experienced in maintaining continuity of services while waiting for a new PCA/Programme Document, which meant that in a context where humanitarian demand outstripped supply, coverage was reduced further while the PCA/Programme Document was finalized. UNICEF's approach of generally not wanting to be the sole funder of an implementing partner is sensible to avoid having NGOs become dependent on it. However, in access-constrained environments, where essential services have broken down, this is often unavoidable.

A child walks through a puddle inside Shuwari 8 camp, Medinatu, Borno State, Nigeria.

© UNICEF/UN0119020/SOKHIN

Multiple implementing partners also raised concerns about the budget preparation process and the level of specificity that was required to foresee itemized costs several months in advance; deviations in spending from the forecasted amounts required lengthy exchanges for approval. A frequently raised concern was the challenge of having to anticipate detailed spending patterns in dynamic complex humanitarian emergencies. The lack of flexibility also limited the ability of partners to respond to community feedback on the relevance of programmes, thereby compromising quality. More positively, the

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323 Of the two L3 countries in the evaluation sample, Nigeria opted not to use the simplifications because of concerns of corruption; the Syrian Arab Republic appreciated the greater flexibility with HACT fund transfers, but did not otherwise change the PCA processes. Of the two L2 countries, the Central African Republic and Somalia, the former did not make use of the possibility to simplify the setup or management of PCAs and the latter did.

Afghanistan and Philippines COs made extensive use of contingency PCA/Programme Documents, including the use of per capita costs to increase timely coverage in times of crisis (*see the following* Good Practice *box*).

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

Per-capita contingency PCAs to increase the agility of the WASH response in Afghanistan

UNICEF Afghanistan recognized that the establishment of PCAs takes a long time and noted that, once they were set up, it took another one to two weeks to activate 'normal' contingency PCAs for the emergency response, compared with ECHO partners that could respond almost immediately to smaller to medium-scale WASH situations. Based on past and existing partnerships, the CO undertook an analysis of the actual costs of typical WASH scenarios affecting up to 50,000 people and arrived at realistic per capita costs for responses ranging from water trucking and boreholes with hand pumps to gravity-fed systems and even solar pumping schemes. They also included distribution of hygiene kits and hygiene behavioural change interventions, and construction of public latrines and emergency household latrines. Overhead and technical design costs were distributed over the different interventions and, together with the costs for construction materials, a per capita cost was calculated for each intervention based on existing (CCC and SPHERE) standards for the number of people to be served by specific interventions. A separate per capita cost was defined for assessments. These per capita costs include staff time, office maintenance, warehousing, etc.

Based on the standardized per capita cost, the UNICEF Partner Review Committee was requested to approve a ceiling for each partner for the response and, within this ceiling, an allocation of the applicable amount to the partner on the basis of the target beneficiary numbers and type of intervention, without a full PCA. Based on this, a partner can request, or UNICEF can request a partner, to prepare an initial WASH needs assessment when a humanitarian situation arises in a single day. The partner then submits an Itemized Cost Estimate detailing the number of people affected and the different types of interventions that they will receive. This information is sufficient to calculate a total budget for the intervention and for the UNICEF programme officer – in consultation with the WASH Cluster Coordinator/UNICEF Emergency WASH focal point – to give the go-ahead to the partner to begin implementation.

8.4.3 HACT PROGRAMMATIC CHECKS AND RISK ASSURANCE

UNICEF's use of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT) remains an important vehicle for supporting partners in implementing humanitarian interventions. Across the case study countries, UNICEF offices have used a range of modalities to obtain risk assurance through programmatic visits by staff and third parties and financial spot-checks of partners. The evaluation found two common challenges, including:

» The administrative due diligence involved in implementing HACT remains substantive and time-consuming, even where L2/L3 simplifications are applied, only to a lesser extent; and

» Programmatic assurance visits following the standard tools and templates were sometimes seen more as a box-ticking exercise than as an opportunity to gather relevant and useful information pertaining to the efficient management and progress towards achieving coverage and quality results. While they have potential to better understand issues of coverage with equity or to focus in on particular issues linked to the attainment of quality standards, these opportunities are not consistently taken.

Children play outside a UNICEF-supported child-friendly space (CFS) near a temporary tent settlement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan.

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While the second challenge is in large part a consequence of the first, UNICEF Afghanistan has taken steps to integrate HACT into the delivery of results (*see the following* Good Practice *box*).

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

Strengthening HACT programmatic checks in Afghanistan[324]

The CO has developed new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for HACT programmatic checks to verify the performance of its partnerships. Following its 2017 Mid-Term Review of the 2015–2019 Country Programme and the 2016 audit, a simple solution was devised by including partnership-specific, activity-level financial data in HACT programmatic checks. A pre-populated monitoring template, building on the standard version provided by headquarters, allows UNICEF's programme officers to review their partners' implementation progress, for any activity that received more than $2,500 in a given quarter, against the budget that was transferred to them. It thereby creates a link between financials and results, and allows UNICEF to make value-for-money judgements during monitoring visits or remote check-ins on the humanitarian and regular programmes they fund. Later in 2018, the Afghanistan CO plans to add another layer of detail by linking programmatic checks – which now already include financial data – to UNICEF's rolling work plan outputs and PCA programme document results, allowing UNICEF sections to track funds transfers and progress by an individual partner, programme output or geographic region.[325]

As discussed in section 6.2 of this report, there is also a misapprehension within some parts of UNICEF that HACT is a means of furthering localization. While the checks play an important role in determining partner delivery capacity and in highlighting areas that require improvement, this is a fundamental misinterpretation of what the Grand Bargain agreement on localization is seeking to achieve.

8.4.4 PROCUREMENT, SUPPLY AND LOGISTICS

UNICEF has put in place comprehensive mechanisms to provide L2/L3-designated countries with supply and logistics support through the Supply Division in Copenhagen, intended to ensure that offshore, regional and locally purchased materials are delivered efficiently and on time.[326] Furthermore, there was consensus among staff participating in this evaluation, about the strong performance of the Supply Division regarding offshore procurements, technical guidance and their flexibility in allowing the COs to procure critical items locally where appropriate.

Three case study countries – the Philippines, Somalia and the State of Palestine – emphasized the importance of being able to supplement shipments of items that are usually procured offshore with locally-sourced goods. Included in this is Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods in East Africa, the local procurement of which permitted UNICEF to deliver more timely assistance to drought-affected communities in Somalia.[327] As noted earlier in this report, a timelier response, and the use of new and innovative partnerships, permitted UNICEF to expand its coverage (with equity) and deliver assistance to some of the worst-affected communities in situ. This also reduced displacement.

The sometimes-lengthy procurement lead times, whether offshore or locally, underscore the importance of supply preparedness planning and foresighted warehousing to strengthen coverage and quality. Among the case study countries, Afghanistan, Nigeria and the Philippines spoke of the criticality of the approach they had taken to pre-position buffer stocks across the country to cover humanitarian response needs without risking stock-outs. One example is the Philippines CO, which has developed a Supply and Logistics Preparedness Strategy that ensures adequate provision of relief items which meet quality standards and offers the potential for UNICEF to scale up its programmes and expand coverage in a timely way (*see the following* Good Practice *box*).

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324 UNICEF Afghanistan, *Standard Operating Procedures for HACT Programmatic Checks*, 2018.

325 UNICEF's global 'eTools', once they are rolled out, are said to provide some of this functionality, although their release date remains uncertain.

326 United Nations Children's Fund, *Supply Manual*, Chapter 10: 'Emergencies', 2015. See also L2/L3 SSOPs.

327 UNICEF Supply Division, *Supply Annual Report 2017*.

💡 GOOD PRACTICE

Supply and Logistics Preparedness Strategy for the Philippines Country Office[328]

UNICEF Philippines has developed a Supply and Logistics Preparedness Strategy that the Country Management Team reviews and approves, and that is updated every six months. The strategy contains a situation and risk analysis and a capacity assessment pertaining to supply and logistics. It aims to be able to reach up to 12,500 families – or 62,500 individuals – with emergency stocks within the first 48 to 72 hours of a sudden-onset disaster. Stocks are pre-positioned to meet the needs of 5,000 families in Mindanao and 7,500 families in Manila. As part of its preparedness strategy, UNICEF has entered into long-term agreements with local suppliers that can guarantee the provision of supplies within a certain time period, which reduces the response time and saves warehousing costs.

Assisting COs to efficiently pre-position goods is a crucial preparedness investment and is also a necessary undertaking in order for UNICEF to satisfactorily fill gaps in coverage as part of its Provider of Last Resort responsibilities. Also important to strengthening its coverage in complex humanitarian emergencies is UNICEF's 'no regrets' policy for L3 emergencies, which is based on the premise that 'it is preferable for the organization to over-deploy resources than to risk a sub-optimal programmatic emergency response'.[329] The implementation of the policy in north-east Nigeria was considered to have been an important factor early in the response where it permitted UNICEF to significantly expand its programmes, in the absence of significant capacity elsewhere in the humanitarian community.

There were considerable variations in the degree to which COs had put policies and guidance into practice and had been able to institutionalize supply and logistics preparedness. One of the implications of this is that supply-related coverage and quality of UNICEF's humanitarian response may depend in large part on the experience and skill of the supply and logistics staff in the office.

The evaluation found examples where experienced humanitarian supply and logistics managers and staff put in place effective preparedness measures and sought creative ways to support UNICEF in reaching those in greatest need using the full range of policy and procedural mechanisms at their disposal. There were also two case study countries where, seemingly due to a lack of emergency experience in the supply and logistics function, the supply side of the response was slow to start up or lagged behind need. In one case, this was exacerbated by the fact that SSOP provisions were not used despite a corporate emergency declaration.

8.4.5 AVAILABILITY AND USE OF POLICIES AND GUIDANCE ON COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

UNICEF has developed a wealth of policies, procedural guidance and tools to provide direction to staff in planning, managing and evaluating programmes in complex humanitarian contexts. Much of the material is accessible online across dedicated websites, intranet document repositories or Agora e-learning courses, the latter containing short courses on the CCC and UNICEF fundamentals of humanitarian action. However, the case studies provided limited evidence that, beyond the most experienced humanitarian staff and some senior managers, UNICEF's global guidance documents are not consistently known and used in the field. While some programme officers referred to specific technical guidance documents, staff in several COs suggested that they were already stretched with the response to a complex crisis and have little time or appetite for reading guidance documents even if these could help them to improve the quality of their programming, as illustrated by the limited familiarity with and use of the L2/L3 SSOPs, as discussed in sections 8.4.2 and 8.4.4 above.

It is important to note that a lack of familiarity with policies and guidance does not necessarily result in obvious mismanagement or misconduct. The evidence from this evaluation shows a subtler pattern of missed opportunities owing to staff not being completely familiar with or unwilling/unable to use the full range of flexible policies and procedures that UNICEF already has in place.

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328 UNICEF Philippines Country Office, *UNICEF Philippines Supply & Logistics Preparedness Strategy*, 2018.
329 UNICEF, *Supply Manual*, Chapter 10: 'Emergencies'. See also L2/L3 SSOPs.

UNICEF field staff meet with the local population in Ogossagou-Peulh, a village in Bankass, central Mali.

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Given the nature of the problem – that of field staff who are time-poor – additional guidance documents are unlikely to offer a solution. The three areas with the greatest potential for improvement appear to be (i) how the guidance is taught and filters through the organization, (ii) how procedures are internalized and practically applied and (iii) how strategic management is conducive to operationalizing the guidance and ensuring compliance.

A girl raises her hand to answer a question in a tented classroom at a UNICEF-supported school in the Kawergosk camp for Syrian refugees, just west of Erbil, capital of the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

PART NINE
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section synthesizes the findings above to draw conclusions on UNICEF's effectiveness in reaching those in greatest need with programmes that meet quality standards. This analysis is presented alongside a set of key messages from the evaluation. Based on these conclusions, a series of recommendations are made to strengthen UNICEF's coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies.

9.1 Conclusions

The evaluation question – to determine the coverage and quality of UNICEF's assistance in complex humanitarian emergencies – is important, but it cannot easily be answered with the data that are available.

Between 2015 and 2018, UNICEF has shown organizational courage and tenacity in sustaining its work in complex humanitarian emergencies despite significant challenges. However, while the central question posed in this evaluation is of great importance to UNICEF, its partners and those they seek to assist, it is not easily answered. While the findings of the evaluation show that humanitarian services have been extended to many of those in greatest need, one of the most important findings of the evaluation is that the data do not permit a detailed and consistent examination of what proportion of needs were met or whether the greatest needs were met.

The lack of adequate data collection, disaggregation and reporting means that UNICEF cannot reliably calculate its coverage in relation to need. Neither can it determine accurately enough whether it is targeting those whose needs are the greatest.

UNICEF (and the broader humanitarian system) lack measures to adequately track coverage due to contextual challenges and time constraints that prevent sophisticated data collection methods. Estimates of people in need lack accuracy and they mostly fail to differentiate between different levels of vulnerability. The imbalance between humanitarian demand and supply, donor priorities and efficiency measures all reinforce an approach that prioritizes coverage over equity and quality. From an institutional perspective, UNICEF's focus on targets rather than people in need, its variability in the capacity of its staffing, and an institutional pressure (and Cluster Lead Agency responsibility) to deliver at scale tends to reinforce this focus.[330] Practice varied in terms of how expected funding, capacity and access constraints are factored into the targets and no established process exists for readjusting targets based on actual funding received.

While UNICEF routinely uses quality standards to guide its work, the delivery of these are affected by a range of internal and external factors that tend to push UNICEF towards prioritizing the most visible and accessible needs in complex humanitarian emergencies – albeit at large scale.

In complex humanitarian emergencies, coverage and quality are only made possible through access to those in need of assistance and protection, and in these contexts, those most in need are almost always the least accessible and most costly to reach. UNICEF often struggles to reach these places. There are a number of reasons for this, which includes a range of external factors that may be difficult to overcome. However, there are also a number of internal factors that influence access, which UNICEF can address. These include inconsistencies in the knowledge and understanding of staff about humanitarian principles, the limited capacity that exists for humanitarian negotiation and for finding solutions to ethical dilemmas, and weaknesses in engaging with communities affected by crises. Addressing these capacity gaps, particularly among front-line staff, will provide an important frame of reference and set of competencies for UNICEF to more consistently gain and maintain principled access. This will be further strengthened if UNICEF uses its profile and networks to routinely advocate for principled access.

The system that the United Nations has in place to assist UNICEF to 'stay and deliver' often fails to fulfil its function, and UNICEF's association with United Nations structures often serves to further complicate its efforts to gain access.

External to UNICEF, integrated United Nations presences and broader engagement with the military can influence how UNICEF is perceived, and this can be a significant constraint in conflict contexts. Across the case studies, the impact of the United Nations security management system on UNICEF's coverage was extremely variable and in some contexts was a considerable constraint. Examples of constructive ways of working, innovative approaches to facilitating access, and scope for negotiation for UNICEF to 'stay and deliver' that were observed in some countries, suggest a lack of consistency in how

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330 While the evaluation was being undertaken, UNICEF introduced an initial set of measures that included a revision of the Humanitarian Action for Children process and intensified training and quality assurance to strengthen the clarity of rationale on the relationship between people in need and targets.

A UNICEF convoy heads to IDP camps north-east of Bambari, Central African Republic.

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procedures are interpreted and applied. It is important that blockages are systematically documented, raised and addressed. Overcoming these challenges will also require ongoing investment from UNICEF in ensuring that it has adequate internal capacity and that, wherever possible, it collaborates with other United Nations agencies.

However, it is the access of UNICEF partners that is of greatest importance, since they are tasked with delivering its humanitarian assistance and protection, and UNICEF can do more to support them in this.
Given the constraints that UNICEF faces in accessing affected people in volatile environments, its partners play an essential role in filling UNICEF's 'access' gap by virtue of the role they play (government), their proximity to communities (local/national NGOs), or their institutional capacity or mandate (INGOs). However, the access that partners have is still highly context-dependent. There is potential for UNICEF to strengthen partner access through its advocacy, by taking a greater interest in how its partners understand and utilize humanitarian principles, and by engaging more strategically in capacity development. Strengthening operational context analysis

will best position UNICEF to identify and exploit access opportunities as they arise, as well as improve the understanding of which partners are best placed to gain principled access.

At the CO level, UNICEF has a wealth of good practice in accessing those in greatest need, which is either transferrable or which can be taken to scale. The case studies provided some good examples of how UNICEF has expanded coverage that have the potential to be used more broadly or to be taken to scale. Integrated programming, the use of cash assistance, and RRMs all have an important influence on coverage or quality, but they also suffer from internal challenges that may restrict their wider use. Evidence of the contribution that each of these approaches can make to coverage and quality already exists and is known to UNICEF. Risk-informed programming, preparedness and resilience are all areas of growing competence for UNICEF, and they have the potential to play an important role in strengthening the speed of response and bridging the humanitarian-development divide. The only cautionary note is that UNICEF must ensure that a principled approach is consistently adopted as a foundation for its nexus-related programming.

UNICEF systems and procedures are consistent with its access aspirations, but there is scope to apply them more widely, or adapt them to better suit this objective.

UNICEF's internal resources, systems and procedures have an important influence on coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies. UNICEF's decentralized internal architecture is appropriate for decision-making on access, and ROs play an important role in providing support and in ensuring that CO strategies are in line with corporate aspirations. However, recruitment and retention of high-performing teams is a persistent challenge. 'Curating' national staff teams that have the diversity, capacities and networks that can facilitate access can also be difficult, and is an area that requires particular attention. Quality and quantity of funding is a consistent challenge for COs, although the evidence suggests that UNICEF has had some measure of success in navigating donor conditions – where it has struggled though, there is scope to clarify the conditions under which funding should be refused – with a focus on using a principled lens to drive decision-making. While there are some specific procedures that appeared to be consistently problematic, there was general support by COs for the routine use of simplified procedures in contexts outside of L2/L3 emergencies.

9.2 Recommendations

UNICEF has shown courage and tenacity in providing assistance to those affected by complex humanitarian emergencies, often at significant risk to its own staff and partners. Across all of the case studies, UNICEF was among the largest, and most important, provider of humanitarian assistance and protection and often worked in some of the most challenging areas. However, there is more that it can do to reach those that are in *greatest need of assistance* and that are *least accessible*, and there is scope for UNICEF to ensure that it more routinely has the data, analysis, staff, partners and programme approaches that will facilitate the provision of effective assistance and protection in complex humanitarian emergencies.

Overarching recommendation	
A strategic vision for achieving coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies	
Recommendation	The overarching recommendation of this evaluation is for UNICEF to articulate and implement a strategy for accessing those who are in greatest need of assistance in a timely and principled manner, particularly in contexts with limited funding. This should address the dilemmas associated with meeting UNICEF's mandate in complex, high-threat environments that are outlined in the recommendations below.
Responsible	Programme Division, EMOPS and Field Results Group

UNICEF's response to the overarching recommendation will provide a framework for the implementation of five clusters of recommendations:

1. EVIDENCE: The generation and use of evidence to determine coverage and quality;

2. ETHICS: Ethical decision-making to strengthen humanitarian access;

3. ACCOUNTABILITY: Improving accountability to promote partnerships and community acceptance;

4. ARCHITECTURE: Influencing the external humanitarian architecture; and

5. APPROACH: Adapting internal approaches and systems to maximize coverage and quality.

9.2.1 THE GENERATION AND USE OF EVIDENCE TO DETERMINE COVERAGE AND QUALITY

Delivering quality programmes that address the greatest needs is a challenge in complex humanitarian emergencies, and the evaluation has found a number of areas where there is insufficient evidence for UNICEF to make a judgement on key aspects of its humanitarian practice. Where possible, UNICEF needs to obtain the information and analysis required to inform effective humanitarian action and must be more systematic in monitoring changes in the context over time to ensure the continuing relevance of its assistance. To do this will require work across a range of areas.

TO STRENGTHEN UNICEF'S GENERATION OF EVIDENCE, AND EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MADE:

1. The generation and use of evidence to determine coverage and quality	
Assessing and reporting coverage (section 3.1)	
Problem statement	The data collected by UNICEF do not permit a detailed examination of what proportion of needs were met or whether the greatest needs were met. As a consequence, UNICEF is unable to determine its reach against the total number of people in need. Moreover, there is a lack of clarity in how UNICEF reports changes in its targeting.
Recommendation	1.1 UNICEF, and the clusters it leads, should calculate targets based on an assessment of people in need. Changes in targets should be consistently monitored and transparently reported. This will provide the strongest evidence base for advocating adequate resources for humanitarian response.[331]
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should seek to achieve greater consistency in assessing, monitoring and reporting its humanitarian coverage by routinely measuring coverage as a proportion of the people in need for each of its sectors. b. UNICEF should use its role as Cluster Lead Agency to advocate to the IASC for the consistant measurement of coverage as a proportion of people in need to be adopted across clusters. c. To improve evidence of its humanitarian results, UNICEF should strengthen its investments in innovation and technology so that it can more consistently monitor the coverage and quality of its programmes at a disaggregated level. Where progress is made, it should seek to work with its partners and clusters to strengthen practice at the inter-agency level. d. Acknowledging that UNICEF's targets will change as a consequence of internal and external constraints (e.g., access, capacity, funding, security), UNICEF should be more transparent in documenting and reporting the basis on which initial targets have been calculated and how these change throughout the year.
Responsible	1a, 1c and 1d – EMOPS and UNICEF Cluster Coordinators, 1d – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support)
Prioritizing coverage with equity (section 3.2)	
Problem statement	With only a few exceptions, the evaluation found that when a trade-off between equity and coverage is required, coverage is prioritized. Equity programming often requires additional activities or programme areas, which makes it less cost-effective to deliver.
Recommendation	1.2 UNICEF should clarify its corporate expectations for the delivery of coverage with equity in complex humanitarian emergencies. This should explicitly address the concern highlighted in the evaluation of how COs should balance reaching the greatest number of people with reaching those in greatest need.
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should resolve the dilemma of how to balance coverage and equity in complex humanitarian emergencies, with a view to clarifying its approach. b. In their response strategies, UNICEF COs should include a vulnerability analysis that draws on the relevant HNO and clearly identifies the people most in need and provides a justification for the targeting of certain groups rather than others. c. In L3 and humanitarian evaluations, UNICEF should routinely include an examination of coverage with equity to build an evidence base for assessing its performance.
Responsible	1.2a EMOPS, 1.2b Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support), 1.2c Evaluation Office and EMOPS
Using context analysis to ensure the relevance of programme approaches and partnership choices (sections 3.4 and 7.1)	
Problem statement	The evaluation found few examples of UNICEF undertaking light operational context or conflict analysis that could assist in identifying the dynamics that influence access to those in greatest need, as well as offer UNICEF the opportunity to exploit changes in the context to access vulnerable communities.

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331 While the evaluation was being conducted, UNICEF circulated revised guidance on setting humanitarian response target levels, which may go some way to meeting the recommendations. See UNICEF, *Brief on Setting Humanitarian Response Target Levels*.

Recommendation	1.3 UNICEF should undertake regular analysis to adapt programme approaches and partnerships to maximize their relevance and their potential to reach those in greatest need. Underpinning this should be an approach that consistently prioritizes agency presence and ensures the greatest proximity to affected people.
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should routinely develop light operational analysis to permit evidence-based planning and programme delivery in complex humanitarian emergencies. At a minimum, this should include actor mapping; conflict, needs, coverage and gap analyses; and changes in access.[332]
	b. Context analysis should be used as a lens to regularly review programme approaches to ensure their relevance and to critically assess the scope that may exist to adapt or expand programmes to exploit changes in access (coverage), address new or unmet needs (equity), or to adapt approaches to strengthen quality.
	c. Context analysis should also be used as a means of regularly reviewing UNICEF partnerships with a view to ensuring that partners are best able to provide principled assistance, maintain the greatest presence and proximity to affected people, and have the skills and capacity to deliver programme quality.
	d. ROs should monitor and support COs in this task and trigger periodic strategy reviews and shifts, if required.
Responsible	1.3a, 1.3b, 1.3c – Country Offices (including through RO support), 1.3d – Regional Offices (including through EMOPS support)

9.2.2 ETHICAL AND PRINCIPLED DECISION-MAKING TO STRENGTHEN HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

In complex humanitarian emergencies, the most immediate ethical dilemmas are those associated with maintaining humanitarian principles and ensuring that these inform UNICEF's approach to access, negotiations and operations more broadly. Linked to this, a second set of dilemmas results from the mandate of UNICEF and requires that in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, UNICEF adopt a principled approach to navigating the ethical fault lines between competing organizational priorities of humanitarian action, poverty reduction and social justice. A third set of dilemmas is linked to UNICEF's engagement with its partners and contractors in complex humanitarian emergencies where UNICEF has a moral obligation to ensure the routine use of risk management practices.

In the Philippines, Grade 3 students walk past a destroyed building on their way home from Santo Niño Elementary School, in the town of Tanauan – one of the areas hardest hit by Super Typhoon Haiyan – in Leyte Province, Eastern Visayas region.

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332 This list is not comprehensive. Guidance on UNICEF's approach is provided in the *Access Field Manual*. See UNICEF, *Access Field Manual*.

TO STRENGTHEN UNICEF CAPACITY TO DELIVER PRINCIPLED HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND RESOLVE ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MADE:

2. Ethical and principled decision-making to strengthen humanitarian access	
Supporting principled humanitarian decision-making (section 4.2, 5.1, 6.2, 8.1)	
Problem statement	The understanding of UNICEF's staff of humanitarian principles is variable, and the evidence suggests that principles are not routinely used as a framework for decision-making in volatile environments. The evaluation also found that UNICEF tends to prioritize its own access above that of its partners.
Recommendation	2.1 There is a need to strengthen the understanding and capacity of all UNICEF staff (at both the headquarters and CO levels) and partners about the practical use of humanitarian principles to make structured, ethical decisions on programme access, coverage and quality.[333]
Detailed recommendations	Actions to be taken by COs a. UNICEF must ensure that its front-line staff understand and can use humanitarian principles to make operational decisions. Any knowledge gaps that exist should be identified and addressed through training. b. At the CO and FO levels, UNICEF should designate a staff member to lead on access to provide specialist support and maintain an overview of the UNICEF approach. Staff selection for these roles should prioritize understanding of context, conflict and power dynamics as well as personal networks and integrity. c. UNICEF should strengthen its engagement with partners on humanitarian principles and access. Commitments should be routinely referred to in programme documents, training should be provided if required, and UNICEF should monitor how its partners and third-party service providers achieve access. d. UNICEF and its partners should also more deliberately and consistently communicate the use of principles with communities as a means of strengthening acceptance. e. UNICEF should be more consistent in using its HCT membership and broader networks with governments to advocate, when required, for principled access for itself and its partners. Actions to be taken by headquarters f. UNICEF should foster an organizational culture that recognizes, discusses and documents significant ethical dilemmas and decisions to build knowledge, promote transparency and permit consistency in decision-making. g. EMOPS should produce a short guidance note that outlines the dilemmas inherent in the UNICEF mandate and provide a decision-making framework to assist in prioritizing principled assistance in complex humanitarian emergencies. h. Acknowledging that decision-making will be context-specific, it is recommended that a framework to guide principled decision-making on donor conditions is developed by the UNICEF Public Partnerships Division.
	2.1a, 2.1b, 2.1c, 2.1d, 2.1e – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support), 2.1f, 2.1g – EMOPS 2.1h – Public Partnerships Division
Strengthening competence in negotiating access (section 5.2)	
Problem statement	UNICEF most frequently engages in humanitarian negotiations at the local level, but front-line staff frequently lack specific skills and training. Staff who have been involved in negotiations, particularly those that are unsuccessful, can face increased risks as a consequence.
Recommendation	2.2 UNICEF should take a more structured approach to identifying, equipping and supporting staff at the country level who engage in humanitarian negotiations with non-State entities and host Governments.

333 At the time the evaluation was closing, UNICEF was in the process of rolling out new guidance on humanitarian access that included a systematic approach to developing CO access strategies, which may go some way to addressing the recommendations.

Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF's revised guidance on Engaging with Non-State Entities[334] provides an enhanced framework for decision-making and includes an accountability and decision-making tree. It is recommended that this is widely disseminated among staff working in complex humanitarian emergencies.
	b. At the CO and FO levels, UNICEF should designate staff members to lead on negotiations; selection for this role should draw on personal knowledge, experience, integrity, networks and profiles. Where appropriate, these responsibilities should be merged into the humanitarian access role (see recommendation 2.1b).
	c. UNICEF should take a more structured approach to training and supporting staff who are tasked with negotiating access – both at the operational and strategic levels – and should engage with staff in advance of, during, and after negotiations in order to assess risk and to provide support (see recommendation 2.1a).
Responsible	2.2a – EMOPS, 2.2b – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support), 2.2c – EMOPS and Regional Offices
Resolving ethical dilemmas in development – humanitarian linkages (section 7.3 & 6.1)	
Problem statement	UNICEF's multi-mandate can lead to challenges and dilemmas, particularly linked to its engagement with the State on issues of principled humanitarian action.
Recommendation	2.3 In fragile and conflict-prone countries, UNICEF must ensure that its engagement with the Government is consistent with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law (IHL). This is particularly important in situations when the Government is party to the conflict, is not meeting its responsibilities under IHL or is otherwise contradicting humanitarian principles.[335]
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should communicate the importance and value of humanitarian principles and IHL as part of its engagement with the State on systems strengthening for preparedness and response.
	b. To preserve its adherence to humanitarian principles, UNICEF should adopt a risk-informed approach when engaging with the State in countries in which the State is a party to the conflict.
	c. In cases in which the State makes demands of UNICEF and the wider humanitarian community that undermine humanitarian principles, UNICEF should collaborate with others in the UNCT or HCT to defend principled assistance and advocate for the State to meet its responsibilities as outlined in IHL.
	d. As part of its context analysis in complex humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF should routinely elicit and monitor community and partner perceptions about its engagement with the State and its impact on the way it is perceived in conflict-affected areas.
Responsible	2.3a – Country Offices (including through EMOPS support), 2.3b, 2.3c, 2.3d – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support)
Security risk management and risk transfer: Ethical decision-making in unsafe environments (section 5.3)	
Problem statement	Across the case study countries, UNICEF transferred significant responsibility to its partners, third-party service providers and contractors that frequently took on significant additional security risks, often with insufficient support for security risk management.
Recommendation	2.4 UNICEF has a moral obligation to ensure that its partners (including NGO partners, third-party service providers and contractors) have measures in place to ensure duty of care for their staff in complex humanitarian emergencies.
Detailed recommendations	a. In complex humanitarian situations, as part of due diligence, UNICEF section staff should determine that partners have adequate security risk management systems in place and explicitly include this as part of its selection criteria.
	b. While UNICEF engagement with third-party service providers is governed by the long-term agreements that it has in place, as part of its due diligence, UNICEF should assess the risk management systems and explicitly include this as part of its selection criteria.
Responsible	2.4a, 2.4b. – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support)

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334 UNICEF, *Engaging with Non-State Entities: A field practitioners' manual.*

335 This recommendation is consistent with UNICEF, *Study on Linking Development and Humanitarian Action,* January 2016.

9.2.3 IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY TO PROMOTE PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE

UNICEF has a broad set of accountabilities, but in volatile environments, two of the most important are to its partners, and to affected people in whose name UNICEF raises funds and whom UNICEF seeks to assist. It is in these contexts that the needs are more acute and the risks are greater. It is also in these contexts that UNICEF's support to partners and engagement with communities is not just the 'right thing to do' but also has the potential to strengthen access, through community acceptance, and programme quality by strengthening the capacity of partners to deliver assistance and the obtaining by UNICEF of feedback on programme adequacy and relevance.

TO STRENGTHEN UNICEF ACCOUNTABILITY TO KEY RIGHTS-HOLDERS IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MADE:

3. Improving accountability to promote partnerships and community acceptance	
Engaging with communities to strengthen accountability and quality (section 7.2)	
Problem statement	At a CO level, UNICEF does not have a structured approach to accountability to affected people or a routine way of gauging community satisfaction with the coverage or quality of its programmes. This is important in complex humanitarian emergencies, as the provision of good-quality and accountable assistance can enhance an organization's ability to sustain safe access.
Recommendation	3.1 UNICEF staff in humanitarian crises need to better understand and act on their accountability commitments to people receiving their assistance[336] and ensure that these are being routinely met.
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF must ensure that its staff are familiar with how it defines its accountability to vulnerable communities and the responsibilities that this entails. b. Linked to the recommendation above, it is important that UNICEF clarify the practical steps required for it to meet these obligations in the context of working in partnership. c. UNICEF has used innovative approaches to support its staff and partners to engage with affected people targeted by UNICEF-funded assistance. There would be value in determining whether these are relevant to complex humanitarian emergencies and scalable as a means of meeting its accountability obligations as well as for increased programme effectiveness. d. One of the key purposes of engaging with communities is to gauge satisfaction with the appropriateness and effectiveness of assistance. At the CO level, UNICEF has a responsibility to routinely collect, analyse and use this information to address concerns that are raised. To achieve this, UNICEF must ensure that there is latitude within its programmes to make course corrections to address communities' concerns about coverage and quality.
Responsible	3.1a, 3.1b, 3.1c – Programme Division and EMOPS, 3.1d – Country Offices (including through RO support)
Strengthening localization and investing in partnerships (section 6.2)	
Problem statement	UNICEF makes insufficient investment in genuine partnerships with local and national actors, even where they have proven essential for access. There is a tendency for emphasis to be placed on one-off trainings or workshops over seeking to strengthen institutional capacity, despite the fact that this offers the greatest potential for strengthening coverage and quality over the long term.
Recommendation	3.2 UNICEF should provide greater and more sustained support to local and national NGO partners in complex humanitarian emergencies, particularly in contexts in which these organizations are best placed to strengthen coverage and quality.

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336 As defined in UNICEF, *Putting People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action*.

Detailed recommendations	a.	In line with the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF should ensure clarity among its staff about its commitment to localization as a strategic engagement with local and national partners and its implications for the ways in which UNICEF seeks to support and strengthen such partners.
	b.	In access-constrained environments, UNICEF Partner Review Committees should assign priority to partners with the profile, contacts and networks to gain access to communities in greatest need of assistance, even when this means that UNICEF will need to address capacity weaknesses.
	c.	With a view to strengthening coverage and quality, UNICEF should routinely undertake capacity assessments of its NGO partners in complex humanitarian emergencies as a means of identifying priorities for implementing capacity development strategies with partners.
	d.	As outlined in the recommendation on humanitarian principles above, UNICEF should (i) strengthen its engagement with partners on issues of gaining and maintaining principled access; (ii) be more proactive in using its network of interlocutors to advocate for partner access where assistance is requested and required; and (iii) strengthen the provision of support to partners for managing risk.
Responsible		3.2a – Programme Division and EMOPS, 3.2b, 3.2c, 3.2d – Country Offices (including through RO support)

9.2.4 INFLUENCING THE EXTERNAL HUMANITARIAN ARCHITECTURE

There are important shifts that need to occur within the humanitarian system to strengthen coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies, that are external to UNICEF, but which it can influence; there is greater scope for the United Nations security management system and UNDSS specifically to facilitate humanitarian access, and at an inter-agency level, there is significant scope to strengthen collaborative approaches, for example, to addressing malnutrition.

IN ORDER FOR UNICEF TO INFLUENCE INTER-AGENCY HUMANITARIAN ARCHITECTURE TO IMPROVE COVERAGE AND QUALITY, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MADE:

4. Influencing external humanitarian architecture	
Supporting the United Nations security management system to assist UNICEF to stay and deliver (section 5.3)	
Problem statement	Positive working relationships between UNDSS and humanitarian agencies tends to be influenced by personality and background rather than structure or policy, which leads to inconsistencies. To navigate the challenges posed by participation in the United Nations security management system, UNICEF has employed its own security staff. The evaluation found that the varying levels of success that have been achieved are linked to staff profile and personality as well as the roles and responsibilities given to these staff.
Recommendation	4.1 UNICEF should bring to the attention of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network the evidence from this evaluation, the recent WFP access evaluation and the *Presence and Proximity*[337] study to promote greater consistency in how UNDSS applies its policies. Concurrently, UNICEF should continue to recruit and deploy high-capacity security officers to complex humanitarian emergencies to strengthen its access.
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should seek allies in the Inter-Agency Security Management Network with which to promote positive change in the United Nations security management system.
	b. Until change occurs, it will be important for UNICEF to continue to select high-calibre, senior security officers to liaise with the HCT and UNDSS, and to support COs in their role of engaging with the Designated Official to find relevant and principled approaches for humanitarian access.
	c. If the use of the Programme Criticality Framework and the decisions of the Designated Official are considered to be overly restrictive, UNICEF should consistently document instances in which access requests are rejected to have evidence to escalate concerns and to support its advocacy on expanding access.
	d. In complex humanitarian situations, there is scope for Country Representatives to provide clearer guidance about expectations for staff travel to FOs and programme locations for the purposes of monitoring programme progress and providing support to partners.
	e. The use of low-profile missions are considered good practice in volatile environments and has played a key role in permitting UNICEF to support and monitor its programmes, but their use is limited to a small number of countries. UNICEF should seek to distil and share practice in order to promote this approach more widely.
Responsible	4.1a – EMOPS, 4.1b – Country Offices (including through EMOPS support), 4.1c, 4.1d – Country Offices (including through RO and EMOPS support), 4.1e – EMOPS

337 Jackson and Zyck, *Presence and Proximity.*

Partnership with WFP to strengthen the continuity of care (section 6.4)	
Problem statement	One of the most significant partnerships from a quality and coverage perspective was between UNICEF and WFP for the delivery of integrated MAM and SAM services in the Somalia pre-famine response. The integration encompassed an unprecedented level of collaboration between UNICEF and WFP, including efforts to harmonize approaches and overcome institutional barriers. There was a strong investment in preparation and in coordinated services, including delivery at shared sites using shared partners. Despite the existence of significant evidence about the benefits of the approach, it is not routinely used in complex humanitarian situations.
Recommendation	4.2 UNICEF should coordinate with WFP and WHO to strengthen the institutional basis for and to provide technical direction on the continuum of care for acute malnutrition cases (i.e., the integration of SAM and MAM treatment).
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF, WFP and WHO should share evidence and lessons from the integrated approach adopted in Somalia to strengthen the evidence base for joint action. b. These should be reviewed alongside similar practices elsewhere to provide a benchmark for the adoption of integrated SAM/MAM programmes in contexts that are characterized by poor continuity of care. c. To provide a foundation for the promotion of integrated programming, the memorandum of understanding between UNICEF, WFP and WHO should be revised to strengthen institutional support for the approach.
Responsible	4.2a, 4.2b, 4.2c – Programme Division and EMOPS

9.2.5 ADAPTING INTERNAL APPROACHES AND SYSTEMS TO STRENGTHEN COVERAGE AND QUALITY

In order for UNICEF to maximize its coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies, it needs to promote internal change in the way that it designs and delivers integrated programmes and disseminates, interprets and acts upon policies and procedures.

IN ORDER FOR UNICEF TO ADAPT ITS APPROACHES AND SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE COVERAGE AND QUALITY, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MADE:

5. Adapting internal approaches and systems to strengthen coverage and quality	
Clarifying the use of Simplified Standard Operating Procedures (section 8.4)	
Problem statement	The SSOPs were widely endorsed by COs during the evaluation although there was significant variation in their use in L2/L3 and other L1 emergencies. While some UNICEF COs with an L3 activation did not make use of the simplifications, several offices of countries for which there was no Corporate Emergency Activation were benefiting from their use.
Recommendation	5.1. As part of the revision of the SSOPs, UNICEF should seek to determine the reasons for not applying the simplifications. It should also consider the use of specific simplifications to support humanitarian response outside of L2/L3 emergencies.
Detailed recommendations	a. Given that the SSOPs strengthen the humanitarian effectiveness of UNICEF, the variability in their uptake should be explicitly addressed in the revisions currently under way. b. Given the broader use of SSOPs outside of L2/L3 emergencies, it is recommended that UNICEF strengthen the transparency and consistency of its decision-making by outlining broader humanitarian criteria under which the SSOPs may be applied. Included in this should be a requirement to document the reasons that COs choose not to adopt the simplifications. c. Linked to the recommendation above, it is suggested that UNICEF should define a light approval process for L1 emergencies to provide the CO with simplified fast-track Human Resources procedures and to give the Country Representative the option to activate, with a well-documented justification approved to the RD, full access to any L2/L3 simplifications pertaining to the CO level deemed critical for the coverage and quality of the humanitarian response. d. The slow pace of Programme Document submission and approval led to significant delays in humanitarian responses across all the case study countries. Although the simplifications offer time reductions, they are not consistently applied. It is recommended that UNICEF review the PCAs/ Programme Document processes with a view to streamlining the process.
Responsible	5.1a, 5.1b, 5.1c – EMOPS, 5.1d – Field Results Group

Strengthen staff engagement with and understanding of key policy documents (section 8.4)	
Recommendation	5.2 UNICEF should develop more coherent, modular humanitarian learning and knowledge management mechanisms to ensure that staff working in complex humanitarian emergencies have adequate knowledge, skills and capacities to address the challenges that UNICEF experiences in achieving coverage and quality.

Detailed recommendation	a. Based on the findings of the evaluation, key areas of focus should include the following:
	   • Delivering coverage and quality in complex humanitarian emergencies – key principles, UNICEF commitments and approach and how to resolve common dilemmas;
	   • Operationalizing the approach of UNICEF to equity in the context of complex humanitarian emergencies;
	   • Understanding and operationalizing humanitarian principles and IHL in complex humanitarian situations;
	   • Engagement with States and non-State entities in contexts of conflict and fragility;
	   • The challenges of leadership in humanitarian action;
	   • Community engagement and translating the UNICEF accountability framework into practice;
	   • Understanding programme integration in UNICEF and laying the foundations for it in complex humanitarian emergencies;
	   • Risk-informed programming; and
	   • Principled approaches to strengthening humanitarian-development linkages in complex humanitarian emergencies;
	
	b. The adopted strategies must take into consideration the specific challenges faced by COs in these contexts which include high turnover, the need to onboard staff with modest prior humanitarian experience and the significant responsibilities held by national staff. Prioritization for learning should be placed on:
	   • Minimum levels of individual skills/knowledge differentiated by function (with the potential of links to individual testing); and
	   • Minimum capacities/functions at the level of the CO team (with links to CO self-diagnosis and RO quality assurance, triggering team-based learning on challenging skills application).

Responsible	5.2a, 52b – EMOPS, Programme Division and Division of Human Resources
The need to promote integrated programming within UNICEF (section 5.5)	
Problem statement	UNICEF has developed a wealth of policies, procedural guidance and tools to provide direction to staff in planning, managing and evaluating programmes in complex humanitarian contexts. However, the case studies provided limited evidence that, beyond the most experienced humanitarian staff and some senior managers, UNICEF's global guidance documents are not consistently known and used in the field.[338]
Recommendation	5.3 The case for strengthening UNICEF programme integration in complex humanitarian emergencies has been made in previous studies and evaluations. It is now urgent that UNICEF create a policy and practice environment that enables progress to be made in achieving integration where it will strengthen humanitarian outcomes.
Detailed recommendations	a. UNICEF should update key texts – including the CCCs,[339] the Programme Policy and Procedures Manual and, in emergency preparedness and response planning guidance, guidance on partnerships, to reflect the expectation that the integrated approach will be applied where it has potential to strengthen humanitarian outcomes and can be achieved in a timely way. b. Drawing on examples from recent practice, UNICEF should document models of programme integration typically used to address humanitarian situations. c. In order to lay the foundations for programme integration, COs in complex humanitarian emergencies should routinely examine opportunities as part of their preparedness planning and, where these exist, lay the foundations for integrated assessments.
Responsible	5.3a, 5.3b – Programme Division and EMOPS, 5.3c – Country Offices (including through RO, PD and EMOPS support)

338 It is important to note that a lack of familiarity with policies and guidance does not necessarily result in obvious mismanagement or misconduct. The evidence from this evaluation shows a subtler pattern of missed opportunities owing to staff not being fully comfortable with or unwilling/unable to use the full range of flexible policies and procedures that UNICEF already has in place.

339 The ongoing revision of the CCCs offers an important opportunity to ensure that they are consistent with this recommendation.

The arm of a young boy, who is sitting in his mother's lap is measured during a growth-monitoring session at a basic health unit in Khangrah Village in Punjab Province, Pakistan.

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