

Evaluation of UNICEF social protection responses towards universal child benefits

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Informal briefing – 22 January 2024

Item 8: Evaluation of UNICEF social protection responses
towards universal child benefits: Summary (E/ICEF/2024/3)

Context, purpose and objectives

- Child benefits are recognized as vital for **children's rights, poverty reduction, and social cohesion**.
 - Despite progress, some governments need help with institutionalizing these benefits.
- The UNICEF EO evaluated UNICEF's work in **broadening child benefits**, aiming to understand the efficacy of various strategies.
- The overarching **purpose of the evaluation** was twofold:
 - 1) to contribute to the **global evidence base** on relevant and effective actions that support the progressive expansion of child benefits; and
 - 2) to provide **organizational direction to UNICEF** on how best to shape interventions in this area of work.

The evaluation objectives are to:

- Evaluate the **processes and factors** influencing the establishment and expansion of child benefits and how these can inform UNICEF's approach.
- Assess the **relevance and effectiveness** of UNICEF country offices' interventions in aiding governments towards achieving universal child benefits.

The evaluation was conducted between **November 2022 and July 2023**, focusing on the period between **2018 and 2022**.

Factors influencing, establishing and expanding child benefits

Fiscal constraints

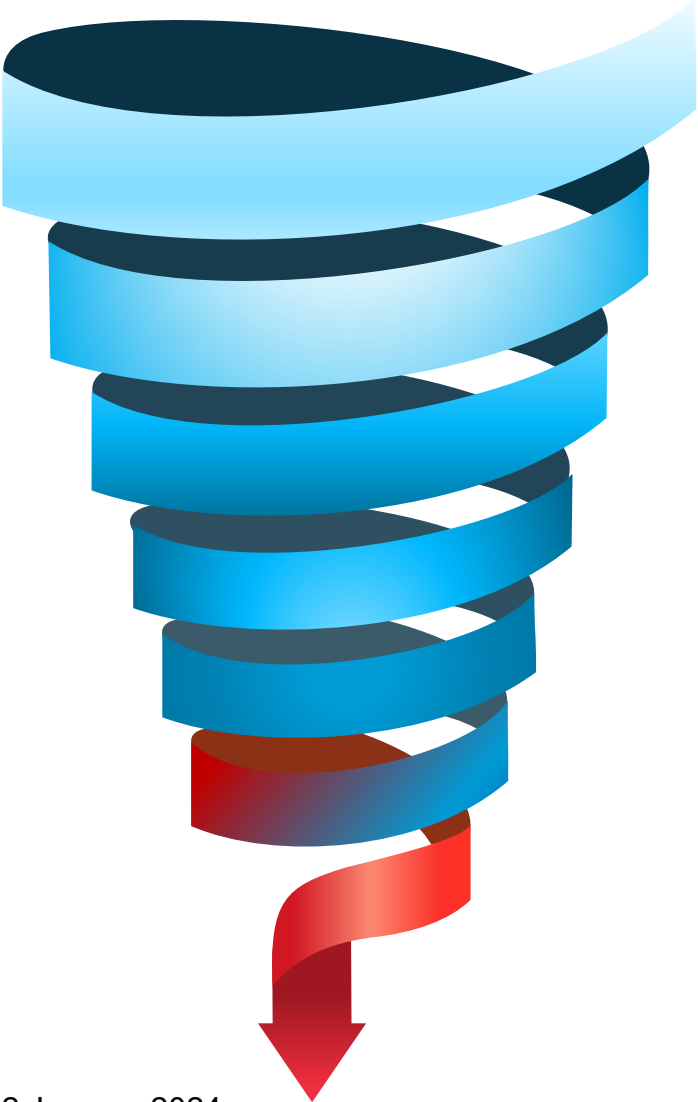
The global COVID-19 crisis has intensified national fiscal shortfalls.

Misconception of UCBs

Misunderstanding of UCBs combined with preconceived notions may inadvertently limit consideration of these programmes.

Poor impact

These problems limit impact and weaken political will.



Capacity barriers

Government capacity to deliver is often weak, particularly at local level, and this interacts with the technological requirements of systems approaches.

Fragmentation

Interventions are fragmented, often limited to pilots and low coverage initiatives with poor integration.

Failure

These problems can create a downward spiral that leads to programme failure.

Key findings: Evidence and fiscal space

How effectively has UNICEF strengthened the capacity of governments and their partners, at the individual and organizational levels, to support UCBs?

UNICEF has **effectively aided governments in establishing and expanding child benefits** in varied contexts.

- Achievements include **integrating policy advocacy, evidence mobilization, capacity-building and comprehensive partnership development**.
- Success is **notably enhanced** when these strategies align with **favourable external factors**.

How effectively has UNICEF been able to mobilize government resources or to enable governments to mobilize resources to support progressive expansion towards UCBs?

- UNICEF COs **actively collaborate with governments to increase domestic funding** for child benefits as part of the **Public Finance for Children (PF4C) programme framework**.
- To enhance the effectiveness of these actions, UNICEF HQ and regional offices developed **global frameworks, guidance and resources** during the period 2018–2021.

Key findings: Expansion of child benefits and partnerships

How effectively has UNICEF strengthened the capacity of governments and their partners, at the individual and organizational levels, to support UCBs (with a view to long-term sustainability)?

- Strengthened **technical, operational, institutional and human capacities** in governments.
- **Decreased exclusion errors** and **increased governmental support** for child benefits.
- **Improved government officials' design and delivery capabilities.**
- UNICEF role may pose a **reputational risk** when working with states characterized by fragility and conflict, as the organization may be **compromising its neutrality.**

How effectively has UNICEF developed, sustained or leveraged partnerships to support the progressive realization of UCBs?

- UNICEF partnerships have led to the **establishment of integrated and harmonized rights-based social protection systems** and the **building of integrated administrative systems** and a **global evidence base.**
- Governments, IFIs and civil society view UNICEF as a **trusted partner** for advancing child-sensitive social protection.

Key recommendations

1

EVIDENCE AND
ADVOCACY

- Continue to **generate evidence and produce fiscal space analyses**, with an increased emphasis on collaboration with **national research organizations and partners**.
- Strategically **balance, sequence and integrate evidence, advocacy, capacity development and partnership-building activities** in joint activities and approaches to social protection.

2

FISCAL SPACE
MOBILIZATION

- Leverage the growing expertise of UNICEF in public finance through **internal capacity-building initiatives**.
- Continue to support governments and CSOs on child-sensitive budgeting and fiscal space expansion through **technical assistance**.

3

GOVERNMENT
CAPACITY
SUPPORT

- Expand efforts to **support government capacity-building to design, implement evaluate and institutionalize** child benefit programmes, strategies and systems.
- Ensure that **capacity-building efforts** strengthen national and local capacities.

4

PARTNERSHIPS

- Work towards **unified messaging and joint programming approaches** for building partnerships with other UN agencies, development partners, IFIs and CSOs to improve child benefit programmes and service delivery.



Thank you.