

Data for Children

Strategic Framework

April 2017

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Executive Summary

UNICEF work on data for children is based on a simple premise: **We believe that smart demand, supply and use of data drives better results for children.** When the right data are in the right hands at the right time, decisions can be better informed, more equitable, and more likely to protect children's rights. Effective use of data can help us not just track results for children, but also shape those results with better insights about what's working, what's not, which children are thriving and which are being left behind.

Data hold more potential than ever before to shape the lives and living conditions of children. Much of that potential is the result of the rapid expansion of data sources and uses. Explosive growth and huge expectations, however, also come with potential danger: with so many opportunities, it is increasingly critical that UNICEF make informed and strategic decisions about how to invest its data resources. Without a clear and agile plan, we risk diluting our impact with too many disconnected projects or being left behind with inflexible plans.

This is why it is crucial that UNICEF approach its data work with an understanding of both what it means to unleash the power of data for children and our own role in that process. By defining key principles for our data work, this strategic framework is the first step in doing just that. It is designed to provide a broad overview of how UNICEF thinks about data for children and to lay out initial steps – already underway in numerous countries – for reorienting our investments.

The framework begins with UNICEF's approach to data work: laying out the necessity of a demand-driven model that maintains an appropriate balance between demand for, supply and use of data. Based on that approach, it also provides an outline of the changes that UNICEF needs to make in the coming years – shifting the emphasis of some of our data work, improving our capacity to carry it out and deepening the partnerships we'll need to undertake it successfully. The document concludes with key issues that UNICEF country offices should consider in plotting their own data investments in the coming years.

The strategic framework is a jumping-off point for a much broader scope of work to follow. From expanding our work to stoke demand for data to creating a hub for exchanging our best (and worst) data experiences, the work to bring UNICEF data investments together in a more coherent, responsive, and strategic framework is just beginning. To succeed, this work will require not only sustained commitment within UNICEF, but also a wider range of partnerships and a flexible approach that can keep pace with a shifting data landscape. The entire scope of UNICEF data work is also part of a larger effort to elevate the role of evidence in our planning and programming investments, as reflected in the new Strategic Plan.

Our success will not be measured by reaching a specific endpoint of data quality or a set number of page views, but rather by achieving a level of agility that allows us to move with the speed of change in the data revolution and to harness its power for the benefit of the most disadvantaged children.

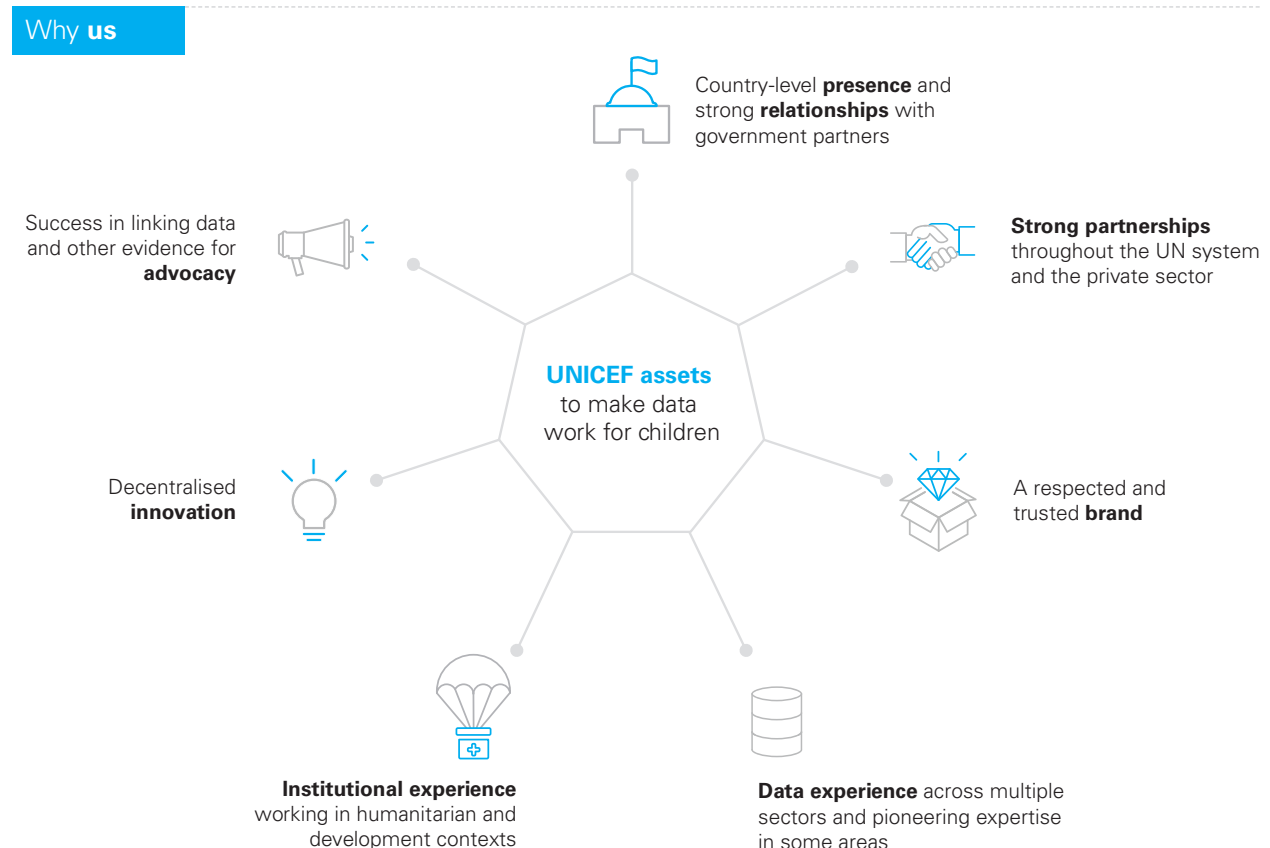
Introduction: Our Rationale

Why UNICEF works on data for children

UNICEF work on data for children is based on a simple premise: We believe that smart demand, supply and use of data drives better results for children. When the right data are in the right hands at the right time, decisions can be better informed, more equitable, and more likely to protect children's rights. Disaggregated data – which can reveal the children who are thriving and those being left behind – are an indispensable tool for realizing the rights of every child.

UNICEF has a wide range of data assets in which it has already invested. These assets – including pioneering work on household surveys, global data advocacy, and country-led data innovation – are well-respected in the larger data landscape. Decades of partnerships, capacity building and technical work have put UNICEF in a global leadership position on data for children. In the coming years, UNICEF has an opportunity to build on those assets as we adapt our work to a shifting data environment.

Both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and UNICEF's Strategic Plan explicitly recognize the key role of data in achieving results. The ultimate success of each plan will rely on data that are fit-for-purpose and put to use for children.



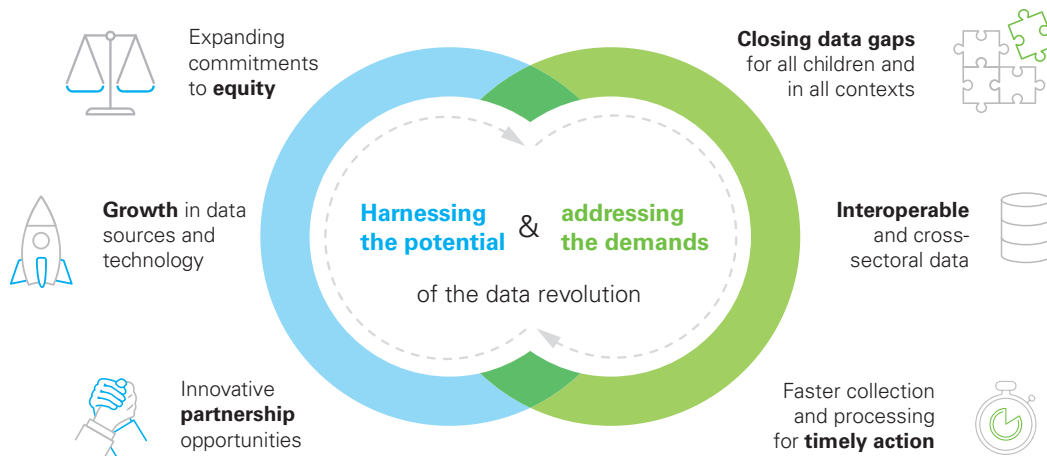
Why now?

The data landscape is constantly remaking itself. Bold commitments to equity are driving greater demand for disaggregated data. Falling technology prices and new options for storing and sharing data are democratizing collection, analysis, and use of data. Social media and new technologies are generating quantifiable evidence about social phenomena that could only be described qualitatively a decade ago. New partnerships between the private sector and global actors are opening novel avenues for data work. Expanded internet access is facilitating data sharing with an ever-increasing section of the public. Across UNICEF, data work is proliferating, with many promising efforts ready to be taken to scale.

At the same time, the requirements for effective data work are changing just as quickly. New commitments to equity in the SDGs require new ways of identifying the most vulnerable children. Increased recognition of the interconnectedness of poverty, health, education and more has led to rising demand for data that can work together and can span multiple sectors. Within UNICEF, the expansion of data work has created challenges for coordination, sharing lessons and developing the right capacities and partnerships to capitalize on our investments.

We are on the verge of a perfect storm in data for children, where possibilities and needs are expanding simultaneously. This is the time to seize that potential and turn it into results for children.

Why now



What we mean by a data for children strategic framework

This framework focuses on data for and about children: the well-being and perspectives of children and their families, the environments in which they live, and the ways that services and systems reach – or fail to reach – them. For more than four decades, UNICEF has supported governments in generating, analysing and using many different forms of data related to these issues. All of these forms – from longstanding and statistically robust household survey programmes to government administrative data and new forms of community feedback mechanisms – are within the scope of the framework.

UNICEF also produces and uses its own data. The data generated directly by UNICEF for internal monitoring - what can loosely be called UNICEF 'management data' - are crucial to the effective and efficient functioning of the organisation but are not our focus here.

The framework recognises that UNICEF acts as part of a larger data environment and we understand that our most valuable investments will be those that work with those of our partners. UNICEF decisions about engaging in data work must always be made in light of how our work can contribute to and shape the larger data landscape.

In this sense, the document extends beyond UNICEF, but it is primarily intended as a framework to focus our own often disparate data investments to deliver a whole that is more powerful than the sum of its parts. That framework is adaptable to the existing data landscape, political realities governing data work and variable financial and human resources in different countries and regions. The framework was developed collaboratively, with extensive consultations and diagnostics across the organisation, reviewing

UNICEF's existing assets and working to understand the root causes of our shortcomings.

The idea behind the strategic framework is not to build a perfect world that can address any unforeseen data need; rather, it lays out a general approach to data for children work and a plan for addressing our existing needs, while giving us the flexibility to adapt as our needs evolve.

Making data a team sport: The development of the strategic framework



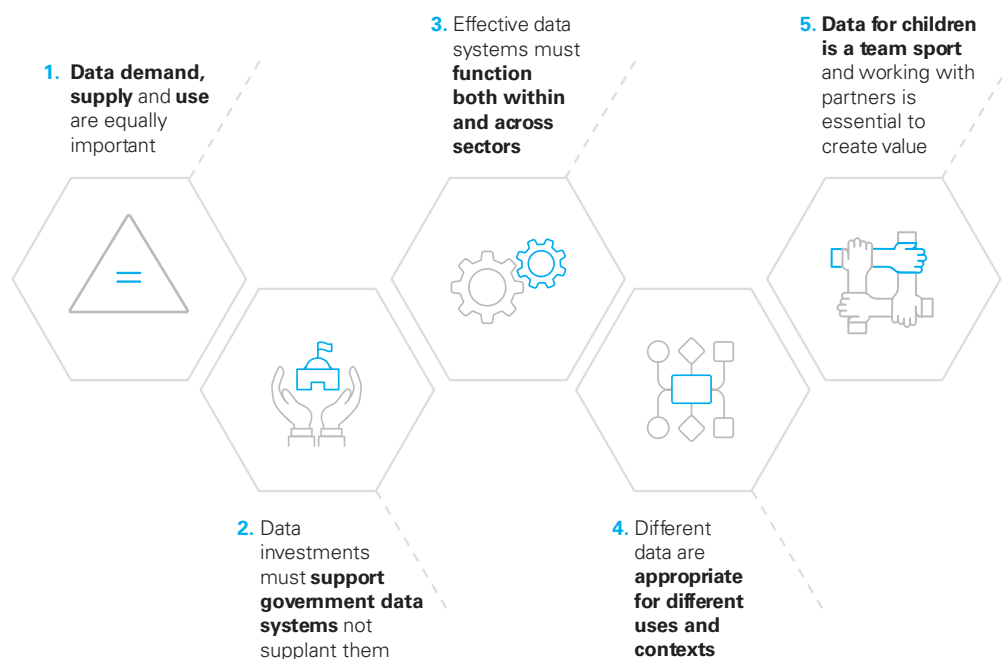
Defining our approach

Our principles

UNICEF's data for children principles are shaped by our core commitments as an organisation – commitments to equity, to supporting government systems and, ultimately, to results for children. The principles also are based on our own experience about what works when it comes to data for children – teamwork, coordination and adaptation

to context. While specific opportunities to put data to work for children will vary between sudden onset humanitarian crises, rising middle income countries, or persistently fragile situations, the principles can provide a common reference point for all UNICEF investments in data for children.

Basic principles of UNICEF data work



Our Approach: Investing in data demand, supply and use

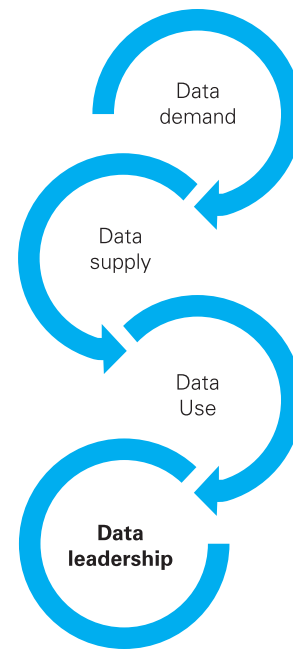
Getting the right data into the right hands at the right time to impact decisions for children requires the appropriate balance of data demand, supply and use. When all three pieces are functioning well, data can be used to inform strategic planning, to monitor and adjust performance of government systems, and to engage communities in dialogue. When any element of this chain falls short, the potential of data to improve results for children also falls short.

As in many areas of UNICEF work, our approach to data is based on a commitment to strengthening government systems. Because data are a core element of every part of government with which UNICEF interacts, it is not limited to a single government office or sector. Our approaches must reflect this and take a broader view of demand, supply and use both across government and the larger data ecosystem. UNICEF also has a leadership role to play in influencing the policies, standards and investments – both within and outside of government – that shape the future of data.

This section of the framework outlines the logic of our approach, highlighting key areas of experience and opportunity for UNICEF. The section that follows provides more detail about the adjustments needed to align UNICEF data investments, capacities and partnerships with this approach.

Driving demand for data

UNICEF is committed to driving demand for data because that demand – the needs and purposes of end users – should shape the types, quality, formats, and frequency of data that are produced in any given context. The demand for data can come from many different corners: community and



civil society leaders who want to know how their community fares versus others, front line ministry workers trying to track down bottlenecks in the delivery of vaccines, parliamentarians writing budgets and private sector actors supporting an emergency response can all lead a charge for data.

As a partner of government, civil society and the private sector, UNICEF has a key role to play in generating informed demand from each of these groups. Moreover, given its breadth of partnerships, UNICEF can play a key role in identifying and prioritising unmet demands for (and intended uses of) data. A clear understanding of priority needs can both promote a better linkage to data supply and use as well as improve the efficiency of resource allocation.

Regardless of the audience, decision-makers and leaders are most likely to demand data when they are convinced of the usefulness of it for their own work. One of the simplest ways to demonstrate

the utility of data is through experience sharing, particularly in the form of exchanges across countries or between sectoral experts within a given country. Sharing real, practical experiences allows decision-makers to directly see how data can help them do their work less expensively, faster, or more effectively. This type of exchange – both within UNICEF and outside of it – is vital for the success of all our data work.

Opening or strengthening channels of communication between government and affected populations can also drive demand for data. Experience from middle- and low-income countries, humanitarian and development contexts has shown that when communities have channels for making their voices heard, they are more likely to make use of the data provided to them and to provide more of it.

Strengthening the supply of data

Generating appropriate, reliable, and timely data to meet the demands of decision-makers and advocates is the second component of investing in data for children. The supply side of the data economy is fed by a wide and ever-expanding set of data sources, from household surveys such as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) to satellite imagery of housing conditions to government administrative data on social worker visits and end-user experience records. The collection and analysis of many of these forms of data are longstanding elements of the work of governments and international institutions alike.

UNICEF – in partnership with national statistical offices, line ministries, private sector partners and civil society – regularly contributes to the supply of data for children through its support to government data capacities. This work includes support to the technical systems needed to manage data as well

as strengthening the skills that government staff need to collect, process and analyse those data. UNICEF is committed to continuing this type of work while encouraging government and other partners to connect all of their data generation activities to demand and use.

The supply of fit-for-purpose data is often weakest in persistently fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Even when demand and use are clearly articulated, traditional systems for producing appropriate and timely data often fall short in these environments. Recognizing this, UNICEF and its partners need to invest in and pursue a wider range of non-traditional data opportunities and deepen efforts to adapt our existing data capacities and tools to these contexts.

In all contexts, the elements of the supply side of the data economy work best when they work together. The usefulness of post-disaster satellite imagery, for example, relies on solid baseline information such as population dispersion before an earthquake or child health indicators before a disease outbreak. The next generation of UNICEF work to strengthen the supply of data for children will ramp up efforts to make data systems work better together. It will place a strong emphasis on the integrated analysis of multiple data sources to generate new insights.

Enabling the use of data

Ultimately, the impact of data for children hinges on whether data are put to use when decisions are made for and about children. While data demand, supply and use are discussed as three separate elements here, the use of data is essential to shaping both demand and supply. If policymakers do not have a good understanding of the potential uses or value of data, they are unlikely to clamour

for it. Likewise, the types of data that government or others should invest in collecting or analysing must be informed by the intended uses. Different intended uses of data will determine the quality, frequency and disaggregation required to serve those uses.

Data that are relevant, timely, accessible and actionable are the most likely to be put to use improving children's lives. Ticking each of these four boxes requires understanding the audience for decision-making, having the appropriate data available and communicating those data effectively. The head of an emergency management agency will require very different information in a very different format than the chair of a parliamentary budget committee. Understanding those audiences and needs ahead of time is crucial to delivering the right message when the time comes. Through strategic planning of data investment, UNICEF offices can identify those audiences and uses from the outset, identify appropriate data sources and tailor communications to the needs of specific audiences.

The long-term success of data work will rely not just on the supply of and demand for data, but also on the larger political environments in which data are situated. Even with data in hand and an eagerness to use it, government officials in a refugee office or social protection ministry cannot translate data into results for children unless they are politically empowered to do so. Public demand for data and accountability on water supply will not improve the lives of children if those calls go unanswered by officials in public utilities or sanitation departments.

The same traits that make data powerful – revealing inequities, highlighting systemic weaknesses,

or unmasking public discontent – also make data political. Data work does not operate in isolation of these realities and must actively engage them in order to achieve the best results for children. Here, too, UNICEF has a role to play in directly addressing the political obstacles to data use while demonstrating the benefits that effective data use can bring. We are committed to addressing these barriers and cognizant of our unique positioning to do so.

Finally, data use also relies heavily on the capacity of individuals and institutions to make use of it. This applies both within and outside of UNICEF. Supporting this capacity requires committing to data-driven policy and advocacy in our own work, as well as to making data accessible, approachable and actionable for others. To translate data into results for children, UNICEF must directly connect the facts that the data reveal with their relevant policy and programming implications. Going forward, UNICEF is committed to strengthening both directions of this evidence-to-action pipeline: making sure that our actions are based on evidence and that our evidence turns into action.

Providing data leadership

As the data revolution brings new opportunities to light, it also reveals new policy and ethical issues at the intersection of data and child rights. Data transparency, digital privacy, and big data mining are just a small sampling of the topics where current debates may put public policy at odds with child rights. UNICEF must engage in these debates and advocate for the protection of children's rights – even and especially when children have competing rights at stake.

At the same time, technological and data science advances continue to expand the playing field of

work on data for children. UNICEF has routinely seized these opportunities to experiment with new ways for engaging communities and communicating with decision-makers. As new data frontiers open, UNICEF must continue this innovation and engage in more systematic efforts to identify, evaluate, and scale-up the most effective data innovations in every context.

UNICEF also plays a crucial normative role in defining the types of data required to monitor progress on child rights and establishing new methods, norms, and international standards for measurement. Our long track record of data work has put UNICEF in a leadership position for several child-focused indicators in the SDG framework. This position comes with a responsibility to continue supporting countries in the measurement, collection, analysis and use of these data as well as global work to improve the quality, timeliness and relevance of SDG data. Our leadership role in this area can be further strengthened by a heightened emphasis on exploring and advocating for new opportunities to use these monitoring data.

All three elements of data leadership – policy advocacy, innovation, and technical expertise – are essential to making sure that children realise the full benefits of the data revolution.

Evolving to stay fit for purpose

Effectively supporting the demand, supply and use of data for children requires both realigning UNICEF's existing data resources as well as making new investments in the future directions of data. This section of the framework outlines key strategic shifts UNICEF will undertake to make itself fit for purpose in an ever-changing data landscape.

What data work we will do: Strategic shifts for programming

Realigning UNICEF data efforts to address gaps in our current work as well as opportunities on the horizon will require shifts in the focus of some of our data work. To this end, UNICEF will:

STOP work that:

- **Encourages piecemeal approaches to data work and the proliferation of disconnected pilot projects.** Instead, we will promote coherence in both guidance and communication as we work to achieve sustainable and scalable solutions across all our data work. With better coordination, we can reduce the burden of one-off or disconnected projects on country offices while improving the effectiveness of our data investments.
- **Takes a tools-first approach.** UNICEF has a range of tools at its disposal for responding to the data needs of any particular context, but we must start with a clear understanding of the needs and context before creating new tools or deciding which existing tools to use. We will promote a strategic approach that starts with a needs analysis and then provides country offices with a menu of options to address those needs.

- **Does not meet necessary quality standards.** Different data types are appropriate for different purposes, and those distinct purposes require varying degrees of statistical reliability, disaggregation and comparability. Focusing on using the right type and quality of data at the right time means we will stop data collection efforts that are either unconnected to an end use or do not meet the quality standards required for that use.
- **Is disconnected from practical use for children.** As the potential areas of data work expand, so too does the risk of diluting our limited data resources. Our capacity will be tightly focused on data work that directly impacts the lives of children.

REDUCE:

- **The collection of redundant data.** In part through improved coordination with others and in part by scaling back our own duplications, we will support efforts to reduce the collection of data that are already available through other channels or partners.
- **Analytical work on issues that are well-covered by others.** The potential areas of work on data for children will always far outstrip our available resources. Recognizing this, for topics that are well-covered by our partners, we will refocus our efforts on making sure that children are represented in the work of others. We will shift our substantive emphasis to issues that receive less attention from our partners and on cross-cutting issues that impact multiple aspects of child wellbeing.
- **Time to insight and action for data.** Many data have relatively short lifespans

for usefulness. Whether delays stem from politics, processing or communication, they all endanger the usability of data. We will redouble efforts to become more agile and to reduce the time it takes to turn data insights into action.

START work to:

- **Drive intelligent demand for data.** Data that are not used are useless. UNICEF will sensitize decision makers at all levels – from ministers to activists – on how they can improve results for children by demanding and using appropriate data and data analysis. As part of our efforts to advocate for the proactive use of data for results, we will document and share examples where data are being used to improve children's lives.
- **Integrate data.** With partners in and outside of government, UNICEF will develop, use and share tools that bring multiple data sources and types together. These tools can both minimise the burdens of reporting and sharing data as well as enable new types of data analysis that provide new insights about the well-being of children.
- **Exploit cross-sectoral data.** UNICEF will help governments link administrative data systems across sectors to better address issues that transcend traditional silos. This may include either ground-up efforts such as multi-ministry beneficiary databases to improve coordinated service delivery or analysis of existing data across sectoral areas to identify areas or groups with overlapping vulnerabilities.
- **Establish SDG baselines and monitoring.** The indicators for the SDGs are owned by

and primarily the responsibility of countries. UNICEF will support governments in establishing baselines and monitoring the SDGs, including work to collect child-related data through a range of data tools, including household surveys, administrative data sources, censuses and other sources of robust data. UNICEF will strengthen its own efforts to make sure that those data are used for decision-making at all levels.

INCREASE work to:

- **Make data work fit-for-purpose in all contexts.** While UNICEF works in some of the most challenging contexts in the world, our data tools and skills are not always well matched to those environments. We are committed to shifting our own approaches to data to make them relevant for and appropriate to a wider range of contexts, with a particular emphasis on fragile and humanitarian contexts.
- **Simplify data communication.** The overwhelming majority of people in a position to help children – from allocating resources to providing better services – are not data specialists. They need data tools that allow them to quickly understand how data about children apply to their jobs and what action they can take in response. UNICEF will meet their needs by simplifying our data communication, providing timely and actionable insights. We will always work to tie the implications of the data to concrete actions that can be taken to drive change for children.
- **Strengthen capacity to use data.** While most stakeholders need simple, data-informed headlines rather than complex tables and

caveats, they also need a basic understanding of what kinds of data are fit for different purposes. UNICEF will invest in focused capacity development for key stakeholders in governments and in UNICEF itself when more advanced data skills are required.

- **Build common platforms and improve coordination.** UNICEF will increase efficiency and effectiveness by promoting the sharing of data in common platforms. At the country level, UNICEF will work to promote transparency and data sharing across ministries, within UN country teams and among international organizations and similar stakeholders. Within UNICEF, we will develop data sharing platforms across the organization. These platforms will reduce the work required to collect, validate and share data, enabling better data communication and use.
- **Accelerate collection and use of data from children and communities.** UNICEF will build on the success of U-Report and similar products to increase government and non-government collection and use of data that reflect the views, priorities and insights of children and communities.
- **Maximise the value of real time monitoring**

and response. UNICEF will expand the commitment and capacity of governments to track and respond to intermediate outcomes for children in real-time. This will include strengthening administrative data systems across all UNICEF areas of work, from identifying whether teachers are in school and teaching to tracking whether child survivors of violence are receiving protection and support services, or how well health clinics are serving the most marginalized.

How we will do our data work: Strategic shifts in capacities and coordination

Effectively taking on new work and maintaining our current responsibilities in the data landscape will require better ways of working and new capacity. First steps include:

Country level

- **Develop strategic action plans for data.** All UNICEF country offices should engage in a deliberate, strategic process to determine their investments in data for children work and other evidence-related activities, starting with an analysis of the country's existing data priorities and ecosystem. Some countries will do this as a stand-alone exercise and others as



part of mid-term reviews, strategic moments of reflection, or the development of their country programmes.

- **Build data and other evidence into sector strategies.** As country offices develop sector strategies, country programmes, and other resource allocation processes, they should consider the role of data and evidence in each sector as well as across all sectors. To support this, the guidelines for country office strategy notes are being revised to include sections on the data and evidence needed to inform strategy choices and on how offices should decide their own priorities in filling data and evidence gaps.
- **Commit to data staffing.** UNICEF needs to increase our dedicated capacity and capabilities in translating evidence into action – whether from data, research or evaluation. In many offices, these functions are bundled together with so many other responsibilities that the evidence component is drowned out by competing demands. To truly create an evidence-based organisation, we will require strong leadership that prioritizes investments in country-level staff focused exclusively on translating evidence into action. These roles are complementary to but should be distinct from the traditional responsibilities of internal UNICEF monitoring and reporting.
- **Replicate good governance examples.** Many country offices have developed good practices regarding the governance of data – from standalone evidence committees in large offices to the inclusion of evidence review in the country management teams of smaller offices. Offices are encouraged to share their own experiences through a global knowledge

exchange hub for the data community. The best practices will be documented and promoted for wider adoption.

- **Take on additional data leadership.** More and more UN Development Assistance Frameworks include a specific emphasis on strengthening country data collection, analysis and use. UNICEF already convenes or co-convenes about half of the country level UN Country Team “Data Results Groups” and will continue to do so, facilitating collaboration and providing leadership to the UN in using data for development. All UNICEF offices should weigh the possibility of taking on similar leadership, based on their capacities and strategic opportunities.

Regional and global levels

- **Support country offices.** Several UNICEF regional offices already have a full time staff member focused exclusively on providing oversight, quality assurance and technical support to country-level data for children work. These roles offer an opportunity to expand support to country offices as they engage in new forms of and uses for data and will benefit from nimble skillsets and terms of reference. At a global level, UNICEF will continue its work to support country and regional offices, while investing more resources to document, share and learn from the ongoing work of country offices, with an ultimate aim of scaling up and replicating the most promising work.
- **Deepen support to administrative data collection and use.** Government administrative data is one of the fastest growing areas of UNICEF data work and holds

tremendous potential for improving results for children. At country level, administrative data systems are typically developed and used for a single sector (for example, an education or health sector management information system), ideally linked to a country's overall national statistics office. UNICEF must take a similar approach, combining involvement of sector specialists with data specialists at country, regional, and global levels. New capacity in administrative data has been established in the Division of Data, Research and Policy to work alongside Programme Division colleagues and others to support regional and country investments in this area.

- ***Invest in emerging thematic issues.*** Global level analytical capacity on emerging and under-addressed issues for children – including early childhood development, adolescents, child protection and child poverty – will be strengthened. UNICEF will depend more on other partners for analysis and collaboration in sectors with many actors, such as health.
- ***Push the boundaries of UNICEF data work.*** New forms and uses of data are expanding opportunities to put data into action for children. UNICEF must be agile in seizing these prospects. We must dynamically identify the specific demands and uses of data for children, always prioritizing those with the greatest potential for impact. Given the rapidly changing landscape and our limited resources, the smartest approach is likely to be a heavy emphasis on demand-driven partnerships, rather than significant expansion of our own capacity.

- ***Improve global-level coordination.*** There are multiple divisions, offices and sections at UNICEF headquarters with responsibilities and capacities related to data for children. UNICEF will clarify both the division of labour and opportunities for collaboration among these teams. Overall coordination will be provided by the Task Force on Data, which is co-chaired by the Division of Data, Research and Policy and Programme Division and includes participation from a wide range of divisions and regions.
- ***Maintain global leadership responsibilities.*** UNICEF has been designated as the lead or co-lead of a large number of child-related SDG indicators. UNICEF will continue to work with others to develop methodologies for the indicators for which current data are either non-existent or of poor quality, while providing quality assurance and analytics in those areas where data are already widely available. UNICEF will continue to improve and develop new measurement techniques for emerging topics, refine methods for current indicators and seek out the best opportunities to collect and use data in the most challenging contexts.
- ***Strengthen capacity to support countries on data for SDG monitoring and implementation.*** As part of its commitment to support countries in collecting and using data for the SDGs, UNICEF will strengthen its efforts to innovate and accelerate results from household surveys. This will include MICS as well as other household survey tools. This work will allow UNICEF to better support countries in identifying and adapting the best tools to achieve the most timely, cost effective and useful results for children.

Who we will partner with: Strategic directions for engagement

The gaps in usable data for children vary widely by context as do the partnerships needed to respond to them. As in much of its work, UNICEF data for children efforts are heavily focused on strengthening government systems and actors. Data supply, demand and use are not, however, the exclusive province of government. An increasingly wide array of players generates and accumulates data that could be put to use for children. Likewise, an expanding circle of civil society actors are involved in using data for and from children to hold governments to account.

UNICEF will identify and pursue the partnerships with the greatest potential for impact, acknowledging that the most appropriate collaborations will vary over time and by context. Critical opportunities include UNICEF working with:

Governments around the world so that they can use data to

- Identify the most disadvantaged children and act on their highest priorities, including through strategies, policies and resource allocation;
- Drive real-time improvements in the quality of services and programmes for disadvantaged children, through data-informed management

- and data-informed service delivery; and,
- Incorporate the voices and views of children and their families in decision-making.

Social movements, advocates, the media, the private sector and the public at large so that they can use the next generation of data about and from children to inform their actions, reports, and positions. UNICEF will use the same data to inform its own campaigning, communication and advocacy work.

Data-rich private and public sector partners

to scale up the use of new data technologies, increase access to new data sources, and extract new insights on what works for children by drawing on multiple data sources. UNICEF also will continue its longstanding efforts to ensure that children's issues and data are appropriately reflected in the data of others, including partners within and outside the UN system, donors, and other private and public actors with the potential to influence outcomes for children.



Next steps in transforming data into results for children

At a country level, the right combination of data investments will be shaped by the data landscape, including the capacity of UNICEF, our counterparts and partners to take on data work and their appetite for engaging with data. Building a fit-for-purpose response for a country office requires mapping the data landscape, identifying our opportunities for adding value, and prioritising UNICEF investments.

This section of the framework outlines key issues that UNICEF country offices should consider in plotting their own data investments. It concludes with an overview of opportunities to come in putting the framework into action.

Mapping the data landscape

As in any area of UNICEF programming, data for children work cannot and does not occur in a vacuum. UNICEF investments should build on the needs of government, the existing investments of partners, and toward a sustainable future of government ownership. To identify the most strategic entry points for UNICEF in data for children, country offices should include a mapping of the data landscape as a core component of their planning processes. In any country, the realm of data that could impact children's lives is much broader than UNICEF's capacity or resources, so the analysis should both be tailored to the specific priorities of the UNICEF office as well as take into account the work being done by others in this space.

In mapping the data landscape, country offices should work to identify the:

- Overall data governance framework of the country, including laws and policies that impact data demand, supply and use
- Relevant government decision-makers who can shape allocations, policies and service

delivery performance in the areas most relevant to UNICEF programming

- Barriers, bottlenecks and critical success factors that determine whether those decision-makers demand and make use of data (including things such as the relevance, accessibility, and political appetite for data)
- Gaps in supply of data for children that hinder UNICEF's own planning and programming processes (including elements such as disaggregation, timeliness, and quality)
- Successful elements of data work that can be replicated or scaled up in different sectors or with different partners
- Partners who are already or have the potential to engage in supporting data for children work and their contributions to the landscape

Prioritising UNICEF investments

Analysis of the data landscape will inform which elements of data work are most relevant for UNICEF in any given context. The specific interventions that UNICEF prioritises in its data investments will vary widely from country to country, but in determining a plan of action on data for children, every UNICEF office should take into consideration the:

- Major enablers, bottlenecks and barriers for data demand, supply and use in the country, with specific attention to the larger national context
- Appropriateness of different types of data for different purposes
- Relative cost and value of different types of data work
- UNICEF and government capacities and resources for supporting data for children work
- Adjustments to or re-prioritisation of existing data work

- Contributions that other partners have or could make toward addressing obstacles or scaling up successes and enablers

Based on these considerations, offices can identify their potential added value, prioritise their data investments and build them into the planning and resourcing of their country programmes.

Setting the framework in motion

The outlines provided here for surveying a country's data landscape and prioritising UNICEF investments are just that: outlines. Offices will need more detailed tools and support to carry this work forward.

To that end, a group of country offices are working with regional and headquarters counterparts to develop and refine tools for:

- Mapping the data landscape
- Identifying UNICEF comparative advantages in different data landscapes
- Building a country level data for children strategic action plan as well as securing the resources necessary to implement it

All country and regional offices are invited to contribute to the Data for Children intranet site and participate in our data community of practice, where colleagues involved in or simply interested by data are:

- Building a global menu of data programming and partnership examples that have demonstrated promise at the country level
- Exploring a range of sources to get started with or refine their data work
- Identifying and sharing lessons from their own data work and offering technical support to colleagues
- Sharing information and strategies for resource mobilisation and partnership building on data issues

With commitment to and investments in these opportunities for action, UNICEF can continue its longstanding work to unleash the power of data for children.

To get involved in the rollout of the framework or contribute your experience with data work in or outside of UNICEF, please contact:



Toby Wicks

+1 917 8932226,
twicks@unicef.org

Data Coordination, Partner-
ships and Innovation



Emily Garin

+1 917 2654578,
egarín@unicef.org

Country and Regional
Office Support



Hye Jung Han

+1 917 2657245,
hhan@unicef.org

Learning, Communities
and Development



Laurence Chandy

+1 917 2654594,
lchandy@unicef.org

Director, Division of Data
Research and Policy