



Strategy for Sweden's cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2018–2022



Government Offices of Sweden
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

1. Scope of the strategy

This strategy forms the basis of Sweden's cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) during the period 2018–2022. The strategy establishes the priorities and forms of collaboration for Sweden's membership of, and partnership with, UNICEF at global, regional and national level.

The strategy is guided by Sweden's Policy for Global Development and its overall objective of contributing to equitable and sustainable global development¹, the Policy Framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance² (referred to below as the Policy Framework), and the Swedish Foreign Service action plan for feminist foreign policy 2015–2018.³ Sweden's Strategy for multilateral development policy is the overarching policy document for Sweden's cooperation with multilateral organisations and

sets out the parameters of the methodology in this strategy.⁴

This strategy is based on UNICEF's mandate and strategic framework. The organisational assessment of UNICEF conducted by the Government Offices (Ministry for Foreign Affairs) in spring 2018 forms the basis for the strategy. The strategy also takes into account the information on cooperation with UNICEF contributed by Swedish missions abroad and government agencies in Sweden. The strategy comprises funds as authorised by the Riksdag and the Government's appropriation directions to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The agreement on four-year core support to UNICEF entered into in June 2018 also forms the basis of Sweden's advocacy work within the organisation during the strategy period.

The Government has devised the strategy in consultation with the relevant government agencies and civil society actors. To ensure children's and young people's participation in drawing up the strategy, the Government also held a consultation with children, with the support of the organisation Children's Rights in Society (BRIS).

¹) Shared responsibility: Sweden's Policy for Global Development (Govt Bill 2002/03:122)

²) Government Communication 2016/17:60

³) www.government.se/495f60/contentassets/66afd4cf15ee472ba40e3d43393c843a/handlingsplan-feministisk-utrikespolitik-2018-enge.pdf

⁴) Reg. no UD2017/21055/FN

2. UNICEF's remit and activities

2.1. Unicef's mandate

UNICEF has a global mandate to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet children's basic needs, and to expand opportunities for children to reach their full potential. The organisation is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and works to strengthen capacities of governmental partners to fulfil their obligations towards children as defined in the Convention. The term 'children' refers to all people under the age of 18. By ensuring a strong link between the aspects of long-term development and humanitarian assistance, UNICEF helps to enhance the resilience of societies and individuals to conflict, natural disasters and other crises.

UNICEF is one of the largest organisations in the UN system and currently has operations in approximately 190 countries. Each year, the organisation's activities reach millions of people throughout the world, providing clean water, education, health care, vaccinations and protective measures. The target group is primarily vulnerable

and marginalised children and women. In addition to its operational role, UNICEF has an important normative remit to drive policy and strengthen national institutions and actors. With its major field presence and long experience of humanitarian action, UNICEF also has a mandate to assume a coordinating role in humanitarian crises.

2.2 UNICEF's financial structure

UNICEF's activities are financed exclusively through voluntary funding, and its annual revenue is approximately USD 6 billion. The proportion of core support – known as 'regular resources' – has gradually decreased in recent years and was 22 per cent in 2017. The remaining 78 per cent of UNICEF's revenue are various forms of earmarked contributions. In 2017, Sweden was UNICEF's second largest donor of core support and its fourth largest donor compared with other countries and governments.

Unlike many other UN organisations, UNICEF generates a considerable proportion of its flexible financing from

private sources, which gives the organisation a special status in the UN system. The fundraising work carried out by the national committees in large parts of the industrialised world is particularly important.

2.3 Strategic Plan

UNICEF's Strategic Plan for the period 2018–2021⁵ is grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 2030 Agenda and other international conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The plan establishes UNICEF's overarching vision of realising the rights of every child and to reach the most marginalised and vulnerable first, in line with the principles laid down in the 2030 Agenda. This objective is to be achieved through the following five Goal Areas:

a) Every child survives and thrives

b) Every child learns

c) Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

d) Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

e) Every child has an equitable chance in life

The five Goal Areas are in turn divided into several result areas and are accompanied by a separate results framework. The two cross-cutting priorities – gender equality and humanitarian action – are integrated into all Goal Areas.

2.4 Organisational assessment

In spring 2018, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs carried out an organisational assessment of UNICEF. The conclusion of the assessment was that with its global reach, high capacity in the field and considerable legitimacy in children's rights issues, UNICEF

⁵ UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, available at www.unicef.org

remains a highly relevant partner for Sweden and contributes to the fulfilment of Sweden's development assistance policy priorities. In addition, UNICEF as an organisation was deemed to be well-positioned to play a coordinating role and thus contribute to streamlining the activities of relevant actors at the country level. UNICEF's efficiency was considered largely satisfactory, with some shortcomings in terms of cost-effectiveness and sustainability of results.

3. Direction and thematic priorities

3.1. Direction

Through dialogue and financial contributions, Sweden will work to ensure that UNICEF achieves its overall mandate and implements its Strategic Plan, with a focus on Sweden's priority issues. The following thematic areas will be prioritised in Sweden's cooperation with UNICEF during the period 2018–2022:

- Children's rights and the rights-based perspective
- Equitable health
- Child protection
- Education

In UNICEF's Strategic Plan for 2018–2021, the two cross-cutting priorities gender equality and humanitarian action are integrated into all Goal Areas. As this strategy takes its cue from UNICEF's Strategic Plan, issues related to UNICEF's work in humanitarian situations and on gender equality

are integrated under each selected focus area. UNICEF is a very strong organisation when it comes to meeting younger children's rights and needs. Within the framework of Sweden's focus areas, a special focus will also be placed on the target group adolescents, i.e. children aged 13–18.

Sweden is to be clear about these priorities in dialogue with the organisation at central, regional and country level. Swedish financial support during the strategy period will take these priorities into account, synergy effects will be promoted and contradictory action avoided. However, giving Swedish funds to other areas during the strategy period has not been ruled out. Bilateral support via UNICEF – multi-bi support – must be in line with the strategy's priorities and approaches in relation to UNICEF.

3.2. Thematic priorities

3.2.1 Children's rights and the rights-based perspective

In the Policy Framework, the rights-

based perspective is one of two overarching perspectives that must be integrated throughout Swedish development cooperation. Moreover, the rights-based perspective is based on binding international law conventions and means that human rights and democracy are fundamental to development. In line with this, all of UNICEF's activities are based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the rights-based perspective should be seen as a fundamental prerequisite for all of UNICEF's other activities.

However, in Sweden's view, in recent years UNICEF's rights-based approach has been weakened, especially as the organisation has increasingly focused on equity as a guiding principle since 2010. It is therefore a priority for Sweden in its dialogue with UNICEF that the rights-based perspective, its principles and a rights-based approach adequately inform all activities. This is also an issue in which Sweden has a high level of legitimacy thanks to its long-standing engagement.

Sweden will work actively to ensure that:

- all of UNICEF's activities are based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and that the organisation does not allow a weakening of the rights-based approach;
- UNICEF makes clear the responsibility of every state for realising children's rights;
- UNICEF works actively to promote women's and girls' enjoyment of their human rights, including by strengthening capacity and technical expertise at country level;
- UNICEF strengthens its work – and its capacity to work – on non-discrimination, including the ability to take into account the double discrimination that some individuals and groups, such as children with disabilities, are subjected to by applying an intersectional perspective;
- UNICEF works actively to ensure that children and young people enjoy

sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and that LGBTI people enjoy their human rights; and

- UNICEF works to ensure that children and young people are included in both decision-making and implementation processes in community-building.

3.2.2 Equitable health

Equitable health is one of the thematic areas highlighted in the Swedish Policy Framework. According to this, Sweden will contribute to efficient national health systems and institutions, and defend all people's right to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and maternal and new-born care. These are areas in which UNICEF is a central actor and where it has great potential to make a positive contribution thanks to its extensive country presence. The organisation is also a very prominent actor when it comes to people's access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). One important starting point for UNICEF's work should therefore be the objective in the 2030 Agenda

whereby children should not only survive, they should also be able to live long and healthy lives. Children's early development is particularly important here, with a focus on reducing exposure to risks and laying the foundation for healthy lifestyle choices.

UNICEF's expected results in this area are primarily found in Goal Area 1 in the organisation's Results Framework – every child survives and thrives. The framework establishes that UNICEF is expected to contribute to positive results regarding children's and young people's early childhood development, with a focus on preventive cross-sectoral work, maternal and new-born care, and efficient health care systems, including treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

Sweden will work actively to ensure that:

- UNICEF expands its preventive work to give children and young people a good start in life in terms of living habits, with a focus on physical activity and healthy food;

- UNICEF specifically highlights young people's need for SRHR, in close cooperation with UNFPA and WHO;
- UNICEF contributes to the development of health care systems and the strengthening of partner countries' capacity at national and district level, in close cooperation with other central actors, such as WHO and UNFPA;
- UNICEF continues to secure children's and women's access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), including menstrual hygiene, in both peace and conflict; and
- UNICEF provides health care services to children and young people in humanitarian crises and refugee camps, including psychosocial support for traumatised children.

3.2.3 Child protection

Under the Policy Framework, Swedish development cooperation will strive to promote peaceful and inclusive socie-

ties, and within this context Sweden will work preventively to protect children in both peace and conflict. Children's right to protection against all forms of violence is also an underpinning theme of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF's mandate. UNICEF is a key actor in terms of advocacy work concerning violence against children, not least through its membership of the governing board of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. UNICEF's expected results in this area are primarily found in Goal Area 3 in the organisation's results framework – every child is protected from violence and exploitation. According to this, UNICEF is to work to promote national protection systems and institutions, and to abolish customs and behaviours that are harmful to children, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). The fact that these and other protection issues are seen as politically sensitive in many contexts often results in UNICEF's activities in this area being underfinanced.

The number of conflicts and humanitarian crises in the world has increased dramatically in recent years. These situations place children and young people in a particularly vulnerable position, as they often result in an increase in child marriages, teenage pregnancies, and sexual and gender-based violence. Children and young people are also at a greater risk than adults of falling victim to human trafficking and exploitation. UNICEF's long experience as a humanitarian actor and the fact that the organisation is often among the first actors on the ground when a crisis breaks mean that UNICEF has an important role to play in preventing violence and exploitation of children and young people.

Sweden will work actively to ensure that:

- UNICEF strengthens its ability to develop and promote national protection systems and institutions;
- UNICEF continues to work towards the abolition of child marriage, female

genital mutilation (FGM) and other harmful customs;

- UNICEF strengthens its ability to protect children in armed conflicts and children fleeing from violence and abuse;
- UNICEF works to combat all forms of mental, physical and sexual gender-based violence in all situations and environments; and
- UNICEF prioritises the area of child protection in its allocation of regular resources, and conducts country-level financing dialogues on the underfinancing of national protection systems.

3.2.4 Education

The promotion of education and research is a thematic focus area in the Policy Framework. The Policy Framework states that education is a human right and a cornerstone of democracy, gender equality, equity and the possibility to achieve sustainable development. Sweden will promote a holistic view of

4. Priorities concerning the organisation's working methods

learning, with a focus on national education systems and fulfilling children's right to education. Sweden is to contribute to all girls and boys being able to complete a primary and secondary education that is free of charge, equitable and of high quality. These objectives are in line with UNICEF's expected results in the area, which are primarily found in Goal Area 2 in the organisation's Results Framework – every child learns. According to this, UNICEF will work for the development of inclusive national education systems and to ensure children's access to both primary and secondary education, with a special focus on girls' schooling.

UNICEF has also gained growing importance regarding children's access to education in conflict and post-conflict situations and humanitarian crises, including by hosting the secretariat of the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) fund, which works on meeting immediate educational needs in conflict and crisis situations. In this respect, ECW functions as a bridge between humani-

tarian assistance and long-term development cooperation.

Sweden will work actively to ensure that:

- UNICEF helps to develop education systems and strengthen national capacity in the area of education to guarantee long-term results;
- UNICEF works with marginalised and excluded children, including children with disabilities, so that they can start school at the right age and complete a primary and secondary education that is free of charge, equitable and of high quality;
- UNICEF strengthens its work on comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), in close cooperation with UNESCO, UNFPA and others; and
- UNICEF strengthens efforts to increase the number of schools with sanitation and hygiene facilities for the needs of girls.

In the Government Offices' organisational assessment, UNICEF is considered to be a mature organisation with a high capacity to contribute to good development results at country level. The organisation also has the ability to absorb considerable financing and translate this into tangible results for children. During the latest strategic period, UNICEF prioritised the development of the Results Framework, and considerable progress has been made in this respect. However, there is scope for additional improvements to UNICEF's results focus.

UNICEF's double mandate, including both long-term development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, makes the organisation particularly well suited to ensuring that both approaches can reinforce each other based on a joint analysis and risk assessment, as well as shared objectives. In this way, UNICEF can support long-term resilience as well as national and local capacity to prevent and prepare for risks related to natural disasters, conflicts, climate change and other crises.

In recent years, UNICEF's work on transparency, anti-corruption and auditing has been considerably strengthened, and in 2016 the organisation was ranked one of the world's most transparent development aid actors by the Aid Transparency Index. At the same time, it is important to follow up work vis-à-vis UNICEF's suppliers, where 'due diligence' can be ensured through procurement routines and links to the work of the UN Global Compact. Moreover, the entire UN system – including UNICEF – has been criticised for inadequate mechanisms for the reporting of sexual exploitation and sexual harassment, and there is reason to carefully follow up these accusations and the organisation's routines in these areas.

UNICEF's evaluation function is independent, and evaluations generally hold a high standard. However, the organisation can improve its ability to follow up and systematically learn from evaluations. This is a priority area in the revised Evaluation Policy that was adopted by the UNICEF Executive Board this year, as is the establishment

of national evaluation systems and joint evaluations within the UN system.

On the basis of the Government Offices' most recent organisational assessment of UNICEF, the Government intends to prioritise the following issues concerning UNICEF's working methods:

Focusing on gender mainstreaming in all areas:

- UNICEF's work to use statistics disaggregated by gender and age to strengthen the situation of young girls and improve their possibilities to exert influence;
- UNICEF's work to strengthen gender mainstreaming in close cooperation with the rest of the UN system;
- UNICEF's work to involve boys and men in gender equality work.

Focusing on long-term and flexible financing:

- UNICEF's work to increase the proportion of core support in the

budget, and increased visibility for Swedish core support and Sweden's thematic support at global and country level;

- UNICEF's work to broaden the donor base and encourage new forms of financing.

Focusing on reform and streamlining the UN system:

- UNICEF's work to implement reform of the UN development system with the objective of implementing the 2030 Agenda;
- UNICEF's important role and responsibility in efforts to further strengthen harmonisation and coordination within the UN system, and joint implementation as one UN;
- UNICEF's further development and contributions to the ongoing work in the UN to strengthen efforts to prevent violent conflicts by enhancing and developing synergies between peacebuilding, humanitarian and development initiatives;

- UNICEF's commitments in terms of making the humanitarian response system more efficient, transparent and inclusive, as they were formulated within the framework of the Grand Bargain at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016.

Focusing on sustainable results and governance:

- UNICEF's work to build national capacity and institutions, and to promote good governance;
- UNICEF's work to strengthen cross-sectoral approaches and collaborations;
- UNICEF's work to strengthen the sustainability of results and assess their cost-effectiveness;
- UNICEF's work to strengthen results-based management and budgeting, and strengthened results and financial reporting, including with regard to Sweden's thematic support via Sida;

- UNICEF's work to strengthen its evaluation function, including coverage and the ability to learn from evaluations;

- UNICEF's development of sustainable procurement (use of selection criteria for economic, environmental and social sustainability, and application of life cycle analysis), including coordination with other UN bodies;

- UNICEF's ability to coordinate with relevant civil society actors in the field in a constructive and efficient way.

Focusing on risk management, transparency and anti-corruption:

- UNICEF's ability to further integrate risk management into its activities;
- UNICEF's work on following up recommendations from internal and external audits;
- UNICEF's work on accountability and transparency – including, but not exclusively, in relation to the organisa-

5. Advocacy and forms of collaboration

tion's handling of the issue of sexual harassment and exploitation within UNICEF and its initiatives;

- UNICEF's link to the UN Global Compact's work and application of due diligence vis-à-vis suppliers.

Focusing on recruitment:

- UNICEF's recruitment of staff, including better use of the Swedish resource base;
- UNICEF's work to ensure an even gender balance, with a special focus on senior/management positions, non-discriminatory employment and organisational structures, and a human resources policy that makes it easier for both men and women employees to combine work and family life and helps to prevent and combat all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation.

5.1. Advocacy

Sweden's long-term and comprehensive support to UNICEF provides good opportunities for influence and advocacy on the Executive Board and in dialogue with UNICEF. The fact that Sweden entered into an agreement this year on multi-year core support to UNICEF further deepens positive cooperation with the organisation. The main advocacy channels include:

- A continuous and consistent bilateral dialogue with UNICEF at both political and official level;
- Active and constructive involvement in the UNICEF Executive Board, together with like-minded Member States, with the aim of gaining traction for Swedish priorities and values;
- An annual high-level consultation with UNICEF's Executive Director and management group, preferably at state secretary level;
- Ongoing monitoring of both core and

multi-bi support to UNICEF, which includes a close dialogue with counterparts in the organisation;

- A constructive and results-oriented dialogue at regional and country level with UNICEF representatives in countries where Sweden has bilateral development cooperation and UNICEF representation to monitor both Swedish core and multi-bi support;
- Continuous dialogue with the UNICEF National Committee in Sweden;
- Active Swedish monitoring of and interaction with UNICEF in social media;
- Harnessing Swedish expertise and experience in UNICEF's areas of activity by promoting recruitment of Swedes to UNICEF's regular positions and through various programmes for resource base development (including secondments, JPOs and UNVs) for mutual learning and skills exchange;

6. Monitoring

- Harnessing Swedish suppliers' expertise in procurements, and Swedish expertise in sustainable procurement and innovation procurement.⁶

5.2. Forms of collaboration

The Government Offices (Ministry for Foreign Affairs) has the main responsibility for Sweden's relations with UNICEF. Strategic, coherent and effective advocacy requires close cooperation and information exchange with all the relevant agencies (especially the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations in New York, Sida, the Embassy in Copenhagen and other relevant missions abroad) and with other actors in Sweden, such as civil society organisations, academia and business. The overarching division of roles and responsibilities within the Government Offices, and between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sida and

the missions abroad, in relation to UNICEF is set out in Sweden's strategy for multilateral development policy.⁷

Organisation consultations on UNICEF are held twice yearly, with the aim of sharing experiences from cooperation and dialogue and strengthening coordinated and strategic action. The organisation consultations are convened by the Government Offices (Ministry for Foreign Affairs), which invites representatives of relevant ministries, Sida, the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN and other relevant agencies in Sweden and abroad to attend.

The primary results monitoring is conducted in relation to UNICEF's Strategic Plan and its separate Results Framework.

The strategy is being operationalised in a joint annual work plan for Swedish actors. The work plan specifies how the year's activities will contribute to achievement of the strategy's goals and the division of work and responsibilities between the Government Offices (Ministry for Foreign Affairs), Sida and Sweden's missions abroad. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for the development and update of the work plan in consultation with the relevant agencies.

The strategy should be shared with the missions abroad in countries where Sweden provides major multi-bi support to UNICEF, which in turn should forward it to UNICEF's country offices in each country. In this way, the strategy will provide a basis for the missions' continuous dialogue with

UNICEF at country level. Joint travel (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sida, missions abroad and other agencies) may be undertaken to monitor the strategy, or parts of it.

The next organisational assessment of UNICEF will be conducted ahead of the upcoming strategy period and by 2022 at the latest.

⁶ Sweden's export strategy, Govt Communication 2015/16:48, area of action 9 (increased exchange with international organisations); Strategy for business promotion vis-à-vis the UN system UD2018/06399/FH.

⁷ Reg. no UD2017/21055/FN, p. 10



Ministry for Foreign Affairs

103 33 Stockholm
government.se