

SUMMARY REPORT

EVIDENCE FOR CHILDREN

Report from a Roundtable

Incorporating the launch of the joint Campbell Collaboration and UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti Mega Map on Child Welfare in Low- and Middle-Income Countries | 27–28 June 2018, Ford Foundation, New York, USA

This publication presents the discussions at the Evidence for Children Roundtable, held in New York, 27–28 June 2018.
The views expressed here may not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the International Rescue Committee, Campbell Collaboration or UNICEF.

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BACKGROUND

There is growing recognition of the need for more evidence-informed funding decisions, programme design and practice to effectively meet urgent challenges in tackling child mortality and malnutrition, and in providing quality early childhood development services and basic education. The global evidence base, however, is generally weak, scattered and too poorly translated to be useful to policy makers and practitioners. Meanwhile, many widely-used approaches are not supported by rigorous evidence.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Campbell Collaboration and the International Rescue Committee therefore organized an Evidence for Children Roundtable in June 2018. The aim was to explore how to improve coordination among those interested in enhancing evidence-informed decision making for child welfare. Participants included senior United Nations staff involved in research, programming and policy, non-governmental organizations, academics, development partners, other specialists working on child rights issues, campaigners for evidence literacy, and representatives from evidence synthesis centres with an interest in child welfare and well-being, including attendees based in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

This report presents the crucial debates held at the Roundtable while also serving as a first call to action for those who work in the field of child welfare.

Roundtable objectives

To convene a community of practice on #EvidenceForChildren and to stimulate ongoing discussion and coordination to fill priority evidence gaps;

To increase awareness of the need for evidence-informed approaches and the role of evidence synthesis in particular, when developing and implementing policies and practice for child welfare;

To begin a discussion on the need for enhanced investment in international development 'evidence architecture' at national and international levels;

To highlight the still significant lack of evidence in humanitarian contexts and the need for continued, long-term investment;

To share good practice, lessons and experience in overcoming challenges to evidence uptake and use, and in building an organizational evidence culture.

About the Roundtable partners



The Campbell Collaboration is an international network which publishes high-

quality systematic reviews of social and economic interventions around the world. It promotes positive social and economic change through the production and use of systematic reviews and other evidence synthesis for evidence-based policy and practice. As a first step towards consolidating the evidence base for children, the Campbell Collaboration and UNICEF have produced a child welfare mega map (see Section 4) showing the interventions and outcomes for which evidence is reported in over 300 systematic reviews.



The International Rescue Committee is a humanitarian organization working in over 30 crisis-affected countries. It has invested in generating rigorous evidence to inform programming for children in humanitarian contexts. Research

is integrated into programme development so that interventions on the ground generate evidence, for example in the area of early childhood development in conflict situations. The International Rescue Committee's interactive Outcomes and Evidence Framework (see Section 5) provides a set of tools for staff to ensure programmes are driven by the best available evidence.

Roundtable highlights

Quality evidence is a key driver of positive change in children's lives. Exciting developments in evidence synthesis are paving the way for a richer, more robust and more extensive evidence base, as researchers, advocates, policy makers and development and humanitarian practitioners work towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

To realize the vision of achieving meaningful impact in children's lives through evidence-informed action, stakeholders interested in #EvidenceForChildren agreed on the importance of facilitating a discussion on the need to build a community of practice or network to concert efforts around five core themes:

- **Invest in evidence and gap maps**, which are a vital tool in enhancing the evidence architecture;
- **Identify urgent evidence gaps** to be filled by evidence synthesis and new primary research;
- **Create demand for evidence** among users internally and among policy and decision makers, using evidence synthesis and mapping to make evidence accessible and understandable;
- **Create shared research agendas** to maximize resources, to generate evidence strategically, and to unite evidence supply and demand to ensure evidence is institutionalized into the policy and programming cycle;
- **Enhance the ability of children to participate in research**, to ensure that children have a voice in decision making.



UNICEF is strengthening its generation, communication and use of evidence through improving staff capacity and optimizing its knowledge management. As a normative actor, UNICEF can set the agenda for children globally, while as a humanitarian actor it has the capacity to deliver, scale and adapt services through key operational and implementational research, as well as through system-strengthening efforts. The Office of Research – Innocenti convenes partners to shape global debates and dialogue and influence national policies and next generation research agendas on children, including adolescents.



1

WHY EVIDENCE FOR CHILD WELFARE MATTERS

There is a **global commitment to reach the most vulnerable and to leave no child behind**. However, robust evidence is needed to reveal who those children are, where they are, the challenges they face, and the interventions that work (including when and why) in support of their well-being.

The Sustainable Development Goals represent new challenges and a growing ambition for children. There is an urgent need to understand and address previous shortfalls in interventions for children. An increase in school enrolment is not sufficient to mean more children are learning; an increase in supervised births does not necessarily equate to more lives saved. The evidence community can rise to this challenge with new, collaborative ways of working

which draw on innovations in generating, communicating and analyzing evidence. Evidence is at the heart of understanding these and other complex issues. Ultimately, evidence is about impact on the ground – informing what can be achieved, how it can be achieved, and with what level of resources. And that evidence needs to be informed by children themselves.

Globally, many governments have reaffirmed their commitment to prioritizing the use of evidence in their development agendas, and from a growing national revenue base, are increasing their own investment in evidence

generation. Nevertheless, there are still many challenges in generating and using evidence effectively, not least the parallel trend of ‘fake news’ and populist politics being experienced in many countries worldwide.



There are other practical challenges in the use of **#EvidenceForChildren**, including internally within many organizations such as UNICEF. These include:

- Fundraising and financing for evidence generation and programming is often decoupled, when it needs to be integrated;
- Knowledge-sharing is often a largely oral tradition, with limited documentation of good practices and tacit knowledge in particular;
- There may be little investment in evidence-related skills and learning products;
- Many organizations tend to have a weak culture of evidence use even if they are expert in quality evidence generation and communication;
- Humanitarian responses benefit from far less evidence than do development actions (with around 100 impact evaluations for the former, compared to 4,300 for the latter, in LMICs). Increased investment in rapid evidence generation is needed in fragile and conflict-affected contexts due to the imperative for immediate action;
- Policy and decision makers need to actively engage with the goal of creating shared research agendas, to enhance learning and the utility and effectiveness of evidence.

A vision of evidence for children: critical needs

To support the most effective #EvidenceForChildren, there is a critical need for:

- Identifying and addressing the most pressing gaps in knowledge and practice;
- Creating demand for evidence to enhance its use and relevance;
- Synthesizing evidence to help time-strapped practitioners to design better programmes, with a bias towards evidence that can inform action;
- Investing more in evidence generation in crisis-affected contexts, balancing the need for speed and quality;
- Developing refined, shared research agendas to enhance ownership from the outset;
- Enabling greater participation of children in research to better capture their unique views and perspectives.





2

ENHANCING THE USE OF EVIDENCE

Barriers to the use of evidence include a lack of external and internal demand for evidence; a lack of research availability and accessibility; a lack of clarity, relevance and reliability of findings; and a lack of opportunity or incentives to analyze or use evidence to inform decision making.

It is critical to build demand for evidence to inform policies and practice. This can be achieved through investments such as building end users' analytical capacity and the skills to understand and appraise evidence; building a culture of evidence-informed policy analysis; and fostering strong linkages between policy analysts and policy makers and practitioners. It is equally important to understand internal demand for (or lack of) evidence, barriers and incentives to uptake, and the crucial role of values and belief systems, as well as the evidence itself in decision making. UNICEF, for example, is undertaking an internal survey on current attitudes and practices in evidence generation and use among staff, to understand demand for evidence and inform its own policies and programmes.

‘Simply summarizing information to enhance availability and access is not always enough.’

Even where demand for evidence exists, this can be undermined if there is limited patience for the way evidence can be accessed and understood. Simply summarizing information to enhance availability and access is not always enough.

The International Rescue Committee has described how the ‘easy, attractive, social and timely’ framework (see Figure 1) from the UK social purpose company, the Behavioural Insights Team, can help foster greater uptake of the evidence it generates. This framework seeks to:

Make evidence easy,

presenting actionable evidence to decision makers so that they can digest it quickly in order to make decisions;

Make evidence attractive,

creating products such as data visualization tools that have aesthetic strength and allow users to play with data;

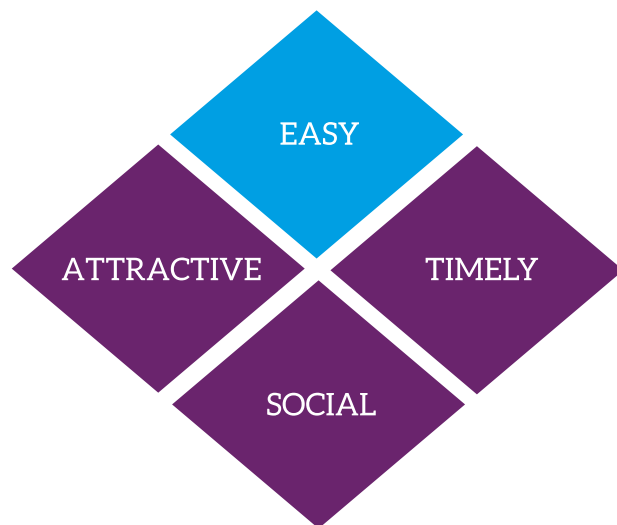
Make evidence social,

linking demand and supply through relationships and collaborations with policy makers and researchers and the internal brokering roles of technical advisers who support country offices and national teams in programme design and implementation;

Make evidence timely,

embedding evidence-informed decision making into core business processes.

Figure 1: Focusing on the user to make evidence easy, attractive, social and timely



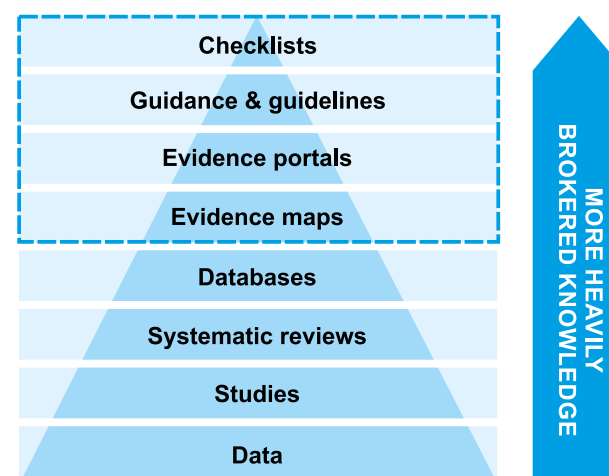
Source: Behavioural Insights Team. EAST: Four simple ways to apply behavioural insights. https://www.bi.team/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BIT-Publication-EAST_FA_WEB.pdf

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has learned from early failures around uptake of evidence. It also recognizes the importance of promoting the significance of context to programme colleagues using the evidence base. The IRC's Outcomes and Evidence Framework (see Section 5) addresses these and other issues.

Knowledge brokering

A key method for making evidence accessible, attractive and timely is to translate it into user-friendly evidence maps and portals which can be easily consulted for programme and policy design (see Figure 2). These can be further synthesized into guidance and simple checklists to ensure the planning cycle is based on available evidence. In this sense, knowledge brokering emerges as a means of institutionalizing the use of evidence (Figure 3), rather than just existing as a parallel system. Ideally, the technical product will be accompanied by human facilitation based on an understanding of potential users and a physical brokerage or interpretative function.

Figure 2: Evidence pyramid for knowledge brokering

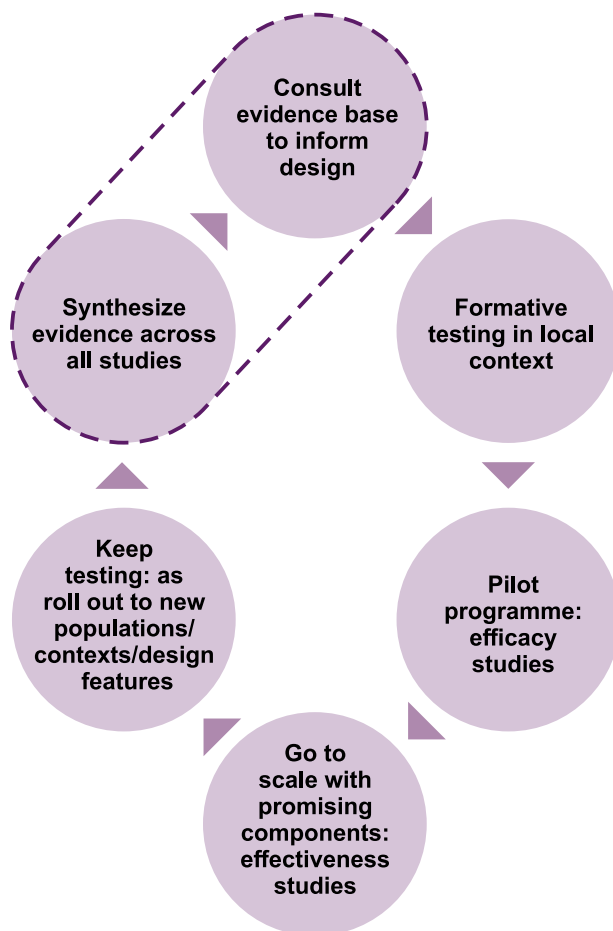


Source: Campbell Collaboration

The top levels of a potential evidence pyramid (checklists, guidance, portals) as proposed by the Campbell Collaboration, would save decision makers from having to find and consult primary evidence. World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, for example, are informed using high-quality systematic reviews of evidence through state-of-the art systematic search strategies, synthesis, quality assessments and other methods. While the health sector has shown significant advances in producing evidence-based guidelines and policy, in other areas of work, such as child rights and welfare, progress is hindered by a lack of evidence synthesis.

For examples of evidence maps and portals, please see Section 3.

Figure 3: Institutionalizing evidence through an evidence-driven project cycle



Source: Campbell Collaboration

Creating trust in evidence

Poor science often goes viral with misleading headlines, and the research sector itself has created headlines, such as those covering the 'reproducibility crisis' (in which more than 70 per cent of 1,576 researchers surveyed by *Nature* in 2016 failed to reproduce another scientist's experiments). There are now numerous exposés of poor research, with campaigning organizations such as Sense About Science mobilizing civil society to challenge the misrepresentation of science and evidence in public life. This organization supports higher standards of reporting through initiatives such as its free STATsCheck service for journalists, where statisticians fact-check claims about data.

The clear communication of quality evidence is key to its utility and use, as well as to building trust. Strong platforms for policy advocacy are needed that unite stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector as well as academics and policy makers. Researchers and practitioners need to blur the arbitrary line which separates their work and engage in active dialogue to allow evaluation and research to be built into ongoing programming. It is equally important to document the economic, social and environmental impacts of evidence-informed decision making, not just in the abstract – how evidence can influence policy for example – but in the tangible ways that evidence can affect children's lives.



#EvidenceForChildren roundtable - @laurencechandy notes that if UNICEF wants to get govt partners to use evidence, "we have to understand it in our own organization first."



“The clear communication of quality evidence is key to its utility and use, as well as to building trust.”





3

THE VALUE OF EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

While impact evaluations are vital in determining ‘what works’, the importance of context means that single studies cannot inform global policy. Evidence synthesis – the process of assessing all studies on a subject together, such as through a systematic review – allows individual findings to be interpreted within the context of global knowledge and to reconcile often competing claims through looking at a broader body of evidence.

Evidence and gap maps

Evidence and gap maps are a vital tool in enhancing the evidence architecture, as they provide a systematic and visual presentation of available, quality-assured evidence for a particular sector or sub-sector, including completed and ongoing primary studies, meta-analyses and systematic reviews. Evidence mapping allows users to clearly identify the most pressing gaps in knowledge and practice that should be filled by evidence synthesis and new primary research, for researchers and research commissioners. As such, evidence and gap maps allow for a strategic, policy-oriented approach to setting the research agenda and are critical in making evidence accessible and understandable to policy and decision makers.

Evidence and gap maps use a rigorous approach to evidence synthesis: they have a pre-specified protocol, a systematic search strategy, and clear inclusion and exclusion criteria. In this way, they are similar to a systematic review, but there are key differences (see Table 1).

Table 1: Key differences between a systematic review and an evidence and gap map

	Systematic review	Evidence and gap map
Questioning	Often limited to a single intervention and a limited range of outcomes	Broad scope of interventions across a sector or sub-sector, with a full range of outcomes across a causal chain
Reporting	Summarizes what the evidence says	Summarizes what evidence is available
Use	Informs policy and practice	Informs research priorities and research funding

Source: Campbell Collaboration

A typical map is a matrix of intervention categories (rows) and outcome domains (columns) (see, for example, Figure 4 in Section 4). The bubbles in the matrix cells denote the existence of a systematic review, impact evaluation or protocol in the relevant focus area; clicking on a circle will open up a summary page. The bubbles often have traffic light colour coding that can denote, for example, high, medium or low confidence in the conclusions of a systematic review, based on a careful appraisal of the methods applied. Or the coding might represent the strength of evidence presented, categorized as strong, inconclusive or weak. The size of the bubble usually denotes the relative size of the evidence base.

Evidence and gap maps guide users to high-quality evidence to inform strategy and programme development. However, it is important to distinguish between the *generalizability* of evidence, which applies everywhere; and the *transferability*, where findings could be used in other contexts. More work is needed to identify markers which can be used to indicate if evidence is transferable across contexts.

The Elevate Children Funders Group has developed a funders' map to help its network of philanthropic organizations identify areas of met and unmet need in support for children and youth facing adversity. The data improves coordination, advocacy and, hopefully, impact. For example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersexed (LGBTQI) organizations use data on the lack of funding for LGBTQI in their advocacy. Future plans for the map include making some parts open access, a funding analysis, and the development of a good practice index.



Great articulation of the evidence building architecture by @HowardNWhite during the #EvidenceForChildren. Talked about 4waves -
 #1-NPM and Results agenda
 #2-Randomisation
 #3- Evidence Synthesis
 #4- Knowledge Brokering
 where is your organization right now?

NPM: New public management

Examples of open access evidence maps, gap maps, and portals

Building Effective and Accessible Markets (BEAM) Exchange

Evidence map for market systems interventions
<https://beamexchange.org/resources/evidence-map>

Campbell Collaboration Online Library

Campbell systematic reviews, plain language summaries and methods series
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/library.html>

Education Endowment Foundation evidence summaries

Accessible summaries of education evidence on boosting the attainment of disadvantaged pupils
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries>

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) best practice portal

Includes briefings, implementation inventories, an evidence database, and standards and guidelines for drug-related interventions
www.emcdda.europa.eu/best-practice_en

Evidence Aid

Uses knowledge from systematic reviews to provide evidence on interventions that might be considered in the context of natural disasters and other major health care emergencies
<http://www.evidenceaid.org>

George Mason University, Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy

Evidence-based policing matrix
<https://cebcp.org/evidence-based-policing/the-matrix>

International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

Various maps including on adolescent sexual and reproductive health; intimate partner violence prevention; social, behavioural and community engagement interventions for reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health; and water, sanitation and hygiene evidence
<http://www.3ieimpact.org/our-expertise/mapping>

International Rescue Committee

Various maps including on cash transfers and humanitarian emergencies
<http://www.rescue.org/resource/strategy-2020-outcomes-and-evidence-framework-evidence-maps>

Sightsavers

Various eye health evidence maps
<https://research.sightsavers.org/gap-maps/>

UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti

Adolescent well-being in LMICs
<http://www.unicef-irc.org/evidence-gap-map>

United States Government

Access to education in maps for conflict settings, such as on health-related threats, and natural disasters
<https://eccnetwork.net/resources/evidence-gap-maps/>

Evidence map of mindfulness

http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esp/cam_mindfulness-REPORT.pdf



4

CHILD WELFARE MEGA MAP

The Roundtable launched an exciting collaboration between the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti and the Campbell Collaboration: the mega map on child welfare in low- and middle-income countries (Figure 4).

UNICEF is investing in major synthesis products to raise awareness of what is known and not known in terms of #EvidenceForChildren. The mega map was developed in response to the scattered nature of evidence on child welfare and children at risk, and takes a systematic approach to identifying existing evidence and evidence gaps.

While an evidence and gap map summarizes systematic reviews and primary studies (impact evaluations), this mega map has a higher-level scope, summarizing existing systematic reviews and evidence and gap maps. It provides an intuitive, interactive and visual overview of 302 systematic reviews on child welfare interventions in LMICs, as well as 16 evidence and gap maps, with ongoing work to expand its scope and maintain its relevance.

The mega map is linked to the five goal areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021: every child survives and thrives; every child learns; every child is protected from violence and exploitation; every child lives in a safe and clean environment; and every child has an equitable chance in life. As such, five research briefs have also been produced outlining key areas of evidence synthesis and evidence gaps pertaining to each goal area. A podcast ‘Closing the gap on child well-being: Kerry Albright on the new evidence mega map which summarizes the mega map findings is also available on the UNICEF – Innocenti SoundCloud website.

The mega map is a key tool for enhancing evidence-informed decision making at UNICEF and among its partners, and will act as a global public good and UNICEF resource by potentially:

Helping to prioritize global needs for evidence synthesis

by quickly identifying areas where there is a need to fill research and knowledge gaps, and by strengthening or scaling up new evidence generation for children;

Identifying evidence gaps around which evidence generation will be coordinated,

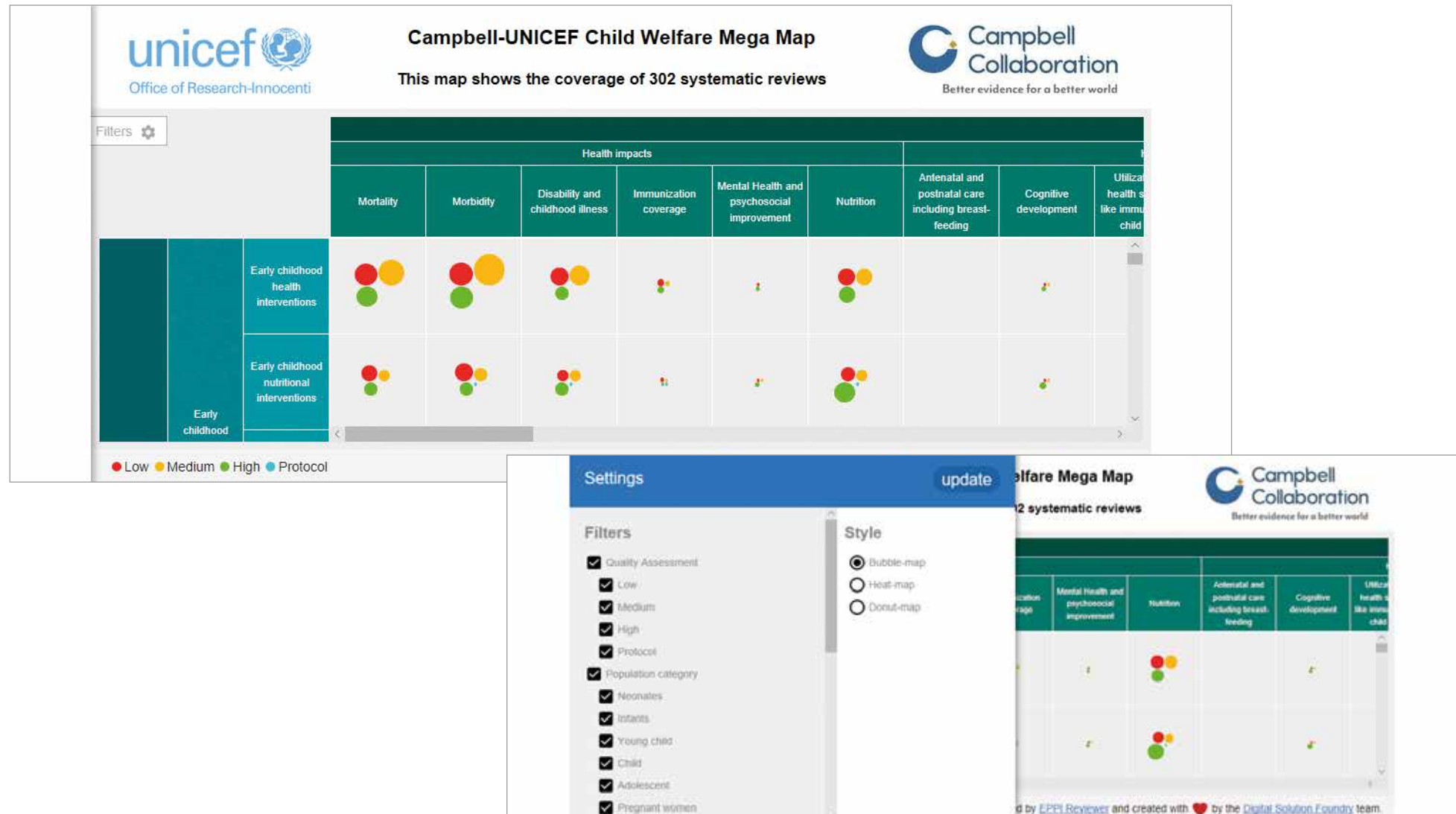
rather than duplicating efforts;

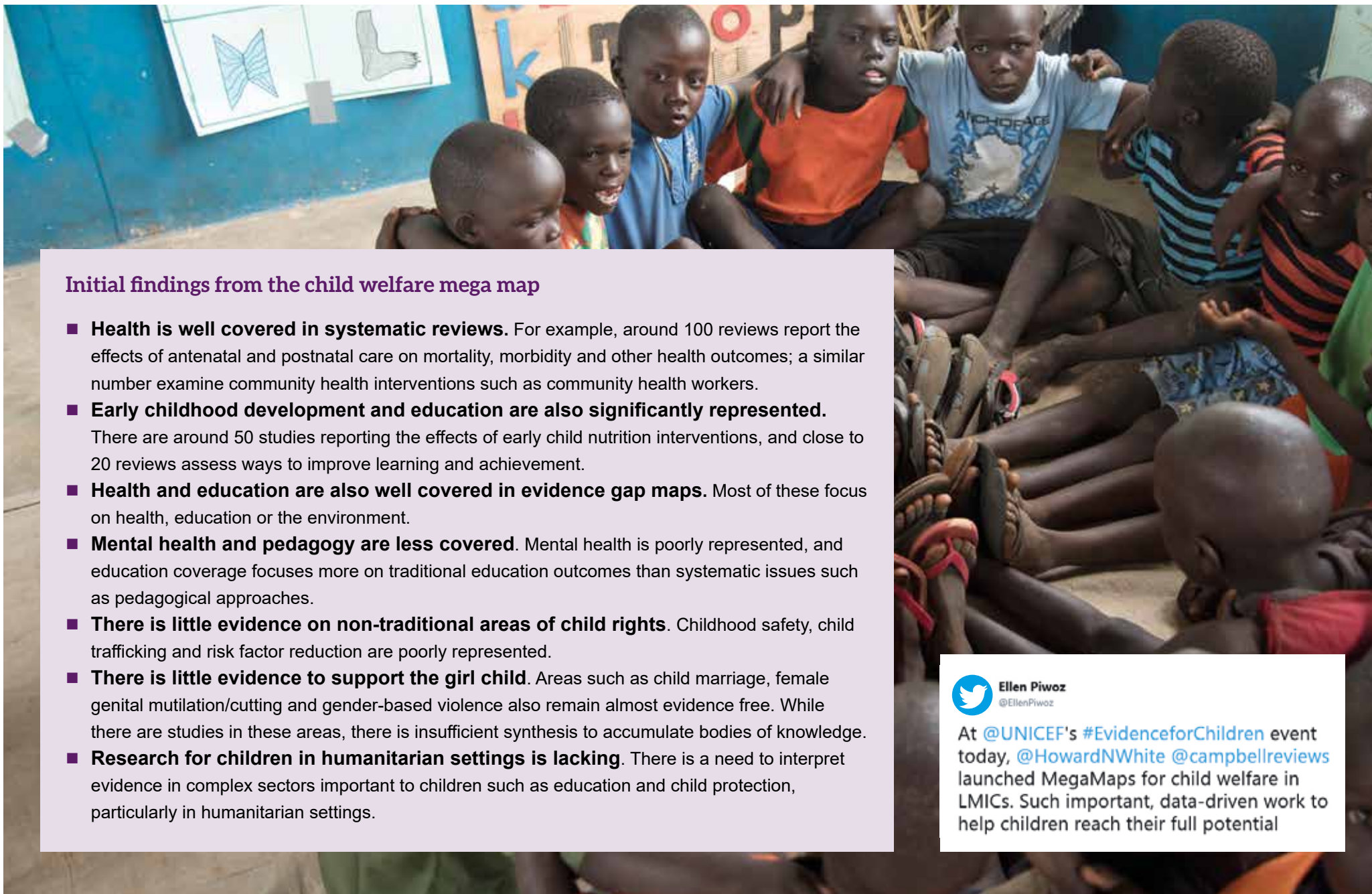
Highlighting evidence to inform programming and policy advocacy

through support to UNICEF country offices.

As a result of funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the mega map will be a ‘living map’. It will be updated annually to include more evidence as it is produced, over the lifetime of the UNICEF Strategic Plan (2018–2021), thus maximizing its relevance and utility for decision making.

Figure 4: The mega map on child welfare in low- and middle-income countries





Initial findings from the child welfare mega map

- **Health is well covered in systematic reviews.** For example, around 100 reviews report the effects of antenatal and postnatal care on mortality, morbidity and other health outcomes; a similar number examine community health interventions such as community health workers.
- **Early childhood development and education are also significantly represented.** There are around 50 studies reporting the effects of early child nutrition interventions, and close to 20 reviews assess ways to improve learning and achievement.
- **Health and education are also well covered in evidence gap maps.** Most of these focus on health, education or the environment.
- **Mental health and pedagogy are less covered.** Mental health is poorly represented, and education coverage focuses more on traditional education outcomes than systematic issues such as pedagogical approaches.
- **There is little evidence on non-traditional areas of child rights.** Childhood safety, child trafficking and risk factor reduction are poorly represented.
- **There is little evidence to support the girl child.** Areas such as child marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting and gender-based violence also remain almost evidence free. While there are studies in these areas, there is insufficient synthesis to accumulate bodies of knowledge.
- **Research for children in humanitarian settings is lacking.** There is a need to interpret evidence in complex sectors important to children such as education and child protection, particularly in humanitarian settings.



At @UNICEF's #EvidenceforChildren event today, @HowardNWhite @campbellreviews launched MegaMaps for child welfare in LMICs. Such important, data-driven work to help children reach their full potential



5

OUTCOMES AND EVIDENCE FRAMEWORK

The International Rescue Committee has developed an interactive Outcomes and Evidence Framework to support humanitarian and development professionals in designing effective programmes. It delivers key information on outcomes related to health, safety, education, economic well-being and power. These are further developed into 26 outcomes with full theories of change and indicators. The framework provides evidence of how interventions work or don't work to achieve the outcomes, and includes guidance on how to measure progress. Programme guidance is being produced to support the framework and provide in-depth synthesis of evidence about interventions together with programmatic experience.

When a user clicks on an outcome, such as 'male partners and other males do not use violence against women' in the safety theory of change, an evidence card appears which shows the availability of evidence and whether it is positive, uncertain or negative (Figure 5). The information is simplified into 'top-line information' so that users can easily judge its relevance. This is similar to an evidence and gap map (albeit that it only shows what evidence exists, not where there are gaps) but is linked to the theory of change, giving information on indicators and linked outcomes. An additional level in the evidence map shows more information about the conclusions and context, such as if the information is from a refugee camp, a stable context, a conflict or a disaster.

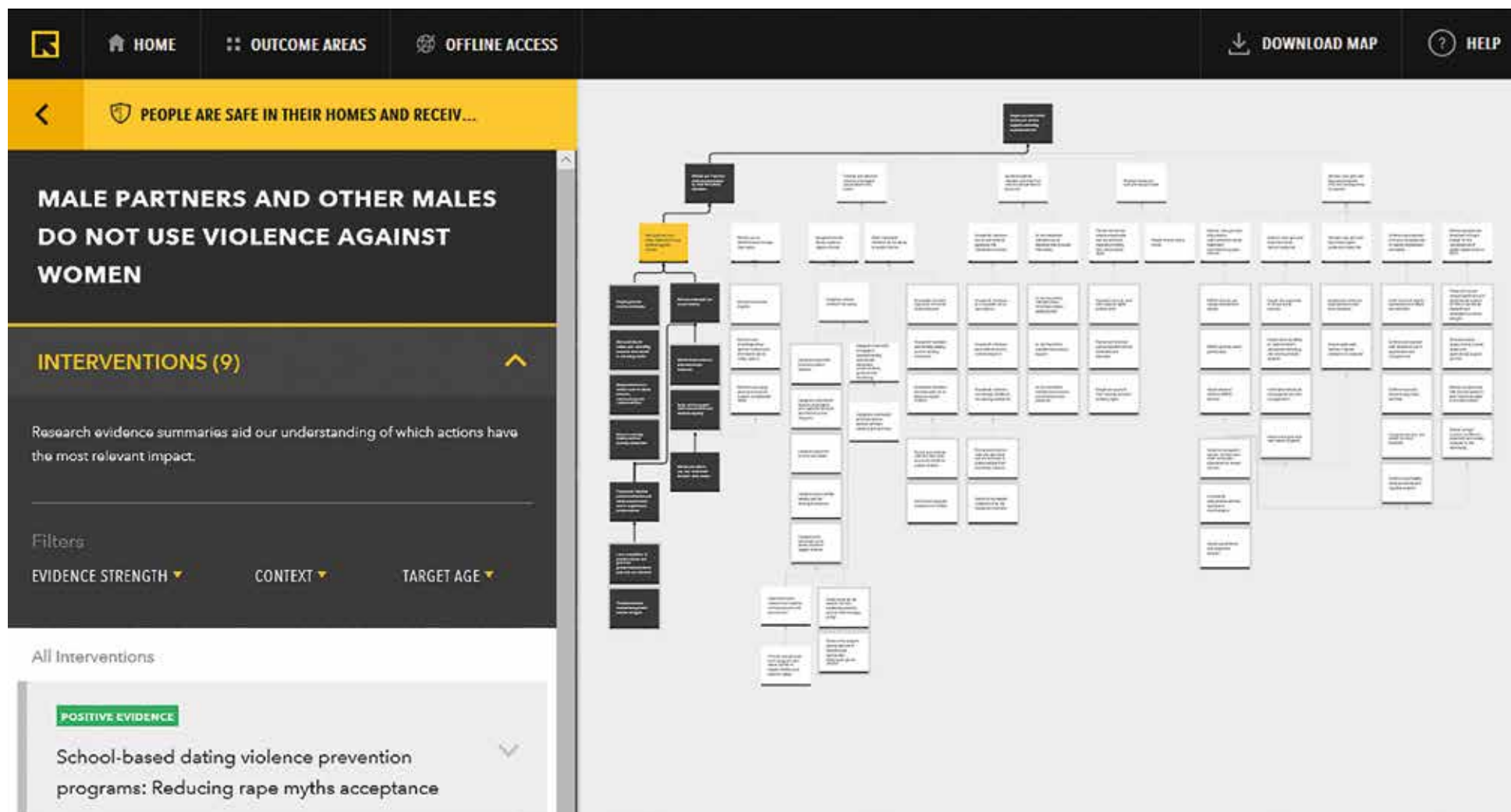
Where there is no evidence, the best hypothesis of appropriate pathways is illustrated, and a number of gap maps are produced in Excel.



"Congratulations for this milestone... so interesting and happy to see that we are more looking to use and exploit the evidence available and invest to cover the gaps."

“The framework provides evidence of how interventions work or don't work to achieve the outcomes, and includes guidance on how to measure progress.”

Figure 5: Evidence card for the outcome 'male partners and other males do not use violence against women'



Source: International Rescue Committee interactive Outcomes and Evidence Framework, <http://oef.rescue.org>

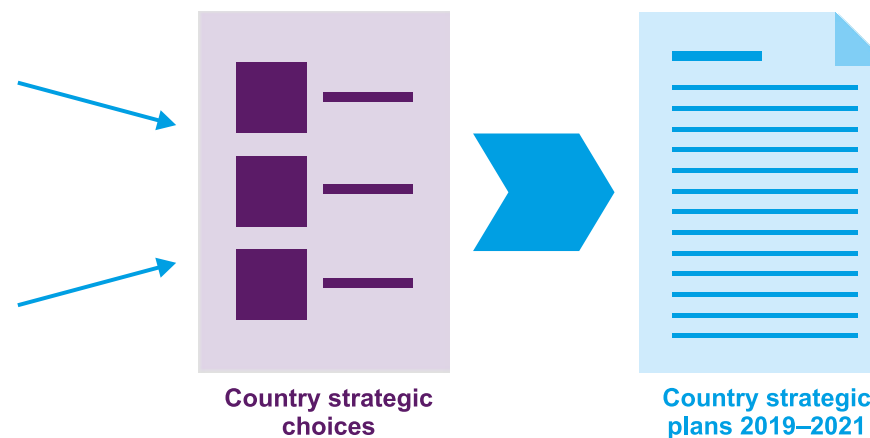
The participation of children in evidence generation and research and development processes is still not often prioritized or valued: children are seen as beneficiaries or subjects as opposed to experts, agents of change or major stakeholders. Researchers and the international development community need to challenge the societal norms and discourses surrounding the capacity and rights of children to participate in decision making and ensure that those affected by research have a voice in that research process. Children's and adolescents' participation in research is a nascent topic of much debate, with key challenges to be explored, such as how children's voices can influence governance; the ethics, dangers and

risk of generalizing children's voices; and social-political and cultural challenges to involving children in policy decisions.

There are, however, examples of good practice. Save the Children actively collaborates with children in gathering evidence. Through its 'Dreamland' children's consultation process, for example, children construct their ideal territory in which their rights are fulfilled (see Figure 6). The voices of children are then collected into a situational analysis which informs country strategic plans. Another example is a community child researchers initiative in Somaliland, which conducts research for the country's child well-being

Figure 6: Dreamland children's consultation process

Child rights situational analysis



Source: Save the Children

6

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

report card. Thirty children aged 13–17 years were trained in research and indicators of well-being. This allowed children to generate data on their well-being, shape discourses and be partners in informing community priorities.

UNICEF recognizes the critical importance of children's voices in generating evidence, and is developing tools to support and advocate for ethical evidence generation involving children. Meanwhile, the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti supports the portal Ethical Research

Involving Children and has produced working papers such as 'What we know about ethical research involving children in humanitarian settings: an overview of principles, the literature and case studies' (2016), 'Children and the data cycle: rights and ethics in a big data world' (2017) and 'The ethical involvement of children with disabilities in evidence generation' (forthcoming). UNICEF has also developed toolkits for conducting research with children and adolescents. See for example <https://www.unicef-irc.org/adolescent-research-methods/>



"It was great to see so much interest in proactively introducing a robust evidence base into the sector."

“UNICEF recognizes the critical importance of children's voices in generating evidence, and is developing tools to support and advocate for ethical evidence generation involving children.”





7

ENHANCING THE SOUTHERN VOICE

Researchers and policy makers in the Global South are vital to enhancing #EvidenceForChildren: well-intentioned policy recommendations made by those outside of the region often fail to respond to local contextual and political realities. A more grounded and local use of evidence is needed, supported by the development of evidence synthesis skills, an embedding of these skills into research centres, and a means of brokering the importance of evidence and evidence synthesis with Southern governments.

It is important to listen to evidence users, and have respect for local knowledge when research is conducted and its use encouraged. Evidence needs to drive and inform decisions, alongside a deep understanding of the context, which may have been gained by individuals over many years or decades of experience. A diversity of experts, ideally from within the community, can champion ideas and tell an evidence-informed story that connects with people's values.

The work of three important organizations was highlighted during the Roundtable. The Global Evidence Synthesis Initiative (GESI) with a Secretariat based at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, supports 37 evidence synthesis centres based in 24 LMICs to enhance capacity and use synthesized evidence to support practice and policy across disciplines. GESI is currently conducting a needs assessment to identify the capacity building needs of the centres in terms of conducting systematic reviews, translating knowledge and setting priorities.

The African Centre for Systematic Reviews and Knowledge Translation, based at Makerere University, Uganda, is building capacity for conducting and using systematic reviews. It is also developing innovative rapid response briefs and mechanisms to respond to urgent demands from policy makers for synthesized evidence in East Africa.

The International Center for Evaluation and Development, based in Nairobi, Kenya is supporting the development of homegrown evidence-informed policies in Africa that are adapted to local conditions and context. To achieve this, there is a need to revamp national policy and research institutions, build capacity for policy analysis, create a culture of evidence-informed policy analysis, and foster strong linkages between policy analysts and policy makers. It is especially critical to build demand for evidence-informed policies within government ministries to ensure that appropriate public investments are prioritized.



Simply "adding more science" won't change people's minds if the evidence doesn't align with their values, or if the evidence creates a social cost - how can #EvidenceForChildren be used to change our culture and beliefs?



8

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

The mechanisms for partnerships in evidence generation for children are currently underdeveloped, with multiple actors working on similar studies, creating duplicate databases, and wasting resources, time and opportunities to further the research agenda. An ecosystems approach is needed which unites cross-sectoral stakeholders and champions to create shared research agendas and resources.

Cross-sectoral partnerships are crucial in furthering the evidence agenda for children and can take different forms, all potentially involving stakeholders such as children, academia, civil society, donors, governments, the international development community and the private sector. Examples include:

Convening donors to collaborate on joint investments in evidence;

Research partnerships to avoid duplication and maximize opportunities for generating evidence;

Research-policy partnerships to enhance evidence demand, utility and use;

Research-implementation partnerships to generate evidence through the programme cycle and break down research/programme silos;

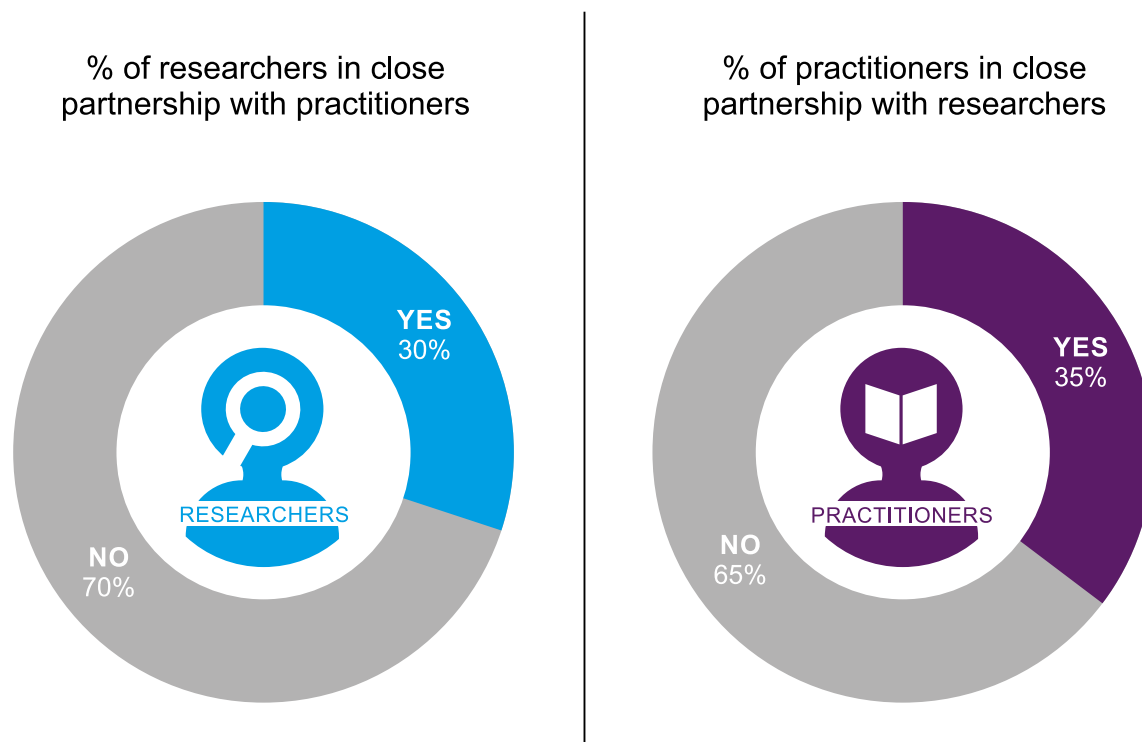
Research-practice-policy partnerships to combine implementation research with opportunities for piloting programmes and policy toolkits.

The Education in Emergencies: Evidence for Action initiative, for example, is led by a research-practice partnership. It marries innovative programme delivery with rigorous research to build a global knowledge base about what works to improve children's learning and well-being in crisis-affected contexts. The model is unusual in the education-in-emergencies sector, where research-practice partnerships are not the norm (see Figure 7).

Other opportunities for evidence coordination and partnership include the creation of an #EvidenceForChildren community of practice; the development of joint programme guidance; common evidence standards and guidelines; shared, synchronized or integrated workplans; and a common coding framework so that all actors undertaking reviews in a particular sector can code data into a single database. In addition, actors can share findings; engage in joint funding of specific studies or activities; benefit from joint support to synthesis studies through the Campbell Collaboration's 'global pooled funds for children at risk of abuse and neglect and for child welfare in low- and middle-income countries'; and undertake implementation research and adaptive learning to ensure immediate utilization of findings within programming.

Figure 7: Education in emergencies research–practice partnerships

Who in the education in emergencies field are in close research-practice partnerships?



Source: Education in Emergencies: Evidence for Action (3EA). 2018. Supporting decision-making for children's programming in crisis contexts. New York, NY: NYU Global TIES for Children and the International Rescue Committee. Retrieved from: https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/mhm327/Survey_Memo-4_FNL_updated.pdf

The findings are based on a survey conducted between October and December 2017. Targeted at stakeholders working with children in crisis and vulnerable contexts in the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey (MENAT), the survey was designed to better understand their current data-driven practices and needs. The final sample included a total of 176 respondents who reported working with children, youth, families, schools, and/or teachers (50 researchers, 102 practitioners, 17 funders, and 7 civil servants). While the response rate was fairly high, the results are unlikely to be representative of the field at large.

The potential benefits of evidence coordination

- **Strengthens evidence ecosystems**, internally within organizations, within sectors and in-country;
- **Institutionalizes evidence generation**;
- **Supports global public goods** with open access data, meaning partners are not competing for funding;
- **Allows for better use of resources** to generate more evidence;
- **Fosters commitment**;
- **Opens up a more self-critical culture**;
- **Allows for learning** from others' mistakes as well as from their successes;
- **Enhances understanding of the contribution of research and evidence** for decision makers;
- **Increases utilization** of research and evaluation findings;
- **Strengthens strategic alliances** and partnerships for an evidence-informed policy-making process as an integral part of fostering the development agenda in the Global South.



WHAT NEXT?

Momentum is gathering to create a global coalition on #EvidenceForChildren to lead and advocate for the use of robust evidence for child policies and programmes. Attendees at the Roundtable plus interested partners can help support the following activities by seeking **mechanisms and funding to sustain an #EvidenceForChildren community of practice or network**, and by facilitating the actions directly. Meanwhile, please join the community by emailing research@unicef.org and following the #EvidenceForChildren hashtag on social media.

For researchers and their partners

- Develop rapid response briefs, particularly in humanitarian settings, and 'quick and clean reviews,' with different models to provide evidence synthesis (including suitable quality caveats) in three days, 30 days or three months;
- Explore the different types of evidence needed to inform decisions including implementation research, impact assessments and cost-effectiveness data;
- Explore evidence synthesis products with aesthetic strength and bring in design and communication experts to make them more powerful, in collaboration with potential end-users;
- Build the capacity of researchers in advocacy and communications, and bring communications practitioners on board at an early stage;
- Acknowledge and address the politics and hard choices that arise when decision-makers shift to more evidence-informed practices, including

the residual importance of values and belief systems;

- Find and support evidence champions among partner policy makers and implementers;
- Establish informal networks and relationships between universities and ministries at the policy level, and formal relationships such as through a memorandum of understanding.
- Explore cross-sectoral and cross-country collaborations which can enhance or translate the evidence base in multiple sectors or contexts;
- Use more inclusive approaches to evidence generation and use – which involve the people and children that evidence is designed to serve.

‘seeking mechanisms and funding to sustain an #EvidenceForChildren community of practice or network’



For donors and their partners

- Donors demanding the generation and use of quality evidence can provide incentives and act as an enabler. However, this should be balanced with perceptions of bias when a donor is funding research so full transparency is necessary;
- A community of donors including foundations can act as champions of open access data;
- Listen to what is needed on the ground, rather than focusing too tightly on funder priorities;
- Make real investments in research, including replication, verification and peer review;
- Pursue multi-donor partnership on organizational learning to ensure that evidence and lessons are utilized across respective member organizations;
- Create an 'online matching' forum to connect researchers, funders, the private sector, universities and non-governmental organizations to identify research projects and joint stakeholders;
- Establish a sustainable global funding mechanism for high-quality evidence synthesis to scale up recognition of its value.

Building the evidence architecture

- Agree on shared standards, information sharing, coordination and cooperation;
- Approach evidence synthesis as a global public good, and use open sourcing of tools and platforms for data, including a global repository for evidence synthesis products (such as the Campbell Online Library);

- Identify new evidence gap maps and reviews for inclusion in the updated mega map, annually until 2021;
- Work with other interested parties to build demand for evidence products and architecture;
- Create tools that use the best available, rather than perfect, evidence while gaps are being filled;
- Continue to develop global standards, particularly around qualitative evidence synthesis;
- Build reflection and learning into institutional structures – a culture of learning where the penalty addresses failure to learn, rather than failure itself;
- Unite the evidence agenda with accountability structures for results-based management or adaptive learning;
- Monitor and review case studies of mega map use and host an event to share experiences.

Filling the gaps

- Complete the empty areas of evidence and gap maps, such as unpacking priority cells in the mega map through enhanced evidence synthesis or production of primary studies to fill evidence gaps and/or to develop programme guidance based on sound evidence;
- Coordinate evidence demand with a small set of like-minded donors for priority reviews around major gaps (e.g. on gender-based violence, child marriage, sexual exploitation and trafficking);
- Create evidence platforms where there is a lack of evidence, including on the environment, urbanization and migration;

- Build rigorous evaluation into international and national programmes;
- Support global pooled funds to minimize duplication of effort and enhance strategic coordination and prioritization;
- Use the mega map in conjunction with the Elevate Children Funding Group's funding map to ensure that important issues are not neglected.



Forward planning on [#EvidenceForChildren](#) - looking at what's next for this group and its research agendas - adeptly led by [@ithorpe](#)





CONCLUSION

The Roundtable provided an opportunity for stakeholders to come together and share experiences, questions and inspiration. The aim was to determine how to collaborate on strengthening the generation, communication and use of #EvidenceForChildren in the future.

While attendees came from the different worlds of academia, international development funding and civil society, among others, they share a passion for driving research, data and evaluation, ensuring the availability of such evidence to different audiences, and examining how findings can be taken forward and used to create impact for children. Many issues need further exploration and the participation of interested stakeholders is welcomed as this important work is developed.

Partnerships, coordination and collaboration are absolutely key, as all concerned collectively strive towards realizing the Sustainable Development Goals and a future fit for children.

Interested partners are invited to join the #EvidenceForChildren community by emailing research@unicef.org and following the #EvidenceForChildren hashtag on social media.

Where we want to be

Sharing quality #EvidenceForChildren



Scaling what we know works for children, including where, when and why



Working together to fill gaps in knowledge on #EvidenceForChildren, with primary research and evidence synthesis, especially for sectors with large gaps



A-Z OF SOME USEFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

3ie database of policy briefs, systematic reviews and impact evaluations

<http://www.3ieimpact.org/evidence-hub/evidence-gap-maps>

Africa Centre for Systematic Reviews and Knowledge Translation

<http://www.chs.mak.ac.ug/afcen>

Africa Evidence Network

<http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org>

American Educational Research Association

<http://www.aera.net>

California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare

<http://www.cebc4cw.org>

Campbell Collaboration Online Library

<https://campbellcollaboration.org/library.html>

Centre for Evidence and Implementation

<https://www.ceiglobal.org>

Children and AIDS Learning Collaborative

<http://childrenandaids.org/learning-center-page>

The Comparative and International Education Society

<http://www.cies.us>

CPC Learning Network

<http://www.cpcnetwork.org>

DevInfo human development data

<http://devinfo.org>

Elevate Children Funders Group

<http://elevatechildren.org>

Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELRHA)

<https://www.elrha.org/about-us>

Epistimonikos collaborative, multilingual database of health evidence

<http://www.epistemonikos.org>

ERIC Institute of Education Sciences

<https://eric.ed.gov>

Ethical Research Involving Children project

<https://childethics.com>

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

(EMCDDA) best practice portal

http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/best-practice_en

Evidence Aid

<http://www.evidenceaid.org>

Evidence-informed Policy Network

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/data-and-evidence/evidence-informed-policy-making/evidence-informed-policy-network-evipnet>

The Global Evidence Synthesis Initiative (GESI) Network

<http://www.gesiinitiative.com>

Global Partnership for Knowledge Sharing

<https://www.knowledgesharingfordev.org/global-partnership>

Global TIES for Children: Transforming Intervention Effectiveness and Scale

<https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/ihdsc/global-ties>

GRADE (Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluations)

<https://bestpractice.bmj.com/info/toolkit/learn-ebm/what-is-grade>

Health Data Collaborative

<http://www.healthdatacollaborative.org>

Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)

<https://www.poverty-action.org/impact/case-studies>

International Centre for Evaluation and Development

<http://www.iced-eval.org>

International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP)

<https://www.inasp.info>

International Rescue Committee interactive Outcomes and Evidence Framework

<http://oef.rescue.org>

Multi-donor partnership on organizational learning

<https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/special-announcement-new-multi-donor-partnership-organizational-learning-development>

Politics & Ideas

<http://politicsandideas.org>

Results for America

<http://results4all.org>

Save the Children

<https://www.savethechildren.org>

Sense about Science, challenging the misrepresentation of science and evidence in public life

<https://senseaboutscience.org>

Social Systems Evidence database

<http://www.socialsystemsevidence.org>

Society for Research in Child Development

<http://www.srkd.org>

UK Government What Works Network

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network>

UNICEF briefs reviewing contemporary research methodologies for adolescent well-being in LMICs

<http://www.unicef-irc.org/adolescent-research-methods>

UNICEF dedicated data site

<https://data.unicef.org>

UNICEF dedicated evaluation site

<http://www.unicef.org/evaluation>

UNICEF dedicated research site

<http://www.unicef-irc.org>

UNICEF Evidence for Action blog

<https://blogs.unicef.org/evidence-for-action>

UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys

<http://mics.unicef.org>

United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation

<http://www.childmortality.org>

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Learning Lab

<https://usaidlearninglab.org>

World Bank Blog: 'Bridge the gap between research and policy, one panel discussion (and 145 studies) at a time'

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/impactevaluations/bridge-gap-between-research-and-policy-one-panel-discussion-and-145-studies-time>

World Health Organization (WHO) Handbook for Guideline Development

<http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/en/m/abstract/Js22083en>

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ROUNDTABLE PROGRAMME

Wednesday 27th June (focus on advocacy for more evidence synthesis for children)

08.30-09.00	<i>Registration</i>	
09.00-09.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome and housekeeping Welcome Remarks – the importance of evidence-informed decision-making for children in the SDG era 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kerry Albright, Chief Research Facilitation & Knowledge Management, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti (5 mins) Shahida Azfar, Deputy Executive Director-Partnerships, UNICEF (10 mins)
09.15-09.45	Session Theme: The Need for Better Evidence for Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why evidence matters in aid agencies today The need for an improved evidence architecture for int. development Q&A incl. Shahida Azfar (10 mins) 	Chair: Laurence Chandy, Director – Division of Data, Research and Policy, UNICEF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jodi Nelson, Senior Vice President, Policy & Practice, International Rescue Committee (10 mins) Howard White, Chief Executive Officer, Campbell Collaboration (10 mins)
09.45-10.15	Session Theme: How UNICEF is working to build an evidence culture within the organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Vision for Evidence at UNICEF (where we've come from and where we hope to go) Why UNICEF co-funded the MegaMap Q&A (10 mins) 	Chair: Jeannie Annan, Director of Research & Evaluation, International Rescue Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laurence Chandy, Director – Division of Data, Research and Policy, UNICEF (10 mins) Kerry Albright, Chief Research Facilitation & Knowledge Management, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti (10 mins)
10.15-10.45	<i>Refreshment Break</i>	
10.45-12.00	Session Theme: Improved Evidence Synthesis, Mapping and Coordination for Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of the MegaMap for Child Welfare in Low and Middle Income Countries Key findings and next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussant – IRC reaction and reflections on potential use and complementary initiatives at IRC, particularly in humanitarian contexts Discussant – ECFG reaction and reflections on similarities and differences to ECFG's own mapping exercise on evidence for children Q&A (15 mins) 	Chair: Ellen Piwoz, Senior Programme Officer – Nutrition, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howard White, Chief Executive Officer, Campbell Collaboration (30 mins) Nicole Behnam, Senior Technical Director of Violence Prevention and Response Technical Unit, International Rescue Committee (15 mins) Ghazal Keshavarzian, Director, Elevate Children Funders Group (15 mins)
12.00-13.00	Session Theme: Pioneering evidence-informed decision-making in government and NGOs' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need for user-centric approaches. IRC organizational experiences with evidence mapping approaches to improve programs – using both impact, cost and implementation research Building capacity for evidence synthesis and use in LMIC settings Working with NGOs and governments in low-income and conflict-affected countries to develop and evaluate innovative approaches Q&A/Discussion (20 mins) 	Chair: Priscilla Idele, Deputy Director, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeannie Annan, Director of Research & Evaluation, International Rescue Committee (20 mins) Racha Fadlallah, Global Evidence Synthesis Initiative/Centre for Systematic Reviews of Health Policy and Systems Research (10 mins) Lawrence Aber, Global TIES for Children (10 mins)
13.00-14.00	<i>Lunch</i>	
14.00-14.45	Groupwork and interactive session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Task: How do we stimulate better uptake and use of evidence for designing child-related policy and programs within our own organizations? 	Facilitator: Dave Algoso, Dave Algoso Consulting
14.45-15.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick Feedback to Plenary Discussion 	<i>As above</i>
15.00-15.30	<i>Refreshment Break</i>	
15.30-16.15	Groupwork and interactive session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Task: What do we need to do to ensure better coordination amongst those commissioning and using evidence for children globally? 	Facilitator: Sarah Schmidt – Deputy Chief of Party USAID LEARN
16.15-16.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick Feedback to Plenary Discussion 	<i>As above</i>
16.30-16.45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take home reflections from three Roundtable participants 	Chair: Howard White, Chief Executive Officer, Campbell Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dwan Kaoukji, Director of Evidence, Girl Effect /Nike Foundation (5 mins) Karie Brown, Vice President – Grants, Comic Relief (5 mins) Esther Goh, Early Childhood Development Specialist, Bernard van Leer Foundation (5 mins)
16.45-17.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing Remarks and Next Step 	Laurence Chandy, Director – Division of Data, Research and Policy, UNICEF
17.00	<i>End of day one</i>	

ROUNDTABLE PROGRAMME

Thursday 28th June (focus on capacity-building and lesson-learning for evidence practitioners)

09.00–09.30	<i>Registration</i>	
09.30–10.30	Theme: The Importance of Evidence Synthesis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduction to commissioning and conducting Evidence and Gap Maps (EGMs) ■ What EGMs don't capture ■ Q&A (15 mins) 	Chair: Annie Duflo, Executive Director, Innovations for Poverty Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Howard White, Chief Executive Officer, Campbell Collaboration (45 mins)
10.30–11.00	<i>Refreshment Break</i>	
11.00–12.30	Groupwork and Interactive Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Chance for workshop participants to have hands-on engagement with the MegaMap on Child Welfare in LMICs to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ find evidence they might not be familiar with and identify how this could help inform what they are doing ■ find gaps and prioritize the most important/pressing questions to answer in their sectors. ■ give feedback on utility and design 	Facilitator: Howard White, Chief Executive Officer, Campbell Collaboration
12.30–12.45	■ Introduction to the afternoon's Action Timeline exercise	Facilitator: Ian Thorpe, Chief- Learning and Knowledge Exchange, UNICEF
12.45–13.30	<i>Lunch</i>	
13.30–14.15	Theme: Putting the User First <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Getting user perspectives built into evidence synthesis for children ■ Q&A/Discussion (15 mins) 	Chair: George Laryea-Adjei, Director of Evaluation, UNICEF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Taitos Matafeni, Head of Impact, Innovation and Evidence, Save the Children UK (15 mins) ■ Ekwaro Obuku, Centre Co-ordinator Africa Centre for Systematic Reviews and Knowledge Translation (15 mins)
14.15–15.00	Theme: The Political Realities of Evidence Uptake <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evidence Uptake and Ongoing Challenges to Strengthening Evidence-informed Decision-making ■ Q&A/Discussion (15 mins) 	Chair: Kerry Albright, Chief Research Facilitation & Knowledge Management, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Trevor Butterworth, Executive Director – Sense About Science USA (15 mins) ■ David Ameyaw, CEO/President, International Center for Evaluation and Development, Andrews University (15 mins)
15.00–15.15	<i>Refreshment Break</i>	
15.15–16.00	Theme: Looking to the Future <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Action Timeline to start identifying next steps and commitments 	Facilitator: Ian Thorpe, Chief- Learning and Knowledge Exchange, UNICEF (30 mins)
16.00–16.15	■ Closing Remarks and Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Jeannie Annan, Director of Research & Evaluation, International Rescue Committee (5 mins) ■ Howard White, Chief Executive Officer, Campbell Collaboration (5 mins) ■ Laurence Chandy, Director – Division of Data, Research and Policy, UNICEF (5 mins)
16.15	<i>Close of Roundtable</i>	

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