The Office of Research – Innocenti is UNICEF's dedicated research arm. Its prime objectives are to improve international understanding of issues relating to children's rights and to help facilitate full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child across the world. The Office of Research aims to set out a comprehensive framework for research and knowledge within the organization, in support of UNICEF's global programmes and policies, and works with partners to make policies for children evidence-based. Publications produced by the Office are contributions to a global debate on children and child rights issues and include a wide range of opinions.

Extracts from this publication may be freely reproduced with due acknowledgement. Further information on the role and mission of the Office of Research is available from the Communication Unit:
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2014 marked a successful year in an upward growth trajectory for the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, and included the development of key research outputs, active advocacy for research, successful growth in the research portfolio, and expansion of outreach, tools and products.

2014 HEADLINE RESULTS

POVERTY, EQUITY AND WELL-BEING RESEARCH

CHILD WELL-BEING IN RICH COUNTRIES
Innocenti Report Card 12, ‘Children of the Recession: The impact of the economic crisis on child well-being in rich countries’, was launched with unprecedented media coverage.

MULTIPLE DEPRIVATIONS ANALYSIS
A cross-country analysis of deprivations among children in sub-Saharan Africa conducted using MODA (Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis) described high rates of multidimensional poverty among children in 45 countries.

CASH TRANSFERS IN AFRICA
The Transfer Project, analysing data from national cash transfer programmes operating in Africa, generated research findings with significant policy impact.

RIGHTS, GOVERNANCE AND SYSTEMS RESEARCH

FAMILY AND PARENTING SUPPORT
In-depth analysis of support provided to families and parents was completed, providing important insight for future research.

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION
A study was completed on the important question of what it is that enables a policy, process, decision or practice to be in the best interests of the child.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN
The first phase of the multi-country study on drivers of violence resulted in the Research to Policy and Practice Process, designed to respond to growing country-level demand.

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND USE OF EVIDENCE

METHODOLOGICAL BRIEFS AND GUIDANCE
An Impact Evaluation series of methodological briefs and instructional videos were launched, along with a technical support facility. Guidance was developed on ethical practices in research quality assurance procedures.
The UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti actively engaged in:
- Generating high-quality research to inform programmes and knowledge about children
- Strengthening the capacity to improve the quality and use of evidence
- Convening international events by acting as a catalyst for research globally.

SHOWCASING UNICEF RESEARCH
An expert panel identified 12 high-calibre research pieces in the annual competition, Best of UNICEF Research, with a view to celebrating and fostering a culture of research.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY
High-impact communications, including rich videos, the Africa series of Breaking Views interviews, a Research Watch edition on ‘Youth, Conflict and Peace Building’, and an e-book on climate change, have helped to share evidence.

EMERGING RESEARCH AREAS

ADOLESCENTS
The four-year multi-donor programme on Social and Structural Determinants of Adolescent Well-Being in Low- and Middle-Income Countries began, building on existing empirical research themes and methods, and operationalizing new frameworks for intervention.

GLOBAL LONGITUDINAL NETWORK
The International Symposium on Cohort and Longitudinal Studies in Low and Middle Income Countries, hosted by the UNICEF Office of Research in collaboration with Young Lives, gave rise to a new global network.

NEW AREAS
Foundations were laid for expanding and exploring new research themes, including children and the Internet, among others.

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AS RESEARCH CATALYST

IMPROVED GOVERNANCE AND CAPACITY
The Office expanded with seven new posts recruited. The Office provided cross-organizational strategic support on high-priority issues and agenda-setting. The Office also engaged in the creation of communities of research practitioners in a number of research areas.

CONVENCING EXPERTS AND NETWORKS
The city of Florence provided the venue for esteemed researchers from the Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing, and expert scholars from across the world.
The Office of Research saw continued consolidation of achievement, and significant growth and development of the research practice in 2014. Facilitated by sizeable new grants, the Office expanded the breadth of projects, developed depth within existing research areas and, importantly, formed linkages across different dimensions of research on children’s well-being.

The Office is the dedicated research and evidence cluster for UNICEF. With a renewed mandate from the Executive Board, the focus has been to encourage new research as well as to strengthen and explore the organization’s reserve of knowledge and experience in order to better inform programmes and policies for children globally. Directly involved in a share of global research production on children’s issues, the Office is innovating with research that breaks new ground or anticipates future programme needs.

The ability to identify, commission, absorb and disseminate quality knowledge products is essential for UNICEF. An in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by children, particularly the most disadvantaged, is key to achieving results in programmes, policy development and advocacy efforts. Children’s lives are dynamic and shaped by complicated and inter-related demographic, social, economic and political factors. Research activities are strengthening UNICEF’s evidence-based interventions in more than 150 countries, as well as supporting the critical advocacy role of the National Committees.

In 2014, research activities ranged from multi-disciplinary initiatives to large-scale international collaborative projects. High-calibre, policy-relevant research was conducted in the areas of: equity, poverty and well-being; child rights and governance; child protection and violence against children; social protection systems and cash transfers, among others. In 2014, this research culminated in 47 new academic publications (including translations), numerous academic events attended by our researchers, and a regular presence of UNICEF voices in media and policy debates.
Significant progress was made towards setting standards for research excellence across UNICEF, and in sharing knowledge across the diverse country contexts in which UNICEF operates. Staff and partners continue to provide technical support and expertise across UNICEF programming. For example, a new mechanism for expanded and timely Long-Term Agreements to provide technical assistance for impact evaluations was put in place, using a standing agreement with industry partners to deploy support. Similarly, a series of methodological briefs, instructional videos and workshops has brought rigour to the field of evaluation. The Office contributed to framing a holistic approach to the generation of evidence supporting child protection within UNICEF, leading to the definition of priority themes for both research and programming.

With seven new recruitments completed in early 2015, the Office now benefits from the expertise of about 40 staff members from over a dozen countries with a wide range of specializations in social policy, child protection, evaluation, health and economics.

The Office of Research continues to attract research fellows. Over the last few years, as part of the Senior Fellowship Programme, the Office hosted a number of academics from across the globe. In 2014, all research arms were brought together in expanded premises within the Istituto degli Innocenti. [http://www.unicef-irc.org/aboutIRC/fellowship.html](http://www.unicef-irc.org/aboutIRC/fellowship.html)

The city of Florence graciously provided the setting for meetings convened by the Office, including that of esteemed researchers from the Lancet Commission on the Health and Wellbeing of Young People, an Expert Consultation on Family and Parenting Support, and the International Symposium on Cohort and Longitudinal Studies in Low and Middle Income Countries.
Children of the Recession
The impact of the economic crisis on child well-being in rich countries

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS ON CHILD WELL-BEING IN RICH COUNTRIES
The UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti continued to play an important role in providing evidence for advocacy with the production of Innocenti Report Card 12, *Children of the Recession: The impact of the economic crisis on child well-being in rich countries*. Launched in Rome in October 2014 with significant media coverage, the Report Card reveals the strong and multifaceted relationship between the impact of the recession on national economies and a decline in children’s well-being since 2008. Within each country reviewed, the extent and character of the crisis’s impact on children has been shaped by the depth of the recession, pre-existing economic conditions, the strength of the social safety net, and policy responses. League tables, the flagship tool of the series, rank the change in the poverty levels of children since the onset of the crisis and the impact of the recession on youth in all the countries of the European Union (EU) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 23 of the 41 countries analysed, child poverty has increased since 2008. In 18 countries, child poverty has fallen. Around 76.5 million children live in poverty in these 41 countries, which are the most affluent in the world. Analysis also indicates that the recession hit young people extremely hard, with the NEET rate (not in employment, education or training) rising dramatically in many countries. Beyond income and employment levels, the study also documents how the recession has affected a number of other dimensions of people’s lives, including stress and insecurity. Innocenti Report Card 12 has equipped advocates with the evidence needed to inform positive policy change. [http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/733](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/733)

ANALYSING MULTIPLE OVERLAPPING DEPRIVATIONS IN CHILDREN (MODA)
Cross-country analysis shows that roughly two out of three children in sub-Saharan Africa have unfulfilled basic rights in two or more dimensions. The *Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis* (MODA) tool is employed to identify and analyse deprivation of children across 45 countries, and has identified that over 60 per cent of children under 18 live in multidimensional poverty. The MODA methodology was developed by UNICEF to define and measure child poverty both at a national and international level, taking into consideration the complex, multifaceted realities of poverty experienced by children at different stages of their lives. The number of dimensions in which an individual child is deprived are calculated. Analyses have also compared monetary poverty using the MODA approach. The interactive cross-country MODA web portal contains the results of 42 countries, including some outside the sub-Saharan African region. [http://www.unicef-irc.org/MODA/](http://www.unicef-irc.org/MODA/)
DETERMINING THE IMPACT OF UNCONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFERS IN AFRICA

The Transfer Project continued to generate research findings with important policy relevance. In Zambia, research uncovering comprehensive impact results of unconditional cash transfers across poverty, social and economic domains, led to a US$2.5 million increase in the Zambian Government’s 2014 budget allocation for cash transfers. In Zimbabwe, despite relatively good performance across the programme, analyses of its targeting yielded recommendations for improvement including, importantly, a re-assessment and eventual modification of the 10 indicators used to identify the ‘food poor’. In Malawi, simulations of potential impacts for different transfer levels were presented to the Government and informed new regulations on the value of cash transfers and adjustments. Analyses in Kenya uncovered the impact of a large-scale cash transfer programme on risk preferences, time preferences, subjective expectations and quality of life; these issues are of interest as it remains unclear whether risk aversion or time preference are fixed traits or can be altered through public policy. The impact of development programmes on subjective well-being and related decision-making is also a growing area of enquiry, to which the project continues to contribute.
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF FAMILY AND PARENTING POLICIES TO IMPROVE CHILD OUTCOMES

Based on a policy review of a number of case studies, an analytic and conceptual framework was developed. Case studies conducted in Belarus, Chile, China, Croatia, England, Jamaica, the Philippines, South Africa and Sweden examined policies and provisions for support available to families and parents. The features and characteristics of interventions, the underlying rationales and philosophical orientations were explored. Some of the key observations uncovered that family and parenting support programmes are providing a focus for innovation and policy development within and across countries. Policies are driven by many rationales and aims, with a mix of cross-sectoral objectives relating to children, parents and family. In relation to children, there are four main rationales: furthering children’s rights, ameliorating child-related risks, enabling positive early childhood development, and addressing anti-social and aggressive behaviour, especially for adolescents. In relation to parents, rationales driving policy and provision of services include improving parental competence, and increasing parental engagement with the development of their children. Family-related rationales include improving family functioning and child-rearing, preventing child–family separation, alleviating poverty, facilitating adjustment to demographic developments, and supporting the family as an institution and way of life. However, gaps still remain in measuring the impact of interventions. The study was informed by an Expert Consultation held in Florence in May 2014 and was published in March 2015. www.unicef-irc.org/publications/770

REFLECTING ON THE PRINCIPLE OF ‘BEST INTERESTS’ IN INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

A new study reviewing policy, processes, decision-making and practices in intercountry adoption was completed, with a view to identifying how to develop rigorous approaches to
defining the best interests of the child. International human rights law is clear that the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in all decisions made about a child's future (and in the case of adoption the paramount consideration). However, there is no universal agreement on who is ultimately responsible for determining what is in a child's 'best interests', nor on what basis the decision should be made. With specific reference to intercountry adoption, the study demonstrates the dangers for children's rights that are inherent in the lack of such consensus, and contributes concrete proposals for addressing the problem in all its facets. It focuses on the precise role that the best interest principle should play in intercountry adoption to ensure that the human rights of children are upheld at every stage.

www.unicef-irc.org/publications/712

UNDERSTANDING THE DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The rollout of the first phase of the multi-country study on drivers of violence took place in 2014. With its academic partner, the University of Edinburgh, the Office of Research provides guidance and expertise on how to identify the way in which structural factors – the social, cultural, economic, legal, organizational and policy responses – interact on everyday violence against children in their homes and communities. The goal is to produce theories of change and programme logic informed by national evidence, leading to contextually relevant violence prevention, responsive to age and gender variations. In Stage 1 of the study, researchers mine data sets, complete systematic literature reviews (including nationally generated documents on violence) and undertake mapping of interventions to analyse ‘what works’. Reports and policy briefs vetted by front-line inter-sectoral ministries determine evidence-based priority areas of focus. In Stage 2, components of possible interventions are tested incorporating gender and social norms relevant to country settings. In Stage 3, evidence-based interventions will be launched and measured. The rollout of the study has sparked significant demand from additional interested countries, requesting support to initiate similar literature and secondary data analysis. Such demand was partly met by providing limited guidance through Regional Office Child Protection network meetings and setting up cross-country knowledge-sharing that uses UNICEF Country Offices in Peru, Vietnam and Zimbabwe as knowledge hubs, supported by the University of Edinburgh and the Office of Research. This has become known as the Research to Policy and Practice Process (R3P).
BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY

SUPPORTING QUALITY RESEARCH THROUGH METHODOLOGICAL BRIEFS AND GUIDANCE

An organizational ‘culture of research’ was also fostered through capacity-building initiatives such as the Impact Evaluation series of methodological briefs and instructional videos. The series, primarily aimed at UNICEF programme staff but available to the public, covers a range of evaluation designs and methods, including randomized controlled trials (RCTs). It discusses their pros and cons, ethical concerns and practical issues. The level of access that UNICEF staff have to technical expertise for conducting rigorous impact evaluations is increasing through a new standing agreement with capable experts (a Long-Term Agreement). Further, a series of webinars and instruction materials were prepared to support the Ethical Research Involving Children guidance, while the Institutional Procedures for Ethical Research, aimed at safeguarding children throughout the research process, were also developed. Quality Assurance Guidelines for Research geared towards improving research practice by setting minimum standards across UNICEF are now scheduled for implementation in early 2015. http://www.unicef-irc.org/article/1114/

SHOWCASING THE BEST OF UNICEF RESEARCH

The annual Best of UNICEF Research competition attracted over 80 submissions, from which 12 initiatives, deemed to have reached the highest standards, were selected as finalists. Three national studies looked at the benefits of cash transfer programmes in Zambia, the State of Palestine and South Africa. In East Asia and the Pacific region, ground-breaking research aimed at supporting legislation and prevention efforts estimated the prevalence and economic costs associated with child maltreatment. In Uganda, a vulnerability index developed for adolescent girls identified those most susceptible to risk. Health research in China shed light on infant feeding practices and the effect of anaemia on development. In Mongolia, barriers to preventing child death were explored, and a multi-country study reviewed guidance for priority setting and health
sector resource allocation in low- and middle-income countries. These pieces present a wide range of themes and countries, with potential for far-reaching impact. The exercise, now in its third year, continues to support the lifting of research quality across the organization. [http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/742]

**DELIVERING HIGH IMPACT COMMUNICATIONS**

High-impact video products helped to communicate evidence to multiple audiences. They included the Africa series of ‘Breaking Views’, broadcast on the eNCA satellite news channel based in South Africa, with 500,000 unique visitors online. eNCA is the first 24-hour television news channel in Africa and was carried by SKY TV in the United Kingdom and Ireland in 2014. The series attracted many of the most prominent researchers, thinkers, politicians and policy-makers in Africa. An edition of Research Watch devoted to ‘Youth, Conflict and Peace Building’, hosted by noted former BBC correspondent Martin Bell, was launched. It proved a timely contribution to public discourse, given current major conflicts affecting young people. The episode sparked lively debate among key stakeholders inside and beyond UNICEF in social media. Research results and findings are published on the website both as Working Papers and Innocenti series, providing open access to researchers and scholars for analysis of data and evidence. In 2014, the publications section of the Office of Research website had over 216,000 visits, and nearly 3,000 downloads. [http://www.unicef-irc.org/research-watch/]

**CONVENING EXPERTISE IN RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Florence continued to provide an exceptional backdrop for key events hosted by the Office of Research. The notable appeal of the city in the heart of Europe, coupled with the hospitality of Italian culture, make it an ideal location to host consultations that convene researchers and practitioners from across the globe. The Office is housed in the historic Istituto degli Innocenti, founded at the beginning of the 15th century. It was the first secular institution dedicated to taking care of children and has worked uninterrupted for over six centuries to assist children and families. In 2014, the Office of Research hosted a series of high-profile events, including, among others, a meeting of the Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Well-being, the International Symposium on Cohort and Longitudinal Studies in Low and Middle Income Countries, and the Expert Consultation on Family and Parenting Support.
EMERGING RESEARCH AREAS

UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING

Existing research themes were strengthened through the completion of the inception phase of the applied research programme, Social and Structural Determinants of Adolescent Well-Being in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. This new multi-donor programme, primarily funded by UNICEF and the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), establishes a platform for enhanced research cooperation with national governments and institutions to advance knowledge on adolescent well-being across cultures and contexts so as to shape more effective policies and programmes. The programme is building an evidence base for new approaches to inform policies and influence interventions for adolescents, is improving the quality of data and methods for analysing adolescent well-being, and is expanding research partnerships and knowledge exchange with regional and global networks of scholars and practitioners.

HARNESSING A GLOBAL NETWORK ON LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH

An International Symposium hosted by the Office of Research, in collaboration with Young Lives, brought together longitudinal studies operating in 25 low-, middle- and high-income countries to explore how to strengthen data, design and coordination for improved policy-making and programmes. A key theme of the meeting was to reflect on the unique nature of this type of data collection, and exploit its comparative advantage. In their presentations, speakers examined challenges in designing and carrying out longitudinal research, explored methodological approaches and innovations, and shared research findings. The discussions addressed the value added through a cohort approach, and illustrated ways in which these types of data can inform policy. The Symposium concluded with a discussion on new avenues of collaboration, including exploring the formation of a global network of longitudinal research. The establishment of a new global network responds to the call for a measurement and monitoring process for the post-2015 agenda (Sustainable Development Goals), with great potential to show holistic stories of young people’s well-being and development. http://www.unicef-irc.org/knowledge-pages/Symposium-on-Cohorts-and-Longitudinal-Studies--2014/
ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN IN THE CLIMATE CHANGE AGENDA

The e-book *The Challenges of Climate Change: Children on the front line* was published, with contributions by 40 eminent thinkers on climate change and child rights. The report looks at climate change through the lens of child rights, and the illuminating conclusions include the urgent need to incorporate a comprehensive child rights approach through the direct involvement of children in adaptation and mitigation efforts. The report was promoted through social media using the Twitter hashtag, #right2Bcool. To date, the hashtag has been mentioned over a thousand times on Twitter. The publication received significant coverage in blogs, including on Virgin Unite and the Guardian websites, and contributed to the ‘drum beat’ leading up to the United Nations Secretary-General’s Climate Summit held in September 2014. UNICEF National Committees planned various activities around the report; for example UNICEF Australia built a social media campaign timed with the Climate Summit, UNICEF Ireland prepared a climate change ‘hackathon’ where young hackers got together to work on climate change advocacy tech solutions, and UNICEF Japan translated the publication. The report was also featured on Eldis Climate Change Reporter, managed by IDS with support from the Climate and Development Knowledge Network. [http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/716](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/716)

INVESTIGATING CHILDREN AND INTERNET USE

A growing body of evidence reveals that, whatever their cultural and geographic context, many children now use information and communication technologies (ICTs) as part of their everyday lives. ICTs – especially Internet and mobile technologies – are no longer an optional add-on to children’s lives but, rather, they are becoming part of the infrastructure. A proposed multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral research agenda will generate evidence to inform national and global Internet policy. The proposed research across diverse national contexts will chart children’s access and usage, their online engagement in matters that concern them, and the ways in which they are empowered and supported by adults and peers. It will map emerging challenges, such as privacy and freedom of expression, including addressing those occasions when rights conflict. It will examine the effects of Internet and mobile technology usage on children’s knowledge, behaviour and norms. The research will consist of the development of a modular survey to be rolled out initially in four countries. The survey will be complemented by the analysis of the national policy frameworks, qualitative data gathering and analysis, and the measurement of the impact of interventions aimed at promoting digital citizenship and safety. This work will allow for the vital extension of important knowledge in the area of Internet and mobile technologies between the North and the South. In 2014 the Office of Research further strengthened consultations with partners on the research agenda related to ICTs and co-chaired the Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion on ‘Digital media and children’s rights’, and contributed to the Council of Europe’s new strategy.
As the data in the Innocenti Report Card series show, in the past five years, rising numbers of children and their families have experienced difficulty in satisfying their most basic material and educational needs. Most importantly, the Great Recession is effectively trapping a generation of educated and capable youth in a limbo of unmet expectations and lasting vulnerability. League tables, the flagship tool of the Innocenti Report Card series, rank the change in the poverty levels of children since the onset of the crisis and the impact of the recession on youth. Innocenti Report Card 12, *Children of the Recession: The impact of the economic crisis on child well-being in rich countries*, also explores the consequences for youth seeking to enter or remain in the labour force in the midst of a recession.

Throughout each stage of the process, the 2014 Report Card benefited from close Office of Research collaboration across UNICEF divisions and with UNICEF National Committees and Country Offices. The inclusion of a UNICEF National Committee representative on the advisory board, releasing background papers early to key stakeholders and providing regular updates, heightened impact. The Report Card received unprecedented media coverage, and significant contribution in government, National Committee and academic fora.

**Government policy:** Since its launch in October 2014, Report Card 12 had significant policy advocacy impact in a number of countries. In Italy, where news coverage of the report launch was widespread, media discussion and debate remained extensive as much as three to four weeks after the launch. The President of the Italian National Committee for UNICEF, for example, reported on the research findings at the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, an Italian Government event. In Spain, the Spanish Committee carried out high-level policy advocacy activities around the theme of ‘A Lost Generation’. In Germany, over 500 news articles and broadcast stories resulted from the Report Card launch, reaching an audience of 13.5 million. In Belgium, Canada, France, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, media coverage and on-air debate was also extensive.
Report Card 12 has made an impact at the European Union level. The European Parliament responded positively to the launch and requested a relevant expert to attend a special hearing, organized by the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, with social services providers on the concept of a European ‘Child Guarantee’, scheduled for early 2015. The Report Card was explicitly referred to in the European Parliament Resolution of 24 November 2014 on the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Council of the European Union conclusions on the same date called on the Member States to step up efforts to prevent child poverty. Furthermore, preliminary invitations have been extended to the Office to present the Report Card findings at various European Union institutions, thus continuing the advocacy messages for children into 2015. http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/733

**Traditional and social media:** Advocacy efforts also benefited from tremendous social media power and the use of infographics: there were 415 Twitter posts by Report Card 12, with an average of 11 retweets and 4 ‘favourites’ – a potential exposure of 3.6 million individuals/organizations. The Report Card was covered by top international print newspapers (such as the *Financial Times*), TV/radio (such as BBC World News) and news agencies/web/blogs (such as the Huffington Post).

**National Committees:** Follow-up reports monitored by UNICEF demonstrated widespread pick-up in national media and excellent support to National Committee advocacy efforts. National Committees used the Report Card league tables, the original analysis and comparative data provided; 16 held national launch events, 17 did not organize events but actively promoted the report, and 2 Country Offices held events. Greece, Japan, Poland and Turkey translated the Report Card 12 into national languages.

**Academic contributions:** Dialogue and debate among academics, government officials and civil society representatives were fostered through one-day academic, policy symposia organized with the Office of Research in Canada, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, after the international launch. The background research was presented at international academic conferences in 2014: three papers at the Foundation for International Studies on Social Security annual conference and one paper at the Crisis and the Distribution conference (Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities). Two background papers produced by the Office to support the Report Card have been published in peer-reviewed journals (International Review of Applied Economics; Social Indicators Research), with four others under review and several more in preparation for submission.

**INNOVATIONS AND IMPACT – EVIDENCE FROM CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMMES**

Research on cash transfers in Africa generated a range of significant policy and programme findings. Accumulated evidence from dozens of cash transfer programmes across the world suggests that few interventions can match the range of impacts and cost-effectiveness of a small, predictable monetary transfer to poor families in developing countries. These results lead many policy-makers to consider cash transfer programmes to be the ‘gold-standard’ in anti-poverty policies with some even advocating for benchmarking all development interventions against what would have been accomplished with a direct cash transfer.
In Zimbabwe, despite relatively good performance across the programme, analyses of its targeting yielded recommendations for improvements. The most important of these is a re-assessment and eventual modification of the 10 indicators used to identify the ‘food poor’. Several countries in the region (Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia) have either already adopted or are about to adopt fully fledged proxy means tests to identify the poor, replacing systems based on unweighted scores, such as that used by the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) scheme. The HSCT targeting algorithm identifies over 78 per cent of the eventual non-eligible group as scoring 3+ and over 48 per cent as scoring 5+ (the new cut-off to be used). Some specific variables also do not perform well in distinguishing between the poor and non-poor (for example, the indicators for land and outside remittance support), and despite its success in identifying demographically vulnerable households, the programme could test other questions for identifying those who are ‘chronically ill’, disabled and ‘not fit to work’ using criteria that are more clinical and objective than those currently used.

Research undertaken provides the first comprehensive impact results of an unconditional cash transfer from one programme, covering many outcomes in poverty, social and economic domains. The study implemented an experimental design in order to evaluate the Zambian Government’s Child Grant. This grant is an unconditional cash transfer to families with small children in three of the poorest districts of Zambia. The study documents the broad impacts of the programme, including on consumption, livelihood strengthening, material welfare of children and young child feeding, as well as investment in assets, productive activities, and housing after two years. This initiative is one of the first studies to demonstrate both protective and productive impacts of a national unconditional cash transfer programme. However, impacts in areas such as child nutritional status and schooling depend on the initial conditions of the household, suggesting that cash alone is not enough to solve all constraints faced by these poor, rural households and communities. Even an unconditional cash transfer programme with a wide range of impacts does not produce effects for all outcomes. As such, it is suggested that complementary programmes, such as supply of services to achieve specific outcomes, will still be necessary even in the most successful cases.

Analyses in Kenya uncovered the impact of a large-scale cash transfer programme on risk preferences, time preferences, subjective expectations and quality of life. These findings are pertinent, as it remains unclear whether risk aversion or time preference are fixed traits or can be altered through public policy. The impact of development programmes on subjective well-being, and resultant effects on decision-making, is also a growing area of enquiry to which this research contributes. Results show that there are very low rates of inconsistency in interpreting questions on time and risk preferences. Cash transfers alone do not appear to impact time discounting or risk aversion, but they do have an important impact on subjective well-being.
measures and on future perceptions of quality of life. Respondents living in households that were enrolled in the programme were 6 percentage points more likely to believe that their life will be better in one and three years’ time. These respondents are also more likely to feel happy and positive about the future, and they scored higher on the overall scale score for quality of life. These outcomes are not only important in their own right, but also for their potential in influencing decisions in other domains. For example, optimism about the future is crucial in the decision-making process about investment, which opens the possibility that the programme could promote not only individual well-being but also the process of economic development for the society as a whole. A future research agenda which explores interactions between these behavioural measures is thus emerging.

**ADDED VALUE THROUGH NETWORKING – GLOBAL LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH INITIATIVE**

The Sustainable Development Agenda offers a unique opportunity to improve the measurement and the monitoring of progress of the post-2015 targets, universally and across different dimensions of development. It has stressed the need for ‘a data revolution’ for sustainable development, with a new international initiative to improve the quality of statistics and information available to citizens and governments. As part of the ‘push for better quality data’, special emphasis is placed on better capacity to produce timely reports and at low cost. This initiative aims to leverage longitudinal studies operating globally to add value through a coordinated, harmonized approach, and better contribute to monitoring progress against the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

There are a number of longstanding cohort studies in developed and developing countries, which together have produced a range of important findings on children’s well-being and
development, including the long-term consequences of maternal and child undernutrition on adult health outcomes and the importance of early child care on their long-term development. Until now, however, there has been no forum to consolidate and validate findings, coordinate methodologies and share practical learnings across existing studies. While there is considerable interest in establishing new longitudinal cohort studies in developing countries, the lack of such a platform means that cohort studies end up being an ‘elite retail’ model of research, instead of a widely used approach to study child well-being globally. Additionally, there is an increasing demand for the technical knowledge to design and administer cohort studies, and the practical measures required to make them relevant and useful for programmes and policies in low- and middle-income country settings.

In October 2014, the UNICEF Office of Research, in collaboration with Young Lives, convened an International Symposium bringing together longitudinal studies to explore how to strengthen data, design and coordination for improved policy-making and programmes. A key theme of the meeting was to reflect on the unique nature of this type of data collection, and exploit its comparative advantage. Lead researchers and experts from 16 well-established longitudinal research studies based in 25 countries participated at the meeting. Special efforts were made to include as many longstanding cohort studies with multiple rounds of data collection as possible, and to showcase research that has made significant policy impact. Further details can be found in the Symposium Report. The Symposium discussed the challenges of designing and carrying out longitudinal studies, explored methodological approaches and innovations, addressed the question of added value of longitudinal studies, shared research findings and illustrated the ways in which these types of data can be used to inform policy. Finally, the Symposium concluded with a discussion of new avenues for collaboration, sharing good practice in research design and implementation.

Building from the meeting, and in further consultation, the Global Longitudinal Research Initiative (GLORI) was created, a network that aims to: promote the harmonization and validation of existing findings from cohort studies; lead in the development of cutting-edge methods, tools and resources; coordinate North–South and South–South capacity-building and training in longitudinal research; and create effective linkages between cohort studies and programme and policy fora. At the global level, key outcomes from this will include a reorientation towards a ‘value-added’ discussion of longitudinal research, potentially contributing to lowering the relative cost of longitudinal cohort research by creating economies of scale. It will also contribute to the creation of globally comparable metrics to
track progress in multiple dimensions of well-being, which can advocate for better opportunities for children. It also has the potential to provide a timely and powerful contribution to the development of comparable core global measures as baselines for the Sustainable Development Goals. Aggregating national studies, it will also seek to contribute to the advancement of global knowledge in some critical thematic areas on important topics for child well-being. At the national level, it will serve to create more cost-effective instruments that build on existing efforts and allow comparative analysis. It will seek to increase awareness and evidence-based advocacy for longitudinal research and support linkages between research findings and policy uptake. The programme will seek to build capacity to design and carry out research to inform policies and public debates on children’s issues. http://www.unicef-irc.org/knowledge-pages/Symposium-on-Cohorts-and-Longitudinal-Studies--2014/1088

**STRENGTHENING RESEARCH – IMPACT EVALUATION METHODOLOGICAL BRIEFS**

The dilemma of whether to invest in services that provide immediate benefits, or in evidence-generating initiatives for the long term, is a difficult one. The answer requires a careful analysis of the cost of not addressing immediate needs versus the potential future benefits of policy and budgetary change brought about by research and advocacy. As countries climb up the GDP ladder, development assistance is less critical for basic service delivery. Increasingly, what decision-makers from low- and middle-income countries seek is knowledge and evidence for the design of their own programmes and policies. Investment in sound data, research and evaluation is an essential component of guiding important decisions for years – and perhaps generations – to come.

The Impact Evaluation series of methodological briefs with instructional videos, released in 2014, contributes to building a ‘culture of research’ at UNICEF and strengthening capacity to provide evidence-based advice. The series covers the foundations of impact evaluation and a range of designs and methods, including randomized controlled trials. It discusses their pros and cons, ethical considerations and practical issues. From its launch in November 2014 to February 2015, the Impact Evaluation webpage recorded nearly 7,000 visits and has been promoted widely via leading evidence networks. http://www.unicef-irc.org/article/1114/
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The Transfer Project is an example of how UNICEF investment in research contributes to evidence-based advice that motivates and empowers governments to support children effectively. This multi-country project runs experimental and quasi-experimental impact evaluations in sub-Saharan Africa, repeatedly providing evidence to governments about the positive effects of social cash transfers on children and families. The methodological design of choice is randomized controlled trials (RCTs), often considered the ‘gold standard’ of impact evaluation. It provides powerful responses to questions of causality by proving that an impact is achieved as a result of a specific intervention (e.g. the cash transfer) and nothing else. In Zambia, for example, an RCT conducted in three districts from 2010 to 2013 showed that the government’s cash transfer programme led to a wide range of health and nutrition benefits. It also contributed to an increase in productive activity, and ownership of livestock.

These studies also have the ability to leverage additional funds in the long run. In the Zambia case, the Government boosted its budget allocation. The overall cost of the evaluation, at US$5 million, will ultimately leverage US$150 million for children over the next five years. Similarly in Kenya, the evaluation of the government’s cash transfer programme for orphans and vulnerable children showed impacts on consumption, diet diversity and secondary school enrolment. It was an important part of the dialogue on the scale-up of the programme, which now reaches over 160,000 families. The Government’s contribution to the programme increased from less than US$1 million in 2006 to US$12.5 million in 2013.

RCTs can be costly. They require a large sample size and cannot be undertaken retrospectively. The random assignment they require can sometimes be perceived as unethical or politically sensitive, and in such cases other options, such as quasi- or non-experimental designs for evaluating impact, need to be considered.

The new methodological briefs in the Impact Evaluation series outline different options, are written in accessible language, and use examples from UNICEF projects. The accompanying animated videos are particularly useful for impact evaluation novices or for training purposes. The overarching aim of these tools is to contribute to building UNICEF capacity in research and evaluation, improving the ability to provide evidence-based, strategic guidance on children for the long term. The materials were written by international evaluation experts from RMIT University, BetterEvaluation and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie). An advisory board, comprising UNICEF staff from the Evaluation Office, Data and Analytics section, the Programme Division and many Country and Regional Offices, guided the quality and relevance of the work. It is hoped that the materials will contribute to more UNICEF-supported, high-quality impact evaluations, and to more evidence-based decision-making by our partners.

BUILDING CAPACITY – IMPACT OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION RESEARCH ON POLICY AND PRACTICE

The Research to Policy and Practice Process (R3P) is a user-friendly methodological road map for UNICEF Country Offices and national partners to step back and systematically review what is known (or not) about violence prevention and related issues in their national contexts. This tool helps countries prioritize the best possible prevention and response interventions based on the local context. Getting to know what drives violence is premised on the understanding that vulnerability to violence evolves in complex socio-economic and
cultural contexts, engaging a cast of siblings, peers, parents, caregivers, the wider community, professionals and authorities. A sound analysis of the issues will lead to better informed action.

The Office of Research, working with the University of Edinburgh, provides expert scientific technical assistance to guide national partners through a multi-level analysis, as well as implementation of interventions and measurement of recommendations. The results of this low-cost, high-impact analysis highlight how critical protective and/or risk factors for violence interact primarily at the household and community levels. It will yield understandings of what triggers violence and which groups are most likely to respond to messaging, and will provide suggestions about how interventions might be tested. It can also guide national discussions and planning, inform national prevention campaigns and improve existing practice. The R3P includes secondary analysis of relevant existing national data sets nested within a qualitative and quantitative literature review and interventions mapping. Countries can analyse what drives violence, customizing the analysis to topical areas of national concern (such as schools, parenting and adolescents).

Training events, which bring together countries interested in violence prevention, have taken place at the regional level, and are open to civil society, governments and UNICEF staff. These have proven to be rich sites of learning and exchange between countries, and the goal is for participants to leave the sessions ready to employ research skills towards improved policy and practice. The sessions demonstrate the efficiency and power of secondary analysis, while also extending the scope of enquiry around violence prevention. The training events also explore qualitative research methods, which are useful before, during and after developing interventions and programmes, to assess community needs, design prevention campaigns, plan for and evaluate interventions, and engage community actors. Two types of qualitative research are explored: formative research – any inquiry that takes place before making big investments in programming or scientific investigation; and participatory research – particularly ‘child-friendly’ methods, with the goal of understanding belief systems, perspectives and experiences. The sessions also review how to formulate a good research question and the basics of qualitative research protocol development.

Critically, such training opportunities have provided an opportunity to share country experiences, how research informs policy and practice, and how to bring both numbers and narrative to bear on children’s outcomes. Recent violence prevention training events in Panama and Peru show further research uptake with the region committing funds to conduct a ‘Burden of Violence Study’. Such an exercise will provide much needed evidence to show the relative cost-effectiveness of investing in violence prevention interventions across sectors. While this process is still evolving, it has significant potential to deliver high-level commitments.
The UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti created a series of partnerships with top institutions in research, policy and practice. A selection of partnerships from 2014 are described below. In addition, research teams in the field are connected to a variety of excellent national-level partners, including government, civil society, non-governmental organizations and local research institutions, working together to implement quality research activities.

**ISTITUTO DEGLI INNOCENTI (IDI)** – As the hosting institute of the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, close linkages exist with IDI, including in areas of programmatic work such as violence against children. UNICEF also provides support for knowledge management activities within the Institute.

**LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION** – Extensive collaborations on issues related to children’s usage of the Internet, including joint seminars, technical assistance, peer-reviewing of reports and preparations for a joint funding proposal.

**MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY** – Collaboration on expanding the MODA methodology to EU countries through a Memorandum of Understanding.

**ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)** – Collaboration on a joint programme of work on transforming schools into learning organizations, looking at structural considerations in making schools responsive and open to innovation.

**THE PONTIFICIAL CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF PERU CISEPA (CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIONES SOCIOLOGICAS, ECONOMICAS, POLITICAS Y ANTROPOLOGICAS)** – Collaboration on governance and birth registration with the School of Government and Public Policy.

**RMIT UNIVERSITY, BETTER EVALUATION, INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR IMPACT EVALUATION (3IE)** – Methodological Briefs on methods for evaluating impact.

**SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO AND THE CHILDSWATCH INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK** – Collaboration designed to take forward work on Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC), with a Charter and Compendium document and a website released in 2013.

**UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH** – Collaboration on the multi-country study on violence affecting children.

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL (UNC)** – Extensive collaboration related to impact evaluations of social transfers in sub-Saharan Africa implemented through a joint Memorandum of Understanding.

**UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD** – Collaboration on a joint research programme examining policies and provisions for multidimensional outcomes for children and adolescents, early childhood development, adolescent well-being, prevention of violence and family separation.

**UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH** – Development in collaboration with the Swiss Government and National Committee on establishing a UNICEF professorship in the Department of Economics, funded by the Swiss Government, with established links to the UNICEF Office of Research to discuss the setting of the research agenda.

**YOUNG LIVES STUDIES IN ETHIOPIA, INDIA, PERU AND VIETNAM** – A number of shared research products and activities, including shared seminars, peer-reviewing of UNICEF research, Young Lives contributions to working papers, data sharing and research collaborations with Young Lives subsidiaries in the South, related to the multi-country study on violence, longitudinal symposium and other areas.
The Office of Research continued to successfully mobilize resources in support of its core mission in 2014. Total budget expenditure reached US$6.5 million for the year. Italian Government support accounted for nearly half (48 per cent) of total expenditure, with additional resources coming from UNICEF regular resources (42 per cent), Swedish International Development Cooperation and the Swiss National Committee for UNICEF, as well as other programmes and funds.

Budgetary allocation for the Office of Research is expected to rise significantly in 2015 to an estimated US$9.9 million. New contributions have been secured from the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), the US Government’s Department of Labor (DOL) and USAID, along with continuing support from the Italian Government, UNICEF regular resources, Swedish International Development Cooperation (Sida) and the Swiss National Committee for UNICEF and others.

In 2014, six new positions were added to support work across the Office, bringing the total number of research and support staff to 33. With the increase of funding commitments in 2015 a sizable expansion of staff will occur. Overall staff strength is expected to reach at least 45 in 2015. Newly recruited staff include both quantitative and qualitative research professionals from the fields of education research, social and economic policy analysis, impact evaluation, child protection, public health, programme management, monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management. Staff expertise is drawn from diverse professional settings including humanitarian response, fragile states and conflict zones, transitional and development contexts. Staff language competencies include English, Italian, Spanish, French, Russian, Swedish, Hindi, Serbian and Portuguese, among others.

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<th>UNICEF OFFICE OF RESEARCH – INNOCENTI STAFF 2014 AND 2015</th>
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<td><strong>2014</strong> (in position end of)</td>
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Looking forward, 2015 priorities include implementation and integration of the Structural Determinants of Adolescent Well-Being research programme. Corporately, the development of a research policy and institutionalization of related procedures are also high on the agenda. These initiatives comprehensively bring together and substantially build on existing themes of work, with great potential to improve knowledge, research and programming for children and young people globally.

While active fundraising efforts have been made, including with large bilateral donors, gaps in financing the full research programme still exist and continued momentum is to be maintained in building up core pieces of research for the Office. There are critical funding gaps to close in three areas – the multi-country study on violence against children, information and communications technologies (ICTs) for children, and the development of a Global Longitudinal Research Initiative (GLORI), which are described in more detail in this report. The year ahead also provides opportunities to support the Sustainable Development Goals agenda in concrete ways, including in the development of indicators, such as multidimensional indicators of child poverty, child hunger indicators and child-relevant ICT targets.

As a result of scaling up the activities, responding to high and increasing country demand has been the most significant challenge for the Office of Research. Over 90 per cent of research at UNICEF is carried out in Regional and Country Offices. Securing predictable funding to provide technical support to research activities and tools geared for the field remains a top priority to respond to the demand. An indication of such high demand for technical support is the considerable interest, manifested as requests for and provision of technical assistance, in violence prevention research from at least 10 UNICEF Country Offices during 2014. The scale of the demand, and the urgency with which it is often expressed, is indicative of a research skills gap in the staffing profile of many UNICEF Offices. Demand for technical assistance to implement the Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) tool has also surpassed expectations.

Developing substantive partnerships with research institutions in the South has continued to be a challenge, requiring a significant push in the coming year. Expanding the Office’s client base more systematically to countries in the South, with a focus on high-priority policy areas, would increase the relevance and utility of research generated by the Office. A repository of Southern research institutions is being developed. This initiative supports the Office of Research’s objective to increase collaboration with Southern institutions and experts, for both research and dissemination.

The coming year promises to be an exciting time to build on the foundation of work described here and to develop the Office further as it strives to implement a research practice approach. The Office will continue building up current programmatic areas and supporting UNICEF, as it improves research undertaken across the Organization and communicates findings that make a difference for children. More concretely, the Office has defined a set of strategic priorities for the coming period 2015–2016. In addition to contributing high-quality research outputs on child and adolescent well-being, these priorities include work on governance, implementation of guidelines for quality assurance and ethics in research across UNICEF, education and emerging areas such as information and communication technologies for children.
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS 2014

INNOCENTI REPORT CARD 12
- Children of the Recession: The impact of the economic crisis on child well-being in rich countries
- French: Les enfants de la récession: Impact de la crise économique sur le bien-être des enfants dans les pays riches
- Spanish: Los niños de la recesión: El impacto de la crisis económica en el bienestar infantil en los países ricos
- Italian: Figli della recessione: L'impatto della crisi economica sul benessere dei bambini nei paesi ricchi

INNOCENTI INSIGHT PUBLICATIONS
- Best of UNICEF Research 2014
- The Best Interests of the Child in Intercountry Adoption
- The Challenges of Climate Change: Children on the front line
- Children, ICT and Development: Capturing the potential, meeting the challenges

WORKING PAPERS
- CC-MODA – Cross Country Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis: Analysing Child Poverty and Deprivation in sub-Saharan Africa
- Household Welfare Measurement in Bangladesh: A tale of two short consumption modules
- Child Poverty and Deprivation in Mali: The first national estimates
- French: Pauvreté et privation des enfants au Mali: Les premières estimations nationales
- Significant Changes to Family-related Benefits in Rich Countries during the Great Recession
- Exploring the Late Impact of the Financial Crisis using Gallup World Poll Data
- Changes in Child Poverty in the OECD/EU during the Great Recession: An initial view
- Child Poverty and the Great Recession in the United States
- Young People (not) in the Labour Market in Rich Countries during the Great Recession
- Pre-crisis Conditions and Government Policy Responses: Chile and Mexico during the Great Recession
- Trends in Child Well-being in EU Countries during the Great Recession: A cross-country comparative perspective
- The Repercussions of the Economic Recession in Greece on Adolescents and their Families
- Subjective Impact of the Economic Crisis on Households with Children in 17 European Countries
- Are Cash Transfers a Silver Bullet? Evidence from the Zambian Child Grant
- Child Poverty and Material Deprivation in the European Union during the Great Recession
- The Consequences of the Recent Economic Crisis and Government Reactions for Children
- Lost (in) Dimensions: Consolidating progress in multidimensional poverty research
● Is it possible to adjust “with a human face”? Differences in fiscal consolidation strategies between Hungary and Iceland
● Subjective Well-being, Risk Perceptions and Time Discounting: Evidence from a large-scale cash transfer programme
● Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis for the European Union (EU-MODA): Technical Note

METHODOLOGICAL BRIEFS
● Overview of Impact Evaluation: Methodological Briefs – Impact Evaluation No. 1
● French: Présentation de l’évaluation d’impact: Note méthodologique – Évaluation d’impact n° 1
● Spanish: Sinopsis de la Evaluación de Impacto: Síntesis metodológica – Sinopsis de la evaluación de impacto n° 1
● Theory of Change: Methodological Briefs – Impact Evaluation No. 2
● Evaluative Criteria: Methodological Briefs – Impact Evaluation No. 3
● Evaluative Reasoning: Methodological Briefs – Impact Evaluation No. 4
● Participatory Approaches: Methodological Briefs – Impact Evaluation No. ’
● Overview: Strategies for Causal Attribution: Methodological Briefs – Impact Evaluation No. 6
● French: Présentation des stratégies d’attribution causale: Note méthodologique – Évaluation d’impact n° 6
● Spanish: Sinopsis: Estrategias de Atribución Causal: Síntesis metodológica – Sinopsis de la evaluación de impacto n° 6
● Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs): Methodological Briefs – Impact Evaluation No. 7
● Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods: Methodological Briefs – Impact Evaluation No. 8
● Comparative Case Studies: Methodological Briefs – Impact Evaluation No. 9
● French: Présentation des méthodes de collecte et d’analyse de données dans l’évaluation d’impact: Note méthodologique – Évaluation d’impact n° 10
● Spanish: Sinopsis: Métodos de recolección y análisis de datos en la evaluación de impacto: Síntesis metodológica – Sinopsis de la evaluación de impacto n° 10