

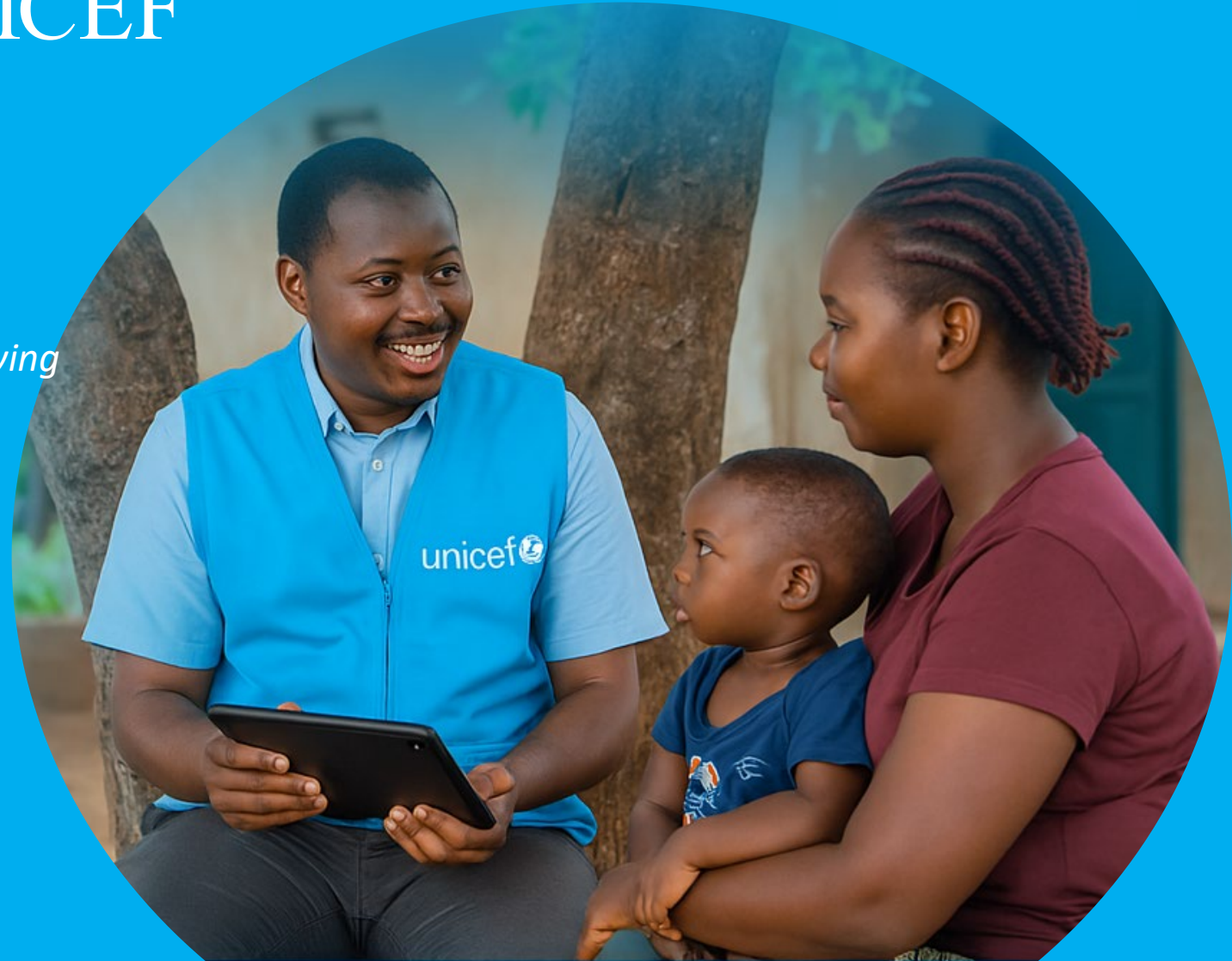
Embedded Implementation Research at UNICEF



Quick Update

*Strengthen the generation and use of
evidence through embedded IR for improving
the health outcomes of the children*

JCB TRD
July 2026



Update on UNICEF's Changes

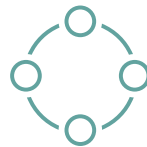
Strategic Plan 2026 to 2029 finalized

Centers child health, survival, and well-being at the core



Structural Restructuring

From 7 to 5 ROs
Moved health from NYC to Nairobi, and with satellites in Panama, Aman and Bangkok



Headcount reduction

Reduced staff by over 30%



Implementation Research Retained as Strategic Priority

IR team sits within the MNCAH section of the Health Practice
Will continue supporting country offices and partners



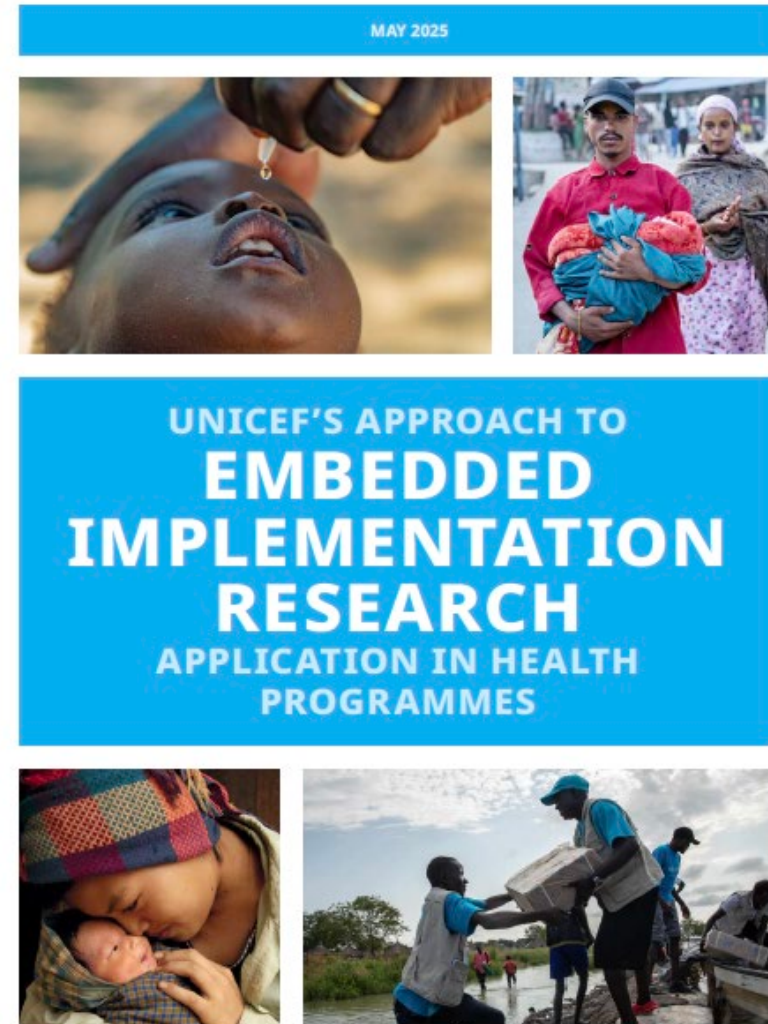
UNICEF Approach to Embedded Implementation Research

- **Embedded in health programme delivery**, focusing on solving real-time implementation challenges through government-led, multisectoral collaboration within PHC systems
- **Country and Decision-maker** lead approach (Bottom-up)
- **Capacity building** embedded within the IR initiatives, e.g. national programme managers, decision makers, workshops

A recent survey with representatives of 24 completed IR projects over 9 countries (article accepted by JoGH) showed

In **67%** of evaluated UNICEF IR projects, IR reportedly led to changes in MNCAH health policy, programmes, and/or practice.

Capacity building in IR leads to transferable competencies: **85%** stakeholders used their acquired skills elsewhere.



unicef  | for every child

Ongoing IR Activities

Country IR initiatives

- **Immunization in six countries:** Nepal, Madagascar, Zambia, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, and Malawi. At the stage of dissemination, research uptake.
- **Childhood NCDs in six countries:** Bangladesh, Nepal, Malawi, Zambia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda – this will be **expanded to 21 countries** in 2027
- **Community Health Workers in 13 countries**
- **Integrated PHC delivery:** Malawi
- **Conflict setting:** Burkina Faso
- **Digital health & connectivity:** Zambia

Global IR products

- **IR Handbook (with TDR)** for decision-makers and programme managers-finalized – to be translated into Spanish and French
- Three journal **special collections launched to publish** UNICEF-supported IR projects
- **Case study compendium** on immunization and childhood NCD implementation research (drafted)
- **Operational guidance** for implementation research in humanitarian settings (at final stage)
- Global **online IR repository (with TDR)** and learning platform managed by UNICEF
<https://www.research4implementation.org/category/news/>

Priorities of the IR team in the Health Practice

“Service Offer” provided to COs by the IR team

- IR capacity strengthening activities for implementers, decision-makers and researchers
- Systematic identification of programmatic implementation barriers
- Development of IR learning priorities based on barriers
- Development of IR study protocols based on research priorities
- Facilitation of recruitment of IR agencies
- Sharing of IR study proposals with funders
- Overseeing quality of IR studies
- Providing guidance to ensure research utilization to improve policies, programmes and practice

Aiming to institutionalization of IR within UNICEF and national health systems as a tool to promote evidence-informed decision making

+ engagement with partners, e.g. TDR, Alliance for Health Policy & Systems Research, GAVI

Future UNICEF Priorities

Digital Health & Innovation

AI, digital transformation, data use, scalable innovations for MNCAH

Primary Health Care & Community Systems

Integrated PHC, community health, service quality and equity

Humanitarian & Fragile Settings

Resilient service delivery and humanitarian-development nexus

Immunization & Child Survival

Zero-dose children, immunization equity, MNCAH and NCDs

Institutionalizing IR for Impact

Research uptake, policy translation, and country capacity strengthening

Cross-cutting focus: Equity • Adolescent Girls • Climate Resilience • Health Systems Strengthening

Current Partnership Value Proposition

UNICEF helps advancing TDR's strategic objectives by translating IR into policy, programme, and systems improvements at scale.

Advancing TDR priorities (selective)

- **Institutionalizing** implementation research within health systems and primary health care programmes
- Strengthening **country capacity** for evidence generation, learning, and research uptake
- Supporting **evidence-informed decision-making** and programme adaptation
- Strengthening **local ownership** and sustainable research ecosystems

UNICEF leveraging TDR assets

- Technical leadership in implementation research, e.g., highly specialized experts & networks
- Capacity strengthening platforms and global learning resources
- Scientific networks and research partnerships
- Joint development of global public goods, guidance, and knowledge products

Future Strategic Opportunities: UNICEF – TDR

Institutionalizing implementation research for country impact

- Embed implementation research within national immunization, and primary health care programmes.
- Strengthen evidence-informed decision-making and programme adaptation.

Strengthening country research capacity and leadership

- Expand implementation research training, mentorship and leadership development for programme managers, researchers and policy-makers.
- Foster sustainable country-led research ecosystems and learning platforms.

Accelerating translation of evidence into policy and practice

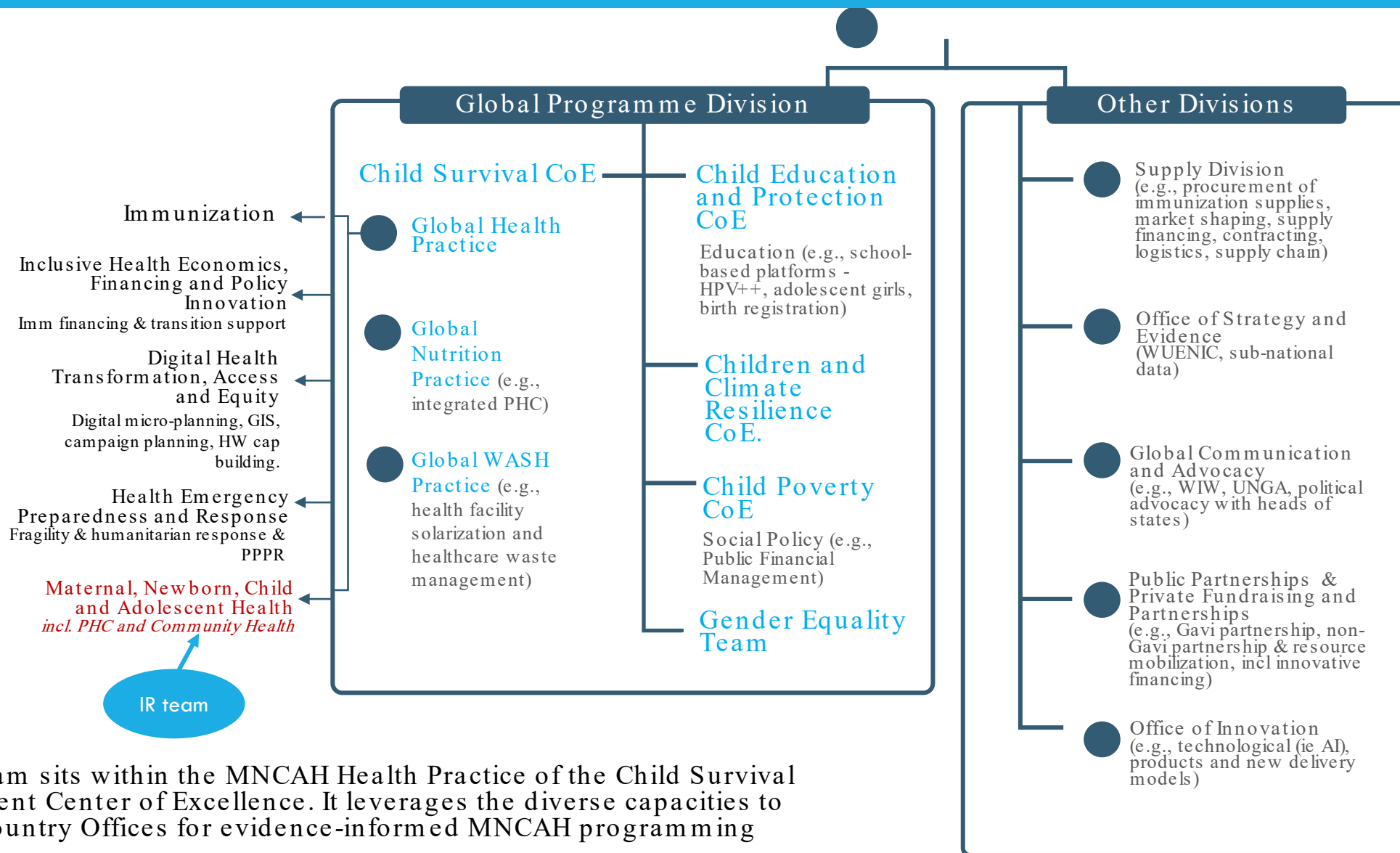
- Jointly generate, synthesize and disseminate implementation research evidence.
- Support research uptake, scale-up of effective interventions and development of global public goods.



Thank You



Organizational Transformation and Restructuring



UNICEF IR team sits within the MNCAH Health Practice of the Child Survival & Development Center of Excellence. It leverages the diverse capacities to support Country Offices for evidence-informed MNCAH programming