Return on Knowledge: Three examples bridging KM, Research & Evaluation from UNICEF

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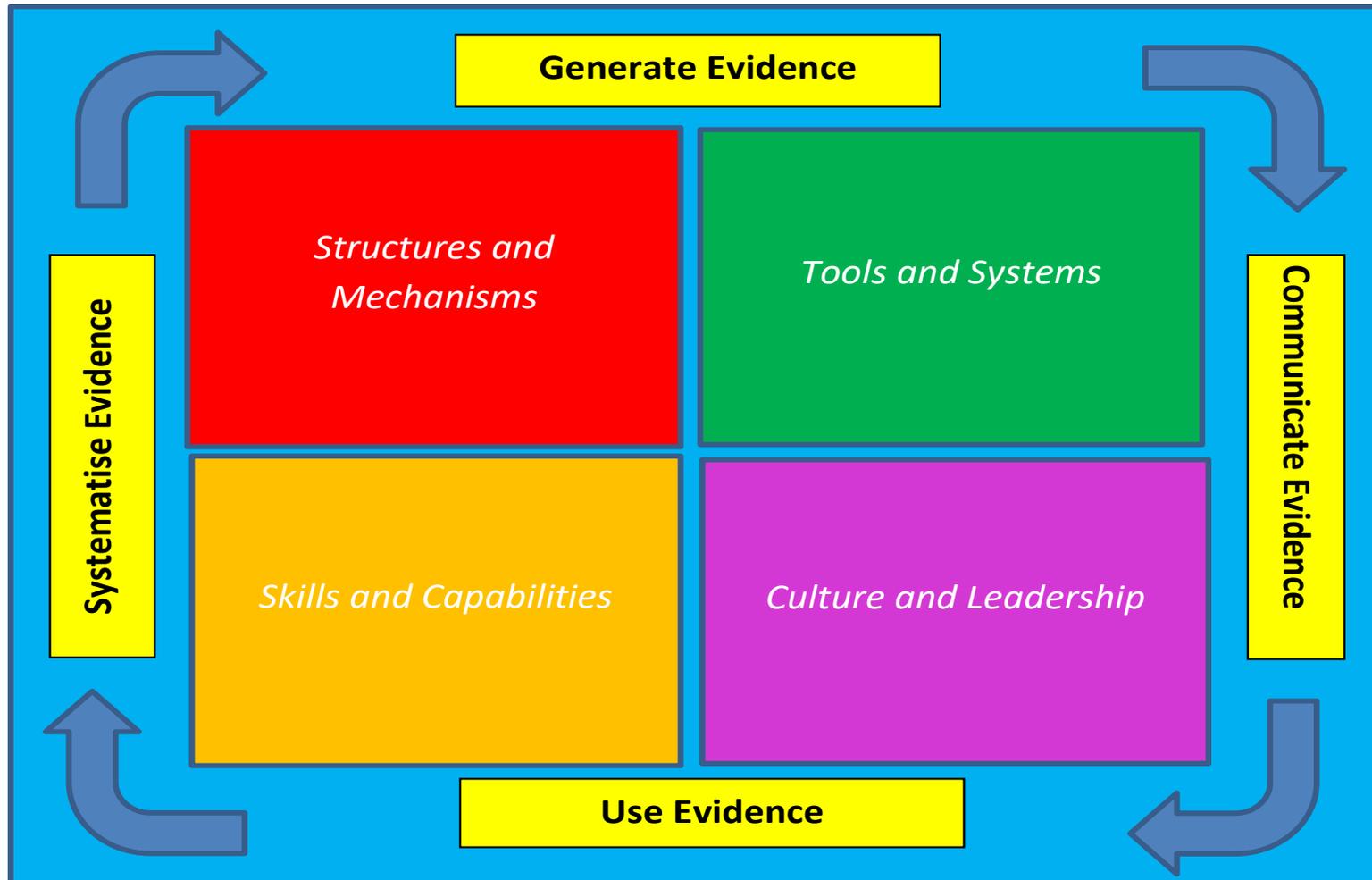# Example One: UNICEF Evidence Survey

CASE STUDY 20

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Description of the Tool- Evidence Survey

Figure 2.1: Intervention Pillars for Strengthening an Evidence Culture at UNICEF

Generate Evidence

Structures and Mechanisms

Tools and Systems

Systematise Evidence

Communicate Evidence

Skills and Capabilities

Culture and Leadership

Use Evidence

Framework adapted from the ICAI 2014 review of 'How DFID Learns' (2014)

Evidence Survey 2018, based on similar surveys from the World Bank and DFID

Jointly developed by UNICEF research, evaluation, data and KM functions

Evidence Diagnostic- deep dives in EAPR and ROSA, 9 webinars and virtual FGD's + 4 results webinars (with INASP/Politics & Ideas)

Impact

- Provided an excellent **baseline of attitudes** towards, and the use of, evidence among all staff worldwide.
- Identified different experiences between offices
- Identified many **'evidence champions'**
- Led to a **learning event series about evidence on gender**
- **Regional evidence strategies** developed
- Informed UNICEF's first **Global Knowledge Management Strategy** and **UNICEF's Strategic Plan for 2022–2025.**
- Creation of UNICEF's **first dedicated Chief of Evidence position** in the India country office
- **Strengthened relationships with external partners**

Reflections

- **Universality**
- **Senior level buy-in**
- **Survey Length**
- **Survey itself quite restrictive**
- **Staff Rotation**
- **Localized ownership**
- **Both a failure and a success**

Example Two: Best of UNICEF Research

CASE STUDY 4

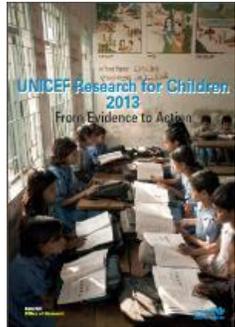Emanuela Bianchera

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Description of the Tool: Best of UNICEF Research

- Raise visibility of high-quality research that has successfully shaped practice, programming and policy for children around the world

- Identify research that has a high potential for further impact/scale

- Reward excellence and inspire others

- Raise external awareness of UNICEF as a 'thinking' organization

- BOUR as a key incentive for conducting rigorous research within UNICEF'
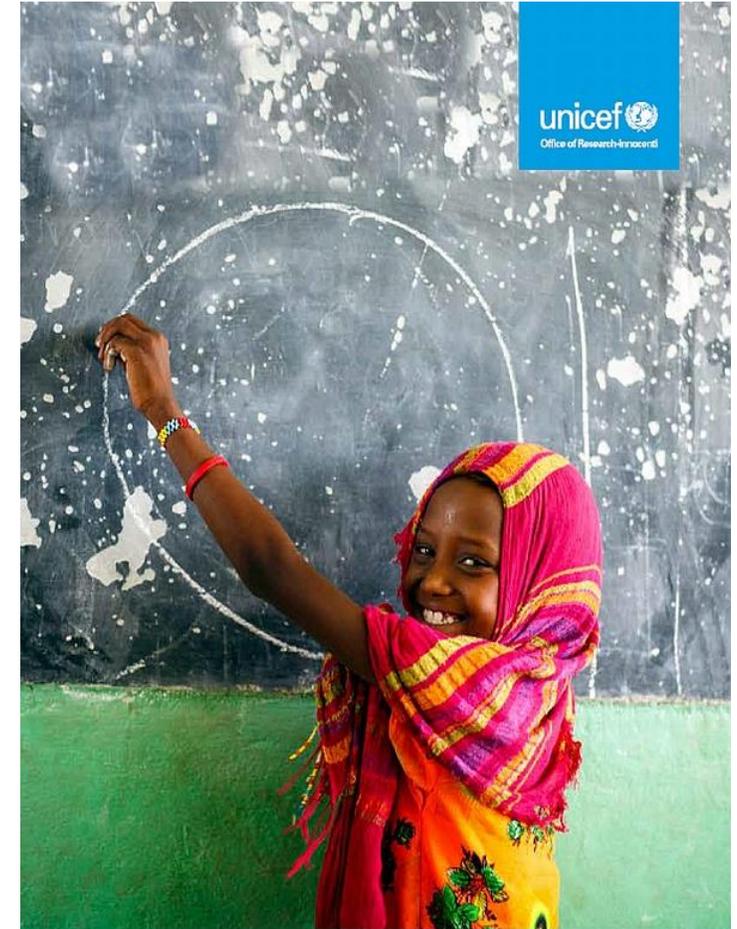
Impact

unicef ✦
for every child

After seven years of running the annual *Best of UNICEF Research* competition, it was decided to conduct a 'retrospective' analysis - looked at subsequent **research impacts of previous winners**; the **value of the competition**; and **lessons learned** as well as 'softer', intangible internal factors such as **enhanced advocacy, capacity, confidence** etc.

Found evidence that BOUR:
- Raised **research quality, ethical standards** and **built capacity**
- Supported those **pioneering research**
- Led to **scaling up/replication**
- Created a **knowledge database** of quality, impactful research
- Facilitated channels for engagement and uptake and **further leverage**
- Led to **additional investment**
- Supported **publishing of findings**
- Increased the **profile** of the Office of Research-Innocenti
- Recognition increased **staff visibility** and acknowledgment as experts within their offices

"Within UNICEF, it is like a Nobel Prize – it really helps to position a subject." (Anon)

unicef ✦
Office of Research-Innocenti

Best of UNICEF Research Retrospective:
Documenting impact and lessons learned

Reflections

- Importance of **incentives** to motivate knowledge-sharing
- It is important to actively manage potential **conflicts of interest**
- Need to **balance political** aspects as well as **technical**
- Importance of **award certificate**
- **External panel** gives credibility but also raises visibility
- Producing a **joint edition with evaluation** added value but brought challenges
- **Expensive** exercise if done properly
- Encouraging **feedback** and listening to colleagues and reviewers is crucial to keep the project relevant

Example Three: Evidence Synthesis

**CASE STUDY 21**

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Shivit Bakrania

Description of the tool: Evidence Synthesis

- Making it as simple as possible for people to access summaries of bodies of evidence a bird's eye view of the entire global evidence base to inform design and delivery of new programmes, policies and advocacy strategies

- Setting our findings amongst the broader body of evidence with independent quality assurance and transparent inclusion/exclusion processes

- Supporting time-strapped colleagues to access top level findings and 'at a glance, interactive overviews of evidence of what works (or doesn't), how, where and why'

- Helping to strategically prioritize future research themes, according to demand and existing evidence gaps (or avoid duplication of effort)
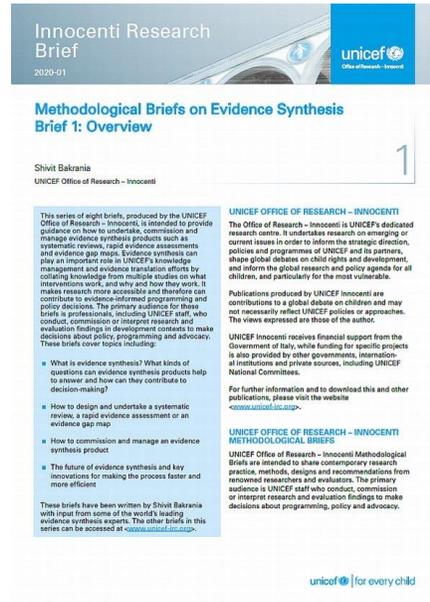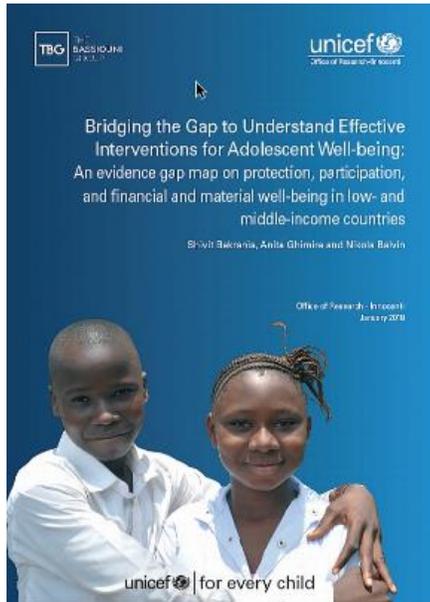
Impact

- Became a **strategic KM tool** e.g. MegaMap as a "Living map"
- Evidence gap maps increasingly influential in **informing programming** within UNICEF
- **Evaluation** now also increasingly looking at meta-evaluation and synthesis
- Sparked interest in **regional and country level maps** across country offices
- UNICEF seen as a **positive outlier in the UN system**
- **Campbell Collaboration coordinating group**
- **COVID-END**
- Global Commission on Evidence for Societal Challenges
- New **UNEG evidence synthesis working group**
- **SDG Synthesis Coalition**

Reflections

- **Incentives** for evidence synthesis

- Evidence syntheses are **living efforts**

- It is essential to combine this with **more active knowledge brokering** with potential users from the outset

- Need to combine with **supporting multimedia products**

- Evidence synthesis products, especially those produced at a global or regional level, are a useful starting point to thinking about 'what works' and the potential for scaling up success. They also need to be combined with **localized, contextual knowledge**

- There is still a need to expand learning within the sector on the appropriate **balance between formal and informal/tacit knowledge in evidence synthesis production**

- Increase UNICEF's **capacity to conduct, manage, commission and use evidence synthesis**

Thankyou for Listening!

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