

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) - UPSC Notes

The United Nations Children's Fund, popularly known as UNICEF, is a [United Nations](#) agency that provides developmental and humanitarian aid to children worldwide. UNICEF is an important topic for the [IAS exam](#).

UNICEF

UNICEF started as the International Children's Emergency Fund (ICEF) in 1946, formed by the UN Relief Rehabilitation Administration in order to offer relief and healthcare for affected children and mothers in the aftermath of the Second World War. In the same year, the UN established the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to manage its post-war relief work better. Though it became a permanent part of the UN in 1953 and subsequently changed its name to United Nations Children's Fund, it continues to use the acronym UNICEF.

- UNICEF engages in fighting for the rights of children all over the world.
- It also works to provide safe shelter, healthcare, nutrition, education, equality and protection from disaster and conflicts.
- Other areas the UNICEF works are providing vaccines, safe water and sanitation, HIV prevention in mothers and babies, protecting children from violence and abuse, early childhood development, adolescent health, etc.
- It also works in regions embroiled in humanitarian crises, to give relief and rehabilitation.
- Today, UNICEF works in more than 190 nations, in collaboration with other UN partners, and as a part of the larger UN system. It is not a specialised agency of the UN.
- UNICEF also comes up with research reports on various aspects related to children all around the globe.
- It received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1965.

UPSC Prelims Facts for UNICEF

NAME: UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

YEAR OF FORMATION: 1946

HQ: NEW YORK, USA

SECTOR: CHILDREN'S WELFARE

IS INDIA A MEMBER? YES

UPSC PRELIMS FACTS: UNICEF



UNICEF Functioning

UNICEF functions through 150 country offices and other facilities all over the world.

- It focuses on developing community-level services to achieve its larger goal of children's welfare and development.
- It is headed by an Executive Director.
- UNICEF's governing body is its Executive Board.
 - It comprises 36 member countries each for a three-year term. They are elected by the ECOSOC.
- It has more than 30 'National Committees' that implements its mission via programmes that are developed in tandem with the host country's government.
 - These are basically NGOs that engage in fundraising activities, selling UNICEF products, creating partnerships, championing the cause of child rights and offering socially-beneficial support.
- UNICEF relies on government and private funding and contributions for all its activities and various programmes.
- The five core values of UNICEF are:
 - Care
 - Respect
 - Integrity
 - Trust
 - Accountability

To know more about [Important Headquarters of international Organizations](#), check the linked article.

UNICEF and India

UNICEF's partnership with India began in 1949. Its first office was established in New Delhi in 1952.

- The nodal agency in India for interacting with UNICEF is the GOI's Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- Currently, UNICEF works in 17 states with more than 400 staff members.
- UNICEF has been very active in India in the past many decades.
- Most of their work in the country is by partnering with the government in the implementation of the various governmental schemes.
- Though initially, the organisation focused on providing medicines, equipment and supplies, currently, it contributes in many broad areas such as providing low-cost, nutritionally balanced food products from locally available food sources; giving training to personnel engaged in child-care projects, sanitation, water supply, health and family planning; and evolving simplified basic-educational kits, specially in the field of science and technology.
- UNICEF's priority in India is children in the age group 0 - 5 years since most deaths happen within this group. For this, UNICEF seeks to work with mothers and ensure they have access to adequate nutrition and healthcare.
- A second area of priority is to focus on vulnerable areas like slums, backward remote areas, drought or flood-prone areas, etc.
- Another noteworthy point is that India is among the top donors to UNICEF.
- A problem encountered in the functioning of UNICEF in the country is that since it works in tandem with government schemes, the execution is sluggish in pace.

Strengths and Weaknesses of UNICEF

Like many global organizations around the world, UNICEF has its fair share of strengths and weaknesses. They are listed in brief below:

Strengths:

- UNICEF can impact major changes in strategy as well as practice, even though the pace may be slow.
- It has become an authority on the education of girls, especially through its Child Protection programmes and the [UNAIDS](#).
- UNICEF has successfully made the shift from a needs-based, vertical sector programme to a rights-based approach rooted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, although greater clarity on the implementation of rights-based programming at country level is still required. Read more on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in [PIB dated 20 Nov, 2019](#).
- UNICEF plays a significant role in emergency response and it has improved by a huge degree in emergency planning and preparedness.
- It has gender sensitive programming although it has miles to go in this regard.
- Security standards have been introduced and security capacity and communications networks strengthened.

Weaknesses:

- **Self-Image & criticising governments:** UNICEF has the image of an agency that keeps its distance, never directly pointing fingers at rogue governments, for fear of its operations being shunted out of that country.
- **Partnership:** There has been a rapid increase in collaboration and diversification of partnerships with civil society. Despite this, UNICEF priorities and strategies for partnerships are limiting the scope for partnership.
- **Bureaucracy and complexity:** UNICEF is a largely bureaucratic organisation and suffers from the problems associated with this such as wasteful spending, red tape, etc.

