

Job no: 594669

Contract type: Fixed Term Appointment

Duty Station: Dakar

Level: D-1

Location: Senegal

Categories: Senior Leadership Vacancies, Executive Management

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. To save their lives. To defend their rights. To help them fulfil their potential.

Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, every day, to build a better world for everyone. And we never give up.

For every child, dedication.

The Deputy Regional Director (DRD) will be part of the regional leadership team. The successful candidate will be one of the two Deputy Regional Directors to support the Regional Director in the management of the Regional Office, ensuring coordination and synergy across multiple functional areas to consolidate a range of integrated and multi-sectoral approaches in support of the Regional Agenda for Children and the UNICEF Strategic Plan (2026-2029). This will be achieved in close collaboration with the twenty-four country offices, headquarter divisions and with a wide range of programmatic and cross sectoral practice areas in the Centres of Excellence (CoEs).

The DRD leads the Virtual Regional Programme Delivery Platform (VRPDP) that draws expertise from multidisciplinary teams on demand, across organizational boundaries, to provide integrated programme, operations, partnerships, planning, innovation, communication, advocacy, emergency, and management support, tailored to country priorities and implementation opportunities and challenges. The VRPDP is an agile, multidisciplinary and virtual regional platform that mobilizes expertise from across UNICEF—including Regional Office, Country Offices, Headquarters, Centres of Excellence and external partners—to strengthen Country Office performance and accelerate results for children.

The Deputy Regional Director, working in close collaboration with country senior management, is accountable for ensuring that each of the 24 Country Offices is optimally guided and connected to the right competencies, as well as supported through integrated, differentiated and multi-country delivery mechanisms that enable Country Offices to achieve sustainable results at scale. Accountability for programme delivery and country results remains with Country Representatives.

S/he also advises and assists the Regional Director on matters relating to regional policy formulation and implementation in support of UNICEF's strategies for children in programmes, partnerships building, resource mobilization/leveraging, communications, and advocacy for child rights. The Deputy Regional Director represents the Regional Director within and outside the United Nations system, as required.

The Deputy Regional Director conducts programme management oversight in the region, providing direction, leadership and guidance to the multi-disciplinary team of professionals of the Regional Office to ensure the achievement of the organizational mission, strategy, goals and objectives. In addition, the Deputy Regional Director fosters and guides the community of Deputy Representatives (Programmes) in Country Offices, to follow up on RMT decisions, ensure programmatic quality control, offer strategic guidance and orientation, and provide key updates related to the roles and accountabilities of the Regional Office.

The Deputy Regional Director will guide and oversee the Emergency Section (led by the P5 Regional Emergency Chief) and the Partnerships Advocacy & Communication section (led by the P5 Regional Public Partnerships Adviser, as well as provide strategic orientation to the Special Regional Initiatives and Grants Management Unit (which includes the Regional Polio Response Team and the Muskoka Multi-Partner Trust Fund Mechanism on Newborn, Child, and Maternal Health).

The DRD will provide strategic oversight of country office performance across the region, enabling timely decision-making, strengthening accountability and ensuring the delivery of suitable, high quality, impactful results for children.

How can you make a difference?

The Deputy Regional Director is accountable to the Regional Director for contributing to the overall achievement of the goals, strategy and objectives of UNICEF country programmes in the region (in collaboration with Centers of Excellence), including the implementation of a humanitarian /development nexus approach, as well as the effective coordination and programme oversight of UNICEF country offices.

The Deputy Regional Director provides leadership and guidance as aligned with regional priorities and broader organizational strategic goals.

Major duties and accountabilities include:

Strategic Programme Leadership and Oversight

- Provide effective leadership, managerial guidance, and coordination are provided to ensure the achievement of programme goals, especially connected to the Regional Agenda for Children and its two flagship priorities: Child and Maternal Health/Nutrition and Access to Quality Education. Oversight is provided on the implementation of Country Programmes and their activities in line with national development priorities, the Strategic Plan (2026-2029), the Africa Strategy, and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.
- Exert effective leadership in the appropriate alignment of global, regional and national policies, strategy and priorities for the achievement of the Strategic Plan objectives and of the Annual Africa Strategy implementation plans, through a rights- and results-based management approach.

Country Office Performance and Integrated Support Delivery

- Lead the Virtual Regional Programme Delivery Platform as UNICEF's regional mechanism for integrated country support.
- Ensure every Country Office has access to the competencies, organizational arrangements and partnerships required to achieve results at scale.
- Mobilize multidisciplinary teams drawn from across UNICEF and external partners to address country priorities and implementation bottlenecks.
- Design and coordinate differentiated and multi-country support models that maximize efficiency, learning and economies of scale.
- Ensure Country Office readiness and results by identifying capability gaps and leveraging expertise and resources across the Regional Office, Centres of Excellence, and global networks to provide timely and effective support.
- Promote South-South cooperation, cross-country learning, innovation and rapid scaling of successful approaches.
- Monitor the quality, responsiveness and effectiveness of regional support to COs and continuously improve the delivery model.

Collaboration with Centres of Excellence and Technical Quality Assurance

- In collaboration with the Centers of Excellence, provide effective programme management and advocacy for the survival, protection, development and participation of children and women in the region and effective contribution to and integration of UNICEF initiatives in broader UN activities. This also includes overseeing the timeliness and quality of technical assistance provided by the Centers of Excellence to country offices.
- Ensure the identification of annual Regional Office topline technical assistance requests to be provided by the Centers of Excellence.
- In collaboration with the Centers of Excellence, ensure that effective support is provided for key milestones such as CPD development (including Strategic Moments of Reflection), TRT/PBR meetings, and RMTs, amongst others.

Strategic Partnerships, Advocacy and Influence

- Ensure that strategic communications and advocacy strategies are developed and implemented to support the Regional Agenda for Children.
- Ensure that effective partnership strategies are developed with regional economic entities and international financial institutions (ECOWAS, ECCAS, WADB, and AfDB amongst others) to effectively position the Regional Agenda for Children in their institutional priorities.

Organizational Effectiveness and People Leadership

- Use of resources and management performance within the region and Regional Office regularly monitored with a view to improving country programme and RO performance.
- Ensure effective coordination of the Regional Programme Coordinating Committee, which will bring together senior Regional Office, country office, and Center of Excellence staff.
- Provide guidance and advice to the Deputy Representatives and Chiefs of Field Offices network in the areas of programme management, as well as the promotion of the Organization's Duty of Care and in upholding the Core Values of Care, Respect, Integrity, Trust, Accountability and Sustainability.

Key Accountabilities and Duties/Tasks:

- Effective senior leadership, advocacy, and managerial guidance and coordination provided to ensure the achievement of programme goals and the key results of the Regional Agenda for Children;
- Strategic planning and policy development;
- Development of high-level and results-focused partnerships to enhance the positioning of children's issues, as well as sustained resource mobilization and leveraging;
- Country Programme Support as part of the VRPDP;
- Monitoring and Reporting;
- Rights-based and results-based management approach fully incorporated into all phases of programming to enhance the value and quality of programmes implementation;
- Administration and management.

To qualify as a champion for every child you will have...

Qualifications:

- An advanced university degree in Social Sciences, International Relations, Government, Public Administration, Social Development, Development Planning, or other relevant discipline.
- A minimum of **thirteen (13) years** of professional work experience in the formulation of policy in international or national administration and translation of policies into practice; experience in external aid administration and senior level international development administration.

- Experience as a UNICEF Representative is extremely important and highly desirable, preferably at a commensurate level of the functions to be encumbered.
- Experience and proven track record in managing emergencies, humanitarian and development programmes, partnerships and advocacy as well as sensitive and complex situations and security-related issues.
- Effective people management and proven ability to guide, motivate and lead large multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural teams.
- Fluency in **English and French** is required. Knowledge of another official UN language or local language of the region is considered as an asset.

Person Profile:

- Senior leadership experience and skills;
- Extensive programming experience, specifically thorough understanding of development, humanitarian, emergency and nexus programming in low and middle-income contexts;
- Proven knowledge and experience in formulating strategies and managing large size programmes (sectoral, development, humanitarian, advocacy, policy dialogue and capacity building) and/or offices;
- Experience in ensuring complementarity and synergy across sectors and disciplines in accordance with best practices;
- Strong track record on strategic planning and results-based management;
- Proven risk management skills and efficient management of financial resources;
- Experience in development effectiveness and UN coherence processes;
- Political maturity and strong diplomacy skills that translate into the ability to work with a wide range of partners;
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills;
- Proven ability to negotiate and advocate effectively and to build relations with a variety of (traditional, non-traditional, and emerging) donors and partners;
- Ability to build consensus and form alliances and inspire others to form alliances for concerted actions.

Region Typology:

- WCAR country income typologies (World Bank classification): Lower-Income Countries (11), Lower Middle-Income Countries (10), and Upper Middle-Income Countries (3). Ten of the top thirty fragile states in the world are located in West and Central Africa (Fragile States Index, 2024).
- Duty Station: Dakar is a family duty station.
- Office Size: Regional Office: 70 colleagues.
- Annual Budget (2026): RO: USD 2 million – Region: USD 1,9 Billion
- Schooling: US and French schools

West and Central Africa Regional context:

The West and Central Africa region (WCAR) has made measurable gains for children in recent years -especially in health, immunization, nutrition, education, protection, WASH and social inclusion - yet progress remains uneven, fragile, and shaped by deep structural vulnerabilities. WCAR carries a disproportionate share of global child rights deprivations: 37% of under-five deaths worldwide, 28% of unregistered births among under-fives, 21% of stunted under-fives, and 22% of the world's out-of-school children. Persisting gender inequality, harmful social norms, and widening climate and economic pressures (high debt, inflation, and declining development assistance) are compounded by rapid population growth and a complex year in 2025 with a context of political transitions, security challenges, and governance reforms - requiring UNICEF, and senior leaders like the Deputy Regional Director, and partners to pursue more adaptive, equity-focused, and resilient approaches.

- **Demographics:** Rapid growth and unplanned urbanization threaten to outpace service expansion; by 2063 WCAR could have nearly **500 million** children under 18 (about **20%** of the world's children). Scaling equitable social investment is essential to capture a demographic dividend.
- **Macroeconomics and aid:** High debt, interest rates, and inflation constrain fiscal space; debt service can absorb up to **55%** of public budgets, while revenues remain below 20% of GDP in many countries. Growth is projected at **4.4%** in 2025 (services-led), creating scope for domestic revenue mobilization. At the same time, ODA has seen sharp cuts in 2025, reinforcing the need to prioritize domestic financing for equity-focused social spending.
- **Humanitarian, climate, and governance:** Conflict, climate shocks, and health emergencies drive sustained needs: **133 crises** addressed, **17 million** displaced (including **9.4 million children**), and **42 million** children needing humanitarian assistance. Climate vulnerability is acute (17 of the 30 highest-risk countries), with UNICEF estimating **95 million** children highly exposed. Current estimates indicate that up to 8.7 million people are exposed to flooding. Political transitions and security dynamics continue to reshape operating environments, requiring strengthened systems, risk-informed programming, and high-level advocacy to keep children's issues central to national priorities.
- **Health:** Under-five mortality fell from 104.5 (2016) to 85.6 (2023) per 1,000 live births; maternal mortality declined from 768 to 629 per 100,000 live births. However, neonatal deaths represent a growing share of child mortality, and gaps in quality, equity, and access persist in fragile and hard-to-reach areas.
- **Immunization:** DTP3 coverage increased from 67% (2016) to 72% (2025). WCAR remains a priority due to **5.7 million zero-dose children** (nearly 290% of the global burden), concentrated mainly in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo—highlighting the importance of last-mile outreach and resilient supply chains.

- **Adolescents, SRHR and HIV:** Adolescent girls face elevated SRHR and HIV risks and account for **80% of new adolescent infections** (incidence up to seven times higher than the general population in parts of the region). Early pregnancy raises risks of stillbirth, prematurity, and maternal death. Of **368,000 children living with HIV**, only **36%** receive ART; mother-to-child transmission remains high at **21%**, underscoring the need for adolescent-inclusive, earlier diagnosis and treatment services.
- **Nutrition:** Stunting decreased slightly (33.6% to 32.5% from 2016–2024) and wasting has reduced, but rapid population growth increases the absolute number of affected children and seasonal/crisis spikes persist (notably in the Sahel). Exclusive breastfeeding remains low at **38%**; efforts are ongoing to improve diet diversity, reduce child food poverty, and expand nutrition-sensitive social protection and vitamin A supplementation.
- **Education:** Access has expanded, but in 2024 **28%** of primary/lower-secondary age children remained out of school and early childhood education attendance was **24%**. It is estimated that **57 million** school-age going children are currently out of school. Learning outcomes are critical: about **80%** of ten-year-olds cannot read at grade level. Lower-secondary Gross Intake Ratio rose from 42% (2016) to 46%, yet gender disparities persist, especially in conflict settings. More than **14,000 schools** were closed due to armed conflict by June 2025.
- **Child protection:** Violence is pervasive—nearly **88%** of children experience violent discipline at home, and **27%** of young women report sexual violence before the age of 18. Child marriage is decreasing but still affects about **1 in 3** young women before the age of 18. Verified grave violations remain high across eight situations of concern, while legal reforms and system-strengthening efforts are expanding prevention and survivor support.
- **Birth registration:** Coverage improved from 45% (2015) to **57%** (2024) among under-fives, yet nearly **50 million** children still lack legal identity—driving efforts to remove fees, strengthen health–civil registration interoperability, and scale digital registration.
- **WASH:** **69%** use basic water services, but **196 million** people (including **96 million children**) still lack access. Only **36%** have basic sanitation; nearly **20%** practice open defecation (highest globally). Just **30%** have handwashing facilities with soap, increasing disease risks.
- **Poverty and social protection:** Globally, extreme child poverty has fallen, but Sub-Saharan Africa’s rate remains **~52%** since 2014. In 2024, **412 million** children lived on under \$3/day (2021 PPP), with **over 312 million** in Sub-Saharan Africa. Coverage and financing of social protection remain insufficient despite evidence that well-managed cash transfers improve resilience and human capital outcomes.

For every Child, you demonstrate...

UNICEF's Core Values of Care, Respect, Integrity, Trust, Accountability and Sustainability (CRITAS) underpin everything we do and how we do it. Get acquainted with Our Values Charter: [UNICEF Values](#)

Competencies

- Builds and maintains partnerships (level III)
- Demonstrates self-awareness and ethical awareness (level III)
- Drive to achieve results for impact (level III)
- Innovates and embraces change (level III)
- Manages ambiguity and complexity (level III)
- Thinks and acts strategically (level III)
- Works collaboratively with others (level III)
- Nurtures, leads and manages people (level III)

To view our competency framework, please visit [here](#).

UNICEF has a zero-tolerance policy on conduct that is incompatible with the aims and objectives of the United Nations and UNICEF, including sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination. UNICEF is committed to promoting the protection and safeguarding of all children. All selected candidates will, therefore, undergo rigorous reference and background checks. Background checks will include the verification of academic credential(s) and employment history.

UNICEF is committed to diversity and inclusion within its workforce, and encourages all candidates, irrespective of gender, nationality, religious and ethnic backgrounds, including persons living with disabilities, to apply to become a part of the organization.