



UNICEF Tajikistan

# Country Programme Evaluation 2020

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Final Report

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## Team Leader

- Francis Watkins

## Team Members

- Nazli Aktakke
- Subhiya Mastonshoeva
- Burcu Yakut-Cakar

## Researcher

- Joy McCarron

## Project Management

- Karolina Mclellan

## Evaluation Direction and Quality Assurance

- Jo Kaybryn

## Copyeditor

- Eve Leckey

## UNICEF Evaluation Manager

- Saltanat Rasulova

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| ACF   | Adolescent Competency Framework  |
| ADAP  | adolescent development and participation                                   |
| ADB   | Asian Development Bank   |
| AKF   | Aga Khan Foundation  |
| C4D   | Communications for Development   |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CIS   | Commonwealth of Independent States   |
| CO    | Country Office (UNICEF)  |
| COAR  | Country Office Annual Report   |
| CP    | Country Programme  |
| CPD   | Country Programme Document   |
| CPE   | Country Programme Evaluation   |
| CRM   | child rights monitoring  |
| CSO   | civil society organization   |
| CWD   | children with disabilities   |
| DAC   | Development Assistance Committee   |
| DFID  | Department for International Development                                   |
| ECARO | Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (UNICEF)                           |
| ECD   | early childhood development  |
| ECE   | early childhood education  |
| ERG   | Evaluation Reference Group   |
| ESRC  | Economic and Social Research Council                                       |
| EU    | European Union   |
| FCSC  | Family and Child Support Centres   |
| GBAO  | Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast   |
| GEROS | Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System                                 |
| GPE   | Global Partnership for Education   |
| IFI   | international financial institution  |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| INGO  | international non-governmental organization                |
| IR    | Inception Report   |
| IsDB  | Islamic Development Bank                                   |
| KPI   | key performance indicator                                  |
| M&E   | monitoring and evaluation                                  |
| MoES  | Ministry of Education and Science                          |
| MoHSP | Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population |
| MNCH  | maternal, newborn and child health care                    |
| NDS   | National Development Strategy                              |
| NEET  | youth who are not in education, employment and training    |
| NGO   | non-governmental organization                              |
| NPC   | National Programme for Children                            |
| NSED  | National Strategy for Education Development                |
| OECD  | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development     |
| OSIAF | Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation               |
| PHC   | primary health care  |
| PME   | Planning, monitoring and evaluation                        |
| RAM   | Results Assessment Module                                  |
| RO    | Regional Office  |
| SAM   | severe acute malnutrition                                  |
| SDGs  | Sustainable Development Goals                              |
| SMQ   | strategic monitoring questions                             |
| SMR   | Strategic Moment of Reflection                             |
| TB    | tuberculosis   |
| ToC   | Theory of Change   |
| ToR   | Terms of Reference   |
| UN    | United Nations   |
| UNCRC | United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child       |
| UNDAF | United Nations Development Assistance Framework            |
| UNEG  | United Nations Evaluation Group                            |

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

WB World Bank

WFP World Food Programme

# Executive Summary

## Overview of the country programme

1. The goal of the UNICEF Tajikistan Country Programme (CP) 2016–2021 was defined as: to accelerate progress towards realization of the rights of all children in Tajikistan. Aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and reflecting a human rights-based approach, the CP is defined by a strong sector-based and life-cycle approach and an emphasis on strengthening up-stream systems.
2. The CP is organized around five outcomes, increased from four as a result of the mid-programme Strategic Moment of Reflection:
  1. Surviving and thriving in early years: More children, including the most marginalized, are surviving, healthy, well-nourished and developing to their full potential in their early years, with focus on the first 1,000 days.
  2. Inclusive quality learning: All children have improved access to quality inclusive education, from early learning to secondary education, particularly those who are most marginalized.
  3. Full participation of adolescents/adolescent development and participation: Adolescents, including the most marginalized, are recognized as equal members of society and empowered to participate meaningfully in all aspects of life.
  4. Protective environment for children: Children who are most at risk benefit from a better functioning protective environment that prevents and responds to deprivation, violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.
  5. Knowledge: the Government of Tajikistan will have a fully financed evidence-based agenda to achieve National Development Strategy (NDS) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets for girls and boys in Tajikistan including the most marginalized.
3. Based on the country programme priorities and the context analysis, UNICEF in Tajikistan aimed to reach all children of all ages, with special attention given to closing equity gaps at different stages of the life cycle, which is further articulated as being: organized around rights issues that affect children at three stages of the life cycle, while considering risk and vulnerability faced throughout childhood. The programme has had a particular focus on issues including children affected by HIV, children with disabilities, and children affected by a range of issues including domestic violence and contact with the law.

## Purpose of evaluation and its audiences

4. The evaluation serves both accountability and learning purposes. It is formative in nature while looking back to document UNICEF's past performance. As defined by UNICEF in the terms of reference, the Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) has three objectives, to:
  1. Provide an independent performance assessment of the CP 2016–20 seen in relation to expected results and UNICEF's contributions to realization of child rights in Tajikistan for which inequity and gender are considered to form part;
  2. Assess UNICEF's strategic positioning and programmatic choices made given government priorities and the changing socioeconomic and political context in Tajikistan; and
  3. Identify good practices and draw lessons and forward-looking recommendations from the assessment of 1) and 2) above that can inform the development of the next CP.
5. The primary users of the evaluation are intended to be the UNICEF CO and the Government of Tajikistan, as well as other UN agencies and development partners. The evaluation report aims to build on the agreements made between them and to assist prioritization as the parties move together into the next planning and programme cycle, specifically the new Country Programme Document (CPD).

## Evaluation methodology

6. The evaluation used a theory-based approach to assessing the Country Programme and to the four thematic programmes, based on their respective theories of change (ToC). At the same time the evaluation took a strategic, overall view of the programme and UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2018–2021, in attempting to understand and assess the contribution of the different programmatic interventions to the anticipated chain of results (short-term outputs, medium-term outcomes) and the contributions towards longer-term impacts, as well as their potential sustainability.
7. The theories that the evaluation sought to test were:
  - That the programme ToCs are integrated and together contribute to the overarching ToC, that in turn delivers UNICEF's contribution to advancing children's rights;
  - That the data reported in the Country Office Annual Report (COAR) and Results Assessment Module (RAM) align with and enable effective monitoring of UNICEF's programmes in Tajikistan; and
  - That together these enable UNICEF to track both the contributions made by the programmes and the progress towards children's rights in Tajikistan.
8. An evaluation matrix was constructed around the evaluation questions, setting out the data sources and methods.

## Key findings

### Relevance

**To what extent has UNICEF been effective in meeting the needs of all children and been consistent with the priorities set in national policy frameworks and SDGs? What needs to be done to ensure relevance in the next CPD?**

9. There is evidence from multiple sources that UNICEF programming has been consistent with the needs and priorities of children and priorities of the Tajik Government and is aligned with international commitments and human rights standards ratified by the country. UNICEF has also been effective in ensuring the needs of vulnerable girls and boys by drawing on context and needs assessments and reflecting geographical differences in vulnerabilities. Both secondary and primary data suggest that a range of relevant implementation strategies was deployed, and these were adequately informed by contextual assessments making them applicable to the context and needs of children and youth. Some important initiatives related to gender equality were introduced but, overall, the CP was not adequately informed by in-depth gender analyses to ensure the highest level of relevance of the implementation strategies.
10. The programmatic shifts following the Strategic Moment of Reflection (SMR) led to more focused interventions targeting vulnerable children and enabled the CO to engage in more strategic system-focused interventions, establishing a crucial foundation for potential scale-up and sustained results. To ensure continued relevance, there are a number of areas that the CO should focus on, including building on its successful implementation strategies. The CO also has the opportunity to apply its successful approach to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable to effectively address gender equality including establishing clear accountability mechanisms for gender equality.

### Effectiveness

**To what extent were the Country Programme results achieved for all children as described in the ToCs and results matrix especially for the most vulnerable?**

11. There was good progress overall towards results, with 44 out of 47 output indicators being met or exceeded as at the end of 2019. There was particularly strong performance across the Learning and the Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) components in which all targets were met or exceeded. Efforts at strengthening monitoring approaches at national level and at the level of programme implementation have enabled UNICEF to demonstrate progress against results in key areas. It has been possible to identify a limited number of output-level indicators where there is a direct linkage between UNICEF interventions, the ToCs and the data that is being reported against indicators in the results matrix. UNICEF is perceived by partners as impacting positively on issues related to behaviour change, including gender norms, although there is less evidence that there was a sufficient programmatic focus on these issues.

12. There is evidence that UNICEF has been able to make progress towards the results for all children, especially the most vulnerable, set out in the results matrix: significant progress in the work on Early Years and Learning, as evidenced in national level indicators; in raising awareness of vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities (CWD), and of the issues affecting marginalized groups, such as adolescent mental health, through developing new approaches to addressing the issues that children face; and, more recently, scaling up approaches through programmes working on a much more significant scale, such as social protection, whilst continuing to ensure a focus on the most vulnerable.
13. Effective integrated work across different programmes, including in roll-out of innovative work and introduction of the child rights monitoring (CRM) role at the provincial level established a basis for scale up, strategic partnerships with stakeholders and increased coordination at the provincial level contributing to effectiveness of the CP. The UNICEF programme has been very successful in advocating for both sector policy change and for the investment of resources in policy implementation, ensuring that resources are focused on the needs of vulnerable children.

## Efficiency

**To what extent have the resources (financial and human resources including Country Office structure) allocated by the CO been appropriate to support the implementation of strategies and achievement of CP results and, if not appropriate, what could be done to ensure resources match programmatic ambitions and needs?**

14. Overall, the human and financial resources seem to have been used to good effect. From evidence of the effectiveness of particular implementation strategies, the evaluation assesses that resources have been appropriately allocated. For example, the success of the pilot programmes reflects the effectiveness of this implementation strategy: the Government has replicated or taken to scale a number of pilots at national level. The CO has demonstrated its ability to adapt its structure: its revised focus on more integrated working across the programme areas can also be said to contribute to efficiency, particularly in the knowledge team, now with 10 staff, working on social policy, evidence and monitoring across the programme. In terms of measuring efficiency through achieving results, the investments in policy change and policy implementation support the finding that UNICEF has been using resources well. UNICEF should be better able to demonstrate its efficiency with internal systems that more clearly record the use of financial and human resources and document the decision-making processes behind these allocations.

## Sustainability and resilience

**To what extent are the results of the CP at different levels sustainable, especially for vulnerable boys, girls and youth?**

15. The foundations for sustainability were laid through the CO's strengthening of health and education national systems and the development of policy frameworks and legislation, but also its effective response to the COVID-19 crisis. Interventions initiated by the CO resulted in

numerous legislative and policy changes, influencing debate around crucial areas of concern to children, with a particular focus on the vulnerable, such as children in contact with the law and child nutrition. Risks to sustainability are both internal to the Government, such as staff turnover, and external, such as lack of coordination in policy application by state institutions, especially at the provincial level.

16. The CO's approach to pilots and models has been very successful with developing pilot programmes being taken up by the Government for replication or scale-up. For interventions that have not yet been taken up (and for future pilots), the learning from the successes to date provides a strong basis for understanding the factors that will further strengthen the long-term potential of pilots and their scalability.
17. The CO adapted rapidly and effectively to emergencies, in part due to the fact that it had established the networks, partnerships and channels to access to the most vulnerable categories of population. UNICEF also responded to emerging political changes, effectively turning them into opportunities to garner momentum for children's rights, such as in adolescent mental health.
18. The CO's post-SMR internal changes created a strong basis to effectively meet the demands of the current crisis by taking a more strategic systems focus and establishing critical partnerships. The CO is in a strong position to plan for continued and post-crisis situations due to its capacity, outreach approaches, well-established partnerships and its proven ability to rapidly mobilize financial resources.

## Coherence

**To what extent do the individual country programme components reinforce each other to leverage the contribution that UNICEF makes towards expected results?**

19. The programme components were mutually reinforcing, particularly where there was cross-sectoral collaboration, positively impacting on UNICEF's equity agenda, especially in the work on CWD and adolescent mental health. Cross-sectoral work also brought benefits in the COVID-19 response where UNICEF demonstrated robust risk and response analysis. In addition to cross-sectoral collaboration where sectoral teams worked together, integrated programming was also built into the design of the country programme components. For example, the programme area ADAP operates across education, health, communication and child protection (cross-sectoral work), while the early childhood development (ECD) programme integrates multilingual needs in peacebuilding contexts with nutrition and immunization for children from diverse ethnic backgrounds (integrated programming).

**To what extent is the country programme consistent with other actors' interventions in the same context (including complementarity, harmonization and coordination with others) and add value while avoiding duplication of effort?**

20. UNICEF demonstrated a high degree of harmonization with other actors and their interventions, including adding value by using its convening and coordination role to leverage resources. In working with other actors, the CO played a number of vital roles, including coordination,

leadership and provision of technical and advocacy support. As an added value, its leadership and coordination helped the CO in prioritizing rights of children in the national policy context, while the technical expertise accumulated over years enabled complementarity and harmonization of the interventions of other actors.

## Long-term change

### **To what extent can UNICEF be considered to have made a contribution to observed progress in the realization of children’s rights?**

21. UNICEF has made demonstrable contributions to improving children’s rights, which is supported by corroborating perceptions among stakeholders. Specifically, UNICEF’s contributions are evidenced in the strengthened national strategies, plans and programmes, and particularly through the scaling of initiatives by the Government. Progress in implementation across the country programme components can be linked to progress in national-level data through output level indicators, as reported in UNICEF’s internal monitoring systems. Some challenges remain in terms of UNICEF’s ability to fully evidence progress towards realizing children’s rights. For specific national-level indicators, clear links can be made to assess UNICEF’s programmatic contributions (under the programmatic headings Early Years and Learning) to results at the national level in the health and education sectors.

## Conclusions

22. **Implementation strategies have successfully transitioned in some sectors:** The CO has made a significant transition from a CPD that consisted of a collection of stand-alone projects under four programmatic headings to a more strategic and integrated country programme and coherence has been increased through more integrated working across the programme. The CO has made progress in implementing this strategic and integrated approach, particularly in the health and education sectors through ECD and ADAP, and there are also examples where the CO has made good use of integrated working to begin to ensure that vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as children with disabilities and adolescents in pilot areas, have better access to services that respond to their needs.
23. **Successful strategies for meeting the needs of the most vulnerable can be applied to gender equality:** The CO has been able to identify and successfully work to address the issues of specific marginalized groups, with a range of effective and influential approaches being used to address these issues, often working in an integrated way to leverage limited resources. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the focus on gender inequalities, where a more one-dimensional, ‘mainstreaming’ approach has been taken, resulting in little consistency other than the requirement for disaggregated data.
24. **There are specific strategies for gender equality available to the CO:** There is a need, then, to ensure that all inequalities/inequities, including gender inequalities, are systematically addressed in all aspects of the programme and in the support that UNICEF provides.

25. **The effective COVID-19 response reflected UNICEF's strong strategic positioning:** UNICEF's strategic position and key role in national coordination efforts across a range of sectors has been confirmed in the response to the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. It will be important to maintain this strategic position and continue to look forward, in order to be 'pre-positioned' for the future, particularly as the impacts of the current crisis emerge and develop.
26. **Ongoing and strategic direction-setting for the CP needs strong planning, monitoring and evaluation:** Although UNICEF is focused on the collection and use of data in the CP and the CO does have the capacity to effectively collect and utilize data in the implementation of its own programmes, the current CP witnessed insufficient use of monitoring and evaluation data in planning and the production of in-depth evidence. There have been notable investments in the presentation of data, but there still remains a gap in terms of the overall picture of progress across the programme; and a lack of clear evidence and documentation of prioritization within the programme (although it is obvious that there is prioritization in practice). There is therefore a need to further develop a monitoring and evaluation system for the programme and particularly use of the data and evidence produced for planning and implementation, based on the work done through the ToCs, but that is geared more effectively to the current programme and the different aspects of the programme.
27. **New programmatic decisions require criteria for prioritization:** The CO is now at a further point of transition, having contributed to significant legislative and national programmatic changes and having influenced or leveraged significant donor engagement and resources in the health, education and now social protection sectors. In addition, there are a number of pilots that have been influential in terms of raising awareness about marginalized groups and the issues that they face, such as CWDs, children in conflict with the law, children affected by migration and adolescent mental health, again areas based on UNICEF's added value. The questions that the CO now faces, based on this understanding of UNICEF's effective roles, are: where should efforts be focused and what are the priorities for the next 5–10 years?

## Lessons learned

28. **When ToCs were used well across multiple components, overall programme-wide shared strategies were easier to identify.** Theories of Change in the development of the CP have been a useful means to develop a clearer overall picture of the programme, to set out expected changes over time and to provide the basis for a detailed analysis of the risks and assumptions in the programme. The detailed analyses of risks and assumptions provided an effective way to draw out and to share an understanding of the context across the programmes, providing the basis for highlighting similar risks and hence the basis for mitigating them.
29. **When the Country Office plays to its strengths in multiple roles, then it can maximise its effectiveness.** A clear sense of UNICEF's added value comes from the analysis of what the CO has been able to achieve and the various approaches that it took within which these achievements

have been made, including: expertise and experience; a clear and realistic role in working with others; and working with a range of partners.

30. **When the Country Office engages in strategic partnerships, it leverages far greater results.** Linked to the clear sense of UNICEF's added value are the various ways in which the CO has made use of partnerships and influencing to leverage results greater than could be achieved by UNICEF on its own. There have been a number of different ways that this understanding of what UNICEF can bring has been used, with the CO working with different stakeholders to make progress in different ways.

## Recommendations

31. The recommendations are elaborated in the report and summarized here:

### Prioritization strategies

1. Take stock of what has been achieved and for whom to this point, looking at progress nationally according to the National Programme for Children; at progress in leveraging resources for programmes in health, education and infrastructure; and at progress in pilots and interventions across the work with adolescents and in the protective environment.
2. Consider where UNICEF can work effectively, making use of the expertise, influence and experience available, drawing on the experience in the current programme and looking at the different ways in which progress has been made, including: support to national government bodies on data and knowledge management and use; capacity-building for the implementation of new approaches to service delivery; and the use of pilots and innovative approaches to influence the development of new strategies and programmes.
3. Use the prioritization criteria suggested (levels of need and vulnerability, UNICEF's added value and capacities to ensure sustainability) to develop and set out a clear statement of what the priorities for the next CP should be.

### Strategic positioning

4. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, using the most recent data and analysis, consider where further data and analysis is required, particularly in areas where underlying vulnerabilities have been highlighted, and ensure that this analysis is utilized by government and development partners in the formulation of medium to long-term response.
5. Consider UNICEF's role in ensuring the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms and, looking ahead, develop a strategy for the CP, across each of the Outcome areas, to ensure the best use of the experience, access and influence within the CO.
6. Carry out a review of existing relationships, considering particularly the current relationship between Government and civil society organizations (CSOs) and the capacities of government bodies at national and local level, and use this to consider the development of new relationships.

### Building on the theories of change for a monitoring and evaluation system

7. Continue efforts to support developments at the national level, including the 33 indicators in the National Programme for Children, the Health Management Information System and Educational Management Information System, and to address any gaps in the remaining indicators at national level.
8. Monitor and evaluate UNICEF-supported interventions, specifically pilots and innovative approaches, which require much more regular and detailed feedback to support assessment and documentation.
9. Revise the CO monitoring and evaluation strategy, and use the programmatic and CP ToCs, to enable the tracking of progress and risks on a regular bi-annual basis, to effectively monitor and adjust implementation and to provide the basis for the documentation and recording of pilots and approaches undertaken with the participation of partners (both government and CSOs).
10. Find ways to ensure that the existing evaluation plan underpins these efforts and to provide an external and objective perspective on the CP and to feed into the planning, reporting and review process. Areas for consideration for evaluation might include advocacy and influencing interventions; and the development, implementation and scaling up of pilots.

### Prioritization strategy for resources

11. Revise the existing hierarchy of activities that are needed to achieve results within programmes, with associated resources (human and financial) to ensure consistency and in order to meet the aims and objectives of the output components.
12. Data disaggregation should be consistently carried out across all aspects of the programme.
13. Specific efforts are made to develop approaches to follow up on gender issues identified in situation analyses, such as differences in suicide rates amongst adolescents, different reasons why adolescent boys and girls drop out of school, come into conflict with the law or are victims of crime, drawing on external expertise if needed.
14. Inequalities and gender inequalities should be a focus in examining the effectiveness (or otherwise) of approaches, in monitoring for lesson learning and for the development of approaches, again drawing on external expertise and experience where required.

# 1. Introduction

1. This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the UNICEF Tajikistan Country Programme (CP) 2016–2021. The evaluation was commissioned by the Country Office (CO) of UNICEF Tajikistan and managed by UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) in close collaboration with the CO. It was carried out between February and September 2020 and covers the entire UNICEF portfolio during the first almost five years of the six-year programme.

## 1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

2. The evaluation serves both accountability and learning purposes. It is formative in nature while looking back to document UNICEF’s past performance.
3. As defined by UNICEF in the terms of reference (see Annex 1 for the full ToRs), the CPE has three objectives, to:
  1. Provide an independent performance assessment of the CP 2016–21<sup>1</sup> seen in relation to expected results and UNICEF’s contributions to realization of child rights in Tajikistan for which inequity and gender are considered to form part;
  2. Assess UNICEF’s strategic positioning and programmatic choices made given government priorities and the changing socioeconomic and political context in Tajikistan; and
  3. Identify good practices and draw lessons and forward-looking recommendations from the assessment of 1) and 2) above that can inform the development of the next CP.
4. Lessons and recommendations should include but not be limited to reflect upon: a) UNICEF’s role and strategic position looking back and thinking ahead into the CP 2022–2026; b) the appropriateness of type and combined use of implementation strategies; c) what UNICEF could do better and differently to enhance its contribution in Tajikistan; d) how UNICEF has strategically steered implementation of its CP in a constrained governance context; and e) how UNICEF should further mainstream inclusion, equity and gender equality in the 2021–2025 CP.
5. The scope of the evaluation:
  - Temporal scope: the period of January 2016 to July 2020, meaning that the evaluation covers the current Country Programme (2016-2021);
  - Geographical scope: all areas in Tajikistan where UNICEF works;

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<sup>1</sup> When the ToRs were developed, the final decision for the CP extension was still awaited.

- Portfolio scope: the totality of the CP portfolio, including cross-cutting issues and integrated working, involving communication for development (C4D), evidence and knowledge generation, gender and inclusion;
- Organizational scope: the evaluation goes beyond the CO and includes provision of technical support and oversight from UNICEF's Regional Office (RO) in Geneva and, when relevant, UNICEF's headquarters in New York; and
- Excluded from the scope: the evaluation does not provide a detailed assessment of any one CP component.

### Audience

6. The primary users of the evaluation are intended to be the UNICEF CO and the Government of Tajikistan, as well as other UN agencies and development partners. The evaluation report aims to build on the agreements made between UNICEF and the Government and to assist prioritization as the parties move together into the next planning and programme cycle.

## 1.2 Country context

7. Tajikistan declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, subsequently falling into civil war until 1997 with widespread loss of life and physical damage until elections in 1994.<sup>2</sup> Tajikistan went through a period of increased political and economic isolation after the civil war and was then severely impacted by the global financial and economic crisis of 2008.<sup>3</sup> Despite these challenges, Tajikistan has proven resilient and has managed to maintain an average annual growth rate of 7.3 per cent during the post-conflict years,<sup>4</sup> although the employment rate only rose by 2.1 per cent annually in that same period.
8. Tajikistan has made significant progress in reducing poverty rates over the past twenty years, with a drop in the national poverty rate from 37 per cent in 2012 to 29 per cent in 2018.<sup>5</sup> Since 2015, the pace of poverty reduction has slowed,<sup>6</sup> with 30 per cent of the population still living under the national poverty line. The post-2014 energy price collapse induced a reduction in remittances inflows.<sup>7</sup> Work migration represents a crucial source of income for many Tajik families

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<sup>2</sup> World Bank. 2019. Tajikistan – Country Partnership Framework for the Period of FY19-FY23 (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank. 2019. J.P. Olters. Tajikistan: Towards the Next Level of Development.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank. 2019. Poverty in Tajikistan 2019. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/10/17/poverty-in-tajikistan-2019>

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF. 2011.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank. 2019. Tajikistan – Country Partnership Framework for the Period of FY19-FY23 (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

as remittances are the second most important income at household level after wages and amount to about 30 per cent of GDP.<sup>8</sup>

9. In 2016, the Government of Tajikistan adopted a National Development Strategy (NDS) for the period up to 2030. The ultimate goal for the long-term development of Tajikistan is to improve the living standards of the population based on sustainable economic development. The framework of the National Development Strategy 2030 aims at achieving a level of socioeconomic development comparable to middle-income countries. To this end, the Government of Tajikistan has placed the development of human capital as an overarching core component, with education and science specifically at the heart of the country's NDS, identifying them as the most important conditions for enhancing national security and encouraging national economic competitiveness.
10. Since ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1993, the Government of Tajikistan has taken important steps to improve the situation for children and youth across the country. Significant progress has been observed in ratification of and accession to international instruments.<sup>9</sup> The Government has taken measures to improve the legislative, institutional and policy frameworks to advance the realization of children's rights in Tajikistan.<sup>10</sup>
11. Despite the progress made regarding reforms in the education and health sectors, challenges remain for children living in both urban and rural areas. 73 per cent of the population live in remote rural and mountainous areas and are vulnerable to natural disasters and seasonal poverty as they often live in isolated communities and have limited access to arable lands.<sup>11</sup> As of 2020, the population of Tajikistan was 9,100,837.<sup>12</sup> 900,000 children live below the national poverty line with almost half living in extreme poverty.<sup>13</sup> The levels of deprivation are presented in Figure 1. These numbers vary across seasons, particularly during the lean season between planting and harvesting, when the number of children living in poverty rises to about 1.1 million.<sup>14</sup> On average, Tajik women have more children than women in other countries in the region, and are vulnerable to negative and preventable pregnancy and postnatal outcomes. Despite the progress in reduction of neonatal mortality and child mortality rates, the levels remain high with one in thirty Tajik children dying before reaching the age of five.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> UNICEF, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> OHCHR. UN Treaty Body Database - Tajikistan.

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=171&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=171&Lang=EN)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> World Bank. 2019. Poverty in Tajikistan 2019.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/tajikistan>

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF. 2018. COAR.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

12. There are growing concerns about the capacity of Tajikistan to provide enough produce from its arable lands for the increasing population.<sup>16</sup> Currently, 40 per cent of the population is faced with a stressed food security situation, while the country imports approximately 70 per cent of its food.<sup>17</sup>

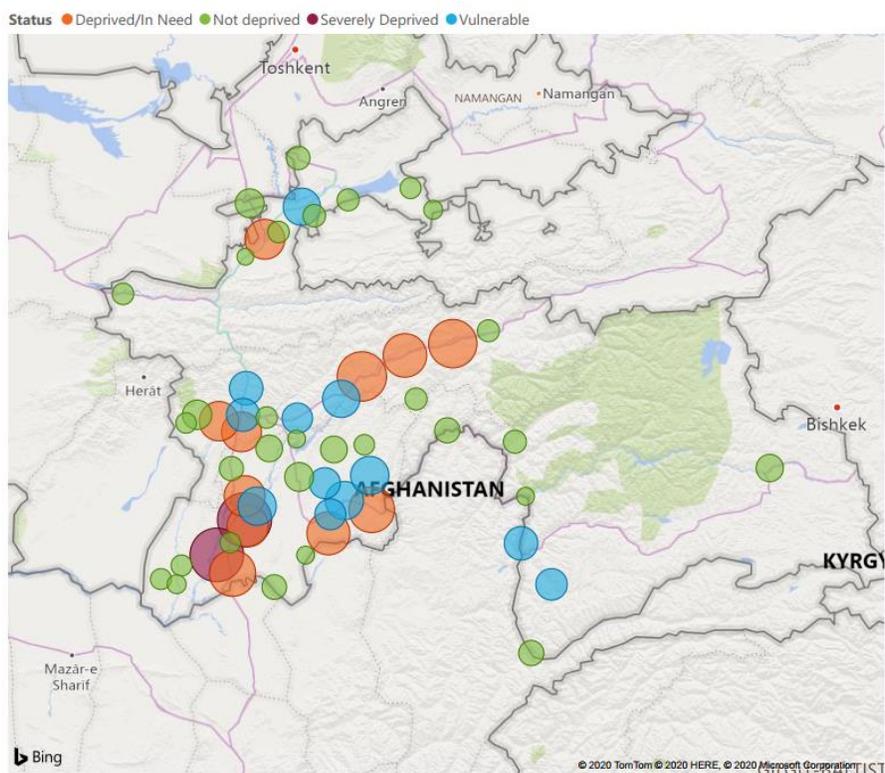


FIGURE 1: MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHILD NEEDS INDEX, TAJIKISTAN<sup>18</sup>

13. From March and April 2020 COVID-19 increasingly spread across the Central Asian region and Tajikistan confirmed the first cases of COVID-19 on 30 April 2020.<sup>19</sup> A WHO Team COVID-19 Technical Mission visited Tajikistan in early May in response to the first confirmed cases. The team reported on 12 May, stating that confirmed cases had been rapidly increasing and had surpassed 660 by that date.<sup>20</sup> It was also reported that on 2 February, the Government had established a joint national multisectoral COVID-19 task force, and, on 19 March, the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan was approved. The UN Country Team has been publishing weekly situation reports, and by the end of July<sup>21</sup> it was reported that the number of cumulative

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> UNICEF. 2019. Situation Analysis of Children's and Young Women's Rights in Tajikistan 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Data provided by UNICEF Tajikistan.

<sup>19</sup> Statement for WHO Press Conference on COVID-19, 12 May 2020: <https://untj.org/?p=13098>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> COVID-19: Tajikistan Situation Report, 23 July 2020: <https://reliefweb.int/report/tajikistan/COVID-19-tajikistan-situation-report-14-23-july-2020>

cases had increased to a total of 7,015 and 58 deaths and that 81.8 per cent of the infected individuals were reported to have recovered.

14. COVID-19 has exposed children to substantial disruption of their healthcare, education, access to basic needs and services such as food, protection and social interaction with family members, teachers, peers and communities. The most recent update from the World Bank's Listening to Tajikistan survey<sup>22</sup> provides the following snapshot: more than 41 per cent of households had reduced their consumption of food; among those households seeking any medical care, 17.5 per cent report being unable to obtain access; less than 2 per cent of households reported newly receiving any financial or in-kind support from government since the outbreak; and only about 33 per cent of households reported that their children engaged in educational activities following mandatory school closures.
15. Through the stakeholder analysis for the purposes of this evaluation (provided in the Inception Report), it can be seen that a major challenge of working across children's rights for UNICEF is the structural fragmentation and lack of consistency when it comes to the implementation of social policies. This fragmentation is due to several factors including limited cross-ministerial collaboration and lines of responsibility that have been blurred between Ministries, particularly at provincial level which has resulted in both overlapping functions and gaps.<sup>23</sup> This lack of coordination is present both at national and local level, between different ministries as well as vertically within specific agencies. For example, the implementation of new laws that have relevance to children's rights requires adequate technical capacity within the responsible Ministry as well as political will and robust coordination across other ministries; this becomes challenging given the current division of labour and the lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities. The context points to the need for strengthened coordination and harmonization of service provision horizontally and vertically and particularly at provincial levels.

### 1.3 Goal and main components of the country programme

16. The goal of the UNICEF Tajikistan Country Programme (CP) 2016–2021<sup>24</sup> was defined in the country programme document as follows: "To accelerate progress towards realization of the rights of all children in Tajikistan. Aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and reflecting a human rights-based approach, the CP is defined by a strong sector-based and life-cycle approach and an emphasis on strengthening up-stream systems."

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2020/07/13/economic-and-social-impacts-of-COVID-19-update-from-listening-to-tajikistan>

<sup>23</sup> Khodjamurodov, G., Sodiqova, D., Akkaziya, B., Rechel, B. 2016. Tajikistan: Health System Review. *Health Systems in Transition*, 2016; 18(1), 1-114.

<sup>24</sup> At the time of conducting the evaluation, the CP was being extended for another year, till end 2022.

17. The key actors and partners are state bodies (i.e. multiple government ministries), civil society organizations, academia, bilateral donors, UN agencies, international financial institutions (IFIs), and stakeholders within UNICEF.<sup>25</sup>
18. The priority areas in the Government's Mid-term Development Strategy for 2016–20, that are relevant to UNICEF's programme are:
  - Overcoming poor food self-sufficiency;
  - Ensuring equal access to social services;
  - Intersectoral priorities, including: respect for human rights and the rule of law; reducing gender inequality; enhancing social inclusion of vulnerable groups; environmental protection and adaptation to climate change; disaster risk management and implementation of preventive measures for climate change mitigation; and enhancing international cooperation.
19. The CP contributes to all six UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2016–2021<sup>26</sup> outcomes:
  - Democratic governance, rule of law and human rights;
  - Sustainable and equitable economic development;
  - Social development (health, education and social protection);
  - Nutrition and food security;
  - Inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups; and
  - Resilience and environmental sustainability.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>A more complete list includes: National Health Strategy until 2020, National Disabled Persons Rehabilitation Programme until 2020, Strategy of Human Rights Ombudsman Office Activity in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2020, National Education Development Strategy in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2020, State Preschool Education Development Program in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2025, National Nutrition and Physical Development Strategy in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2025, National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2019–2030, National School Meal Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2027, First Aid and Family Planning Strategy until 2020, Social Service System Development Framework in the Republic of Tajikistan, National Action Plan (NAP) to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Tajikistan until 2020, National Healthy Lifestyle Formation Program until 2020, State Family Violence Prevention Programme until 2023, Child Justice System Reform Programme for 2017–2021, State Business Support Program in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2020, State Employment Promotion Programme until 2019, National Programme to Counteract the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2020, Private Preschool and General Secondary Education Institution Development Program in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2020, National Immunoprophylaxis Program in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2020, Health Professional Training Program in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2020, State Transportation Industry Development Program until 2025, Improved Pure Drinking Water Supply of Population Programme of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2020, Human Rights Education Programme until 2020, Citizen Legal Education and Training Program until 2019, Police Reform Strategy until 2020, as well as Judicial and Legal Reform Programme in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Initially, the UNDAF was signed for the period of 2016–2020, extended for one year in 2019. In 2020, it was further extended for another year, till December 2022.

<sup>27</sup> [https://untj.org/?page\\_id=1128](https://untj.org/?page_id=1128)

20. **UNICEF global strategies:** The Tajikistan CP was developed during the previous UNICEF strategic plan period 2014–17 but its implementation stretches into the new strategic plan period 2018–21. The ToRs for this Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) specified that planning and implementation strategies up until the 2018 Strategic Moment of Reflection will be assessed against the previous strategic plan, whereas CP adjustments after this point can also refer to the current strategic plan.
21. **The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The CP will contribute to 11 out of the 17 SDGs, that is: SDGs 1 to 6, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17.<sup>28</sup>
22. In early 2018, UNICEF Tajikistan conducted the Strategic Moment of Reflection (SMR), the mid-point review in the country programme cycle, with the aim of sharpening its programme and advocacy focus on the SDGs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations 2017, as well as aligning it with the UNICEF Strategic Plan for 2018–2021. The SMR led to a revision of the country programme results with the reintroduction of a Water, Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH) programme, and a renewed joint commitment with the Government to continue investment in early childhood development (ECD). UNICEF Tajikistan strengthened its efforts in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and emergency response and preparedness. In addition to programmatic shifts and respective structural changes, the programme was extended until 2021.
23. The CPD of 2016 was organized around four outcomes, each with a set of outputs under the headings: Surviving and thriving in the early years; Inclusive quality education; Full participation of adolescents; and Protective environment for children. Detailed ToCs were developed for each of the outcome areas. After the SMR in 2018, a further outcome, Knowledge, was added. The outputs were re-organized and revised, as set out in Table 1. At the same time, the ToCs for the four original outcomes were revised. The main findings (Section 3) of the evaluation consider progress against the five revised outcomes of the CP and against the ToCs, as well as considering the response to the COVID-19 crisis. The financial information for the country programme is provided in the findings section on efficiency.

#### Beneficiaries and needs

24. Based on the country programme priorities and the context analysis, UNICEF in Tajikistan aimed to reach all children of all ages, with special attention given to closing equity gaps at different stages of the life cycle. This aim is explained in more detail as being organized around rights issues that affect children at three stages of the life cycle, while considering risk and vulnerability faced throughout childhood.
25. The redefining of the country programme in 2018 introduced an outcome related to Knowledge and shifted the outputs towards realizing UNICEF's equity agenda. The initial focus on the

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<sup>28</sup> (1) No poverty, (2) Zero hunger, (3) Good health and well-being, (4) Quality education, (5) Gender equality, (6) Clean water and sanitation, (9) Industry, innovation and infrastructure, (10) Reduced inequalities, (13) Climate action, (16) Peace, justice and strong institutions, (17) Partnerships.

programme in 2016 was on explicit vulnerabilities such as children affected by HIV, children with disabilities, and children affected by a range of issues including domestic violence and contact with the law. The revisions to the outputs in 2018 include references to equitable access (Early Years), girls and boys (Learning), and to specific vulnerabilities (ADAP and Protective Environment).

**TABLE 1: COUNTRY PROGRAMME OUTCOMES AND CHANGES TO OUTPUTS**

| 2016 Country Programme Outputs  | 2018 Revised Country Programme Outputs   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Surviving and Thriving in Early Years</b></p> <p>More children, including the most marginalized, are surviving, healthy, well-nourished and developing to their full potential in their early years, with focus on the first 1,000 days.</p>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More pregnant women and children benefit from the Government’s increased, efficient, transparent and equitable budget allocation and utilization regarding maternal and child health and nutrition interventions;</li> <li>• Caregivers and communities are supported to adopt healthy behaviours and appropriate nutrition and care practices for all children, including children with disabilities, HIV and TB, with special attention to the first 1,000 days;</li> <li>• Parents, caregivers and children demand and benefit from improved quality of maternal, newborn and child health care services, in accordance with international standards, including during emergencies; and</li> <li>• Government’s capacity to coordinate and manage multisectoral nutrition and early childhood interventions is strengthened.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maternal and Child Health – Mothers, newborns and children will have equitable access to sustainable and quality essential integrated packages of maternal and newborn, child health in targeted areas;</li> <li>• WASH – Mothers, newborns and children have equitable access to clean water, improved sanitation and hygiene at health facilities in targeted areas;</li> <li>• Nutrition – Mothers, caregivers and young children will have equitable access to accelerated programmes for the prevention and management of stunting and other forms of malnutrition in targeted areas; and</li> <li>• Early childhood development – Girls and boys (from conception to the age of 6) and care givers will have access to quality ECD services in targeted areas.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Inclusive Quality Learning</b></p> <p>All children have improved access to quality inclusive education, from early learning to secondary education, particularly those who are most marginalized.</p>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More children aged 3–6 years benefit from increased capacity of government, partners, communities, and caregivers as duty bearers to provide and promote early learning;</li> <li>• More children demand and benefit from an increased political commitment, national capacity, and accountability to adequately programme improved access and participation for completion of preschool and</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Education – More girls and boys, including the most marginalized, benefit from increased national, subnational and community capacity to access and complete preschool and basic education, and transition to further education;</li> <li>• Safe Learning Environment – More girls and boys in targeted areas benefit from a safe and enabling learning environment that ensures</li> </ul>   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>basic education, and transition to further education, in an equitable environment; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All children benefit from improved capacity at the national level to legislate and plan for strengthening of education to realize quality learning in a safe and inclusive environment.</li> </ul> | <p>their resilience to disasters, mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality – More girls and boys, including the most marginalized in targeted areas benefit from improved quality of learning in an inclusive environment.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

**Full Participation of Adolescents/Adolescent Development and Participation**

Adolescents, including the most marginalized, are recognized as equal members of society and empowered to participate meaningfully in all aspects of life.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The normative framework and budget for adolescents, especially for the marginalized, is improved to promote the realization of their rights to information, quality services and participation in matters concerning their lives;</li> <li>• Adolescents, including the most marginalized, demand and have access to quality youth-friendly information, services and capacity development; and</li> <li>• Social norms shift in favour of the increased participation and voice of all adolescents, with a special focus on the most marginalized.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adolescent Health – Support systems in health and education settings are strengthened and harmonized to provide adolescent-friendly services responding to the specific needs of adolescent girls and boys, especially the most marginalized;</li> <li>• Skills and Innovation – Adolescent girls and boys and youth in targeted areas develop competencies and skills that facilitate their transition to adulthood and employment; and</li> <li>• Participation – Adolescent girls and boys have opportunities to participate in decision-making as well as contribute to social cohesion in their communities and sustainable development at national level.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

**Protective Environment for Children**

Children who are most at risk benefit from a better functioning protective environment that prevents and responds to deprivation, violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children benefit from an improved protection system based on a policy and legal framework in line with international standards, adequately resourced by evidence-based, equitable resource allocation and executed through strong intersectoral coordination at central and local levels;</li> <li>• National and local authorities increasingly ensure availability and accessibility of quality child protection services and social benefits, including during emergencies, for children most at risk and their families; and</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Protection and Social Work – By 2020, the most vulnerable girls and boys have increased inclusive access to social benefits and quality social work services;</li> <li>• Alternative Care – By 2020, girls and boys, including children with disabilities, in institutions and children at risk of family separation, have increased access to family and community-based alternative care; and</li> <li>• Justice for Children and Violence against Children – By 2020, boys and girls, including those in contact with the law, benefit from programmes that prevent and respond to</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social norms shift in favour of better protection and inclusion of the most marginalized children.</li> </ul>  | <p>violence against children (VAC) and a strengthened child-friendly justice system.</p>   |
| <p><b>Knowledge</b></p> <p>The Government of Tajikistan will have a fully financed evidence-based agenda to achieve the National Development Strategy (NDS) and SDG targets for girls and boys in Tajikistan including the most marginalized.</p> |  |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Finance for Children – The mandated government institution will have increased capacity to monitor financial allocations to SDG for children; and</li> <li>• Data and Evidence for Children – The Government of Tajikistan’s relevant line Ministries and agencies will have increased capacity to measure progress against the NDS and SDG targets for children at district level (disaggregated for vulnerabilities, gender, etc.).</li> </ul> |

26. The redefined outputs under each outcome after the SMR have noticeable changes in language. The original outputs have several references to the “most marginalized children” or “children most at risk”. The changes after the SMR include changing from “children” to “girls and boys” which indicates a new focus to start disaggregating the different situations and needs of female and male children. The new outputs continue to refer to the “most marginalized” and the “most vulnerable”, but also spell out *inclusive* access to services. Specific vulnerabilities are now explicitly mentioned including children with disabilities, children in institutions, children at risk of family separation, and children in contact with the law.
27. Figure 2 below shows the distribution of interventions in different districts by different outcomes (as of 2019), including districts where there are multiple interventions, as well as districts where there are no interventions. In addition, there are a number of health and nutrition interventions that are implemented at a national level as well as being implemented across all districts.

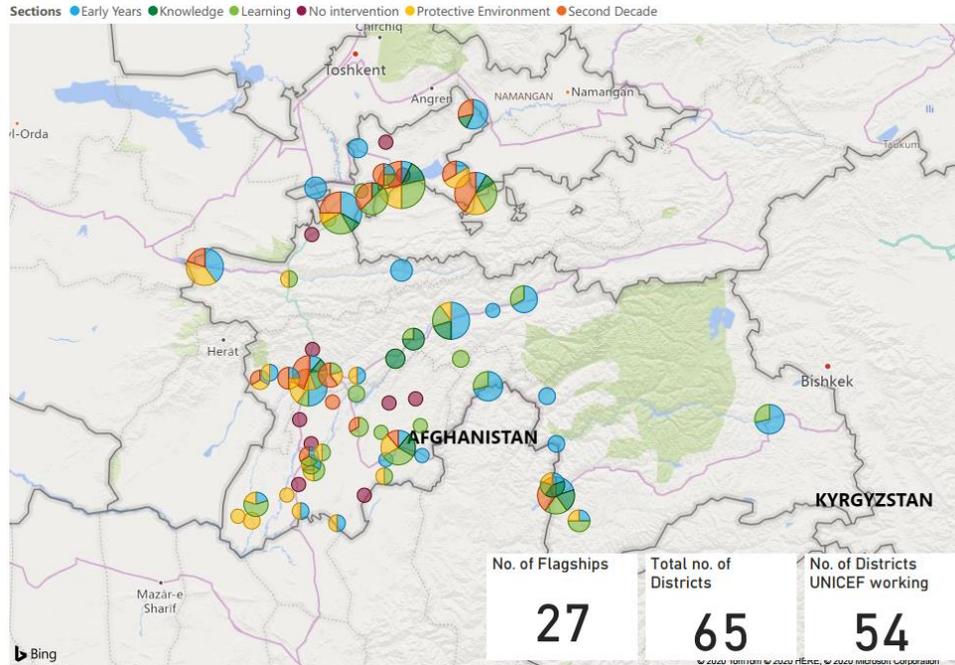


FIGURE 2: UNICEF TAJIKISTAN INTERVENTION MAP FOR 2019

## 1.4 Rights framework of the country programme

28. The 2016–2021 programme reflects the observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW and aims to support the ratification by Tajikistan of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The programme aims to address a range of child rights, including rights to protection and care, health and education. There are no specific references in the CPD to how gender will be addressed.
29. The programme aims to adopt a rights-based approach that develops throughout the life cycle, to ensure that child rights in all phases of childhood are promoted in a holistic manner. The programme has a component on providing support to strengthen registration and national data systems for child rights monitoring. It aims to integrate child rights into local planning processes and strengthen local capacities for child rights monitoring. The programme also aims to address rights issues for adolescents in a comprehensive manner through adolescent rights awareness as well as youth participation which is positioned as a central programme strategy.
30. In 2017, the main areas of concern noted by the CRC Committee for Tajikistan and priority areas for the Government of Tajikistan are corporal punishment; family environment; children with disabilities; health and health services, in particular nutrition; access to education; and administration of juvenile justice – see Annex 10 for full analysis. Some Committee recommendations and areas of concern, such as the need to end child marriage and to end corporal punishment for children, are also supported by UN entities and International Convention Committees, such as CEDAW or the Committee against Torture. The UNICEF Tajikistan Country

Programme aligns with the aims of the Government of Tajikistan's strategy areas related to child rights, including access to education, healthcare, adolescent participation, juvenile justice and protective environment. UNICEF Tajikistan particularly aims to reduce neonatal and child mortality, improve the nutritional status of children, improve access to education for children with disability and increase enrolment rates in preschool education as well as prevent institutionalization and the detention of children in conflict with the law. The analysis as a whole served to review whether the issues raised by the CRC recommendations are covered by the programme and a reminder that issues such as gender, remain to be addressed more fully. A summary of the human rights analysis conducted can be found in Annex 9.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Evaluation framework

31. The object of this evaluation is the UNICEF Tajikistan Country Programme (CP), specifically the CP of cooperation 2016–2020 developed in partnership with the Government of Tajikistan (now extended to 2021). The evaluation rationale is described in the ToRs as follows: “Aligned with corporate policy requirements, this formative evaluation of the CP in Tajikistan serves both accountability and learning purposes. The CPE sets out to document and account for UNICEF’s performance and contribution towards national development goals. The CPE will look back and assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and resilience, synergies<sup>29</sup> and longer-term changes associated with UNICEF’s portfolio, and programmatic and strategic choices made in the design and implementation of the CP to identify good practices, and draw lessons and forward-looking recommendations that can inform the 2021–25<sup>30</sup> CP planning process, which will commence during the last quarter of 2019.”
32. The evaluation has used a theory-based approach to assessing the country programme and the four thematic programme components, based on the respective theories of change that were developed by the CO in 2016 and revised in 2018. At the same time the evaluation took a strategic, overall view of the programme and UNICEF’s Strategic Plan 2018–2021, in attempting to understand and assess the contribution of the different programmatic interventions to the anticipated chain of results (outcomes) and the contributions towards longer-term impacts, as well as their potential sustainability.
33. The theories that the evaluation sought to test were:
  - That the programme ToCs are integrated and together contribute to the overarching ToC, that in turn delivers UNICEF’s contribution to advancing children’s rights;
  - That the data reported in the Country Office Annual Report (COAR) and Results Assessment Module (RAM) align with and enable effective monitoring of UNICEF’s programmes in Tajikistan; and
  - That together these enable UNICEF to track both the contributions made by the programmes and the progress towards children’s rights in Tajikistan.
34. An evaluation matrix was constructed around the evaluation questions, setting out the data sources and methods (see Annex 2).
35. The process of carrying out the evaluation took place from February to September 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adaptations to both the evaluation questions and data collection methods were incorporated into the approach. In addition, it was not possible to establish the

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<sup>29</sup> Changed to ‘Coherence’ in the organization of the evaluation questions.

<sup>30</sup> Now 2022–2026, provided the request for CPD extension is approved by Executive Board.

Evaluation Reference Group, as originally planned in the terms of reference (see section 2.3 on limitations and constraints).

36. The Evaluation Questions (EQs) and sub-questions (the full evaluation matrix with criteria for each of the evaluation sub-questions can be found in Annex 2) against the evaluation criteria that this report addresses are in Table 2. The evaluation criteria are based on UNICEF’s adaptations of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation standards.<sup>31</sup>

**TABLE 2: EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS**

| <b>Evaluation Criteria and Questions</b>  | <b>Evaluation Sub-questions</b>   |
|---|---|
| <b>Relevance</b><br>EQ1 To what extent has UNICEF been effective in meeting the needs of all children and been consistent with the priorities set in national policy frameworks and SDGs?<br>What needs to be done to ensure relevance in the next CPD? | Has UNICEF been effective in ensuring that the needs of vulnerable boys, girls and youth have been considered in the planning and implementation of UNICEF-supported interventions defined to advance all children’s rights? (Including the geographic distribution of vulnerabilities of children and their families.) |
|   | Were the country programme implementation strategies relevant and responsive to the context of children living in the programme sites?  |
|   | Have the programme implementation strategies been relevant to context-specific gender barriers and bottlenecks?   |
|   | Have the programmatic shifts and structural changes resulting from the Strategic Moment of Reflection 2018 contributed to better targeting and scale-up of the CO results for vulnerable children at risk of being left behind in Tajikistan?   |
| <b>Effectiveness</b><br>EQ2 To what extent were the country programme results achieved for all children as described in the ToCs and results matrix, especially for the most vulnerable?  | How effective has UNICEF been in its contribution to behaviour change, if any (particularly to change of local gender norms)? How can the C4D interventions be strengthened to effectively support programme results delivery, especially for the most vulnerable?  |
|   | Were there any unintended negative or positive outcomes and, if so, were they appropriately managed?  |
|   | Has the programme been effective in achieving gender-sensitive progress towards planned outcomes for vulnerable boys, girls and youth?  |
|   | Have opportunities to enhance programme effectiveness and mitigate risks been appropriately managed?  |
|   | Have the programmatic shifts and structural changes resulting from the Strategic Moment of Reflection 2018 contributed to the country programme effectiveness?  |

<sup>31</sup> UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards, updated June 2017 and UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference, updated June 2017.

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | How effective has the Country Office been in leveraging resources for vulnerable children at risk of being left behind?  |
| <p><b>Efficiency</b></p> <p>EQ3 To what extent have the resources (financial and human resources including Country Office structure) allocated by the CO been appropriate to support the implementation of strategies and achievement of CP results and, if not appropriate, what could be done to ensure resources match programmatic ambitions and needs?</p>   | To what extent has the CO been utilizing the available resources efficiently?  |
| <p><b>Sustainability and Resilience</b></p> <p>EQ4 To what extent are the results of the CP at different levels sustainable, especially for vulnerable boys, girls and youth?</p>   | <p>What has been the result of learning from the initiated interventions (including pilots and models) in terms of influencing the policy debate or scaling up approaches to reach more children? How likely is it for the rest of initiated interventions to go to scale and why? (Make a list for both.)</p> <p>To what extent has the Country Office been able to respond to changes in national needs, rights and priorities or to shifts caused by crises or major political changes, including COVID-19?</p> <p>What was the quality of the response? (Ability to respond.)</p> <p>What are the medium-term and longer-term anticipated barriers to delivering results?</p> <p>To what extent has the Country Office adapted internally to meet the external demands of the current crisis and how is it planning for a continued or post-crisis situation? (Sustainability)</p> |
| <p><b>Coherence</b></p> <p>EQ5a To what extent do the individual country programme components reinforce each other to leverage the contribution that UNICEF makes towards expected results?</p> <p>EQ5b To what extent is the country programme consistent with other actors' interventions in the same context (including complementarity, harmonization and coordination with others) and add value while avoiding duplication of effort?</p> | <p>Has UNICEF been able to make the most of integrated and cross-sectoral working across the programme to increase the overall contribution?</p> <p>What roles has UNICEF played in working with other actors in the country and how do these roles add value?</p>   |
| <p><b>Long-term Change</b></p> <p>EQ6 To what extent can UNICEF be considered to have made a contribution to observed progress</p>  | To what extent is UNICEF able to assess the contribution that has been made to progress?   |

## Departures from the ToR

37. The main significant departures from the ToR were that, due to COVID-19, it was not possible to carry out an in-country inception visit and/or to carry out in-country fieldwork, both of which were carried out virtually. In addition, revisions were made to the evaluation questions, to reflect the current situation, and adjustments were made to the approach and methodology, as explained below. This meant that no children, young people or their families directly participated in the evaluation. As a result, efforts to reach professionals who work with children were increased to include them in the consultations.
38. During the inception phase, the key questions were identified and aimed to look at the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and resilience, coherence and longer-term change. A revised set of six key evaluation questions, with further evaluation sub-questions was developed and agreed.

## 2.2 Data collection and analysis

39. Two primary data collection tools were used:
  - Semi-structured interviews: a series of 49 focused and selective interviews were carried out by video-conference and telephone with UNICEF staff and stakeholders who interact with UNICEF on a regular basis, including national and local government partners, development partners, other UN organizations, IFIs and CSOs, to drill down and explore, focusing on Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence and Sustainability and Resilience (see Annex 3 for the list of those interviewed); and
  - Online Partner Perception and Beneficiary Surveys; a total of 32 respondents completed a detailed survey, used to gather perspectives from a range of stakeholders (national government, development partners and CSOs) offering different views on UNICEF's role and contribution and focusing on Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Sustainability and Resilience, Coherence and Long-term Change. In addition, a total of 17 respondents (teachers and lawyers) completed a beneficiary survey focused on Effectiveness and Sustainability (see Annex 5 for data collection instruments);
40. The evaluation considered a wide range of documentation, carrying out a range of further analysis to look at UNICEF's capacity to monitor programmes, and progress towards programme outcomes, focusing on Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence, Long-term Change and Sustainability (see Annex 4 for the list of documentary evidence).

41. In addition, the evaluation team engaged extensively with the UNICEF CO, during both the Inception Mission and during the data collection phase. In particular, workshops focusing on theories of change were held with the four programmatic teams in the inception and data collection phases, looking at the main achievements in the programmes and evidence sources and data collection points in the programmes and risk analysis.
42. The evaluation design and data collection tools incorporated the principles of gender equality and empowerment of women throughout by considering specific evaluation sub-questions under Relevance, Effectiveness and Sustainability.

#### Sampling of respondents for interviews and survey

43. The evaluation covered the four thematic components of the country programme, as well as all of the geographical areas where UNICEF is actively involved. The initial list of over 80 respondents provided by UNICEF was refined during the evaluation stages to ensure that the data collection covers the three main categories of stakeholders identified in the stakeholder analysis which are:
  - a) Decision-makers and policymakers: in the main ministries, departments and state agencies, as well as local provincial governments and municipalities;
  - b) Partners in implementation: including government partners for each of the programmatic areas, CSOs, UN agencies and IFIs and development partners; and
  - c) Beneficiaries: specifically focused on direct programme beneficiaries, such as teachers, judges, lawyers and service providers.
44. The evaluation sought to include stakeholders and professionals who work with the most vulnerable children to deliver equity in Tajikistan and received responses from teachers and lawyers. Children and their families were not included in data collection with the agreement of UNICEF.
45. More details on the survey method, including limitations, can be found in Annex 6.

#### Working with theories of change

46. The shift to virtual data collection changed the schedule and allowed for the introduction of different types of engagement with the Country Office. This included follow-up workshops with each of the four programmatic teams to present initial analyses of their ToCs, looking specifically at the location of indicators in the ToCs and at identifying the main risks for sustainability. The focus of the discussions was on collaborative testing of the analyses carried out by the evaluation team, as well as on exploring further the use of different monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools by the UNICEF teams. Overall programmatic ToC is included in Annex 7.

#### Analysis methods and tools

47. The overall evaluation matrix (Annex 2) provides a summary of the data collection and data analysis tools and methods against the main evaluation questions and sub-questions. The analysis has been brought together initially against the evaluation sub-questions, using the

judgement criteria, cross-checking and triangulating the data collection (survey and interviews) against the UNICEF programme and secondary data analysis, to provide answers to these questions – see Annex 4. The analysis in the report addresses the main EQs, setting out where progress has been made and where there are still efforts required, highlighting examples of good practice and lessons learned, to provide a clear and accessible assessment of the development and implementation of the country programme.

48. The strength of the evidence for each of the evaluation sub-questions is judged according to high confidence, medium confidence or low confidence according to the extent that data could be triangulated. Through the documentary analysis key issues were identified within the EQs that the evaluation sought to corroborate through primary data collection. Similarly, if issues were raised during interviews, the evaluation referred back to documentary evidence including studies undertaken by UNICEF and other agencies in order to verify information. Where there were multiple sources of validated evidence for the sub-questions, the evaluation judged the evidence as having a high level of confidence. Where the sources for evidence were smaller in number or more limited to a particular type of source (e.g. mainly documentation or mainly through interviews) then the evaluation judged the evidence as having a medium level of confidence. If the sources were very limited, then the evaluation would have judged the evidence as having a low level of confidence. Most evidence was judged as either high or medium confidence. There was only one sub-question where the evidence was judged as low confidence.

#### Participation in the evaluation

49. Key stakeholders took part in the evaluation, particularly the UNICEF Country Office staff throughout the inception phase, to inform the direction of the evaluation. During the evaluation data collection phase, the CO was consulted in specific sessions focused on the programme component theories of change. Wider stakeholders were included as per the data collection strategy above. As mentioned, the formation of an external reference group was not feasible due to the COVID-19 emergency but, importantly, the drafting of the final evaluation report went through a process of consultation with the CO to gain feedback on the substance of the findings and the utility of the recommendations.

## 2.3 Limitations and constraints faced by the evaluation

#### Changes due to COVID-19

50. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, in-person data collection was precluded. The evaluation mitigated this serious limitation in a number of ways: online interviews using interview guides were carried out with a targeted group of government and partner stakeholders, providing nuanced perspectives on UNICEF's work. These were complemented with a partner perception survey, which provided a perspective from a broader range of stakeholders, and virtual workshops with the CO programme teams, which provided a more in-depth understanding of programme implementation.

51. It was not possible to establish the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), as was originally envisaged in the terms of reference, due to the lack of response from the Government. UNICEF's Government partners would usually be key members of such an evaluation reference group, but in the context of COVID-19 they were unable to commit their time and availability to participating. Discussions were held with the CO to consider other means to engage a wider group of stakeholders in the dissemination of the evaluation. At the time of writing this report, the dissemination plan to a wider stakeholder group was being prepared by the Country Office.

#### Data (evaluation) availability

52. Of relevance to the CP period, only two evaluations have been undertaken by the CO, the 'Evaluation of UNICEF capacity-building investments in Tajikistan 2016–2018' and 'Evaluation of UNICEF Tajikistan's work in priority districts during the 2010–2015 Country Programme'. This limited the information available to the evaluation team, especially in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of activities in the thematic areas. However, other research and surveys were conducted during the CP period, including national surveys such as the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2017 report and baseline studies conducted in collaboration with the Government, and UNICEF's own situation analyses, which were useful in the evaluation when coupled with qualitative data and analysis.

## 2.4 Ethical considerations

53. The evaluation team observed ethical standards set in IOD PARC's ethical code of conduct. IOD PARC's ethical framework is based on international guidelines for all contexts, in particular: UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, UNEG, March 2008; UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System 2007; DFID Ethics Principles for Research and Evaluation 2011; and ESRC Framework for Research Ethics Principles 2012.
54. The evaluation team adhered to UNICEF's Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis (2015) and the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards. This means that the evaluation team upheld the appropriate obligations of evaluators, including maintaining the independence, impartiality, credibility and accountability of the individual team members and the evaluation process as a whole. The evaluation team was not subject to any conflicts of interest and confirmed that they were able to carry out the evaluation without any undue interference.
55. There was no requirement for formal ethical review board approval for this evaluation because no in-person consultations or data collection with children, young people or vulnerable or disadvantaged adults took place.
56. With respect to ethical approaches to managing client and evaluation participant data (applying to the content of interviews and surveys), the evaluation specifically ensured the following:

- Confidentiality: participants' anonymity was protected, and all participants were assured of the confidentiality of any information they shared;
- Preventing disclosure of identity: we took appropriate measures to prevent individual data from being published or otherwise released in a form that would allow any subject's identity to be disclosed or inferred; and
- Informed consent: we obtained informed consent from all participants and ensured that participants had the contact details of the evaluation team to withdraw or change their consent at any time.
- Data security: data was kept secure on servers; once analysed, all data was anonymised. All personal data is destroyed within six months of the completion of a project. Only team members will have access to password-protected folders containing the data of the participants for the duration of the project. Raw data (for example interview transcripts) are stored in a protected folder in IOD PARC's document sharing site on the secure server. This folder is accessible only by the evaluation team. The evaluation team and all users of the shared folders have signed confidentiality and data protection agreements.

## 3. Findings of the Evaluation

57. The findings are organized in sections according to the six evaluation criteria. Within each section, the key findings are highlighted, followed by a detailed response to the main Evaluation Question (EQ). At the end of each section Summary Findings against each of the Evaluation Sub-questions are provided in a table.
58. The strength of the evidence for each of the evaluation sub-questions is judged according to high, medium or low confidence according to the extent that data could be triangulated. Where there were multiple sources of validated evidence for the sub-questions, the evaluation judged the evidence as having a high level of confidence. Where the sources for evidence were smaller in number or more limited to a particular type of source (e.g. mainly documentation or mainly through interviews) then the evaluation judged the evidence as having a medium level of confidence. If the sources were very limited, then the evaluation would have judged the evidence as having a low level of confidence.
59. The approach to analysis and to assessing the strength of evidence is set out in Section 2.2 (see “Analysis methods and tools”). As part of the evidence and analysis process, a detailed evidence matrix was constructed to demonstrate the depth and quality of data according to each of the evaluation sub-questions. This evidence matrix can be found in Annex 7.

### 3.1 Findings: Relevance

#### Key findings

1.i The country programme was relevant due to being adequately informed by evidence on the needs of all children; it was well aligned with national priorities and strongly aligned with the SDGs.

1.ii Three implementation strategies stood out as particularly relevant due to their success and effectiveness, and how they were received by stakeholders: modelling through pilots; combining strategic partnership approaches with pilots; and system strengthening.

1.iii The CO addressed specific needs through addressing geographic differences and responding to emerging and urgent issues for marginalized groups of children. This has reflected UNICEF's equity agenda by focusing on some of the most vulnerable children. Despite some important examples of specific interventions addressing gender inequality, a comprehensive approach to gender is missing.

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**EQ1 To what extent has UNICEF been effective in meeting the needs of all children and been consistent with the priorities set in national policy frameworks and SDGs? What needs to be done to ensure relevance in the next CPD?**

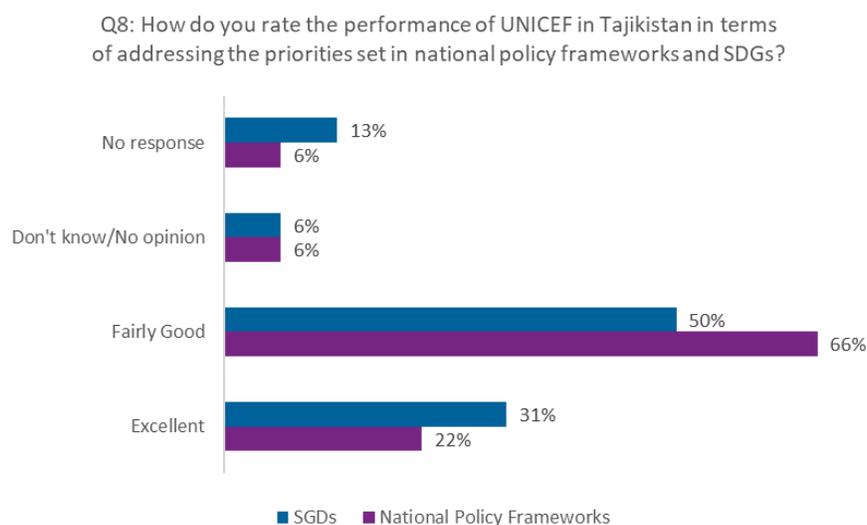
### Alignment with national priorities

60. There is strong evidence that the CP has been adequately informed by comprehensive analysis of the children's situation and the CO applied a contextually relevant combination of implementation strategies to meet the needs of all children. The review of the secondary data and interviews with government partners validated the alignment between CP and national priorities reflected in the key national policies and strategies, in particular the National Development Strategy 2030, the Mid-term Development Programme, the National Health Strategy, the National Programme on Rehabilitation of Disabled People in Tajikistan, the State Programme on Youth Social Development and the National Education Strategy, the Healthy Lifestyle Strategy, and the Child Rights Ombudsman Strategy.

### Alignment with SDGs

61. There is also strong evidence demonstrating that the UNICEF CPD is aligned with and contributes to the fulfilment of the SDGs, specifically SDGs 1 to 6, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17. In order to ensure relevance in the next CPD, UNICEF needs to further build on the work towards increasing visibility and recognition of the most vulnerable children through generation of strong evidence on the extent of vulnerabilities across different intersecting dimensions of inequality. Development of a broader strategy of engagement with civil society organizations with relevant sectorial experience and presence on the ground will also further contribute to increasing relevance of the next CPD.

FIGURE 3: SURVEY RESULTS - QUESTION 8



62. These findings are reflected in the views of stakeholders who participated in the partner perception survey. There were no negative perceptions among survey respondents about UNICEF's performance in relation to addressing national priorities and the SDGs. Across different types of stakeholders, UNICEF was potentially perceived as addressing the SDGs better than

national priorities. CSO partners, government respondents and IFI respondents rated UNICEF as 'excellent' in addressing SDGs more frequently than 'excellent' in addressing national priorities.<sup>32</sup>

#### Alignment with the needs of children and young people

63. In addition to focusing on the needs of 'all children', the available evidence suggests that the CP design and implementation has been informed by analysis of the needs of vulnerable boys, girls and youth, including the geographical distribution of vulnerabilities. The CO commissioned studies and contextual analyses which were used during the design and implementation of the CP.<sup>33</sup> For example, the Mapping of Vulnerable and Excluded Groups of Adolescents and Youth in Tajikistan (2017) identified as vulnerable categories: adolescents who have limited access to essential basic services including children with disabilities (CWD); institutionalized children; and adolescents and youth who are neither in employment, nor in education or training. The Adolescence Baseline Study (2018) helped in identifying competencies needed for successful learning and transition to life and work for adolescents and youth. The Adolescent Competency Framework (ACF) established by the CO in 2017 was based on findings and analysis from these studies as well as other available data. The ACF is a cross-sectoral framework aimed to inform programming both in formal and non-formal education. As such it has informed UPSHIFT and the ADAP sections' programming related to the Adolescent Kit, as well as school-based competency-building interventions conducted through student councils as part of the Learning section programming. Components of the ACF that have been responsive to the identified needs of adolescents and youth are the Innovation Labs, the adaptation of the Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation and the UPSHIFT initiative, all established by the CO. The study, commissioned by the CO, on the learning programme based on the Adolescent Competency Framework (2020) was positive in its conclusions and the programme was commended for its relevance by Government, teachers, facilitators, mentors and the adolescents who participated.
64. Another relevant example is UNICEF's work to support the improvement of services for mother and child health (MCH), following an assessment of the quality of services within 17 maternal facilities. The assessment findings informed the design of capacity-strengthening interventions and procurement of essential equipment. Within eleven pilot districts, health specialists have participated in capacity-building, maternal hospitals including water and sanitation supply have been refurbished, and other essential equipment has been procured for eleven district maternity facilities and two maternity hospitals. The assessment has established a basis for creating a

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<sup>32</sup> See Annex 5 for the results to survey question 8 disaggregated by stakeholder type – page 37.

<sup>33</sup> These included: Adolescence baseline study (2018), Situational analysis, Baseline study on knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and practices related to children and women with disabilities in Tajikistan (2018), Mapping the vulnerable and excluded groups of adolescents and youth in Tajikistan, (2017), Formative research on infant and young child feeding and maternal nutrition in Tajikistan, (2016), Rapid assessment of the system's response to adolescents' mental health, including prevention of suicidal behaviour in the Republic of Tajikistan (2016), Assessment of the impact of social allowances on the quality of life of children living with HIV (2018).

mechanism for Continuous Quality Improvement of maternal, newborn and child health care (MNHC) services in health facilities in the pilot districts enabling access of women and children to quality services. Provision of technical support to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population (MoHSPP) aimed at strengthening policy on case management of HIV infection in children and allowing full-scale implementation of option B+ mother-to-child transmission protocol is another example of the CP alignment with the needs of children.

## Promising practices: Pilots and models

The Country Office has demonstrated innovative and effective approaches to modelling and pilots. The extent to which the CO uses models can be categorised as an implementation strategy.

At least five pilots have been successful when measured by whether they are being taken forward by government or other actors.

The pilots or models are well contextualised and build on existing systems and institutions. They address specific issues affecting adolescents and children, including some of the most vulnerable or disadvantaged.

For example, the CO has targeted alternative care, children with disabilities and reductions in institutionalization, and has brought together government and CSO actors to effectively cooperate.

65. Based on the interviews and secondary data, the CP has also contributed to joint initiatives on strengthening knowledge generation and use through the existing and emerging systems of data collection to enable better targeting of the most vulnerable children by the CO as well as by relevant government bodies and development partners. The Listening to Tajikistan Survey (2015–2020), the Tajikistan Vulnerability & Resilience Atlas (2019), collection of data on child discipline in the DHS as a result of inclusion of the MICS module (2017), are among efforts to design and implement rights-based programming that targets the needs of vulnerable children and young people.

### Addressing different geographical needs

66. Building on recommendations from the 2015 evaluation of UNICEF Tajikistan's work in priority districts, the CO has also been effective in addressing the geographic distribution of vulnerabilities at district level. The CO has been using contextualized pilots and innovative models to focus on issues pertaining to adolescents and children, using existing systems and building on cooperation of CSOs and formal institutes to roll out interventions in specific localities. Responding to the alarming suicide rate among youth in Soghd region, the CO has piloted an integrated model for addressing mental health issues of adolescents in nine districts using schools as an entry point. The referral network within the preventive approach involves primary health care (PHC), including the youth-friendly health services, peer support and referral, community and other educational institutions. The peacebuilding and civic engagement interventions covering adolescents, development and delivery of early learning in minority languages in border districts, is relevant given the specific

geographical vulnerabilities of children and youth in these locations. The CO has been focusing on CWD living in remote districts<sup>34</sup> with a high level of multidimensional poverty affecting access to services, such as Rasht district, ensuring access to early screening, rehabilitation and development for CWD.

### Relevance of implementation strategies

67. During the country programme period UNICEF Tajikistan applied a combination of implementation strategies, including policy dialogue and advocacy, cross-sectoral linkages, strategic partnerships, identification and promotion of innovation, system-strengthening, service delivery and capacity development to respond to the needs of children living in the programme sites.
68. An example of using the approach of modelling is the establishment of the platform for alternative care, with the aim of preventing children with disabilities from being institutionalized. The CO launched a promising pilot on transformation of two baby homes in Sughd region into Family and Child Support Centres (FCSC). According to the CO staff this initiative is promising, because it has laid the foundation for a country-wide change in terms of alternative care: the FCSC is now offering a broader range of services, including family assessment, weekends with the families, daily support on early intervention to raise the competence and skills of parents, short breaks for mothers parenting children with disabilities, positive parenting and mother and baby rooms. The transformation plan based on two models is envisaged by the relevant government agencies to target the country-wide system of institutions.
69. A second example of modelling was enhanced by combining it with an approach to developing a strategic partnership between the Government and CSOs. This strategic partnership approach was applied to piloting the integrated programme for in- and out-of-school adolescents, and UNICEF stakeholders perceived this way of working to be highly relevant and a contributing factor to the success of the initiative. Based on interviews with CSOs and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) the engagement of CSOs helped to bring the necessary context-specific youth and adolescent expertise and outreach capabilities to reach the most underserved adolescents and young people. Implementation of the pilot through the formal established structures (i.e. youth centres, centres for additional education, student councils) established the necessary prerequisite for ownership and replication.
70. The implementation strategy of systems strengthening has been relevant for improving the youth-friendly health services at primary health-care level by assisting the MoSPP in the development and application of algorithms and protocols for check-ups. Another example is UNICEF's support to enhancing policy related to case management of HIV infection in children, resulting in increased access for pregnant and HIV-positive women to antiretroviral therapy.

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<sup>34</sup> The multidimensional poverty index (MPI) developed by the World Bank is a tool to assess non-monetary poverty, which combines information about individual deprivations to present a complementary measure of poverty and includes dimensions such as demography and labour, education, services and infrastructure. World Bank. 2018. Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO.

### Staying relevant during the course of the country programme

71. Based on interviews and secondary data, there is evidence that programmatic shifts following the SMR led to more focused interventions through evidence generation targeting vulnerable children. This enabled the CO to engage in more strategic system-focused interventions and establish the necessary foundations for potential scale-up. The SMR contributed to creation of the Knowledge Management section which has been instrumental in evidence generation to make the CP relevant to the needs of children and youth. The key effort following the SMR has been development of monitoring tools for real-time data gathering and tracking progress within specific programmes and projects.

### Addressing specific and emerging needs

72. The CP remained relevant to newly identified and emerging needs of children, including new categories of vulnerable children and youth. As such, the SMR enabled the CO to bring a more comprehensive focus on adolescents and youth, especially on their proactive engagement in community, skills and competence building, employability and peacebuilding potential. The reintroduction of the WASH programme helped in increasing the focus on the impact of WASH related barriers to education, especially girls' education, and accessing quality services at maternity and neonatal departments of health facilities. According to the CO situation analysis (2019), inadequate WASH in maternity and in neonatal departments of health facilities remains one of the leading contributing factors to high neonatal and infant mortality. The reintroduction of the WASH programme has also been relevant in terms of capitalizing on emerging political momentum, with the Tajik Government championing the international "water for life" initiative.
73. The CO's work in the social protection sector has been more focused on tackling the most urgent issues – strengthening access to social services for vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities, children affected by migration and at risk of statelessness, and children at risk of institutionalization. The CO efforts to make the social protection system shock responsive has been especially relevant given the hazard-prone nature of the country, and has informed the piloting and scale-up of responses in the COVID-19 context. The reinforcement of Communication for Social Change as a key approach in the work on social protection has been relevant for the Tajik context as well, given the importance of shifts in social norms and practices as pre-requisites for the achievement of results for children and youth.
74. In terms of equity focused programming the work of the CO is aligned with and relevant to the needs of children and young people. The needs of the most deprived groups of children and youth, including children with disabilities, children in contact and conflict with law, and children at risk of institutionalization have been explicitly addressed through relevant interventions. The CO has also focused on identification and analysis of the causes of deprivations by generating evidence, such as the baseline study on knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and practices related to children and women with disabilities in Tajikistan (2018); assessment of guardianship in Tajikistan (2020); baseline study on children, teachers and parents' ability to recognize and respond to situations of discrimination or exclusion in five target districts of the Sughd Region of

Tajikistan (2019), and the mapping of vulnerable and excluded groups of adolescents and youth in Tajikistan (2017).

### Relevance to gender equality

75. The changes made to outputs after the SMR show the necessary first steps to addressing gender equality by introducing the need for sex-disaggregated analysis and data. Specifically, “girls and boys” are clearly articulated in place of “children” (see Table 1 in the Introduction). This is an essential pre-requisite. However, embedding gender equality is an ongoing process of which the CO is at the beginning. It consists of both knowledge generation and analysis of root causes, mainstreaming gender equality and focusing on sex-specific initiatives for both girls and boys. It takes time to build expertise and practice to apply it universally. This section highlights that some sex-specific initiatives have been implemented, and next steps would be for a more holistic approach to the critical context-specific, gender-related barriers which need to be clearly identified, assessed, reported and fed into the overall CP. This will support a comprehensive gender analysis going forward.
76. According to the Demographic and Health Survey (2017), around seven per cent of Tajik women aged 15–19 are either pregnant or already have a child. One in four (26 per cent) of 19-year-old women are either pregnant or have had a child, with one in two (47 per cent) of women married by the age of 20. Moreover, women in rural areas have limited access to reliable information on sexual and reproductive health issues, information on maternal and child health, and therefore rely on the experience of older women in the household. To tackle this, the CO’s focus on educating mothers in the 12 most deprived districts with regard to maternal and child health and nutrition is very relevant. The initiative included distribution of a Maternal and Child Health Handbook, followed by the ‘golden 1,000 days’ campaign focusing on knowledge, attitudes and

## Promising practices: Gender equality

The Country Office has started to build the foundations of embedding approaches to gender equality in its programme. This includes a new focus on sex-disaggregated data after the changes made in the SMR.

There are also several interventions that specifically target women or girls.

These include the focus on maternal and newborn health in the First 1,000 Days initiative, and the WASH intervention in schools which specifically focuses on gender-related barriers to girls’ participation in education.

In both of these examples UNICEF works effectively in partnership with the government and other development partners.

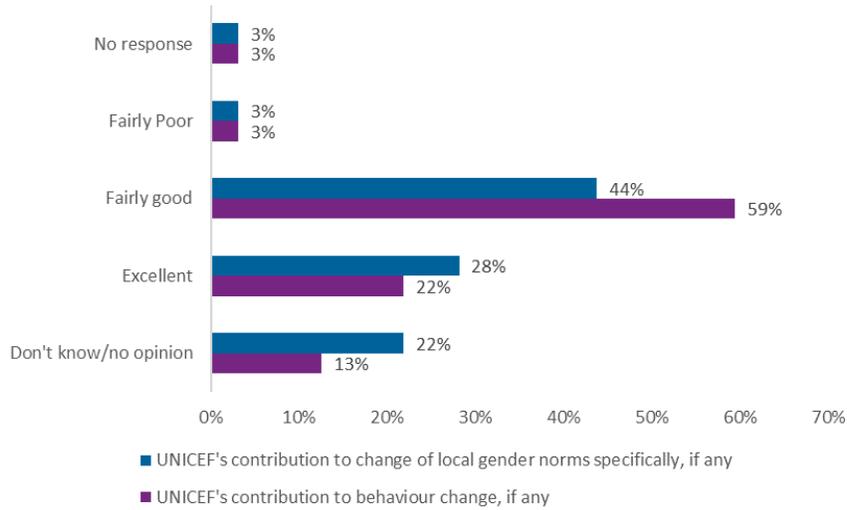
The evaluation makes recommendations regarding how to take gender equality further, based on the CO’s effective approach to addressing equity.

behaviour change around infant and young child feeding, and other critical parenting issues.

77. Among relevant initiatives focusing on specific gender-related barriers is the improvement of the WASH infrastructure in 48 schools, and the development of a comprehensive resource pack for school communities on WASH and menstrual health management. These were developed jointly with other development partners.
78. According to the 2017 DHS, child disciplining through physical violence is practiced in families. More than one in three women/girls aged 15 years and older (34 per cent) have reported being subjected to physical violence during the 12 months that preceded the survey. Therefore, the UNICEF-supported positive parenting workshops in three target districts, aiming at analysis of gender-related values and relationships in the family, are relevant in terms of addressing gender barriers at family level.
79. The main guiding document for the CO to mainstream gender and equity in the programming is the UNICEF Gender Action Plan. Additionally, the CO has been generating knowledge through some specific studies, for instance the Baseline Study on Knowledge, Attitudes, Behaviors and Practices Related to Children and Women with Disabilities in Tajikistan (2018) to understand the intersection of gender and disabilities and the collection of sex-disaggregated data through regular monitoring. The gender focal point role has been introduced to further strengthen gender mainstreaming efforts within programming and the organization. However, according to the ECARO Gender Annual Results Report (2019), accountability is not mentioned at all in the Tajikistan Country Programme Management Plan/Annual Management Plan to achieve gender results across sectors, which makes it difficult to meaningfully report on gender-specific results across sectors. This conclusion is in keeping with the review of the CP planning and reporting documentation undertaken for this evaluation.
80. In order to ensure relevance in terms of addressing context-specific gender challenges and equity issues in the next CPD, there is a need for a more comprehensive disaggregation of data (gender, urban/rural, disability) for indicators, which is currently missing. Currently, outcome indicators for the ADAP and Learning sections are disaggregated. Outcome data for Early Years and other indicators are not yet disaggregated to the full extent possible. The data should also be complemented by qualitative information and in-depth analysis of different vulnerabilities and the root causes of deprivations. It is also important for the CO to establish a clearer definition and enforcement of institutional accountability for gender mainstreaming through explicit inclusion in job descriptions, and clear articulation of the responsibilities of the gender focal points. In addition to this, a more comprehensive reporting on tackling context-specific gender barriers in annual reports, assessments and evaluations is needed.

**FIGURE 4: SURVEY RESULTS - QUESTION 9**

Q9: How do you rate the performance of UNICEF in Tajikistan in terms of its contribution to any behaviour change?



81. There were mostly positive perceptions of UNICEF’s work on addressing behaviour change and gender norms among stakeholder survey respondents. UN agencies were more frequently positive about UNICEF’s contribution to behaviour change, compared to its work addressing gender norms, and one CSO partner rated UNICEF’s response to gender norms as ‘poor’. Government and CSO partner respondents were more frequently highly positive about UNICEF’s work in gender norms compared to broader behaviour change.<sup>35</sup>

**Evaluation questions and summary answers**

**TABLE 3: EVALUATION QUESTION 1 AND SUB-QUESTIONS**

| Evaluation Questions   | Summary Findings   |
|--|--|
| EQ1 To what extent has UNICEF been effective in meeting the needs of all children and been consistent with the priorities set in national policy frameworks and SDGs? What needs to be done to ensure relevance in the next CPD? | <p>See Annex 8 for the detailed evidence matrix</p> <p>There is evidence from multiple sources that UNICEF programming has been consistent with the needs and priorities of all children and the Tajik Government and are aligned with international commitments and human rights standards ratified by the country including SDGs. The CP remained relevant to the new emerging needs of children with post-SMR outputs focusing on specific vulnerabilities: children with disabilities, children in institutions, children at risk of family separation, and children in contact with the law.</p> <p>High confidence</p> |

<sup>35</sup> See Annex 5 for the results to survey question 9 disaggregated by stakeholder type – page 38.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1.1 Has UNICEF been effective in ensuring that the needs of vulnerable boys, girls and youth have been considered in the planning and implementation of UNICEF-supported interventions defined to advance all children’s rights? (Including the geographic distribution of vulnerabilities of children and their families).</p> | <p>UNICEF has been effective in ensuring the needs of vulnerable girls and boys by drawing on context and needs assessments and reflecting geographical differences in vulnerabilities.</p> <p>High confidence</p>   |
| <p>1.2 Were the country programme implementation strategies relevant and responsive to the context of children living in the programme sites?</p>  | <p>Both secondary and primary data suggest that a range of relevant implementation strategies was deployed, and they were informed contextual assessments making them applicable to the context and needs of children and youth. Three implementation strategies stood out as particularly relevant: modelling through pilots; combining strategic partnership approaches with pilots; and system strengthening.</p> <p>High confidence</p>  |
| <p>1.3 Have the programme implementation strategies been relevant to context-specific gender barriers and bottlenecks?</p>   | <p>Some important initiatives related to gender equality were introduced but, overall, the CP is not adequately informed by in-depth gender analyses to ensure the highest level of relevance of the implementation strategies. To incorporate gender more comprehensively, the CO needs to go beyond numbers and engage in more qualitative analysis of the root causes and deprivations to be able to tackle them. Accountability for gender mainstreaming needs to be included in the job description of the Gender Focal Points to ensure comprehensive reporting on gender across different sectors.</p> <p>Medium Confidence</p> |
| <p>1.4 Have the programmatic shifts and structural changes resulting from the Strategic Moment of Reflection 2018 contributed to better targeting and scale-up of the CO results for vulnerable children at risk of being left behind in Tajikistan?</p>   | <p>The programmatic shifts following the SMR led to more cross sectoral work in the areas of ECD, work with adolescents in mental health and peacebuilding, and the inclusion of CWD. It also resulted in re-introduction of WASH and establishing the Knowledge team. The SMR further led to more focused interventions targeting vulnerable children and enabled the CO to engage in more strategic system-focused interventions, establishing a crucial foundation for potential scale-up and sustained results.</p> <p>High confidence</p>   |

**3.2 Findings: Effectiveness**

Key findings

2.i There is progress against output indicators for 44 out of 47 CP targets, with just over half (27) having been met or exceeded. Progress is demonstrated against 17 indicators which have not yet met targets. There were only 3 indicators against which there was no or little progress.

2.ii Efforts at strengthening monitoring approaches at the national level (strengthening government monitoring systems) and at the level of programme implementation have enabled UNICEF to demonstrate progress against results in key areas, such as access to and quality of education and adolescent health and participation. It has been possible to identify a limited number of output-level indicators where there is a direct linkage between UNICEF interventions, the ToCs and the data that is being reported against indicators in the results matrix. Despite improvements in internal monitoring processes, there remains a lack of comprehensiveness in tracking results across the country programme that in many cases might lead back to the planning stages of the programme.

2.iii The CO's effectiveness has been enhanced by its recognition of and response to contextual risks, and through its reorganization of both the programme and the staffing. However, overall, the country programme's effectiveness would be significantly enhanced by the development of the overarching ToC and strong rationales for how decisions and prioritizations are made.

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## **EQ2 To what extent were the country programme results achieved for all children as described in the ToCs and results matrix especially for the most vulnerable?**

### **Overall progress towards results**

82. UNICEF has been able to make progress towards the results for all children, especially the most vulnerable, as set out in the results matrix: significant progress in the work on Learning and ADAP, as evidenced in national-level indicators and as discussed in Section 3.1; in raising awareness of vulnerable groups, such as CWD, and of the issues affecting marginalized groups, such as adolescent mental health, through developing new approaches to addressing the issues that children face; and more recently, scaling up approaches through programmes working on a much more significant scale, such as social protection. There is strong corroborating evidence from interviews and from the analysis of documentation of progress towards results, with a range of examples of significant scaling up of UNICEF pilots and approaches in health, education and, most recently, social protection, with a continued focus on ensuring that the most vulnerable are included. Generally, the progress made against the programme ToCs together contribute to the overarching ToC that in turn delivers UNICEF's contribution to advancing children's rights.

### **Progress snapshot**

The following tables are recreated from the UNICEF results matrix for each of the outcome areas and the internal monitoring data generated from the COARs up to the end of 2019. Therefore, the progress is compared against the end-2019 targets for the outcome areas. They show the strongest performance across Learning and ADAP. The column on the right relates to the individual indicators for each outcome area. The detail is provided in the Annex 11.

**FIGURE 5: PROGRESS AGAINST OUTPUT INDICATORS**

|                        |                   |                             |                                   |         |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Target met or exceeded | Target nearly met | Progress but target not met | No or little change from baseline | No data |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|

| Early Years                  |   |  |  |  |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Maternal and child health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 indicator no change from baseline</li> <li>1 indicator progress towards target</li> <li>2 targets met or exceeded</li> </ul>                     |  |  |  |
| 2. WASH                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 indicator with progress (but target not met)</li> <li>1 indicator no progress</li> </ul>   |  |  |  |
| 3. Nutrition                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 targets met or exceeded</li> <li>1 indicator with progress (but target not met)</li> <li>1 indicator very little change from baseline</li> </ul> |  |  |  |
| 4. ECD                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 target met</li> <li>3 indicators no data but on track (as there was no progress expected in 2019)</li> </ul>                                     |  |  |  |

| Learning                     |   |  |  |  |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Access to education       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 targets met or exceeded</li> <li>1 indicator on track</li> </ul>   |  |  |  |
| 2. Safe learning environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 targets met, exceeded or nearly met</li> <li>1 indicator no data but on track (as there was no progress expected in 2019)</li> </ul> |  |  |  |
| 3. Quality                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 targets met</li> </ul>   |  |  |  |

| Adolescent Development and Participation |   |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Adolescent health                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 indicators target met or exceeded</li> </ul> |  |  |  |
| 2. Skills and innovation                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 targets exceeded</li> </ul>                  |  |  |  |
| 3. Participation                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 targets exceeded</li> </ul>                  |  |  |  |

| Protective Environment               |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| 1. Social protection and social work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 targets met</li> <li>1 indicator on track</li> <li>2 indicator progress but target not met</li> </ul> |  |  |  |
| 2. Alternative care                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 targets met</li> <li>1 indicator on track</li> </ul>  |  |  |  |
|                                      |  |  |  |  |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 3. Justice for children and Violence Against Children (VAC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 targets on track</li> </ul> |  |
|---|--|--|

|                                   |   |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Knowledge                         |   |  |
| 1. Public finance for children    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 target progress but target not met</li> <li>• 2 indicators on track</li> </ul> |  |
| 2. Data and evidence for children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 target met</li> <li>• 1 indicator progress</li> </ul>                          |  |

83. There are notable examples of effective integrated working, raising the profile of particularly marginalized groups, where innovative approaches have raised awareness of issues that specific marginalized groups face (CWD, children in conflict with the law, out-of-school children, especially adolescents) and have provided the basis for new approaches and partnerships. This is reflected in the fact that the targets for CWD, children born with HIV, children with developmental difficulties, marginalized girls and boys and adolescents etc. have been met or exceeded. Evidence is also provided from interviews and the analysis of documentation of progress in taking pilots to scale, with a range of examples of significant scaling up of UNICEF pilots and approaches in health, with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) programme on MNCH, education, with the World Bank programme on ECD, and, most recently, social protection, with the World Bank programme in response to COVID-19.
84. Despite the effective focus on vulnerable groups (see Section 3.1), until recently, there has not been a similar focus on gender issues, with issues identified in situation analyses (such as different rates of suicide among male and female adolescents) not being followed up in interventions or through ensuring the consistent disaggregation of data (see Annex 9).

#### Approaches to tracking results

85. In terms of tracking results, UNICEF is operating on two levels: working on national systems as well as developing and using internal UNICEF systems. There have been some notable successes in building monitoring systems at the national and local levels and in building capacity to be able to effectively use data generated, such as the health and education monitoring systems. At the same time, the CO has been making a range of efforts aimed at collecting data for programme implementation using situation analyses to set out baselines, monitoring the implementation of pilots and using its RAM indicators to monitor and report against programmes. There is also work underway that aims to bring these efforts together, using real-time monitoring tools to present the programme monitoring data as a means to begin to assess progress towards results.
86. Understanding the linkages between the national systems and internal UNICEF systems requires access to the real-time monitoring (currently only accessible within UNICEF), particularly as the CO is using a range of tools in different ways to assess different aspects of the

programme. Through working with the CO team, it was possible to identify a limited number of output level indicators where there is a direct linkage between UNICEF interventions, the ToCs and the data that is being reported against indicators in the results matrix. The output indicators reporting evidence of progress are set out in the table below. These indicators were identified, first by establishing a long list of data sets reporting progress in the COARs, and then by making links to baseline data set out in various research and situation analyses. In consultation with the CO programme teams, the ToC workshops were then used to identify a smaller set of indicators that provide evidence of UNICEF’s direct contribution to the outputs assessed. Whilst the data is available and is being used by the CO, it does not currently fully align with the programme ToCs and thus does not yet fully enable effective monitoring of the programmes.

87. Using this set of indicators, further analysis was applied to identify those indicators that had been revised in 2018 where baselines and targets were set, and to focus on the more limited set of indicators where reported data is available for 2019, as set out in Table 4. All of these indicators come under the Early Years, Learning and ADAP programme areas, where considerable work has been undertaken by stakeholders working together to establish clear sector plans, and to more effectively utilize management information systems. The evidence from UNICEF’s own reporting is that programme contributions have in turn contributed to the progress that has been made nationally. There is also a range of data available on progress towards national targets (see Section 3.6: Long-term Change).

**TABLE 4: PROGRESS AGAINST SELECTED OUTPUT INDICATORS (EARLY YEARS, LEARNING AND ADAP)**

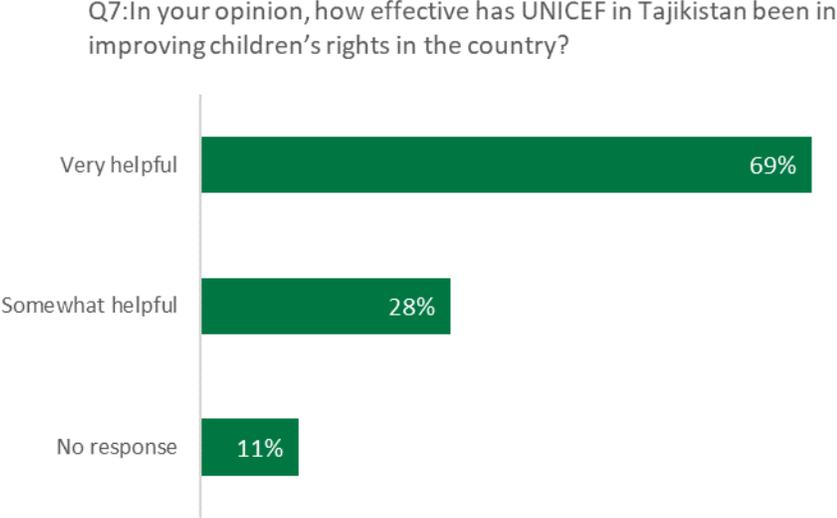
| Indicator   | Baseline |        | Progress |        |   |
|---|----------|--------|----------|--------|---|
|   | 2018     |        | 2019     |        |   |
| Number of live births delivered in health facilities supported through UNICEF programmes                | 2018     | 34,168 | 2019     | 38,643 |  |
| Number of girls and boys with severe acute malnutrition who were admitted for treatment                 | 2018     | 2,800  | 2019     | 3,163  |  |
| % of households using adequately iodized salt   | 2018     | 92%    | 2019     | 92%    | No change <sup>36</sup>   |
| % children aged 6–59 months effectively provided with two annual doses of vitamin A                     | 2018     | 75%    | 2019     | 96%    |  |
| % of annual births taking place in maternity and newborn units which applied national quality standards | 2018     | 0%     | 2019     | 20%    |  |

<sup>36</sup> This type of data is collected every five years. Therefore, no new data is available for 2019.

|  |      |        |      |        |   |
|--|------|--------|------|--------|---|
| Number of children benefiting from early childhood education through alternative approaches (new models + TV animation model)  | 2018 | 43,666 | 2019 | 70,000 |  |
| Number of girls and boys who have participated in skills development programmes for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability through UNICEF-supported programmes (humanitarian) | 2018 | 4,971  | 2019 | 18,764 |  |

88. The respondents to the Partner Perception Survey strongly agree that UNICEF’s contributions are effective in improving children’s rights in Tajikistan according to the majority of CSO partners, UN agencies, IFIs, and all of the government respondents.<sup>37</sup>

FIGURE 6: SURVEY RESULTS - QUESTION 7



Changes to increase effectiveness

89. The shift in strategic focus and the re-organization of UNICEF’s programme and staffing seem to have significantly increased effectiveness.

<sup>37</sup> See Annex 5 for the results to survey question 7 disaggregated by stakeholder type – page 36.

- There is evidence from interviews with a range of stakeholders and workshops with the CO indicating an increase in integrated working across the programme teams since 2018, highlighting the important role that the knowledge team plays in supporting programme teams to have an oversight of the programmes, and the field CRMs' support in tracking both implementation and local-level results. This has proved difficult to specifically corroborate with evidence and documentation, and it is explored further in Section 3.5 Coherence.
- The use of ToCs by programme teams and by the CO as a whole has clearly played a key role in the strategic positioning of the programmes, but it has been a significant job for this evaluation to establish the linkages between the ToCs, the evidence from interviews and workshops, the reporting and documentation provided and the data and evidence of progress.
- The elements of an effective monitoring and evaluation system are in place (i.e. ToCs set out the overall objectives, indicators in the RAM to track progress, and pilot project-level monitoring to track implementation), but are either very dispersed or patchy, so that a lot of information and evidence is held by individuals in the CO team or is recorded in systems that are specific to individual interventions. There are compelling stories about what has been achieved and where elements of the programme are going but it is recognized by the team identifying materials or documentation that to evidence these stories is much more difficult.

#### Effective management of risks

90. An important part of the ToCs for the programme areas are detailed analyses of risks and assumptions. The analysis of the documentation identified a number of overarching and contextual risks that affect the programme as a whole, which were confirmed in the ToC workshops, including: lack of government investment and lack of capacity, both affecting sustainability; and lack of data for planning and limited use of evidence in development planning. There is considerable evidence from the interviews, workshops and from the survey that the CO team seek to address these risks in a

### Good practices: Most vulnerable

A range of initiatives has effectively targeted girls and boys and their specific vulnerabilities.

For example, the peacebuilding and civic engagement interventions incorporated early learning programmes delivered in minority languages in the border districts, while the focus on children with disabilities supported reducing institutionalization.

Through the work on social protection the CO has combined a focus on the most vulnerable with strengthening systems, to increase access for children with disabilities, children affected by migration and at risk of statelessness, and children at risk of institutionalization.

variety of ways, either directly through interventions, or strategically through the National Programme for Children and the work to highlight funding gaps. There is also evidence that the scaling up of the programmes in health, with the ADB programme on MNCH, and in education, with the World Bank programme on ECD, have the potential to address the financing, capacity and data issues. However, while it is clear from the interviews and workshops that the team take a dynamic approach to monitoring these risks, there is limited documentary evidence that these analyses are regularly revisited in order to check assumptions and update understandings about both risks and opportunities.

### Gaps in programme decisions

91. Overall, while the programme ToCs are clear and detailed, these are not matched by the overarching ToC; and while there is data reported in the COAR and RAM, this does not yet fully align with and enable effective monitoring of the programmes. Thus, the current CP witnessed insufficient use of monitoring and evaluation data in planning and the production of in-depth evidence. Consequently:

- There have been notable investments in the presentation of data, but there still remains a gap in terms of the overall picture of progress across the programme. , with the links between the programme ToCs and the overall ToC being weak and not clearly spelled out – while the individual ToCs for the programme areas are detailed and well set out, they are not clearly brought together into an overarching ToC for the CP as a whole (which is generic and not well developed in comparison), and the links to the indicators used to assess progress are similarly unclear.
- There is a lack of clear evidence and documentation of prioritization within the programme (although it is obvious that there is prioritization in practice). There is therefore a need to further develop a monitoring and evaluation system for the programme and particularly use of the data and evidence produced for planning and implementation.

### Evaluation questions and summary answers

TABLE 5: EVALUATION QUESTION 2 AND SUB-QUESTIONS

| Evaluation Questions  | Summary Findings  |
|---|---|
| EQ2 To what extent were the country programme results achieved for all children as described in the ToCs and results matrix especially for the most vulnerable? | See Annex 8 for the detailed evidence matrix<br><br>There was good progress overall against the results matrix, although only approximately half of the 2019 targets were met or exceeded. There was particularly strong performance across the Learning and ADAP results which met or exceeded all targets.<br>There is evidence that UNICEF has been able to make progress towards the results for all children, especially the most vulnerable, as set out in the results matrix: significant progress in the work on Learning and ADAP, as evidenced in national level indicators; in raising awareness of vulnerable groups, such as CWD, and of the issues affecting marginalized groups, such as |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>adolescent mental health, through developing new approaches to addressing the issues that children face; and more recently, scaling up approaches through programmes working on a much more significant scale, such as social protection, whilst continuing to ensure a focus on the most vulnerable.</p> <p>Medium confidence</p>  |
| <p>2.1 How effective has UNICEF been in its contribution to behaviour change, if any (particularly to change of local gender norms)? How can the C4D interventions be strengthened to effectively support programme results delivery especially for the most vulnerable?</p> | <p>UNICEF has been effective at contributing to changing attitudes of government and civil society actors, particularly in relation to CWD. UNICEF is perceived by partners as mostly impacting positively on issues related to behaviour change, including gender norms, although there is less evidence that there was sufficient programmatic focus on these issues. C4D interventions would benefit from more consistent attention to learning from evaluations, similarly to how learning is built into pilots that UNICEF aims to scale up.</p> <p>Medium confidence</p> |
| <p>2.2 Were there any unintended negative or positive outcomes and, if so, were they appropriately managed?</p>  | <p>Without a coherent picture of the programme and different approaches to monitoring and evaluation across the programme it has not been possible to identify either negative or positive outcomes.</p> <p>Low confidence</p>   |
| <p>2.3 Has the programme been effective in achieving gender-sensitive progress towards planned outcomes for vulnerable boys, girls and youth?</p>  | <p>Specific gender issues have been identified in situation analyses and, while there is a commitment to the disaggregation of data within the CP work, this is not being consistently followed through. However, gender sensitivity is not fully embedded in programme approaches to achieve progress for boys, girls and youth holistically, with only few interventions focusing on identified gender issues.</p> <p>High confidence</p>  |
| <p>2.4 Have opportunities to enhance programme effectiveness and mitigate risks been appropriately managed?</p>  | <p>The evidence from interviews and workshops with CO staff suggests a range of approaches have been developed and used appropriately to address some of the major risks identified in detail in the programmatic ToCs, either directly through interventions, or strategically through the National Programme for Children (NPC) and the work to highlight funding gaps.</p> <p>High confidence</p>   |
| <p>2.5 Have the programmatic shifts and structural changes resulting from the Strategic Moment of Reflection 2018 contributed to the Country Programme effectiveness?</p>  | <p>Changes made as a result of the SMR, such as more effective integrated work across different programmes, including: roll-out of innovative work and strengthening of the field CRM role at the provincial level as a basis for scale up; strategic partnerships with stakeholders; and increased coordination at provincial level, have contributed to the effectiveness of the CP.</p> <p>Medium confidence</p>  |
| <p>2.6 How effective has the Country Office been in leveraging resources for vulnerable children at risk of being left behind?</p>   | <p>The UNICEF programme has been very successful in advocating for both sector policy change and for the investment of resources in policy implementation, ensuring that resources are focused on the needs of vulnerable children in health, education and, most recently, in social protection.</p> <p>High confidence</p>   |

### 3.3 Findings: Efficiency

#### Key findings

3.i The human and financial resources have been used by the CO to play an important role in working with partners at the national and local level to raise the profile of key issues for children, such as through the NPC, and to bring significant resources to bear to progress programmes and sectoral strategies focused on these issues, such as ECD and MNCH.

3.ii Much greater clarity is needed within the systems used to record the use of financial and human resources for the CO to evidence how these resources have been allocated and the decision-making processes behind these allocations. There is a need for, firstly, a clearer overall vision for the CP to be set out (as discussed in Section 3.2), and, secondly, to ensure that decisions about human and resource allocations are more transparently recorded and reported.

**EQ3 To what extent have the resources (financial and human resources including Country Office structure) allocated by the CO been appropriate to support the implementation of strategies and achievement of CP results and, if not appropriate, what could be done to ensure resources match programmatic ambitions and needs?**

92. Proportionately, the Tajikistan CO is large for the size and population of the country (48 staff and a USD\$43 million programme initially), in comparison to other UNICEF COs in the region, reflecting both its strategic location and the levels of poverty and poor indicators regionally. Looking at the programme over the period of the evaluation, the human and financial resources do seem to have been used to good effect. The programme budget utilization has grown each year, from USD\$5.76million in 2016 to USD\$9.84 million in 2019, with considerable further growth predicted for 2020, showing that where programmes are funded, the CO has been effective in using those funds. What is less clear, is why such a significant proportion of the planned programmes remain unfunded. This is something that is not explored in any of the documentation provided. The tables below show the programme budget by outcome areas and the total budget utilization for the programme as a whole.

TABLE 6: BUDGET UTILIZATION 2016–2021 BY OUTCOME AREAS<sup>38</sup>

| Outcome / Budget (in US\$) | Planned (in US\$) | Funded (in US\$) | Unfunded (in US\$) | Utilized (in US\$) |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Early Years                | 42,687,000        | 29,872,008       | 12,814,992         | 25,776,183         |
| Learning                   | 14,828,753        | 6,011,725        | 8,817,028          | 5,928,118          |
| Protective Environment     | 10,714,000        | 4,889,282        | 5,824,718          | 4,366,837          |

<sup>38</sup> As per the latest financial summary update (September 2019)

|                                |            |            |            |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Adolescents</b>             | 14,775,000 | 5,196,978  | 9,578,022  | 3,839,711  |
| <b>Knowledge</b>               | 3,477,000  | 832,634    | 2,644,366  | 642,940    |
| <b>Programme Effectiveness</b> | 5,940,000  | 5,339,505  | 600,495    | 4,803,464  |
| <b>Grand Total</b>             | 95,968,000 | 53,062,094 | 42,905,906 | 46,015,370 |

TABLE 7: TOTAL BUDGET UTILIZATION 2016–2019

| Utilized Budget (in US\$) <sup>39</sup> | 2016      | 2017      | 2018      | 2019      | Total      |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Total Budget</b>                     | 5,765,457 | 8,060,323 | 8,149,530 | 9,844,564 | 31,819,874 |

#### Investment in pilots with potential for scale-up

93. There is good evidence from interviews that the CO human and financial resources have been allocated and used to good effect in advocating for the effectiveness of pilot programmes (in education, health and social protection), which has resulted in at least five programmes being scaled up significantly (see Section 3.2).

#### Investment in policy change

94. The UNICEF programme has been very successful in advocating for both sector policy change and for working with others to ensure the investment of resources in policy implementation, with a range of examples including: collaboration with the European Union (EU), UNESCO and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to carry out an Education Sector Analysis and to develop a National Strategy for Education Development (NSED); World Bank (WB) support to an ECD Project; ADB and Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) support for the replication of MNCH interventions; Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) and Japanese support for the national immunization programme; and, most recently, the inclusion of temporary social assistance, using a UNICEF developed model of cash transfer programming, in the World Bank Emergency COVID-19 Project.

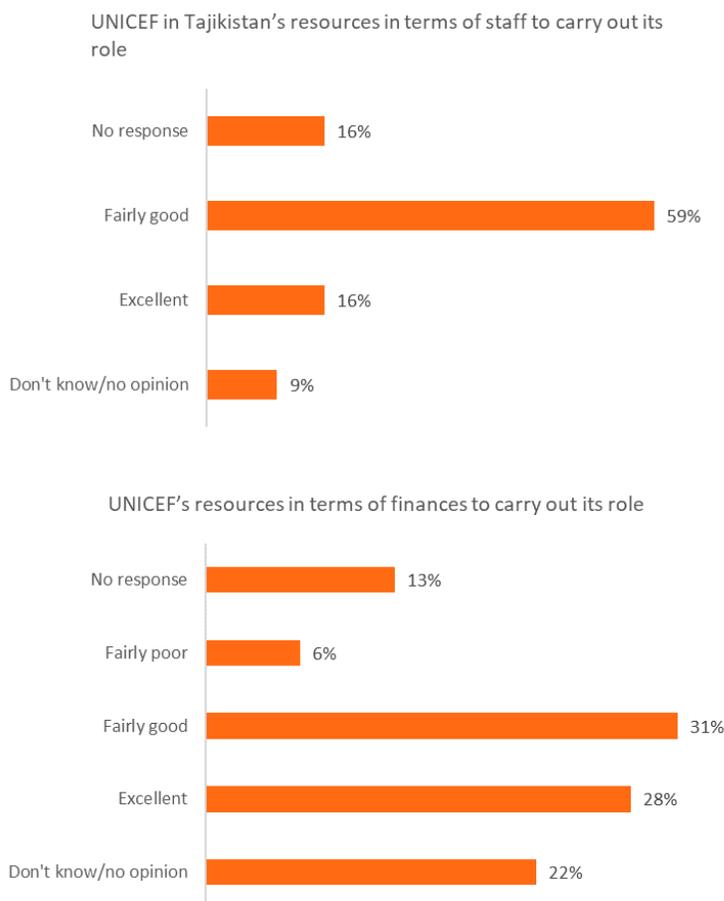
#### Decision-making on resources

95. There are some gaps within UNICEF's systems at the CO that limit the ability to assess the effective use of resources from an external perspective, as these systems are currently geared to reporting at the global level and are somewhat opaque when looking at the country level. There is limited evidence available to be able to identify how resources (financial and human) are allocated and are tracked to demonstrate effectiveness. The results from the Partner Perception Survey are mixed, with a large proportion of respondents agreeing that the staff resources are

<sup>39</sup> Including Operational Effectiveness and Special Purpose

used efficiently, while there was more uncertainty when it came to financial resources – see diagrams below.

FIGURE 7: SURVEY RESULTS - QUESTION 16



96. The perceptions among the majority of survey respondents were wholly positive in relation to human resourcing. However, the picture in relation to finances was much more mixed: although more survey participants responded with 'excellent', there were a minority of respondents (among CSO partners and IFIs) that assessed UNICEF's efficiency in this area more negatively (Fairly poor).

#### Human resources

97. The CO has been using key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the COAR RAM system to support a better monitoring of the utilization of financial resources. It is evident that there have been considerable changes to the way that the CO team works, with a significant change in staff, bringing in new staff, and in the structuring of the team. There has been a focus on more integrated working across the programme areas and particularly on the knowledge team, now 10 staff, working on planning, management and evaluation (PME), knowledge management, social policy, public finance and programme finance across the programme. In terms of evidence, in interviews with government and development partners two things were consistently commented

on: the high quality of national staff in particular, in terms of their experience in the sectors and their understanding of the issues; and the important role that UNICEF staff have played in terms of coordination, bringing key stakeholders together at national and provincial levels, and in terms of providing access to key government stakeholders, as well as providing space for government and non-government staff to work together effectively (see Section 3.5: Coherence).

## Evaluation questions and summary answers

TABLE 8: EVALUATION QUESTION 3 AND SUB-QUESTION

| Evaluation Questions  | Summary Findings   |
|---|--|
| EQ3 To what extent have the resources (financial and human resources including Country Office structure) allocated by the CO been appropriate to support the implementation of strategies and achievement of CP results and, if not appropriate, what could be done to ensure resources match programmatic ambitions and needs? | <p>Overall, the human and financial resources seem to have been used to good effect. From the evidence of the effectiveness of particular implementation strategies such as policy change and pilots with potential to scale up, the evaluation assesses that resources have been appropriately allocated: for example, the success of the pilot programmes of which the Government has adopted five to scale up nationally. The CO has demonstrated its ability to adapt its structure: its revised focus on more integrated working across the programme areas can also be said to contribute to efficiency, particularly in the knowledge team, now 10 staff, working on research and monitoring across the programme.</p> <p>Medium confidence</p> |
| 3.1 To what extent has the CO been utilizing the available resources efficiently?   | <p>In terms of measuring efficiency through achieving results, the investments in policy change and policy implementation support the finding that UNICEF has been using resources well. UNICEF would be better able to demonstrate its efficiency with internal systems that more clearly record the use of financial and human resources and document the decision-making processes behind these allocations.</p> <p>Medium confidence</p>   |

## 3.4 Findings: Sustainability and resilience

### Key findings

4.i The Country Programme results on strengthening legislation and policy pertaining to boys, girls and youth at national level and strengthening systems and processes to operationalize policies establishes a solid foundation for sustainability.

4.ii Sustainability is impacted negatively by high staff turnover in the Government, lack of coordination in policy application by state institutions, especially at the provincial and municipal levels, and financial constraints may affect sustainability of CO-supported interventions.

4.iii The current COVID-19 crisis creates another layer of longer-term challenges to sustaining results. Nevertheless, the CO's effective response to the crisis demonstrated that UNICEF has

been successful in establishing sustained systems and channels of partnerships to adapt and respond to the crisis.

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**EQ4 To what extent are the results of the CP at different levels sustainable, especially for vulnerable boys, girls and youth?**

**Influencing policy and legislation changes at national level**

98. Interventions initiated by the CO resulted in numerous legislative and policy changes, influencing debate around crucial areas of concern to children, particularly the most vulnerable. The CO utilized a range of implementation strategies including policy dialogue and advocacy, system-strengthening, capacity development, combining strategic partnership approaches with pilots to promote the development and approval of relevant policies and legislation, with a particular focus on the vulnerable, such as children in contact with the law and child nutrition. The newly adopted and amended policies establish the necessary regulatory framework on the national level to tackle issues pertaining to rights holders (boys, girls and youth) and are likely to contribute to sustainability.
99. According to the available secondary data, interviews with government stakeholders and CSOs in the areas of child protection and access to justice, UNICEF-led initiatives have contributed to promotion and adoption of the Law on Prevention of Offences among Adolescents in January 2020; promotion and adoption of the National Programme on Prevention of Offences for 2020–2024 envisaging social workforce system strengthening and prevention of violence against children. Efforts led by the CO have also contributed to amendments to the Law “On Order and Condition of Custody for Suspects, Alleged Offenders and Defenders” with specific focus on protection of children in contact and conflict with the law.
100. In the education sector, the CO has played an important role in the development of the National Education Strategy 2021–2030 including provision of technical expertise and facilitation of national working groups including with the Ministry of Education and Science, and Development

Partners. The new strategy is important in terms of advancing a specific SDG4-related agenda such as inclusive education and pre-primary education as national priorities until 2030.

## Good practices: Systems strengthening

By focusing on strengthening legislation and policy, the CO has also gained national-level commitments which have important implications for the future sustainability of its efforts.

Specific systems-strengthening initiatives in the health sector include improving youth-friendly health services at primary healthcare level, and enhancing the policy for case management of HIV infection in children, which increased access to ART for pregnant and HIV-positive women.

Advocacy in policy change has been undertaken in partnership with other actors, including governmental, to ensure the investment of resources in policy implementation. At the same time, policies and legislation are not developed in isolation, with standards, protocols and guidelines all created in support of strengthening responses.

101. The CO strategic positioning on nutrition contributed to raising the profile of child nutrition as a priority issue on the political agenda. Child nutrition aspects have been included in strategic documents, including the National Development Strategy until 2030. The National Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan (2020 – 2025), a cross-sectoral programme on nutrition, has been recently developed and approved. In interviews with government stakeholders it was made clear that the Action Plan would be a guiding document for operationalization of all nutrition related initiatives across various Ministries and agencies. The Tajik Government approved the Law on the Provision of Population with Fortified Food Products in the Republic of Tajikistan in July 2019.
102. Addressing children`s health in early years, the CO supported the first ever National 1,000 Days Communication Strategy and Plan for 2020–2024 helping it to be approved. In addition, a three-year plan for reduction of wasting had been approved in February 2020. The objectives of the Communication Strategy and Plan are to create awareness of this critical window in the child`s life that has long-lasting implications across the lifecycle and to promote a range of practices with clear, age-appropriate and action-oriented messages that are recommended for specific stages in the 1,000-day window.

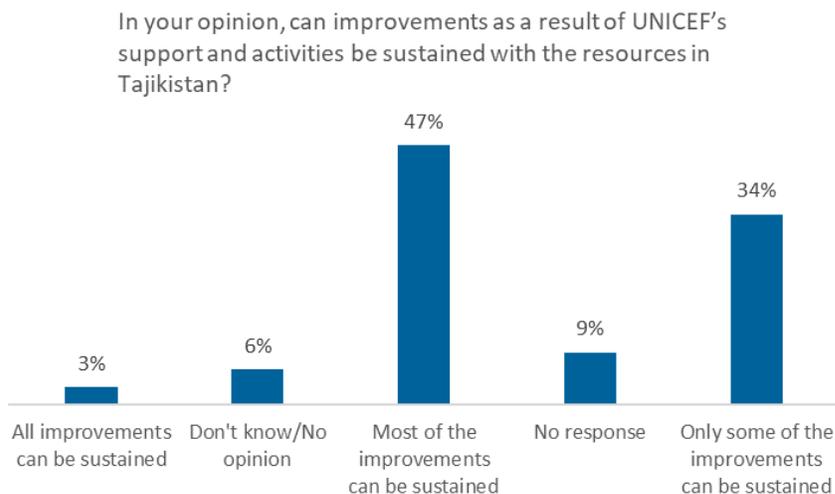
### Enhancing systems and processes

103. There is also evidence that the CO strategically focused on building the basis for implementation mechanisms of the relevant policy and legislation. The development and implementation of standards, guidelines and protocols are all likely to contribute to sustainability of results aimed at strengthening systems and processes. In the social protection sector, the CO advocated for changes in approaches to social assistance resulting in application of the per capita metric, as opposed to per household, to consider the sizes of Tajik families and cash plus model. Work supported by UNICEF on making the state social assistance system shock responsive has been instrumental in the response to COVID-19 and other crises, given the disaster-prone nature of Tajikistan. Prior to

COVID-19 the approach was piloted by the Government through EU and WB technical support in three districts, and the Government is currently considering whether to extend it nationally to cover all districts. The model was also used by the WB and the Government in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. There is high likelihood that the approach will remain sustainable beyond COVID-19.

104. Another example is the updated national integrated management of acute malnutrition protocol which has led to full-scale implementation of 'integrated management of acute malnutrition' in the districts with high levels of malnutrition. Quality of maternal and child health (MNCH) and nutrition services, rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities in maternity units, procurement of essential health and nutrition commodities, and advocacy for increased budgetary allocation for MNCH were explicitly reflected in the National Health Strategy.
105. In June 2017, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection approved a revised Decree on adolescent-friendly health services, that provides for the integration of adolescent-friendly health services into the primary health-care system to ensure that adolescent girls and boys have equal access to health promotion services. Currently, twenty-one Youth Friendly Health Departments are established and functioning in the health-care system and are the only structures to provide medical care and psychological support to children, adolescents and youth on a friendly basis. In 2018, MoHSP issued an order aimed at strengthening adolescent-friendly health services in the country, which should ensure that the registration and reporting of statistical forms for the medical examination of children and adolescents is improved.
106. Thus, legislation and policy, backed up with national level commitments to programmes, and available implementation mechanisms aimed at advancing systems and practices, set out a path towards sustainability. Allocation of adequate state financial and human resources remains a challenge for sustainability of results at system level. The CO promoted budgeting exercises as one of the steps to advocate for more meaningful child financing, but further advocacy around resource allocation is essential. According to the CO situation analysis triangulated with primary data gathered during evaluation, the challenges for sustainability remain in the form of the lack of coordination and harmonization of work through relevant government agencies and across both national and provincial levels.
107. The evidence from the Partner Perception Survey generally supports this mixed perspective – see the figure below (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8: SURVEY RESULTS - QUESTION 12



108. There were positive responses across all stakeholders who thought that most of the improvements can be sustained. A greater proportion of respondents from CSO partners (approximately half) and IFIs (two-thirds) were of the opinion that only some of the improvements can be sustained.<sup>40</sup>

#### Enhancing service delivery through capacity strengthening

109. The interview participants highly appreciated the capacity-building activities organized by the CO as part of system strengthening efforts, especially when the capacity-building initiatives have been integrated into education and professional development curricula or delivered in the form of cascade trainings. The evaluation found that the focus of the CO interventions (2016–2018) on building the capacity of duty bearers within government systems was a success factor for the sustainability of interventions. However, most of the respondents among state and CSO partners underlined the high turnover and low salary of staff within state institutions as a barrier for sustained results of capacity-building initiatives and the evaluation concluded that these issues, plus the demanding administrative procedures and discouragement of genuine accountability all hamper sustained results of capacity-building initiatives. The findings of the previous evaluation of capacity-building interventions and the current CPE match also in terms of suggestions identified for an integrated curriculum and continued supervision for relevant sectoral specialists.

#### Working with CSO partners

110. There is a high probability that Country Office engagement with CSOs will further contribute to influencing policy and ensuring sustainability of changes in policies and practices. Stakeholder interviews suggest that CSO partners working with UNICEF realize the importance of developing exit strategies and continuing work beyond programmes and projects. Thus, CSOs engaged in service provision contribute to sustainability through social entrepreneurship to cover certain costs

<sup>40</sup> See Annex 5 for the results to survey question 12 disaggregated by stakeholder type – Page 42.

and to seek other funding opportunities. UNICEF has used its mandate strategically, by playing the role of a facilitator and helping CSOs to influence policy through advocacy and to strengthen cooperation with relevant government agencies. CSOs have also established sectoral networks and joint CSO-government working groups while existing networks have been strengthened and continue the work of advocacy and influencing policy. CSOs have also been instrumental in rolling out models and innovations, particularly for the most vulnerable groups.

### Scaling up

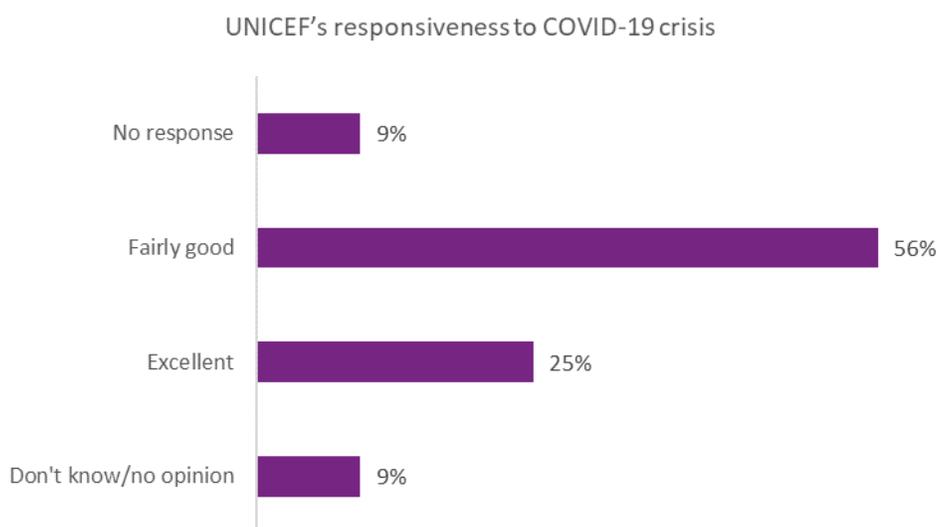
111. Several models have been successfully scaled up and replicated ensuring a sense of ownership. A competency-based education model to develop the skills and competency of adolescents and youth was finalized in 2019 and delivered through multiple pathways in formal and non-formal settings. A national inter-agency working group launched a strategy to scale up the Impact Sourcing model, an initiative to support marginalized youth transition to employment. The Ministry of Labour, Migration, and Public Employment led the working group which included the Committee on Youth Affairs, Tax Committee and State Telecommunication. Interviews also confirmed the replication in seven additional districts of the Country Office MNCH intervention aimed at improving the quality of services in maternal and pediatric facilities, with additional funds from the ADB and IsDB.
112. The scale-up potential of the CO-supported pilot initiative for the transformation of Baby Homes into Family and Children Support Centers (FCSCs) has been further advanced by development of guidelines on foster care and amendments by the Ministry of Education and Science to the Family Code on foster care, facilitated by the CO. Early detection and intervention procedures for children with developmental delays and disabilities have been modeled in specific districts and evaluated for scale-up. Standard operating procedures, referral guidelines, regulations on early intervention services have been developed.
113. There is, however, a need for UNICEF to further advocate for better assessment by the national government of the capacity of state systems, before the transition of piloted models. Longer-term follow-up mechanisms to monitor beyond the transition phase should be established. There is also the need to engage with organizations with long-term local institutional presence in the regions, such as CSOs, in order to further ensure the contextualization of innovative initiatives and encourage their contribution to sustainability.

### Resilience in a crisis

114. The effectiveness of the CO in responding to COVID-19 has been primarily due to already established systems, channels of work and partnerships, and access to the most vulnerable categories of population through existing interventions. Building on the existing work and partnerships in the health sector, the CO responded to COVID-19 by distributing COVID-19 treatment protocols to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSPP); providing capacity-building for health workers in the management of COVID-19; ensuring monitoring and promoting continuity of the essential health care services to mothers and children; providing support in scaling up the Severe Acute Malnutrition programme in the context of COVID-19; engaging with

the MoHSPP in discussions around COVID-19 treatment protocol 3 regarding treatment of pregnant and lactating women and children. The CO has also been able to use existing networks in other sectors to initiate new approaches in response to COVID-19, especially within vulnerable categories of population. The CO also supported provision of communication materials and sanitizers for adolescents in care structures; organized online psychological support for people affected by COVID-19; developed information materials on COVID-19, including in minority and sign languages, distributed through established CSO networks. The Partner Perception Survey shows a positive view of the CO actions (see Figure 9 below).

FIGURE 9: SURVEY RESULTS - QUESTION 11



115. The responses across the stakeholders in the survey were consistently positive, with the highest endorsement regarding UNICEF's responsiveness to COVID-19 from other UN agencies. A second question in the survey which asked respondents about their opinion on UNICEF's approach to managing risks related to the COVID-19 crisis also registered highly positive feedback across all stakeholders. Again, UN agencies were most positive, but some dissatisfaction was registered by a small number of CSO partners on this aspect.<sup>41</sup>

#### Medium- and longer-term anticipated barriers and opportunities

116. The response to the COVID-19 crisis has helped the CO to identify challenges as well as opportunities. Among issues identified during interviews with the Government and CSOs is the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of children and adolescents. Given that the CO has already created a platform for engagement with mental health issues it is felt that this should be strengthened. In terms of achieving longer-term results, UNICEF should ensure that vulnerable children are not left behind due to constraints created by COVID-19. This can be achieved by further engagement with government and CSO partners, especially those working with vulnerable

<sup>41</sup> See Annex 5 for the results to survey question 11 disaggregated by stakeholder type – page 42.

children. The socioeconomic impacts of the crisis, such as the dramatic decrease in remittances and the likely underinvestment in the SDGs from the government, will create a challenge for achieving longer-term results.

117. As a longer-term perspective beyond the COVID-19 response, availability of CO-supported online and digital education can potentially have an equalizing effect both in terms of gender and the urban/rural divide.

#### Internal adaption of the CO to external crisis

118. The internal changes made following the SMR have been instrumental in establishing the basis for adaptive approaches and programming due to more strategic work across the programmes and strengthened critical partnerships. The CO played a strategic role in fast-tracking the procurement and distribution of PPE and ventilators to health facilities during the COVID-19 crisis.
119. The reintroduction of the WASH programme to address persistent gaps in WASH infrastructure and efforts to strengthen disaster risk reduction (DRR), and emergency response and preparedness have been important preconditions to effectively confront the current crisis. Strategic engagement with IFIs and channeling financial resources to the Government from the WB and ADB have been an effective in responding to the crisis on a significant scale.
120. In the early childhood education (ECE) sector, the SMR contributed to more targeted system-level changes. The CO pushed for inclusion of ECE in the education agenda providing an essential foundation for child development with long-term value. The CO piloted school and community-based ECE, which is fully inclusive of children with disabilities and from minority ethnic groups and the most vulnerable. It is hoped this will be a much-needed basis for scale-up.
121. The life cycle approach used by the CO takes a comprehensive view of child rights, though it is clear that this approach needs substantial resources. The detrimental impacts of the current crisis on nutrition are among other anticipated challenges that the CO needs to consider. However, the current position and capabilities of the CO in the nutrition sector, the necessary partnerships and the policy framework that have been built over years, have created the necessary basis for adaptation to likely economic shock and responding to an anticipated nutritional crisis.
122. The current stance of the CO in terms of capacity, outreach, established partnerships and rapid mobilization of financial resources puts it in a good position to plan and respond to the likely economic shock and post-crisis work in DDR, WASH, education, health and social protection.

#### Evaluation questions and summary answers

TABLE 9: EVALUATION QUESTION 4 AND SUB-QUESTIONS

| Evaluation Questions  | Summary Findings   |
|---|--|
| EQ4 To what extent are the results of the CP at different levels sustainable, | See Annex 8 for the detailed evidence matrix<br><br>The foundations for sustainability were laid through the CO's strengthening of national systems and the development of policy frameworks and legislation. The CO |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>especially for vulnerable boys, girls and youth?</p>   | <p>has used effective strategies – building strategic partnerships, piloting models and advocating for relevant policy amendments to increase the potential for scale-up, many of which focused on the most vulnerable, such as, for example, work on nutrition and with children in contact with the law. Risks to sustainability are both internal to Government (staff turnover within state institutions) and external (lack of state policy harmonization at the provincial level).</p> <p>Medium confidence</p>   |
| <p>4.1 What has been the result of learning from the initiated interventions (including pilots and models) in terms of influencing the policy debate or scaling up approaches to reach more children? How likely is it for the rest of the initiated interventions to go to scale and why? (Make a list for both.)</p>  | <p>The CO's approach to pilots and models has been very successful with five pilot programmes across legislation and policy and at state level being taken up by the Government for replication or scale-up.</p> <p>For interventions that have not yet been taken up (and for future pilots), the success factors that need to be considered are: capacity at system level within Government; UNICEF's role in establishing longer-term follow-up mechanisms to monitor scale-up of models beyond the transition phase: strengthening of CSO-government partnerships; and targeted advocacy to promote state investment in systems and staffing, especially at provincial level.</p> <p>Medium confidence</p>  |
| <p>4.2 To what extent has the Country Office been able to respond to changes in national needs, rights and priorities or to shifts caused by crises or major political changes, including the current COVID-19? What was the quality of the response? (Ability to respond.)</p> <p>What are the medium-term and longer-term anticipated barriers to delivering results?</p> | <p>The CO adapted rapidly and effectively to emergencies, made possible by the fact that it had already established the networks, partnerships and channels to access the most vulnerable categories of population. UNICEF also responded to emerging political changes, effectively turning them into opportunities to garner momentum for children's rights, such as in adolescent mental health.</p> <p>The socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 is likely to greatly exacerbate the existing vulnerabilities of children due to the dramatic decrease in remittances from migrant workers. UNICEF has an opportunity to build on its online education response to support children, not only in emergencies but also in more remote locations.</p> <p>High confidence</p> |
| <p>4.3 To what extent has the Country Office adapted internally to meet the external demands of the current crisis and how is it planning for a continued or post-crisis situation?</p>   | <p>The post-SMR internal changes created a strong basis to effectively meet the demands of the current crisis by taking a more strategic systems focus across the programmes and establishing critical partnerships.</p> <p>The CO is in a strong position to plan for continued and post-crisis situations due to its capacity, outreach approaches, well-established partnerships and its proven ability to rapidly mobilize financial resources.</p> <p>Medium confidence</p>  |

## 3.5 Findings: Coherence

### Key findings

5.i Cross-sectoral collaboration has contributed to individual programme components such as ADAP and ECD mutually reinforcing each other, by using the life cycle approach to make greater combined contributions to the expected results, particularly within UNICEF's equity agenda through addressing issues faced by certain vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as CWD and adolescents.

5.ii The COVID-19 response provides clear evidence of effective cross-sectoral work, where UNICEF demonstrated a sound capacity for providing analysis and discussing risks in a coherent way in order to provide a range of relevant responses. The ADAP programme area and ECD programme are good illustrative examples of effective intersectoral working of the CO.

5.iii UNICEF has been a major actor in leadership, coordination and support, as well as advocacy in relation to the other development partners, particularly IFIs, in Tajikistan. The country programme has been aligned with the interventions of other actors in a way that adds value by prioritizing rights of children in the national policy context while it also complements, harmonizes and coordinates or leads the relevant actions of development partners, including IFIs, as well as government bodies.

5.iv UNICEF's complementarity is evidenced through its concerted and strategic engagement with IFIs and other major donors, through which it has leveraged significant resources for the education and health sectors. This has been targeted at development resources throughout the CP period as well as for specific actions within the recent COVID-19 response.

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### **EQ5a To what extent do the individual Country Programme components reinforce each other to leverage the contribution that UNICEF makes towards expected results?**

#### Cross-sectoral collaboration

123. The CP sets out cross-sectoral collaboration as a key strategy for achieving progress and favourable outcomes for children. The integrated programming approach is best illustrated in one programme area, ADAP, and in one specific programme, ECD. ADAP operates across education, health, communication and child protection, where adolescents benefit from an integrated service model within a referral path from schools towards primary health care (PHC) and the community, while also supported by complementary basic education in formal and non-formal learning settings. The ECD programme, on the other hand, integrates the provision of alternative models to deliver multilingual service within a peacebuilding framework for children from diverse ethnic backgrounds to improve access to ECE opportunities and learning outcomes for those enrolled, while also supporting nutrition and immunization interventions for infants.
124. There are other examples in the country programme where integrated working has brought greater coherence. For example, the work on CWD demonstrates complementary and mutually

reinforcing interventions. The early detection and early intervention framework are used within a school-based inclusive model where a higher proportion of CWD were able to both attend mainstream schools and benefit from community-based rehabilitation services at the local level. The introduction of the WASH programme and related interventions provide quality improvement in several sectors alongside the health sector. The upgrading of physical infrastructure and WASH facilities in ECD programmes, school-based activities including menstrual hygiene management rooms and toilets for CWD have the potential to contribute to behavioural changes while also reinforcing provision of good quality services for preschool children, decreasing dropout rates for girls and promoting inclusion of CWD in mainstream school environments.

#### Integrated response to COVID-19

125. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, UNICEF implemented effective cross-sectoral approaches and demonstrated a sound capacity for providing analysis and discussing the risks in a coherent way in order to provide a range of relevant actions. In this respect, the detailed COVID-19 Response Plan by the CO, including the set of responses listed with respect to the envisaged scenarios, and the comprehensive programme cooperation agreement for the activities, documented the analytical perspective and discussion of the risks showing alignment with the official Country Preparedness and Response Plan and the MoHSP. In the health sector UNICEF provided a range of support, including: the provision of capacity-building interventions for health workers (guidelines and protocols); the distribution of PPE and supply of ventilators, combined with a set of infection prevention control (IPC) interventions aimed at improved IPC and good quality health care in case of an outbreak; support from the WASH programme to provide a solid basis for hygiene and sanitation practices; the continuation of the provision of food supplements for children and pregnant and lactating women; and dissemination of appropriate recommendations and counseling for caregivers of infants. In the education sector the UNICEF CO: delivered a campaign at the start of the crisis that reached all schools; expanded

### Good practices: Integrated working

Parts of the Country Programme have been intentionally designed with integration at their core. This is particularly evidenced within the ADAP and through the work on ECD.

Beyond the way in which the programme and the CO are structured, there are further examples of how a particular focus brings together expertise and efforts to develop holistic approaches.

For example, the focus on CWD demonstrates complementarity while the WASH in schools programme delivered a holistic approach.

Both the knowledge team and the field CRM worked across the programme and teams to support tracking implementation and local level results.

External partnerships were also built through the CO's focus on CWD, children in contact with the law, and out-of-school children.

television lessons available to support children's education at home; developed and distributed a back-to-school action plan, with induction packages for children; provided technical support for development norms and standards for schools; and provided training for teachers and staff for safe reopening and blended/distance learning with lessons on TV and digital learning tools. Perhaps most significantly in the medium to long-term, the response includes an emergency cash transfers programme supported by the World Bank (based on a model developed by UNICEF) as a model for expanding social protection for those affected by COVID-19. The scope and variety of the set of interventions by the CO within the COVID-19 response reflects an integrated approach towards prioritizing the well-being of children in the country during a pandemic with provision of interventions in health, education and social protection.

**EQ5b To what extent is the country programme consistent with other actors' interventions in the same context (including complementarity, harmonization and coordination with others) and add value while avoiding duplication of effort?**

**Leadership and coordination**

126. The CO is regarded as a reputable and active partner, with sound technical expertise, capable of assuming leadership and coordination roles with interventions undertaken collaboratively with government officials and development partners. Among the examples detailed in Annex 8 the development of the National Programme for Children (NPC) is clearly one of the main achievements that demonstrates the leading role that UNICEF has played nationally. The NPC is rooted in the CRC and SDGs and sets out the key priorities for achieving SDGs for children, showing the pivotal role of the CO in translating these into a political commitment for the Government. In other words, the CO successfully mobilized political intent on SDGs into a national plan for children based on the commitments set out in both the NDS 2030 and Mid-term Development Programme 2020 – which are referred to as the two key tools for nationalization of SDGs. In the education sector, the CO is the coordinating agency of the Local Education Group with the support of the Global Partnership for Education aiming at strengthening the national education system via development and implementation of a National Strategy for Education Development (NSED).
127. Further examples at a national level include: the technical expertise of the CO in the health sector contributing to the leveraging of new resources for a major MNCH programme by ADB, IsDB, EU, WB, GAVI etc.; the development of the child poverty measurement methodology jointly with WB based on the technical expertise of the CO – the methodology framed the national poverty monitoring by the Agency of Statistics; and, most recently, the COVID-19 response that has strengthened the role of the CO as a visible and active actor, through participation in the oversight body with development partners, while also leading the risk communication and preparation of action plans.

**Harmonization and avoidance of duplication**

128. With respect to complementarity of the interventions by the CO under the CP, and added value while avoiding duplication of efforts, ECD is an illustrative area with a number of development

partners involved providing support for national policy commitments to increase pre-primary coverage in the NSED. Here, in the provision of alternative preschool models such as early learning centres, funding from the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and GPE has complemented CO support to the ELC model development and piloting as well as teacher training. Moreover, there has been a joint intervention by the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation (OSIAF), AKF and the CO for awareness-raising and advocacy on ECD. The CO has also contributed to development and piloting of assessment tools for services and child development as well as modelling for financing tools at the local scale. These different components all generate additional evidence for complementary interventions for national policy commitments.

### Leveraging resources

129. Through concerted and strategic engagement in the education and health sectors over a number of years, the CO has been able to leverage major resources from several institutions such as ADB, IsDB, WB, GAVI, GPE and the EU, either in the form of development resources throughout the CP period or specific actions under the recent COVID-19 response. Other funds have been mobilized through bilateral and other donors such as the Government of Japan, Russian Federation, Government of Canada, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, USAID, and OSIAF. As a partner in UNDAF, the CO has also provided commitment in terms of activities and resources to promote outcomes related, in the main, to social development, inclusion and empowerment strategic focus areas.

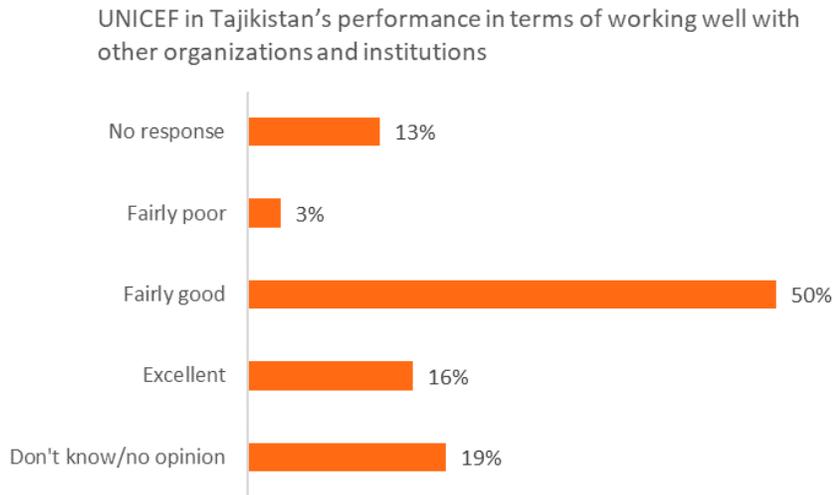
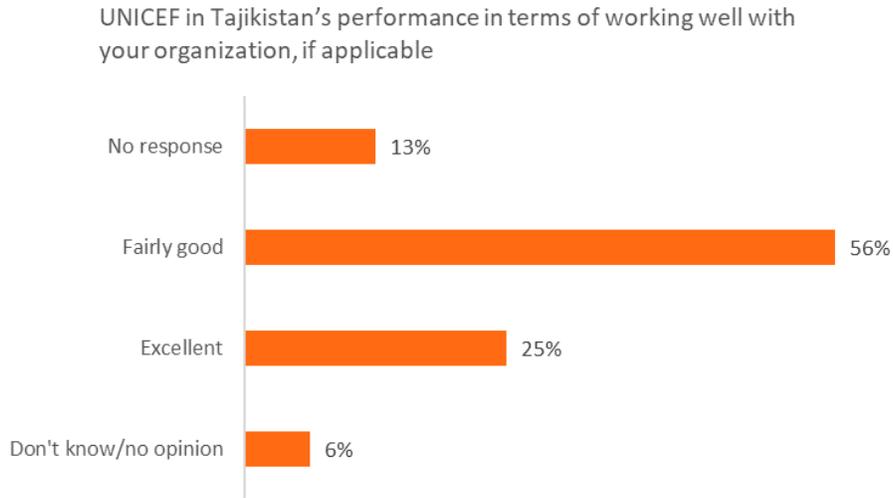
### Cooperation

130. The Partner Perception Survey gives another perspective, with more than half of the respondents expressing positive attitudes towards the performance of the CO in terms of working well internally as well as with other organizations and institutions (Figure 8). Among examples given in more detailed comments of the survey, respondents referred to good cooperation of the CO with all NGOs, provision of support to initiatives for protection of child rights and the leading role of the CO in the education sector.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See Annex 5 for the results to survey question 16 disaggregated by stakeholder type – page 45.

FIGURE 10: SURVEY RESULTS – QUESTION 16



Evaluation questions and summary answers

TABLE 10: EVALUATION QUESTION 5 AND SUB-QUESTIONS

| Evaluation Questions   | Summary Findings   |
|--|--|
|  | See Annex 8 for the detailed evidence matrix   |
| EQ5a To what extent do the individual country programme components reinforce each other to leverage the contribution that UNICEF makes towards expected results? | The individual programme components were mutually reinforcing particularly where there was cross-sectoral collaboration (ADAP and ECD), positively impacting on UNICEF’s equity agenda.<br><a href="#">High confidence</a> |
| 5a.1 Has UNICEF been able to make the most of integrated and cross-  | The CO has been able to make good use of integrated and cross-sectoral working. CO’s integrated programming is   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>sectoral working across the programme to increase the overall contribution?</p>  | <p>increasing the overall contribution to progress particularly within Learning and ADAP, which operate across the inclusive education (including ECD), mental health, communication and child protection sectors.</p> <p>High confidence</p>   |
| <p>EQ5b To what extent is the country programme consistent with other actors' interventions in the same context (including complementarity, harmonization and coordination with others) and add value while avoiding duplication of effort?</p> | <p>UNICEF demonstrated a high degree of harmonization with other actors and their interventions, including adding value by using its convening and coordination role to leverage resources.</p> <p>High confidence</p>  |
| <p>5b.1 What roles has UNICEF played in working with other actors in the country and how do these roles add value?</p>  | <p>In working with other actors, the CO played a number of vital roles, including coordination, leadership, provision of technical and advocacy support. As an added value, its leadership and co-ordination helped the CO in prioritizing rights of children in the national policy context, while the technical expertise accumulated over years enabled complementarity and harmonization of the interventions of other actors.</p> <p>High confidence</p> |

6.ii **Findings: Long-term change**

Key findings

6.i UNICEF has contributed to progress in children’s rights at the strategic level in terms of strengthening a range of national strategies, plans and programmes, and through the successful scale-up of pilot initiatives.

6.ii Progress in implementation of programme inputs in all four programme areas can be linked to progress in national-level data through output level indicators, as reported in the COAR and RAMs, although there are challenges in tracking indicators consistently through the chain of results within the theories of change.

**EQ6 To what extent can UNICEF be considered to have made a contribution to observed progress in the realization of children’s rights?**

Long-term change through national and programme results

131. UNICEF has contributed to the observed progress in realization of the rights of children in Tajikistan during the CP period. The assessment of this contribution has two interrelated dimensions: at the strategic level and through direct contributions to changes on the ground. The first dimension is related to the formal level where UNICEF has operated at a strategic level in

terms of being active in both development of national plans, programmes and actions for children and legislative changes in relevant sectors, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable, for example through the focus on child rights protection, reform of the justice system and inclusion of CWD (see Box 1 for a list of national-level outputs as a result of this strategic engagement. See also Section 3.4). The second dimension is about the actual evidence in practice whereby the progress could be “ideally” traced along the outputs and outcomes. Here, the evidence is available from several different sources: through strategic monitoring questions (SMQs), results matrices with respect to programmes, reported in the COARs, and reporting of progress against national-level targets (see also Section 3.2: Effectiveness).

### National strategies, plans and programmes

132. There is strong documentary evidence of the contribution that the CO has made to national strategies, plans and programmes, with its support in the form of technical assistance or policy advocacy. This support has taken two forms: the provision of evidence to support the emergence of a coherent overall framework (including institutional settings) for ensuring child well-being; and the introduction of new methodologies and policy tools, awareness raising and policy advocacy, particularly on the most vulnerable groups, such as CWD, for feeding into further progress (see Box 1).

#### BOX 1: NATIONAL-LEVEL DEVELOPMENTS IN PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND LEGISLATION

##### Box 1 – National-Level Developments in Plans, Programmes and Legislation

- National SDG Programme for Children
- National Social Protection Strategy
- Mid-Term Development Strategy 2016–2020 (as part of National Development Strategy 2030) – specific items for children
- Establishment of Ombudsman for Child Rights
- National Action Plan for Justice for Children System Reform
- Establishment of Directorate on Child Rights Protection
- Child poverty measurement methodology – routine monitoring + biannual reporting by Agency of Statistics
- National Campaign on Disability Inclusion (2018) – awareness raising
- National Programme on Youth Social Development 2019–2021
- National Strategy for Education Development 2021–2030
- Costing and scenarios for 12 years education transition reform (2019)
- State Programme on Preschool Education 2020–2025
- National Programme on Prevention of Offences 2020–2024
- National “1000 Days” communication programme and plan 2020–2024
- A three-year national plan for reduction of wasting 2020–2022
- Multisectoral action plan for nutrition 2020–2024
- National Health Strategy for 2021–2030
- National Immunization Programme for 2021–2025

## Tracking progress at programme level

133. There is evidence providing links between key areas of intervention supported by UNICEF in Early Years, Learning, ADAP and Protective Environment and progress in national-level data through output-level indicators, as reported in the COAR and RAMs, over the CP period; see Table 11 for areas where there are recorded examples of progress. The table shows examples of progress at the national level in each of the components of the programme where UNICEF has made a contribution through specific inputs, in all cases ensuring that the most vulnerable groups are covered. At the same time, such progress needs to be carefully considered in relation to the need for further development and nationwide scaling up of existing programmes and consequently, against the challenges associated with both the capacity and the financing/budgeting issues for the sustainability of achievements so far (see Section 3.4). As with the discussion in Section 3.2, Effectiveness, while it has been possible to identify the potential linkages between programme inputs and progress recorded in the COAR and RAMs, it has taken considerable work to identify these linkages. In addition, it is still not possible to give a clear overall picture of where UNICEF's efforts have been most successful and the resources and approaches that have been used to achieve this progress, as is discussed in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

**TABLE 11: RECORDED PROGRESS AGAINST COUNTRY PROGRAMME TARGETS**

| Programme Area          | UNICEF Inputs   | Progress Recorded in CP Output Targets   |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Early Years             |   |  |
| Nutrition               | <p>Training of health staff on management of acute malnutrition</p> <p>Provision of therapeutic food by UNICEF</p> <p>Coordination undertaken by CO for full implementation of Universal Salt Iodization</p> <p>Children aged 6–59 months who are effectively provided with two annual doses of vitamin A supplements</p> | <p>51% increase in the admission to treatment of severe and acute malnourished (SAM) children in 2018</p> <p>Admission of SAM children across the country increased by 93% (compared to 2016) with 82% recovery rate in 2019</p> <p>92% of the households were using adequately iodized salt in 2019 which is close to the target value set as 95% by 2019</p> <p>Percentage of children increased from 75% in 2018 to 96% in 2019 exceeding the target set as 92% by 2019</p> |
| Mother and Child Health | Provision of essential equipment to the pilot maternity and newborn departments   | The number of live births in UNICEF-supported facilities increased 20% in 2019   |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
|   | Distribution of essential vaccines to all primary health care facilities  | High immunization coverage (98%) sustained in 2019   |
| ECD   | Training of health workers in PHC and for consultations within the pilot implementation of the Early Detection and Early Implementation model   | Progress was made in early detection of children with developmental difficulties/delays through screening and consequent intervention services were provided at PHC level  |
| Learning  |   |  |
| ECE   | Development of alternative models with respect to the very low national enrolment in pre-primary education for children aged 3–6  | Number of children benefiting from ECE through alternative approaches (including model through TV animation series) increased by 70% in 2019   |
| Inclusive Education/Access to Education         | Capacity-building for trainers to prioritize inclusive education<br><br>Modelling of early warning system for prevention of school dropout and encouragement of girls for transition to secondary education | 7,278 children with disabilities (less than 27% of identified children) had access to education, an increase in 2019 of 694 children (268 girls)<br><br>Implemented in 110 schools in 2019, to be scaled up nationally   |
| Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) |   |  |
| Adolescent Mental Health                        | Strengthening of the mental health programme  | 16% of total adolescents in the 220 schools targeted received mental health services in 2019 under the integrated model introduced in 2018   |
| Skills Building                                 | Integration of skills-building into additional education system   | The number of adolescents (including NEET, adolescents with disabilities and those in contact with the law) who have participated in skills development programmes for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability was more than 9,000 in UNICEF-supported Innovation Labs in 2019 |
| Local Governance                                | Development of Child- and Youth-Friendly Local Governance initiative in cooperation with Committee on Youth Affairs and Sports  | 15,000 adolescent girls and boys participated in decision-making in on issues of concern to them at school level and contributed to the development of their communities (including social cohesion) in targeted   |

|                            |   |  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
|                            |   | districts in 2019 (greatly exceeding the target of 4,000 for 2019)   |
| Protective Environment     |   |  |
| Child Protection Systems   | Piloting of Referral and Response Mechanisms  | Increased coverage of vulnerable children to address their needs in targeted districts from 4% in 2018 to 103.5% in 2019   |
| Justice for Children       | Legislative amendments in justice for children domain   | The number of children in conflict with the law diverted to alternative community-based support during the year increased from 99 in 2013 to 143 in 2019. Moreover, the pilot implementation of diversion of minor offenders from formal justice procedures showed progress in successful handling of 84 cases in 2019 |
| Children with Disabilities | Increase in the number of community workers with skills to promote social inclusion of children with disabilities | The number of children with disabilities receiving community-based care service during the year increased from 240 in 2014 to 1,999 in 2019 – greatly exceeding the target of 1,000 by 2020  |

**Global and programme reporting on indicators**

134. The CO collects substantial amounts of data for global reporting purposes. However, the available set of indicators and the ways in which they are used and reported remain limited in providing clear linkage to the ToC frameworks. This is critical in identifying the extent to which the CO would be able to assess its contribution to progress. Making use of the data presented in COARs and SMQs, the progress in programme areas reported in Table 11 above is based on the evidence generated through data collected in programmatic interventions. The programmatic interventions in Early Years (specifically health and nutrition) and Learning demonstrate much more limited but stronger evidence for UNICEF’s contribution to progress against national level indicators.

135. An analysis of the programme approaches used also provides a range of evidence to support the assessment of the CO contribution as reported in COAR and RAM. The National Health Strategy 2012–2020, for instance, set priorities for a number of areas, including: advocacy for both the financial sustainability of vaccines and essential MNCH services; and the development of a national WASH strategy. UNICEF's contributions to these priorities include: declines in neonatal mortality rates through the quality improvement in services by provision of essential equipment to maternity and newborn departments; the provision of therapeutic food for treatment of SAM enabling timely treatment and recovery; the procurement and distribution of essential vaccines across the country resulting in the sustaining of high rates of immunization coverage in the country; and significant programmes by ADB and IsDB for MNCH services in some of the most underserved areas of the country.

#### Taking pilots to scale

136. In terms of taking to scale pilots or programmes implemented in selected districts or that target specific groups, there is evidence of both provincial and national government taking on UNICEF interventions. As an example of the former, the collaborative project on the provision of home-based care services, provided by the Social-Assistance-at-Home Unit at the district level to improve coverage and effectiveness, was later taken over by the budget of the local authority and complemented with a community-based rehabilitation project in collaboration with a local NGO in 2017. As an example of the latter, the Adolescent Innovation Labs, using the UPSHIFT social entrepreneurship curriculum, was initially piloted in two locations and has been gradually scaled up to a national level, using centres for additional education. Similarly, the focus on youth-friendly health services and adolescent mental health has been integrated into primary level health care and the school system, initially in one region in 2018, and is now to be scaled up nationally. There are other examples where scaling up still remains incomplete, such as the pilot diversion programme targeting children in conflict with the law, implemented initially in five districts of one region, where further rolling out has been limited due to a lack of budgetary resources, despite its progress in providing effective rehabilitation services.

### Good practices: Strategic positioning

The SMR provided an opportunity to reflect on the CO's strategic direction. From this process, the Knowledge Management section was created, and it has been instrumental in evidence generation to make the programme relevant to the needs of children and youth. Further, the SMR ensured that the CO intentionally pursued interlinked approaches that combined work at the strategic level with direct efforts on the ground.

UNICEF has assumed multiple roles: leadership, cooperation, facilitation, technical support, and resource leveraging. It seems to have deployed these effectively and appropriately, with external stakeholders viewing the CO as a reputable and active partner.

The collaborative approach has strengthened partnerships.

## Evaluation questions and summary answers

TABLE 12: EVALUATION QUESTION 6 AND SUB-QUESTION

| Evaluation Questions  | Summary Findings<br>See Annex 8 for the detailed evidence matrix   |
|---|--|
| EQ6 To what extent can UNICEF be considered to have made a contribution to observed progress in the realization of children’s rights? | <p>UNICEF has made demonstrable contributions to progress on the ground, particularly in health and education at a national level, and there are also high levels of perceptions among stakeholders in relation to improving children’s rights. There is evidence for all of the programme components that UNICEF has been able to contribute to progress at a national level, with a particular focus on ensuring that the most vulnerable groups are covered. Some challenges remain in terms of UNICEF’s ability to fully evidence progress towards realising children’s rights.</p> <p>High confidence</p> |
| 6.1 To what extent is UNICEF able to assess the contribution that has been made to progress?  | <p>Despite the significant amount of data collected for global reporting purposes, there are only a limited number of output indicators and an even more limited number of outcome indicators where there is potential to trace linkages within the ToCs of the CP and assess the contribution against the progress. Nevertheless, the four indicators of health and education sectors, such as those in the National Programme for Children, can be used to assess the contribution of the UNICEF programmatic interventions of Early Years and Learning.</p> <p>High confidence</p>                          |

## 4. Conclusions

### 1. Implementation strategies have successfully transitioned in some sectors

Findings 1.ii, 1.iii, 2.i, 2.iii, 5.i,

137. The CO has made a significant transition from a CP that consisted of a collection of standalone projects under four programmatic headings to a more strategic and integrated country programme, based on well-developed programme ToCs (with clear analysis of risks and assumptions) and interventions guided by a sense of what UNICEF is able to bring in terms of expertise and influence. Coherence has been increased through more integrated working across the programme, with innovative approaches, for example, to addressing adolescent and ECD issues in Early Years and Learning interventions.
138. The CO has made progress against output indicators for 44 out of 47 country programme targets, with just over half (27) having been met or exceeded. Progress is demonstrated against 17 indicators which have not yet met targets. There were only three indicators against which there was no or little progress. There is also evidence that the CO has made progress in implementing this strategic and integrated approach, where progress and the contributions that UNICEF has made can be demonstrated through national-level output indicators and data, particularly for Early Years and Learning, but also in ADAP and Protective Environment. There are also examples where the CO has made good use of integrated working to ensure that vulnerable and marginalized groups have better access to services that respond to their needs, such as inclusive education for CWDs and for out-of-school adolescents through skills training, and mental health support for adolescents through the school system.

### 2. Successful strategies for meeting the needs of the most vulnerable can be applied to gender equality

Findings 1.iii, 5.i

139. The CO has been able to identify and successfully work to address the issues of specific marginalized groups, as set out above. A range of effective and influential approaches have been developed to address these issues, often working in an integrated way to leverage limited resources. There are examples of how the CO has been able to work with specific vulnerable groups such as CWDs, children in conflict with the law, and out-of-school adolescents. In addition, this experience can be used to encourage an integrated approach in the response to issues to ensure that support and opportunities are available equitably, such as in mental health support in schools and making skills training available through centres for additional education. There is also an example from the response to the current crisis, where a new humanitarian cash transfer model is being used for support to the most vulnerable households.
140. The approach for analysing and responding to the needs of the most vulnerable can be applied to the focus on gender inequalities. The CO has taken a first essential step in terms of requiring sex-disaggregated data. There is more work to be done on consistently collecting, monitoring and

utilizing sex-disaggregated data. The UNICEF-commissioned situation analyses identify a range of important gender issues, such as: different rates of suicides among adolescent boys and girls; reasons for dropping out of school being different for boys and for girls; and boys tending to commit more offences; and boys being more frequently in conflict with the law. Whilst these issues are identified in analyses, the CO has not incorporated them into specific programme approaches in the same way as those of marginalized groups.

### 3. There are specific strategies for gender equality available to the Country Office

Findings 1.iii, 5.i

141. There is a need, then, to ensure that inequalities/inequities are systematically addressed in all aspects of the programme and in the support that UNICEF provides. It is important to ensure that:
- Data collected, targets set, indicators and reporting of progress are consistently disaggregated and, if not, explanations are provided as to why not;
  - In implementation, the thread from the identification of issues in situation analyses, is followed from the development of approaches and setting of targets and indicators, through to monitoring and reporting; and
  - This is backed up with analysis of the underlying causes of issues identified, exploring the effectiveness (or otherwise) of approaches and using monitoring for lesson learning and for the development of approaches, all of which require gender analysis expertise and experience.

### 4. The effective COVID-19 response reflected UNICEF's strong strategic positioning

Findings 1.i, 2.iii, 4.i, 4.ii, 4.iii, 5.i, 5.ii

142. UNICEF's strategic position and key role in national coordination efforts across a range of sectors has been confirmed in the response to the COVID-19 crisis since April 2020. There are a number of key features that have enabled this, including UNICEF's credibility, its ability to convene key stakeholders and its effectiveness in 'pre-positioning' both relationships and approaches. The credibility of the CO is based on considerable efforts in collecting data and carrying out analysis across a range of sectors and issues. This contributed to UNICEF being able to provide briefings to key national stakeholders and to quickly follow up seeking more up-to-date data through established links and mechanisms in the health, nutrition and education sectors, as well as for children in institutions. At the start of the crisis, when there was a vacuum in coordination at the highest levels, the CO was able to convene key stakeholders and contribute to the development of coordination efforts, working through existing and proven mechanisms, such as the Development Coordination Council. The CO had also established partnerships and had developed approaches that effectively 'pre-positioned' aspects of the programme to be able to respond quickly and effectively including: the relationship with the Tajikistan Red Crescent Society that was used in the distribution of materials and equipment in the response; a wide-scale third-party monitoring to ensure the delivery of the humanitarian aid to end-users; and the development

of a humanitarian cash transfer model, using the existing Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) programme, which was included in the WB Emergency COVID-19 Project.

143. It will be important to maintain this strategic position and continue to look forward, in order to be 'pre-positioned' for the future, particularly as the impacts of the current crisis emerge and develop. It will be important to:

- Carry out further data collection and analysis to understand the underlying issues (such as poverty and vulnerability) and the impacts of the crisis;
- Continue to contribute to effective coordination mechanisms, looking particularly at the provincial levels and the relationship between government and CSOs; and
- Review existing relationships and develop new relationships, as necessary and in response to the identification of new issues through analysis.

#### 5. Ongoing and strategic direction-setting for the country programme needs strong planning, monitoring and evaluation

Finding 1.iii, 2.i, 2.ii, 3.ii

144. Although UNICEF is focused on the collection and use of data in the CP and the CO does have the capacity to effectively collect and utilize data in the implementation of its own programmes, the current CP witnessed insufficient use of monitoring and evaluation data in planning and the production of in-depth evidence. There have been notable investments in the presentation of data, but there still remains a gap in terms of the overall picture of progress across the programme; and a lack of clear evidence and documentation of prioritization within the programme (although it is obvious that there is prioritization in practice). Whilst there is a wide range of data available in the programme, it has taken considerable efforts as part of this evaluation to make sense of what is available and to establish links between the data and the ToCs that guide programme implementation. In addition, for the evaluation period there were only two evaluations available, one published at the start of the CP in 2016 (on priority districts) and the other (on capacity-building) in 2019. The CO recognizes and is aware of the notable gaps in documenting what is being done and what has been achieved.

145. There is therefore a need to further develop a monitoring and evaluation system for the programme and particularly use of the data and evidence produced for planning and implementation. This can be based on the work done through the ToCs, but geared more effectively to the current programme and the different aspects of the programme. Such a system will need to consider: the systems and data that are already in place, for example the health and education management information systems and the likely progress in their development, as well as the remaining gaps in national-level indicators; the needs of the CO in being able to effectively track and document progress in a range of interventions; and a longer-term view of evidence and evaluation to ensure that there is an external and objective perspective to feed into the planning, reporting and review process.

## 6. New programmatic decisions require criteria for prioritization

Findings 1.ii, 2.iii, 5.ii, 6.i

146. The CO is now at a further point of transition, having contributed to significant legislative and national programmatic changes and having influenced or leveraged significant donor engagement and resources in the health, education – and now social protection – sectors. In addition, there are a number of pilots that have been influential in terms of raising awareness of marginalized groups and the issues that they face, such as CWDs, children in conflict with the law, children affected by migration and adolescents experiencing mental health problems, again areas based on UNICEF's added value. The questions that the CO now faces are: where should efforts be focused and what are the priorities for the next 5–10 years? The programme remains large and diverse, so that there is a need going forward to prioritize efforts and resources. Prioritization should be guided by the following suggested criteria:

- Where the greatest needs and highest levels of vulnerability are, based on the most up-to-date data and analysis; this is particularly important in the ongoing response to the current crisis, where a number of underlying vulnerabilities have been highlighted, such as increasing poverty levels as remittances have dropped;
- Continued consideration of UNICEF's added value, looking at where the greatest difference can be made using the expertise, influence and experience available; across the programme UNICEF brings a unique focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups, with experience of both analysis and ability to influence the issues affecting these groups and to develop innovative approaches that have influenced both policies and programme; and
- A more robust and consistent approach to the assessment of major risks (financial support, capacity and use of data), the contextualization of approaches and development of exit strategies through consideration of sustainability; taking a much broader perspective than solely technical capacity for implementation that looks at institutional capacities, coordination and financing to ensure sustainability, making use particularly of the experiences in the health and education sectors.

## 5. Lessons Learned

147. **When ToCs were used well across multiple components, overall programme-wide shared strategies were easier to identify.** The ToCs developed by each of the programme teams in 2016, and revised in 2018, have been a useful means to develop a clearer overall picture of the programme, to set out expected changes over time and to provide the basis for a detailed analysis of the risks and assumptions in the programme. While each of the teams has taken a slightly different approach to developing the ToCs, the overall format used has been consistent: using the same levels of change (activities/inputs, operational changes, two levels of intermediate changes, behavioural changes/outputs, and developmental changes/outcomes); and broadly using different groups of activities leading to specific outputs.
148. Again, while the programme teams approach the analysis of risk and assumptions slightly differently, all have undertaken the analysis with the same level of detail. These detailed analyses of risks and assumptions provided a useful means to draw out and to share understanding of the context across the programmes, providing the basis for highlighting similar risks and hence the basis for mitigating them.
149. **ToCs, when used as a resource, supported clarity of expectations.** From the interviews and workshops with the CO it was clear that the ToCs also provided a means for developing and sharing a clear understanding of what was expected across the programme and the basis for identifying and then developing integrated approaches to implementation. There are two areas where the ToCs can be further improved:
- Through being used on a more regular basis to examine progress in implementation, to check risks and assumptions, and to modify the approach to implementation if needed; and
  - Through establishing clearer linkages between the ToCs and the indicators where data is regularly collected, as means to verify and support the regular examination of progress.
150. **When the Country Office plays to its strengths in multiple roles, it can then maximize its effectiveness.** A clear sense of UNICEF's added value comes from the analysis of what the CO has been able to achieve and the various approaches that it took within which these achievements have been made. The basis of the added value comes from the expertise and experience that UNICEF can draw on, both within the organization and externally; expertise is drawn from the CO, RO and HQ and is backed up with external expertise, through consultants, where required. Where the CO has been most effective is in the realistic approach that it has played, realizing that things cannot be done alone, but only through playing a clear role in working with others. UNICEF in Tajikistan always works with a range of partners, at all levels: locally, working with provincial and municipal government and CSOs to ensure the contextualization of approaches and the practicality of what is being delivered; and nationally, to ensure the replication and scaling up of

models developed, through working with IFIs for example, and with national government to ensure that legislative change is put in place and that resources are made available to ensure sustainability. There is some evidence to show that the CO does have experience in knowing when to step back and hand over, although at this point in the implementation of the programme there is a need to further consider its roles.

151. **When the Country Office engages in strategic partnerships, it leverages far greater results.** Linked to the clear sense of UNICEF's added value are the various ways in which the CO has made use of partnerships and influence to leverage results greater than could be achieved by UNICEF on its own. For example, UNICEF has worked closely with a small group of stakeholders to develop approaches to the collection, analysis and publication of key data, such as: working with the UN Country Team, with the WB, EU and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade to develop the Tajikistan Vulnerability and Resilience Atlas; and working with a range of stakeholders on other national data collection and analysis exercises including the Demographic and Health Survey in 2017 and the regular Listening to Tajikistan Wellbeing Surveys carried out by the WB. More recently UNICEF led a significant national-level exercise, bringing together many stakeholders, to develop a National Programme for Children, with 33 indicators under four results areas covering the life cycle of children. Also significant have been the efforts made to leverage significant resources from IFIs to take forward key programmes for children, developed initially as pilots by UNICEF, including: the WB ECD Project, with financing of US\$70 million; and ADB and IsDB support for the replication of MNCH interventions with financing of US\$32 million from ADB and US\$26 million from IsDB. Another area of work with IFIs (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) is to explore in a practical way how the infrastructure investments can be used to create child-friendly zones in Tajikistan. Two issues remain unresolved in the approach that has been taken to date:

- Important programme areas that do not fit so clearly into the agenda of other, larger partners, such as nutrition, child protection and adolescents and how to take them forward; and
- Long-term sustainability in a context where the national government is slow to increase resources in the social sectors.

## 6. Recommendations

### 6.1 Strategic

#### Ongoing reality check

152. The programme remains large and diverse, so that a question was posed (and was highlighted in a number of interviews), where should efforts be focused and what are the priorities for the next 5–10 years? The environment that UNICEF operates in is changing as well, with government priorities evolving, as are the priorities of other development partners. It is, therefore, recommended that the CO use the opportunity of both the evaluation and of planning for the next CP to undertake a staged process to assessing UNICEF's future role.
1. Take stock of what has been achieved and for whom to this point, looking at progress nationally, such as the development of the National SDG Programme for Children, at progress in leveraging resources for programmes in health, nutrition, education and infrastructure, and at progress in pilots and interventions across the work with adolescents and in the protective environment.
153. Recommendation 1 is aimed at all sections within the Country Office who will be able to provide their insights for their particular sectors of expertise, while some sections bring cross-cutting expertise. The information will need to be aggregated to provide a full picture of the programme's achievements. This evaluation contributes to this, but more detailed analysis per programme component was outside its scope.
2. Consider where UNICEF can work effectively, making use of the expertise, influence and experience available, drawing on the experience in the current programme and looking at the different ways in which progress has been made, including: support to national government bodies on data and knowledge management and use; capacity-building for the implementation of new approaches to service delivery; and the use of pilots and innovative approaches to influence the development of new strategies and programmes.
154. Recommendation 2 is similarly aimed at all sections in the Country Office and focuses on analyzing the modalities of working that have contributed to the achievements. There is rich understanding here to be gained from the way that the CO identified the most appropriate and effective way of working depending on the target audience and what it was aiming to achieve.
3. Use the criteria suggested (levels of need and vulnerability, UNICEF's added value and capacities to ensure sustainability) to develop and set out a clear statement of what the priorities for the next CP should be.
155. Recommendation 3 is the next step in the prioritization process, and again aimed at all sections of the Country Office. By using the suggested criteria to prioritize the national needs and the needs of the most vulnerable, the effective ways of working can be mapped against the priorities to understand the levels of resources and types of inputs that are required. This process will show

whether the prioritization needs to be adjusted to align with the CO resources and capacity, as well as the likely external resources and partnerships that are anticipated to be leveraged.

### Strategic positioning

156. At the same time, it will be important for UNICEF to maintain a strategic position and to continue to look forward, in order to be 'pre-positioned' for the future, particularly as the impacts of the current crisis emerge and develop. It is recommended that the CO:
  4. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, using the most recent data and analysis, consider where further evidence and analysis is required, particularly in areas where underlying vulnerabilities have been highlighted, and ensure that this analysis is utilized by government and development partners in the formulation of medium- to long-term response.
157. Recommendation 4 affects the whole of the programme, although the experts in planning and evidence functions may be best placed to lead on this process. There is increasingly available data and analyses on the serious impacts of COVID-19 in terms of increasing vulnerabilities with implications for how UNICEF focuses. The challenge is that data may not be specific to Tajikistan, so there may be gaps. UNICEF has an important role to play in engaging with government and development partners to ensure that the increased vulnerability of children is well understood, and that policies, programmes and initiatives are sensitive to the changing context and needs.
  5. Consider UNICEF's role in ensuring the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms and, looking ahead, develop a strategy for the CP going forward, across each of the outcome areas and in each of the sectors, to ensure the best use of the experience, access and influence within the CO.
158. Recommendation 5 speaks to UNICEF's convening and coordinating role with government and development partners. It is about both UNICEF's activities externally, but also bringing in information from its coordination activities into the CO for cross-sectoral learning. In turn this knowledge-sharing should aim to further strengthen UNICEF's position in its external coordination roles. This recommendation is aimed at each of the sections within the CO that engages in coordination mechanisms externally.
  6. Carry out a review of existing relationships, considering particularly the current relationship between Government and CSOs and the capacities of government bodies at national and local level, and use this to consider the development of new relationships, if required, in areas such as social protection.
159. Recommendation 6 requires a whole-of-CO approach to combine knowledge and expertise from across the section regarding how UNICEF collectively is engaging with external partners. It is also important to regularly review the partnership 'landscape' and identify if there are opportunities to strengthen existing relationships or to develop new relationships.

### Building on the theories of change for a monitoring and evaluation system

160. As discussed in Recommendations 1, 2 and 3, it is important that UNICEF should take stock of the CP as a whole and of the programme components. It is recommended that this be done by building on the work done through the programmatic ToCs. Work could also be done by using these ToCs in combination with the CO monitoring and evaluation, making the linkages to the current programme clearer and ensuring that data produced is used in planning and implementation. Such a system should consider the need to:
7. Continue efforts to support the development of national-level systems, including the 33 indicators in the National SDG Programme for Children, the Health Management Information System and the Educational Management Information System, and to address any gaps further in the remaining indicators at national level; and
  8. Monitor and evaluate UNICEF-supported interventions, specifically pilots and innovative approaches, which require much more regular and detailed feedback to support assessment and documentation.
161. Recommendations 7 and 8 acknowledge the complexity of the different sources of indicators that UNICEF has the potential to incorporate into a monitoring system. The important elements here are: mapping the national indicators for children; and clearly identifying the specific indicators by which UNICEF can specifically measure its own efforts.
9. Revise the CO monitoring and research strategy and use the programmatic and CP ToCs to enable the tracking of progress towards results and risks on a regular (quarterly or biannual) basis, to effectively monitor and adjust implementation and to provide the basis for the documentation and recording of pilots and approaches undertaken with the participation of partners (both Government and CSOs).
162. Recommendation 9 aims to bring a holistic perspective to the CO's monitoring strategy that is augmented by evaluations (see recommendation 10). The important aspect of this is that regular monitoring needs to take place in a format that is useful and meaningful to the cross-cutting and thematic sections in order to help inform decision-making about whether progress is as expected or whether changes should be made to priorities or actions.
10. Find ways to ensure that the existing evaluation plan underpins these efforts and provides an external and objective perspective on the CP in order to feed into the planning, reporting and review process. Areas for consideration for evaluation might include advocacy and influencing interventions; and the development, implementation and scaling up of pilots.
163. Recommendation 10 is aimed at the CO as a whole, coordinated by the PME team, to make the best use of UNICEF's experience and achievements by capturing learning to strengthen responses. At the same time, it is equally important to learn from initiatives that are less successful. Some of the suggested areas of focus (e.g. advocacy and influencing) are not 'projects' with defined budgets, yet are important strategies within the CO. These are also worthy

of capturing learning from. The findings from evaluations are of benefit to the CO, but also other UNICEF country offices in the region and beyond.

## 6.2 Operational

### Prioritization strategy for resources

164. There is no clear evidence available for external scrutiny of prioritization across the programme or of how decisions are made about where to prioritize human or financial resources. Without such evidence the approach taken is not fully clear to an outside perspective.

11. Revise the existing hierarchy of activities that are needed to achieve results within programmes, with associated resources (human and financial) to ensure consistency and in order to meet the aims and objectives of the output components.

165. Recommendation 11 is directed at the senior management of the CO in order to have clarity and transparency around delivery of the country strategy which is dependent on meeting funding targets. Each country programme is developed against the target budget, with the aim of meeting the resource mobilization target, yet achieving the target is not always guaranteed. In this shifting and uncertain context, there must be a decision-making process in place to ensure that the activities implemented are logical and justified. This particularly applies to core funding for which UNICEF has more flexibility and can be used to complement funding that is for specific initiatives.

### Gender equality and equity

166. It is recommended that the CO develops and implements a more systematic approach to ensuring that inequalities, and gender inequalities specifically, are systematically addressed in all aspects of the programme and in the support that UNICEF provides. It is specifically recommended that:

12. Data disaggregation is consistently carried out across all aspects of the programme.

167. Recommendation 12 is aimed at all sections of the CO within the programme components, and with a key role for the PME team in coordinating and supporting data disaggregation. This recommendation will support UNICEF's ability to fulfil its commitments to gender equality and equity, in terms of meeting the needs of the most vulnerable. It is not merely useful concept, but rather a pre-requisite for UNICEF to meet these commitments.

13. Specific efforts are made to follow up on gender issues identified in situation analyses in programmes, such as the reasons for differences in: suicide rates amongst male and female adolescents; adolescent boys and girls school dropout; adolescents in conflict with the law; and as victims of crime, drawing on external expertise if needed.

168. Recommendation 13 is aimed at the thematic sections within the CO, coordinated by the Gender Focal Point to guide the sections in developing specific plans to track these gender issues. This may require specific initiatives and/or incorporation of these specific issues into other interventions and strategies. Usually a mix of approaches is needed.

14. Inequalities and gender inequalities should be a focus in examining the effectiveness (or otherwise) of programmes, in monitoring for lesson learning and for the development of approaches, again drawing on external expertise and experience where required.
169. Recommendation 14 is similarly aimed at all sections but will likely need leadership from the monitoring and evaluation section to take a broader approach to a range of inequality issues, including gender. This recommendation is more focused on analyzing the extent to which the programmes, interventions and initiatives actually address inequalities in practice. It is an ongoing monitoring approach and will also benefit from dedicated initiatives such as periodic assessments of whether gender and other inequalities are being addressed.

## 7. Annexes

1. **Terms of Reference**
2. **Evaluation Matrix**
3. **List of Interviewees**
4. **Documentary Evidence**
5. **Data Collection Instruments**
6. **Additional Details on Methodology**
7. **Programmatic Theory of Change**
8. **Detailed Response to Evaluation Questions**
9. **Gender Analysis**
10. **Human Rights Analysis**
11. **Results Matrix Progress against Indicators (end 2019)**
12. **Implementation Strategies and Bottlenecks**
13. **Evaluation Team**