

# EVALUATION REPORT



## JOINT UNICEF BANGLADESH-GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH EDUCATION PROGRAMME MID-TERM EVALUATION 2017-2020

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**Joint UNICEF Bangladesh-Government of  
Bangladesh Education Programme  
Mid-Term Evaluation 2017-2020**

**Final Report  
Volume I  
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Joint UNICEF Bangladesh-Government of Bangladesh Education Programme Mid-Term Evaluation 2017-2020  
Final Report

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# Joint UNICEF Bangladesh - Government of Bangladesh Education Programme Mid-Term Evaluation 2017-2020

Title	Joint UNICEF Bangladesh-Government of Bangladesh Education Programme Mid-Term Evaluation 2017-2020
Geographic Region of the Programme	Nationwide
Timeline of the Evaluation	April 2018 – December 2019
Date of the Report	December 2019
Country	Bangladesh
Evaluators	Martha Laverde Toscano, Mamunur Rashid, Farrukh Ahmed, Manuela Mejía, Helena María Suárez, Camila Nieto, Shuaib Muhammad
Name of the Organization Commissioning the Evaluation	UNICEF Bangladesh, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Government of Bangladesh

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following document is the Evaluation Report for the “UNICEF Bangladesh Education Programme 2017-2020”. This programme will be referred to as the ‘Education Programme’ throughout the report unless otherwise specified. The Education Programme Evaluation is an effort undertaken jointly by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). The Education Programme is part of a broader undertaking by the GoB and UNICEF titled the UNICEF Country Programme 2017-2020. The evaluation was conducted between November 2018 and July 2019 as a means for UNICEF to fulfil its accountability mandate and learn lessons to inform future programming.

### Context and Object of the Evaluation

The Education Programme originally focused on: (1) expanding and increasing the opportunity of early stimulation and learning, (2) improving access to education and reducing out-of-school children, and (3) access to education for adolescents. The following headline results are part of the overall Country Programme’s outcomes: infants, young children and their mothers, children of primary school age, and adolescents as agents of change. They are meant to be achieved with support from other components of the Country Programme including WASH, Child Protection and Health. Two geographic levels were defined to narrow the scope of interventions. Bangladesh was defined on the national and local levels to better serve the efficacy of the programme. Beneficiaries included the targets groups of the programme, stakeholders, and implementation partners. All school-aged children are potential targets of the ongoing interventions within Bangladesh, in connection with the Education Programme.

### Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The objective of this evaluation is to assess the relevance, appropriateness, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, connectedness, potential impact, and sustainability of the Education Programme using a formative approach. This is done while retaining a focus on children who are excluded or disadvantaged by socio-economic status, geographic location, or gender. The four outcomes of the programme are lenses used by the programme as it seeks to sustain and expand children’s rights with a concentration on the disadvantaged and excluded. The temporal range of the current evaluation is from 2017 to the middle of 2019. Geographic coverage incorporates two levels, national and local. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming, children’s rights, and a rights-based approach have been considered throughout the evaluation.

### Evaluation Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to create a mixed-methods approach. There were three phases during the evaluation. The inception phase involved identifying and collecting pertinent documentation, initial meetings, and the inception visit, led by the team leader. The data review and collection phase consisted of online surveys and field-visits to gather qualitative data carried out by four teams. The final phase was the analysis, using data triangulation and reporting phase. . This was



undertaken in conjunction with direct observations in early childhood centres and focused group discussions (FGDs) with parents. Ethical clearance was given for this project by Econometria's own Institutional Review Board (IRB). Multiple layers of consent were implemented so the evaluation would fully adhere to moral and ethical principles. Anonymity was carefully enforced, and confidentiality upheld to guarantee standardized practises. Through the triangulation of the different sources of information available, meaning the qualitative primary information, the survey, quantitative secondary information and documentary information, the analysis of the data was made for each evaluation criteria, taking into account relations made between research question and data collection tool and sources.

## **PEDP3 to the Education Programme 2017-2020**

A comparative analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between PEDP3 and the current Education Programme, and to synthesise the findings and recommendations of the two. The programmes have carried over gender mainstreaming and a focus on vulnerable populations as well as a rights-based approach. It was determined that some components of PEDP3 were designed and implemented independently from each other, revealing the need for a comprehensive approach to create the highest level of efficacy. It was found that many lessons have carried over to the current programme. Additionally, lessons linked to resource disbursement, the results-based management approach and efforts to achieve a higher quality of education, point to elements that must be further reinforced in the current programme.

## **Findings and Analysis of Results**

### **Relevance and Appropriateness**

The UNICEF Education Programme is highly relevant as it is closely aligned with the planning and policy framework of the GoB, and it responds to the identified main challenges of education in the country. It reflects UNICEF's core principles and is internally aligned with the expected outcomes and results that the programme seeks to achieve. Further, the Theory of Change initially planned for the programme has been followed and includes all relevant factors. The Education Programme, in the context of the Country Programme, was constructed based on a comprehensive diagnosis of the country's main challenges. The specific interventions are closely linked with the full scope and scale of beneficiaries' needs in Bangladesh, both in emergency and development settings. It is appropriate for the changing needs as Bangladesh transits to a middle-income country. It also appropriately reflects and contextualizes UNICEF's common principles, such as UNICEF Strategic Plan, the SDGs, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies.

Regarding the perception of UNICEF within the Education sector, UNICEF is recognized as a credible and reliable actor in technical assistance and strategy advocacy, according to the stakeholders, especially at the national level. It is recognized as a well-equipped agency to work hand in hand with the GoB on its response to the current and changing needs as the country transits to a middle-income country. At the local level, there are opportunities for improvement in its advocacy role for budget allocation, and in technical assistance.

## Coherence

Stakeholders are aware of the objectives of the Education Programme and recognize UNICEF's comparative advantages such as strategic advocacy and technical assistance. They also note that UNICEF is well versed in giving advice for improvements where gaps exist in the education system under ECCD. UNICEF addresses the main structural causes of disparities for the attainment of educational rights. However, there are structural barriers in the education system, such as the lack of integrated ECCD policy among the various public and private actors involved and the low degree of importance given to education by some parents, especially when it pertains to their daughters.

## Effectiveness

Current trends indicate that almost all results will be achieved during the remaining one and a half years of programme implementation. However, because the programme is still under implementation, it is too early to find evidence concerning the outcomes and on the impact of the programme that are related to overcoming the main challenges of the education system. The programme has also been moderately effective in developing and implementing educational and multisectoral policies, strengthening sector coordination to promote a good governance model, developing a comprehensive management information system and building institutional capacity at the national and local levels. However it has been satisfactorily effective at creating an evidence base in some successful interventions that could be scaled up through government systems, and moderately effective in mobilizing and engaging families, communities, local government bodies and key influencers through C4D strategies that would address socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks, increase demand for utilisation of education services and promote more desirable behaviours. Finally, the new country programme structure based on a life-cycle approach has had a very positive impact, mainly because it is aligned with the education levels and allows various groups within UNICEF to work jointly towards a common objective (life phase) of achieving the results of the education programme as well as addressing the main challenges faced by the education system in Bangladesh.

## Impact

The legal framework, plans, programmes, and strategies supported by UNICEF have been effective in promoting equitable access to education. Enrolment rates have increased three-fold at the pre-primary level between 2010 and 2017. There was approximately a 3% rise in enrolment at the primary level and at the secondary level. Despite the substantial quantitative progress, important challenges remain in terms of establishing child-friendly inclusive schools, particularly for girls and children with disabilities. In addition, even though UNICEF is on track to achieve its target for out-of-school children accessing education, there are still limitations from the viewpoint of delivering high-quality outputs. Skills-based education has been determined as a viable approach to keep girls in school while providing facilities for girls and children in general are deemed 'crucial', including supplying more technical equipment and sanitary facilities. Safety in and while commuting to school is perceived by parents to be the main restrictor to girls attending schools due to the levels of harassment. Another area of improvement is the school's lack of ability to maintain education during an emergency, due to the lack of protocols. Unless



a school has been appropriated as a shelter during emergencies, access is near impossible. Attempts by teachers to issue more homework and condense lessons during flooding, for example, have been partially successful.

### Efficiency

Many Country Programme projects and components contribute financially to elements of the Education Programme. These resources, allocated elsewhere in UNICEF's programme, are anticipated to positively affect the expected outcomes and areas of intervention, such as management, technical assistance and coordination. Coordination among organizations and entities involved in the programmes' various aspects has improved. UNICEF was able to renew partnerships as well as create new ones which allowed for integrated approaches. Child rights have also been strengthened at the local level with local authorities through increased cooperation between UNICEF and the Cabinet Division. Partnerships also allowed the creation of a field office in Cox's Bazar to address level three emergency responses. Civil society organizations (CSOs) were brought in to help during emergencies. To prevent a duplication of efforts, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the donors share their respective plans to avoid duplication. An area that provides some contention is the service delivery of interventions. Finally, there is not enough information yet to assess efficiency in service delivery interventions affected by the geographic scope of the programme, but there is evidence about the unbalanced relationship between demand and needs, and the insufficient resources to finance the education sector's operations in each Upazila.

### Connectedness

Advocacy, training and awareness raising, as well as infrastructure improvement and access to services are all strategies shared by the Water Sanitation Hygiene (WASH) and Communication for Development (C4D) interventions. The evaluation has shown that these are the most aligned entities within the programme. WASH is working to introduce the three-star approach in the education system in Bangladesh, which in turn should improve the quality of primary education through better hygiene conditions. The three-star approach encourages schools to, "take simple steps to make sure that all students wash their hands with soap, have access to drinking water, and are provided with clean, gender-segregated and child-friendly toilets at school every day" (UNICEF, 2013). However it should be noted that Education has no collaboration with Protection when it comes to the establishment of child friendly schools and the guarantee of safe and protective spaces for learning.

Even though the partners and stakeholders recognize that UNICEF has played an important role in supporting the GoB in the design of education policies and guidelines, they perceive that the timeframe established to accomplish the different outcomes is too short, and that the assumptions made for the simplification of the barriers that are structural and require important social and cultural changes over a long period of time are underestimated. Therefore, more advocacy activities and a higher budget allocation from UNICEF are needed for investment in the Education Programme.

Life skills, citizen development, and an emergency education response are examples of sustainable interventions that UNICEF implemented well by effectively coordinating with the GoB and supporting

partners. The Education Programme includes innovative partnerships between the Government and NGOs, and between the Government and development organizations, as well as private sector partnerships for implementing specific initiatives. However, the evaluation found that a comprehensive strategy for coordination among all actors is still lacking.

### Sustainability

National ownership, a key driver of sustainable programmes, is high. UNICEF has strong links with the national government and the main decision-makers in the education system. However, a comprehensive strategy between partners such as the GoB and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or the GoB and the private sector is still missing.

### Conclusions

The UNICEF Education Programme has successfully responded to the main education challenges identified in the evaluation. It is fully integrated in the Country Programme implementation as it is a cross-sectorial response, where education is one of the components in the life-cycle approach. Also, the Programme is closely aligned with the relevant planning and policy framework of the GoB.

The key stakeholders at the national level, especially the GoB view UNICEF as a credible technical partner. Consequently, UNICEF Bangladesh has a strong capacity to promote significant improvement in the education sector by overcoming the challenges identified. Nevertheless, at the local level, UNICEF's recognition is weaker, hence the importance of improving technical assistance at this level.

At the same time, the evaluation shows that the UNICEF Education Programme includes the generation of solid evidence through pilot initiatives. However the Education Team does not systematize those pilot initiatives and they do not disseminate the results among the stakeholders.

It is too early to measure how effective the programme has been in attaining the planned outcomes, and how much impact it has had in addressing Bangladesh's education challenges. However, when considering the time left for implementation and that most of the output indicators are on track, the evaluation indicates that there is a good chance of achieving the programme's goals.

The evaluation also concluded that the generation of evidence, policy dialogue, advocacy, equity response, resilient service delivery, partnership and participation are adequate strategies to reach the Education Programme's objectives because they take advantage of UNICEF's strengths. As the education sector in Bangladesh is highly centralized, UNICEF has an appropriate strategy by partnering with the central government while building more evidence at the local level.

Where the budget is concerned, the UNICEF Education Programme has a total of approximately USD 64 million, which is 18.9% of the total budget allocated to the UNICEF Country Programme. Notwithstanding, it is essential to also take into account the contribution of WASH, nutrition, health, protection and C4D as complementary interventions likely to influence the expected outcomes of the



Education Programme in a positive manner. According to UNICEF, this is the planned figure for the country programme period. It does not include funding for the Rohingya refugees but includes funding for other emergencies.

Similarly, the evaluation found that UNICEF has been instrumental in supporting the progress made in Bangladesh in terms of the legal framework, plans, programmes and strategies to promote equitable access to education.

From the fieldwork interviews and focus groups, the main conclusion is that there is plenty of room for improvement in the effective implementation of policies, plans and programmes at the local level, e.g., in improving school infrastructure, sanitary facilities, availability and use of ICT, adequate schools for disabled children, availability of teachers and teaching materials, and a child-friendly and disaster-resilient environment. All of these may demand an extended timeframe, especially where important social and cultural changes may be necessary.

There is a widespread positive perception of UNICEF's experience in advocacy among stakeholders and partners at the national and local levels, in both the public and the NGO sectors. In fact, they are expecting UNICEF to be involved more in the structural changes of the education system to ensure better quality and equity in education.

Finally, an increase in access to education services has been achieved for both girls and boys, and there is no gender inequality in this regard. both in primary and education. However there is a higher dropout rate for boys at secondary (close to 6 perceptual; points). However, identified female-specific challenges are related to child-friendly inclusive schools for girls and a supportive learning environment for girls in secondary education. In addition, there is evidence of the unbalanced relationship between demand and resources to address the specific needs of girls.

## Lessons Learnt

- UNICEF and other partners adopted a holistic approach to improve the learning process, taking a wide range of contextual, social, institutional and individual level factors into consideration. However, considering the limited financial resources of various donors, the impact could be more difficult than a more target intervention.
- The coherence amongst Education Programme, WASH and C4D interventions can be defined as a good practice in terms of program design and programme implementation.
- As part of developing the Education Programme development, UNICEF Bangladesh learned how to maximize its comparative capacities, adequately focusing on advocacy, policy dialogue, and technical assistance.
- The Country Programme life-cycle approach is an effective response to the pathway required from early childhood education to secondary education and enhances collaboration between UNICEF and Government sections to support this.

## Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Related Findings	Time frame	Main stakeholders responsible
1	<p>Strengthen the strategic positioning of UNICEF activities at the local level, in the remaining period of the Education Programme implementation framework and the new country programme in order to ensure alignment with upstream work. The local TA should aim to strengthen UNICEF field offices, taking into account Bangladesh's transition to a middle income country, and thus UNICEF must plan to transition from delivering services to a supportive role upstream.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) From the local level, there are some voices calling for more education-service provisions, evidence development, and local level actions. Due to the highly centralized education system in Bangladesh, there is a need to downstream the national standards, protocols, and guidelines and make them more applicable at the local level.</li> <li>2) There is clear evidence that the level of national ownership of certain interventions supported by UNICEF are very high. However, there are others like ECD policies that are seen as academic and private responsibility.</li> </ol>	Short-term	UNICEF Education office and UNICEF field offices in coordination with MOE and MOPME
2	<p>Develop a standardized approach to designing, implementing, documenting and scaling up pilots. This can be achieved by strengthening the systematization and socialization of the Education Programme piloting activities through</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The UNICEF Education Programme includes developing evidence generation through piloted initiatives, although the Evaluation Team did not evidence results systematization. Also, stakeholders have no knowledge of the results and lessons learnt from those pilots.</li> </ol>	Short-term	UNICEF SPEAR



No.	Recommendation	Related Findings	Time frame	Main stakeholders responsible
	"implementation research", but also operational evaluations and in general, a strong and systematized monitoring framework that covers all stages of the ToC of the programme, including a well-developed dissemination strategy.			
3	Develop a comprehensive coordination strategy to strengthen the linkages and quality of policy dialogue among the existing mechanisms (ELCG, DPC, etc.) where education policies and strategic direction are discussed or decided.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Evidence shows that the Education Programme includes innovative partnerships between the Government and NGOs, development organizations, and private sector. Nevertheless, the evaluation found that in terms of those innovative partnerships a comprehensive strategy for coordination among them is lacking.</li><li>2) Even though UNICEF has played an important role in supporting the GoB in the design of education policies and guidelines, data shows that the timeframe established to accomplish the different outcomes is too short,</li></ol>	Short-term	GoB with the technical support of UNICEF Communication, Advocacy and Partnership.

No.	Recommendation	Related Findings	Time frame	Main stakeholders responsible
		<p>3) For example, the information collected and analysed suggests that the partnerships in ECD, and some aspects of equitable access to quality and inclusive education, are focused on the implementation of specific activities, but not sufficiently integrated into a comprehensive coordination strategy.</p>		
4	<p>Develop and implement a comprehensive C4D strategy that addresses the positive professional aspirations of boys and girls evidenced in the results of the evaluation, supports the engagement of adolescents boys and girls in developing and practicing desired behaviours, and to facilitate actions to eliminate harmful social norms and practices, for example child marriage and drug abuse.</p>	<p>1) Adolescents who attended the focus groups during the fieldwork, including in tea gardens and enclaves, see themselves as being successful professionals in ten years. No differences could be detected by gender.</p> <p>2) As evidenced by an average score of 3.44 out of 5 from the online survey, there is partial agreement, concerning the community engagement with the following statement: "There has been an improvement in the engagement of adolescent boys and girls from selected communities in developing desired behaviours and facilitating actions to eliminate harmful social norms and practices, with a focus on ending child marriage"</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>UNICEF CO and UNICEF C4D office.</p>



No.	Recommendation	Related Findings	Time frame	Main stakeholders responsible
5	Advocate for and support the Government of Bangladesh to undertake a system wide review of the administration of Education in Bangladesh which looks at all Ministries and agencies involved in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, their mandate, and fit for purpose.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) All sector analysis from donor agencies and the interviews conducted for this evaluation show that the complex institutional structure of the education sector in Bangladesh creates serious obstacles. It stifles progress in the basic education system and weakens an aligned, and homogenous curriculum across the two levels.</li><li>2) The interviews show that the relationship between demand and needs, and the available resources that finance the education sector's operations in each Upazila are unbalanced.</li><li>3) Evidence also shows that there are critical issues with GoB's institutional capacity, especially in the implementation of the ECD policy, and career plans.</li></ol>	Mid-Term	UNICEF Country Office in coordination with GoB

No.	Recommendation	Related Findings	Time frame	Main stakeholders responsible
6	Undertake a detailed analysis of gender in the education system and the ways the various practices and behaviours of education personnel affect retention and performance of girls, especially at higher levels.	1) The increase in the access to education services has been achieved for both girls and boys. There is no gender inequality in this regard. However, female-specific challenges identified are related with child-friendly inclusive schools for girls and a supportive learning environment for girls in secondary education. In addition, there is evidence of the unbalanced relationship between demand and resources that might include the specific needs of girls.	Mid-Term	GoB with the technical support of UNICEF Education office
7	Support the Government of Bangladesh in designing a comprehensive strategy to substantially reduce the high level of school dropouts among boys. The strategy may include interventions that the education system can directly manage, such as introducing more attractive pedagogies (problem-based curriculum and active learning methods), strengthening the citizen and socio-emotional skills and competencies program, as well as developing the vocational training program.	1) The increase in the access to education services has been achieved for both girls and boys. However, female-specific challenges identified are related with child-friendly inclusive schools for girls and a supportive learning environment for girls in secondary education. 2) The dropout rate presents a significant difference between boy and girls during the last years. By 2018 there were almost 6 perceptual points higher for boys than girls. One of the main reasons is the need to increase family's income.	Mid-Term	GoB with the technical support of UNICEF Education office



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

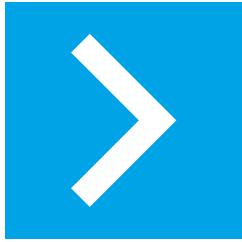
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALP	Alternative Learning Programmes
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information Statistics
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BEN	Bangladesh ECD Network
BNFE	Bureau of Non-Formal Education
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
C4D	Communication for Development
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
CFE	Child Friendly Education
CFS	Child Friendly Schools
COAR	Country Office Annual Report
CPD	Country Programme Document
DLI	Disbursement Linked Indicators
DO	Direct Observation
DR	Document Review
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECCD	Early Childhood Care Development
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EP	Education Programme
EQ	Evaluation Question
ET	Evaluation Team
FGD	Focus Groups Discussions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HQ	Headquarters
JICA	Japan International Agency for Cooperation
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MIC	Middle-Income Countries
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Financer
MoMPE	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs



MTR	Mid-Term Report
NAPE	National Academy for Primary Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NSA	National Student Assessment
NSSS	National Social Security Strategy
OoSC	Out of School Children
PECE	Primary Education Completion Exam
PEDP	Primary Education Development Programme
PPE	Pre-primary education
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
ROSA	Regional Office for South Asia
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SCBA	School and Classroom-Based Assessment
SCE	Second Chance Education
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SE	School Effectiveness
SLIP	School Level Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
SPEAR	Social Policy Evaluation and Research
SWaP	Sector Wide Approach
TA	Technical Assistance
TBC	To be confirmed
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPEP	Upazila Primary Education Plan
WASH	Water Sanitation Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation

# CONTEXT





This chapter presents the object of the evaluation and the context, which shows how this evaluation is relevant to the country. The object of the evaluation is the UNICEF Bangladesh - Country Education Programme 2017-2020.

The Education Programme developed by UNICEF is part of the UNICEF Country Programme 2017-2020, which aims at supporting the country's efforts in "advancing the universal realization of the rights of children, particularly the most disadvantaged and excluded" (Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF, 2017). Consistent with UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2014-2017, the UNICEF Country Programme was designed to address the different needs that children face in the context of Bangladesh. The Country Programme is centred on four outcomes and has been built to follow a life-cycle approach.

### 1. Infants, young children and their mothers

- Reducing neonatal mortality
- Accelerating the reducing childhood stunting
- Expanding and improving timely birth registration
- Expanding and increasing the opportunity of early stimulation and learning

### 2. Children of primary school age

- Improving equitable access to quality inclusive education and reducing out-of-school children
- Preventing violence against children

### 3. Adolescents as agents of change

- Ending child marriage
- Access to education for adolescents
- Improving adolescent health and well-being
- Increasing participation of adolescents in development

**These Programme Outcomes are supported by a component of:**

### 4. Social inclusion and increasing awareness of children's rights

- Increasing awareness of child rights and resiliency to climate change
- Scaling up social protection and corporate social responsibility
- Evidence-based planning for better investments in children

The Country Programme 2017-2020 follows a series of strategies to “ensure a balance between upstream and downstream work against the background of the transition of Bangladesh towards middle income status.” (Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF, 2017)

The life-cycle approach of the Country Programme responds to multidimensional challenges that children face in Bangladesh. Even though Bangladesh has shown progress in per capita income, over 40 million people continue to be in poverty and the social and human development needs remain vast. Equitable results for children continue to be a significant concern. “The fast rate of economic development, propelled by the national goal of becoming a middle-income country by 2021, risks outpacing the country’s human development and social change” (Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF, 2017).

The life-cycle approach of the Country Programme responds to multidimensional challenges that children face in Bangladesh. Even though Bangladesh has shown progress per capita income, the UNICEF Country Programme addresses different targets that remain to be attended to. Equitable results for children continue to be a significant concern. “The fast rate of economic development, propelled by the national goal of becoming a middle-income country by 2021, risks outpacing the country’s human development and social change” (Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF, 2017).

The primary school completion rate in the poorest quintile is 65% and in the richest quintile it is 97% (Social Watch, 2018). According to the Global Gender Gap Index (2013) for 136 countries, Bangladesh ranks 75th while Nepal, a geographic comparator from the South Asian Region, is 12th. This means that Bangladesh has a lot to do in terms of equity.

In 2015, the United Nations Country Team conducted a country analysis in which the root causes of the country’s developmental challenges were identified. However, it is difficult to identify these challenges because there is more of a focus on collecting national data than regional data. The GoB and the United Nations (UN) characterize the following as root causes: “Inequality and growing disparity, based on gender, ethnicity, place of residence, disability or other variables, reflect the persistence of harmful and sometimes discriminatory social and legal norms, attitudes and practices in a context of overall limited service provision.” (UN and the Government of Bangladesh, 2016)

The above causes have an impact throughout the life cycle of every Bangladeshi, particularly affecting the most disadvantaged and excluded children in the country. Some of the most prevailing issues affecting children and their education in Bangladesh are:

- Child marriage: Bangladesh has the highest child marriage rate in the world. Fifty-nine per cent of girls get married before their 18th birthday and twenty-two per cent are married before the age of 15.
- Child labour: It is estimated that there are 31.18 million children in Bangladesh. Close to 11%, or 3.45 million children, between the ages of five and fifteen years of age are working. (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics - Ministry of Planning).



- Out of school children: The proportion of youths in Bangladesh who are not in Education, Employed or in Training (NEET) is 32% (UNFPA, 2017).
- Gaps between rural and urban areas are still substantial. For example, according to the 2017 Sample Vital Statistics Report, the national literacy rate for people over the age of 7 was 72.3%. The disaggregated numbers are 79.5% in urban areas and 66.5% in rural areas.

## Contextualization of the Object of Evaluation

The UNICEF Country Programme “has been developed in close dialogue with the Government to ensure its alignment with the seventh five-year plan, sector plans and the in-country process to define Sustainable Development Goal indicators, as well as the UNDAF 2017-2020, the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and lessons from the midterm review of the country programme” (Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF, 2017). The UNICEF Country Programme in Bangladesh responds to the problems mentioned by using different strategies in nutrition, health, WASH, child protection and education.

With consideration to the above, the UNICEF Education Programme 2017-2020 is consistent with the Country Programme outcomes, both framed by the UNDAF 2017-2020, the SDGs and the seventh five-year development plan in Bangladesh. This shows clear alignment between UNICEF’s actions and the GoB’s priorities.

The UNICEF Bangladesh Education Programme 2017-2020 focuses on school-age children, including those who can access early childhood, primary and secondary education. With an approximate total budget of USD 64 Million, which corresponds to 18.9% of the total planned budget of the Country Programme, the Education Programme aims to generate impact, through evidence generation, technical assistance, institutional efficiency and mainly advocacy.

The UNICEF Bangladesh Education Programme 2017-2020 is being assessed by the life-cycle approach considering all the geographic areas of the programme.

The Education Programme focuses on three headline results based on UNICEF’s comparative advantages and priorities. They are:

1. Expanding opportunities for early stimulation and learning
2. Equitable access to quality inclusive education – improved learning achievement and reducing the number of out of school children
3. Access to education for adolescents

The Education Programme headline results emerge from the outcomes defined in the Country Programme, particularly outcomes one, two and three. They are related to the social services provided to women, infants and young children, the quality of education for girls and boys of primary school age, and the empowerment and access to social services for adolescents, girls and boys.

The designs of both the Country Programme and the Education Programme identify and assess different challenges from the education sector in Bangladesh:

- (1) Institutional structure: Several bodies are responsible for operating the education system, which is a complex institutional set-up. There is limited coordination between the primary and secondary sub-sectors. They are administered by two different ministries; one building upon the success of the other, and provision at one level has considerable implications for the other level.
- (2) Budgets and financial sources: During the past decade, annual public expenditure on education has remained at about 2% of GDP. In general, public education receives 14–16% of the total public budget<sup>1</sup>. This level of public spending remain relatively low compared with international standards of 5-6% of GDP and 25% of total public budget to education sector as is established by UNESCO.
- (3) Institutional capacity and decentralization: Bangladesh has a highly centralized system for education service delivery, with fiscal and administrative powers largely concentrated in Dhaka. This stifles local initiative and contributes to weak management, lack of transparency, and little accountability.
- (4) Inadequate career development opportunities and high turnover of personnel: There is a lack of career development opportunities, performance evaluations and capacity building of administrative and technical staff. The system does not offer sufficient incentives to avoid the high turnover of personnel at the national and local levels.
- (5) Lack of continuity in policies over time: Programmes and projects often change and finish without being rigorously evaluated, due to administration turnover. There is no evidence-based decision-making process.
- (6) Cultural and social factors: Some cultural and social factors prevent children in Bangladesh from going to school. Firstly, low-income families do not value education as an investment to break the circle of poverty. Secondly, many parents, especially mothers, consider early marriage to alleviate poverty and as a legitimate means of protecting their daughters, especially when they have to go to work and the girls are left alone. Finally, the same conditions of poverty explain why child labour is an accepted practice among parents to increase their income.
- (7) Natural disasters: “A recent analysis of the impact of climate change on children recognized Bangladesh as one of the most climate change-vulnerable countries globally” (Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF, 2017). Flooding is a chronic natural occurrence in Bangladesh. During flooding, the Bangladeshi population suffers immensely as many are displaced. Children are particularly affected as schools indefinitely close. These same schools act as shelters for internally displaced persons, doubly impacting the surrounding population.

**The main inputs that UNICEF provides for programme implementation are:**

- Generating evidence for decision-making.
- Delivering strategic advocacy and technical assistance at the national and local levels.
- Offering conceptual and strategic support for the design and implementation of education-focused strategies.

<sup>1</sup> Information obtained from UNESCO



- Promoting partnerships among public and private key stakeholders.
- Providing some financial resources.

These inputs are required for implementing activities in three areas: policy development, norms and coordination bodies, piloting and modelling education interventions and C4D strategies to strengthen communication.

The specific outputs generated from these activities are the required policy, legislation and coordination for achieving the expected outcomes, strengthening the technical and management capacity to provide educational services, and creating the demand for these interventions. The four headline results defined for the programme were derived from a combination of the activities.

The interventions are divided into two groups for geographical preference and the Education Programme point of convergence. The first group is Dhaka/National, and the second group is at the local level in the Dhaka/Urban, Rangpur, Barishal, Chattogram, Khulna, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Cox's Bazar districts that cluster the 24 districts prioritized by the Programme.

Finally, the beneficiaries from the UNICEF Bangladesh Education Programme (2017-2020) are all school-aged children, particularly those in poverty-stricken and vulnerable conditions. The group of relevant stakeholders includes ministries and agencies from the GoB, implementing partners, engagement partners, and other development partners.

UNICEF, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and PLAN international are all implementing partners who participate in the UNICEF Education Programme. Ministries participating from the Government are the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and the Ministry of Education. Additionally, the most relevant engagements partners are the Bangladesh Early Childhood Development (ECD) network and the Bangladesh student associations which are both civil society organizations (CSOs).

The UNICEF Bangladesh Education Programme, much like the Country Programme, responds to important social and cultural challenges that Bangladeshi children face. They translate into a lack of educational opportunities and negatively impact the education system from a policy and service provision standpoint.

The relevance of the UNICEF Education Programme resides in addressing crucial conditions and barriers to the country's development.

## Early Childhood Education

- Enrolment in early childhood education is quite low. By 2013, only 13.4% of children, three to five years of age, had attended early childhood education (UNICEF, 2016). Early childhood education (ECE) is different from pre-primary education. ECE refers to the education provided to children

between three and five years of age and is provided in early childhood learning spaces (homes or centers). Pre-primary education is the first formal year of education for five year old children (K level).

- Currently, there is no evidence which shows the quality of the early childhood education that is being provided.

The aforementioned suggests that the more noticeable inequalities in education start at this stage. It is important to note that it is at this age where the foundation for success for future development of children is defined.

## Pre-Primary Education

Service provision in pre-primary education expanded from 2011 to 2014 when it was introduced in its full capacity. Since then, the following important advances have happened:

- More than three million pre-primary children were enrolled in 2016, three times the number in 2010.
- Almost 100% of government primary schools (GPS) now provide pre-primary education.
- The percentage of first grade students who have been enrolled in pre-primary education rose from 50% in 2012 to 87% in 2016 (DPE, 2017a).

## Primary Education

According to the 2018 Annual Primary School Census (APSC), the BANBEIS (2018) and World Bank reports:

- There are 20.9 million students attending primary schools. Of those students, 50.53% are female.
- Although primary net enrolment is at 98%, only 67% of primary students qualify for secondary education and only 22% reach the higher secondary level. This means that quality is not good enough to achieve the minimum standards to transition to the next level.
- About 4.6 million Bangladeshi children between the ages of 6 and 13 remain out of school. They are mostly from poor families, urban slums and hard-to-reach regions (UNICEF, 2018).

### There has been progress within the last ten years in Bangladeshi primary education:

- Both the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) and the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) increased between 2010 and 2018. Table 1 shows the increase of the GER and the NER between 2010 and 2018.
- The primary school dropout rate was reduced by almost 50% from 2010 to 2018. This was true for both boys and girls. However, the dropout rate of boys (21.4%) is 5.8 percentage points above the dropout rate of girls (15.7%), signifying a wide gap between boys and girls. The dropout rate has been declining since 2010 when it was approximately 40%. In 2018, it was 18.6%.
- The completion rate for students between first and fifth grade increased from 60.1% in 2010 to 80.8% in 2016.

**Table 1 ENROLMENT RATE AND DROPOUT RATE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION (2010-2018)**

YEAR	GER (%)			NER (%)			DROPOUT (%)		
	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS
2010	107.7	103.2	112.4	94.8	92.2	97.6	39.8	40.3	39.3
2011	101.5	97.5	105.6	94.9	92.7	97.3	29.7	32.4	27.0
2012	104.4	101.3	107.6	96.7	95.4	98.1	26.2	28.3	24.2
2013	108.6	106.8	110.5	97.3	96.2	98.4	21.4	24.9	17.9
2014	108.4	104.6	112.3	97.7	96.6	98.8	20.9	24.3	17.5
2015	109.2	105.0	113.4	97.4	97.1	98.8	20.4	23.9	17.0
2016	112.1	109.3	115.0	98.0	97.1	98.8	19.2	22.3	16.1
2017	108.10	115.40	11.70	97.66	98.29	97.97	18.8	21.7	15.9
2018	114.23	110.32	118.3	97.85	97.55	98.18	18.6	21.44	15.69

Source: Annual Primary School Census (APSC) 2018

## SECONDARY EDUCATION

- In total, there are 20,465 post-primary institutions, both at the secondary and higher secondary levels. From those, 19,802 schools are privately managed and receive subsidies from the government (BANBEIS, 2018).
- In total, there are 243,165 teachers and 10,475,100 students in secondary schools. Of those, 25.65% and 53.99% are female, respectively (BANBEIS, 2018).
- The learning capacities of students in secondary education are low because students who finish primary school are not sufficiently well prepared to enter secondary education.
- In 2015, 43% of eighth grade students were placed in or below level three in mathematics, which means they had only acquired basic skills. Only 6% were in level six or above, meaning they could use mathematical concepts and apply them in an unfamiliar context (Learning Assessment of Secondary Institutions 2015).
- There are large differences in the quality of secondary education between urban and rural areas. The largest gaps in learning outcomes exist between socio-economic groups. According to this assessment system, 67% of eighth grade students from the richest decile are competent in Bangla at the eighth grade level, whilst only 45.3% of students at the same level from the poorest decile were competent in Bangla.
- Discrepancies in gender were only found in mathematics, marginally favouring boys. This is not true for the subjects of Bangla and English, where there were no discernible differences between girls and boys.

The dropout rate at the secondary level was 37.21%, and the GER and NER were 60.45% and 54.68%, respectively for girls and boys in 2017. Table 2 illustrates the GER, NER, and dropout rates at the secondary level in 2017.

**Table 2 GER, NER, AND DROPOUT RATE BY GENDER IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS 2017**

INDICATORS	SECONDARY LEVEL (%)		
	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS
Gross Enrolment Rate	60.45	54.15	67.10
Net Enrolment Rate	54.68	48.94	60.75
Dropout rate	37.21	36.02	38.44

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information Statistics (BANBEIS) (2018)

## TEACHERS

- In total, there are 548,201 teachers working in primary schools. Female teachers make up 60.3% of the total (DPE, 2017a).
- About 44% of the primary school teachers do not have a bachelor's degree (World Bank, 2015).
- The use of double shifts (the school offers educational services during the morning and afternoon times)<sup>2</sup> affects almost 80% of schools and results in fewer lesson hours than international norms (595 hours vs. 900-1000 hours).
- Additionally, there is high teacher absenteeism and an excess of administrative responsibilities for teachers.

## THEORY OF CHANGE OF THE UNICEF BANGLADESH EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2017-2020

As the main purpose of this evaluation is to determine the relevance, appropriateness, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and connectedness of the Bangladesh UNICEF's Education Programme (EP) 2017-2020, the team's understanding of the theory of change is a key input for the evaluation.

When the Programme began its operations, Bangladesh had a high poverty rate, gender inequality issues, child and adolescent violence, exclusion of those disabled and hard to reach, and deep problems with the education system, besides a migration situation affecting in particular the Cox Bazar district. Therefore, the country was in need to improve not only the access but also the quality of its education system.

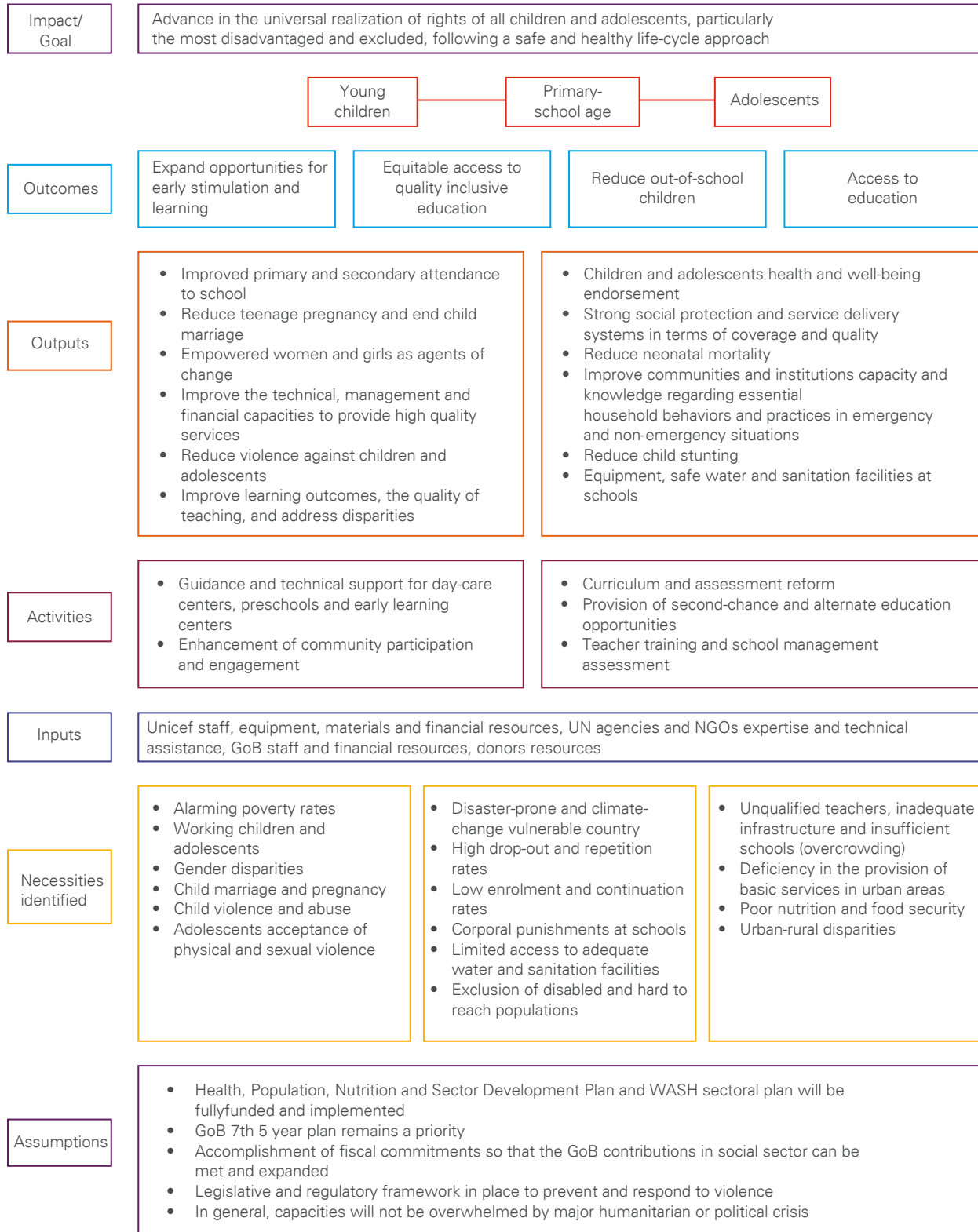
In this line, the main goal of the EP 2017-2020 is to advance in the universalization of rights of all children and adolescents, particularly the most disadvantaged and excluded, following a safe and healthy life-cycle approach. To do so, the adequate use of the inputs delivered by UNICEF, other UN agencies and NGOs, and the GoB itself is a key element to accomplish the necessary activities (see Figure 1)

If the activities mentioned above are applied properly, and the assumptions presented in Figure 1 are respected, the outputs and outcomes of the Programme should be delivered.

<sup>2</sup> This is a measure that some countries have to take in order to increase coverage because there are not enough schools and teachers to take care of the large number of students.



**Figure 1 THEORY OF CHANGE 2017-2020 BANGLADESH'S UNICEF EDUCATION PROGRAMME**



Source: Econometria Based on Terms of Reference

# OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF EVALUATION





The objective of the evaluation is to determine the relevance, appropriateness, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, connectedness and potential impact and sustainability of the UNICEF Bangladesh Education Programme 2017-2020 through a formative approach. This evaluation will also include an analytic synthesis derived from the five evaluations carried out during the previous years of the Education Programme, PEDP3.

## OBJECTIVES

Based on the agreements reached during the inception mission, the approved inception report<sup>3</sup> presented the parallels between the Bangladesh education challenges and UNICEF’s strategic education intervention. This was the framework on which UNICEF approved and designed the collection tools. The following table presents this framework.

**Table 3 ENROLMENT RATE AND DROPOUT RATE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION (2010-2018)**

BANGLADESH EDUCATION CHALLENGES	UNICEF EDUCATION OUTCOMES	UNICEF STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS
Institutional Capacity	Expanding opportunities for early stimulation and learning	Strengthening capacity to operationalize ECCD policy
Quality of Education		Support to set standards and increase quality of ECCD services
Social and Cultural Factors		Implement and document model day-care services
	Equitable access to quality, inclusive education	Advocacy, Social Mobilization and Media Campaign for ECCD
Quality of Education		Developing/revising PPE standards
		Revision of pre-primary and primary education curriculum
		Strengthening of teaching practices
Institutional Capacity and Decentralization		Assess and document application of School and Classroom Based Assessment (SCBA)
		Data for decision-making (monitoring and governance)
		SLIP/UP Education Programme and School Effectiveness Grants
Access and Equity	Reducing numbers of out-of-school children	Support to Out-of-School Children
Social and Cultural Factors		Communication, Social Mobilization and Behaviour Change

<sup>3</sup> Approved in March 2019.

BANGLADESH EDUCATION CHALLENGES	UNICEF EDUCATION OUTCOMES	UNICEF STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS
Access, Equity, and Quality	Access to education for adolescents	Modelling life & citizenship skills-based education in secondary schools
		Strengthening adolescent’s participation to remove barriers that lead to them dropping out and not completing their studies
		Education, life & livelihood skills training
Strategies: Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue & Advocacy, Partnership & Participation, and Equity Responsive and Resilient Service Delivery		

Source: *Econometria*, Based on Inception mission – Presented in the Approved Inception Report

The identification of lessons learnt and recommendations is highly useful for the following UNICEF Country Programme design. Thus, this evaluation is of direct interest to the UNICEF Bangladesh offices at the central and regional levels. It is also useful to the GoB, specifically the Ministry of Primary Mass Education (MoPME), particularly the Directorate of Primary education (DPE) and the Ministry of Education (MoE). Additionally, the evaluation provides important inputs to partners.

## SCOPE OF EVALUATION

The evaluation aims to conduct an overall analysis with the following in consideration:

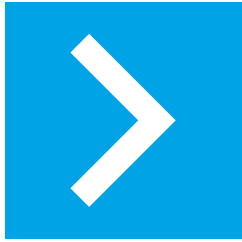
- Unit of analysis:** Main projects and sub-projects are developed under the current UNICEF Education Programme. The evaluation does not focus on the UNICEF Rohingya response because another evaluation has already been done.
- Temporal coverage:** The evaluation of the Education Programme covers the period between 2017 and mid-2019.
- Geographic coverage:** The evaluation includes Dhaka/National, Dhaka/Urban, Rangpur, Barishal, Chattogram, Khulna, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Cox’s Bazar districts.
- Accountability, attribution and contribution:** The Education Programme is being jointly implemented by the GoB, UNICEF and other partners. The evaluation shows UNICEF’s contribution to the achievements of the programme. UNICEF’s achievements will only be recognized when there is enough appropriate evidence to justify the arguments.
- Gender** According to United Nations Evaluation Group (2014), the concept of gender helps to understand and explain how a society establishes differences between men and women. Its assessment should consider gender equality, referring to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of men and women, and gender mainstreaming, referring to a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. This concept is addressed in the analysis of each evaluation criterion and a conclusion and recommendation is included in the final part of the document.



- **Children’s rights and human rights approach:** UNICEF defines the human rights-based approach as, “a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights” (United Nations Evaluation Group , 2014). These human rights include the right of education for men, women and children, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 26), “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages” (United Nations, 1948). Therefore, the evaluation is framed under the human rights conceptual framework. It considers that the UNICEF Education Programme is aligned with the UNDAF outcome that aims to ensure that by 2020, relevant state institutions, together with their respective partners, develop and implement improved social policies and programmes that focus on the reduction of structural inequalities and advance the situation of vulnerable individuals and groups. Its four strategic headlines seek to improve the access to education and services for children across their life cycle.

# METHDOLOGY





A mixed-methods approach was used to evaluate the Education Programme, combining desk review, quantitative and qualitative techniques. The use of quantitative, qualitative and desk review methods allows for cross-cutting analysis, giving more validity to the results. In addition, areas of agreement, disagreement, and conclusions can be obtained through the triangulation of results.

The following five types of data collection methods were used (Annex 4):

- Document review/secondary data review (DR): The analysis of the documents reviewed provided inputs for a more in-depth understanding to formulate new questions, and to allow for the identification of areas that needed further explanation and more in-depth analyses. Desk review is also the foundation for the analysis of UNICEF's role in PEDP3, primarily through the study of the rapid assessment report, the mid-term report, and the completion report.
- Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the relevant stakeholders at the national and field levels. Also, as part of the formative evaluation of the Education Programme 2017-2020, selected head teachers were interviewed at schools visited, and Upazila education authorities were interviewed at early childhood development centres, primary schools and secondary schools.
- Focus group discussions (FGD): Group discussions were conducted with teachers, parents, School Management Committee (SMCs), Parent Teacher Association (PTAs), and students from different levels. There were four FGDs in each school visited. Additionally, there were focus groups with parents and children at selected tea gardens, enclaves and city corporation locations.
- Survey (S): Self-administered surveys were conducted with relevant officials from MoE, MoPME, UNICEF, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), through databases which were referred by UNICEF.
- Direct observation (DO): During fieldwork, direct observation was conducted following a guideline developed during the inception phase as part of the collection tools. These observations included; (1) non-verbal language used during the interviews and focus groups; (2)

observations of the management information system of the school; (3) management processes; (4) selected school classroom observations for teaching practice assessments; (5) wash blocks; (6) administration spaces; (7) general infrastructure and public utilities; (8) adaptation for disabled children; (9) and availability of teaching materials.

Gender and child sensitivity were addressed in the methods and data sources chosen. Firstly, focus groups were planned with children at the secondary level, considering they might be more aware of themes related to job training and emotion management. Secondly, they were done separately with boys and girls, to identify their different perceptions. In addition, the questions were tailored to different genders, including topics related to the reasoning behind boys and girls dropping out and repeating a grade. Likewise, interviewees were asked to give their perceptions on the differences in opportunities given to boys and girls, and for recommendations to overcome the identified gender gaps.

The analysis plan was carried out separately for each criterion. The analysis was conducted using data from:

- Desk review of key documents on context, norms, related policies and implementation guidelines.
- Secondary information of education coverage, public investment on education policies, the socio-economic context of the target population, progress in the implementation of the Education Programme.
- KIIs, FGDs, school observations, and online surveys.

All data was triangulated for the research questions and the indicators proposed for each criterion. The data used for the analysis of each evaluation criterion is presented in the evaluation matrix (See Annex 3)

## Evaluation Phases

The evaluation was carried out in three consecutive phases:

- The inception phase was carried out from November 2018 to February 2019. It included initial meetings, gathering and identifying documentation, a draft inception review and an inception visit by the team leader. The final version of the Inception Report was delivered on February 16th, 2019.
- Four field-teams began data collection in April 2019 after receiving the information needed for sampling the fieldwork. Each team consisted of two research assistants working under a supervisor with experience in qualitative data collection and in the education sector. In addition, the local expert in education led the national level interviews. This was done in conjunction with the online survey given on May 7th, 2019 to the stakeholders which were referred by UNICEF.
- Information collected during the first two phases was analysed and integrated into the Draft



Evaluation Report, paralleling the “UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards” (Evaluation Office, UNICEF NYHQ, September 2004). The analysis was based on the revised ToC and the evaluation matrix developed during the inception phase of the evaluation process.

The triangulation of the information was based on the analysis conducted for each research question, which was based on UNICEF primary data from its strategic documents, monitoring framework, norms and policy documents, and outcomes and results from other evaluations. The initial findings were argued and complemented with primary qualitative information collected for the evaluation through interviews with national stakeholders and FGDs at the local level. Interviews were conducted face to face and online. Conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations were derived from this triangulated analysis carried out for each criterion.

### Fieldwork: Sampling and Data Collection

Sampling was done at the regional level and the school level. Four out of seven UNICEF field offices were selected. Those field offices were in Khulna, Mymensingh, Sylhet, and Chittagong. The criteria considered for their selection was:

- The regions with a higher concentration of UNICEF Education Programme 2017-2020 activities were Cox’s Bazar, Barisal, Khulna, Mymensingh, and Sylhet.
- Those with the lowest literacy rates were the districts of Sylhet, Chattogram, and Mymensingh (Khonder & Mahzab, 2015).
- Those that included the tea producing districts, or tea gardens were Maulvi Bazar, Habiganj, Sylhet, Chattogram, Panchagarh, Brahmanbaria and Rangamat (Teaboard GoB, 2015).
- Those that included city corporations, Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Barisal, Khulna, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Cumilla, Chattogram and Sylhet.

Those with geographic diversity. Two Upazilas were selected in each of the four regions. The criteria for the Upazila selection were the following:

- The regions with higher concentrations of Education Programme 2017-2020 activities.
- Those with special activities like operational research districts on keeping girls in school.
- Those with early childhood centres and schools with pre-primary, primary and secondary education.
- Those with School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP) and/or Upazila Primary Education Plan (UPEP) activities.
- Those with geographic diversity.

School selection consisted of all schools within the EP. This consisted of early childhood centres and schools. The Education Team (ET) identified schools at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels and

then applied probabilistic stratified sampling. There was over-sampling in cases where some schools needed to be replaced due to difficult accessibility conditions or school closures. This selection was done based on the information that UNICEF shared with the ET. For that purpose, the team requested all potential schools and early childhood centres involved in the Education Programme 2017-2020 information about its location at the division, district and Upazila levels and basic characteristics like the number of girls and boys per grade.

The fieldwork conducted for the evaluation included the following (see Annex 5 for details):

- Interviews with Dhaka national stakeholders, UNICEF, the GoB, implementation partners, other UN agencies, and other international development agencies.
- The list of persons of interest to be interviewed was constructed during the Inception Mission.
- Eleven interviews were planned, and eight were conducted successfully. Interviews with MoPME, DPE and the Ministry of Finance were not possible.
- UNICEF field offices visited were in Sylhet, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Khulna and Mymensingh. Five officials participated in the interviews.

In each of the eight Upazilas visited:

- Education authorities were interviewed from secondary and primary offices. A total of 16 interviews were conducted with the participation of 16 officials.
- One early childhood centre and one school were selected to be visited. The schools were at the pre-primary, primary or secondary levels and were covered by the Education Programme 2017-2020.
- In every school, the head teacher was interviewed.
- At the primary school level, there were FGDs held with parents (52 women and 15 men), SMCs (22 women and 33 men), and teachers (26 women and 10 men). At the secondary level, there were FGDs held with parents (29 women and 25 men), SMCs (5 women and 32 men), teachers (14 women and 48 men) and students (106 girls and 104 boys). Groups were separated by gender. A total of 64 FGDs and eight interviews were conducted with head-teachers.
- Direct observations were also carried out in education center for a total of eight direct observations in early childhood centres. The direct observation guide was applied, including during interviews with the director.
- In the city corporations, tea gardens, and enclaves, five FGDs were held with parents, 18 women and 23 men and with children, 40 boys and 42 girls.

## Evaluation Limitations

As mentioned before, due to the changes made by the ERG at the end of the Inception Mission, the evaluation team had to take out the PEDP3 programme from the scope of the evaluation and concentrate in depth on the continuing Education Programme 2017-2020 and its contributions to education sector.



Thus, the main focus of the evaluation has been on providing recommendations to overcome bottlenecks. This led to modifying the design of the instruments and the analysis of the collected information, rather than following the specific evaluation questions included in the original ToR's, many of which were framed in relation to PEDP3.

In addition, there were some operational limitations that delayed the fieldwork. They were:

- School calendar: Due to the festivities that affected the school calendar, the field team had to accelerate the collection of information by adding more people to each fieldwork route, which affected the start of the interviews with the national stakeholders.
- School activities: Schools were holding examinations at the time of the survey, so observations were performed after examinations.
- Delays on the access of information: The delays affected the start of the fieldwork for the dates originally planned and therefore delayed the reporting and analysis phase. This meant that an amendment to the contract had to be made.
- Data limitations: Statistical information at the school level was not available.
- The agendas of officials: Due to difficulties in the agendas of officials and the year-closing of government, it was not possible to carry out three of the eleven national stakeholder interviews. To compensate for missing these interviews, the analysis included information from documents published by these entities, as well as information gathered during the inception mission.

## Quality Assurance

UNEG quality criteria for the evaluation report and UNICEF quality standards for evaluations were applied to the evaluation. Results-based management principles and logical framework analysis were also applied. Conclusions are evidence-based and logically follow the analysis that was made of the preliminary evaluators' findings. Recommendations are also logically derived from the main conclusions of the evaluation so that they can be useful to its users. In addition, Econometría's internal quality measures were applied, which are based on the forms of interaction and coordination between the team of consultants and the client, in this case, UNICEF. These mechanisms aim at impartiality, independence, credibility, and utility.

## Ethical Concerns

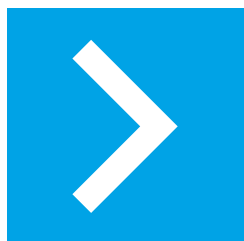
This evaluation was conducted following the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (2008), which provide professional standards for ethical and moral principles. A human rights-based approach and gender perspective were part of the evaluation's approach. Additionally, Econometría asked for an Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethical concept on the evaluation, which provided the ethical clearance (See Annex 5).

The evaluation team conducted consent and interviewing procedures with sensitivity to children's specific needs because the data collection exercises included the direct participation of children. Children's consent to participate, parental awareness of their children's participation, and teacher's approval were ensured.

Full confidentiality was respected so that any statement could not and will not be attributed to a named individual or traced to its source. The field teams followed a standardized procedure in which the participants in each school and Upazila were informed of the scope of the evaluation. They were asked for their approval to participate in the study and to be recorded.

# FROM THE PEDP3 TO THE UNICEF EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2017-2020





Section 4.1 consists of a synthesis of previously conducted PEDP3 assessments to establish their influence and effect over the design and implementation of UNICEF’s Bangladesh Country Programme 2017-2020. This section is structured in accordance with the agreed upon modification of the evaluation objective: a summative evaluation of the PEDP3, as discussed during the inception mission. The transition from the PEDP3 to the Country Programme 2017-2020 is presented in three subsections. They are, providing a brief description of the main components of the PEDP3, synthesising the findings and recommendations generated from the PEDP3 assessments, and establishing the relationship between PEDP3 findings and the design of the Country Programme 2017-2020.

### The main finding from the analysis is presented below:

**Finding 1:** The UNICEF Bangladesh Country Programme 2017-2020 was adequately responsive to the recommendations that emerged from PEDP3 evaluations. The Country Programme’s focus on Second Chance Education and the introduction of quality-based indicators capture how PEDP3’s lessons on lower learning outcomes were translated into innovative responses. Other PEDP3 recommendations were also incorporated into the Country Programme’s design, such as the need to push for a gender mainstreaming approach and the importance of creating strategies targeting vulnerable populations. A more accentuated focus on results-based management (RBM) in an area that could have better addressed the Country Programme’s responsiveness to PEDP3 recommendations.

## PEDP3 DESCRIPTION

Between 2011 and 2017, PEDP3 was the government’s main effort to develop primary education. It was guided by the specific objective of “establishing an efficient, inclusive and equitable primary education system delivering effective and relevant child-friendly learning to all children from pre-primary through grade 5 primary education” (Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 2011).

Article 70 from the constitution clearly outlines the county’s aspiration to “establish[ing] a uniform mass oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as determined by law” (Article 70).

This programme was preceded by PEDP2 and will be followed by PEDP4, all aimed at improving the education sector by creating a fully inclusive and quality system.

The third version of the educational development programme was marked by efforts to deepen the interventions and introduce two governance innovations: (1) the adoption of an RBM approach as a way



of moving from activity to result-driven management and; (2) a strengthening of the SWAp<sup>4</sup> to incorporate financial harmonization.

### PEDP 3 ANALYTIC SUMMARY

This section will use the results of five of the most comprehensive evaluations of PEDP3 to create an analytic summary.<sup>5</sup> The analytic summary creates a chronological story by using the evaluations to draw common themes of analysis with respect to the four components of PEDP3 and the lessons learned from looking at the progression of themes over the course of the different evaluations. Table 4 shows the four components and their corresponding result areas, as well as the key performance indicators to measure those results. The analysis of these evaluations generates a common set of criteria which can be used to conduct a coherent analysis of PEDP3, leading into the evaluation of the current Education Country Programme in the following subsection.

**Table 4** PEDP3 STRUCTURE

PEDP3			
Components	Sub Components	Result Areas	Key Performance Indicators
1 Learning and Teaching	1.1 Each Child Learns	1 Learning Outcomes	Level of achievement in Grade III: mean score (boys and girls): in Bangla and Mathematics
	1.2 School and Classroom based Assessment		
	1.3 Curriculum Development		Level of achievement in Grade V: mean score (boys and girls): in Bangla and Mathematics.
	1.4 Textbooks Production & Distribution		
	1.5 ICT in Education		Grade V terminal examination pass rate (boys and girls).
	1.6 Teacher Education & Professional Development		
2 Participation and Disparities	2.1 Second Chance Education	2 Universal access and participation	Number of children out of school (boys and girls) ; 6-10 years old AND 11-14 years old
	2.2 Pre-Primary Education		Gross enrolment rate, primary education (boys and girls)
	2.3 Mainstreaming Gender & Inclusive Education		
	2.4 Education in Emergencies		Net enrolment rate, primary education (boys and girls)
	2.5 Communication and Social Mobilization		

<sup>4</sup> SWAp is Sector Wide Approach.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank: Implementation Completion Report: Independent Evaluation Group (2018), Joint Rapid Assessment Report: Anne Bernard (2016), Bangladesh Third Primary Education Development Program Mid-Term Review (2012-2013), Bangladesh Primary Education Annual Sector Performance Report (2017) and Teaching & Learning Quality in Primary Education: Assessment & Recommendations (2016).

PEDP3			
Components	Sub Components	Result Areas	Key Performance Indicators
	2.6 Targeted Stipend	3 Reducing Disparities	[Participation] Gender parity index of gross enrolment rate
	2.7 School Health & Feeding		[Participation] Net enrolment rate – Range between top 20% and bottom 20% of households by consumption quintile
	2.8 Need based School Environment		Upazila level composite performance indicator <sup>5</sup> : Annual improvement of 20 per cent lowest performing upazilas, and, range between top 10% and bottom 10% of upazila
	2.9 Need based Infrastructure Development		
3 Decentralization and Effectiveness	3.1 Field level Offices Strengthened	4 Decentralization	Percentage of AOP budget allocation for unconditional block grants (UPEP & SLIP) for Upazillas and schools
	3.2 Decentralized School Management and Governance		
	3.3 School level Leadership Development		Expenditure of unconditional block grants (UPEP & SLIP) by Upazillas and schools
	3.4 Review and Strengthening		
	3.5 Grade 5 Terminal Examination	5 Effectiveness	Completion rate, primary education (boys and girls)
	3.6 Recruitment and Deployment		Dropout rate by grade
	3.7 Annual School Census		Number of input years per graduate
	3.8 National Student Assessment		Percentage of schools that meet composite school-level quality indicators
4 Planning and Management	4.1 PEDP III Management and Governance	6 Programme Planning and Management	NO KPI
	4.2 PEDP III Financial Management		
	4.3 Sector Finance		
	4.4 Strengthening Monitoring Functions		
	4.5 Human Resources and Development		
	4.6 Public Private Partnership		

Elaborated by Econometria using data from (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2011)



## ANALYTIC THEMES IDENTIFIED AND LESSONS LEARNED

### Teaching and Learning (Component 1)

Most of the evaluations have concluded that, while many of the targeted PEDP3 outcomes were achieved, there was evidence that learning outcomes declined throughout the programme period. This suggests potential problems for the quality of education and related development objectives, even though 13 out of the 29 sub-components were related to the quality of education in one way or another. Some of the evaluations found that, while there was a lot of information about the inputs and outputs for the Education Programme 2017-2020, the data relating to a system change or classroom incidence were extremely limited. This posed a great difficulty in the identification of the underlying causes of declining learning outcomes.

The Teaching & Learning Quality in Primary Education: Assessment & Recommendations (2016) found that, although various initiatives focused on improvements to the quality of learning, there was limited programme monitoring in terms of the interconnectedness of those actions. The programme could have benefited from a restructuring or better linkage among the sub-components in order to better connect the delivery of interventions to teachers and the subsequent impact of those interventions on changes in teacher practices in the classroom. PEDP3 success is limited by the actual change that happened in terms of teaching and learning practices in the classrooms, one of the important parts of pre-service and in-service teacher training. Many international studies have also demonstrated the impact of teacher training in terms of thematic knowledge, pedagogical practice and their ability to promote student learning. This last dimension is a “sine qua non” condition for both students and nations to be able to reap economic and social benefits from education” (Bruns, B & Luque, J 2015).

Many educational factors limit the quality of learning, according to the different evaluations reviewed, and all of them agree in their conclusions with the international studies report. The key factors identified are as follows: (1) few contact hours for pupils; (2) poor teacher morale due to the heavy workload; (3) insufficient academic leadership; (4) lack of transparency in teacher selection; (5) lack of innovative pedagogical practice in the classroom (6) and problems with support and supervision.

The fact that children learning outcomes seem to have worsened throughout the completion of the programme is concerning, given the programme’s purpose of providing quality education. This is despite achieving most of the intended outcomes. Despite improvements in the M&E design, the World Bank’s evaluation suggests a failure to further investigate the driving factors behind declining learning outcomes to understand how this issue could be addressed more effectively. The negative implications for the development outcomes are high as a result of the lack of action and further investigation into this trend of declining learning outcomes.

Along similar lines, the Joint Rapid Assessment report found a lack of a systematic efforts to improve learning conditions and outcomes. The report argues that the programme achievements are mostly visible at the output level (results emanating directly from resources and actions) rather than at the outcome level (changes in learning results likely to be sustained).

The evaluations also found that there is a need to continue investing in schools' technological infrastructure (software and hardware) to achieve teaching and learning conditions that are conducive to quality learning.

Like all the evaluations, the Annual Sector Report also found a decline in learning outcomes, as evidenced by the results of the 2015 NSA. This was particularly true for math and Bangla.

Bangladesh has developed and implemented a competency-based curriculum. However, the national assessment system is not aligned with this new approach as it continues to measure content. Thus, students are evaluated on aspects that the curricula were not meant to teach them.

To remedy this situation, the World Bank introduced the objective 'to improve the quality of measurement of student learning' in its project. To do so, the project supported the creation of more 'competency-based test items' for the Primary Education Completion Exams (PECEs). This was substantially achieved. By 2017, 65% of the PECEs were competency-based items, compared to the original goal of 25%. Despite that important achievement, the results on children learning assessments did not improve but instead got worse. This was most likely due to poor teacher preparation, the lack of pedagogical innovations in the classroom, and children spending less time in the classroom (600 hours compared to 1,200 hours in many countries).

## Participation and Disparities (Component 2)

The two result areas in this component are universal access and participation, and the reduction of disparities. Both participation and disparities can be measured by enrolment rates. Analysing these numbers over time shows whether there has been an increase in participation across sub-groups, e.g., boys and girls, and whether the goals have been met.

The data indicate improvements in both net and gross enrolment rates. However, the dropout rate is still high, with 19.2% of children leaving school before completing grade 5 in 2016, compared to 39.8 in 2010. The evaluations also found persisting geographical disparities in relation to attendance rates. Geographic disparity was also marked by gender, with a lower proportion of boys attending school. This could be the result of boys being more likely to engage in child labour.

The Mid-Term Report (MTR) shows mixed results for Component 2. On the one hand, pre-primary education, along with school health and feeding, were all determined to have been being successfully achieved. On the other hand, Second Chance Education (SCE), and environment improvement did not progress as of 2014. The JRA indicates that gender, children with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and children living in geographic poverty are four distinct areas of exclusion. The reduction of factors to a single metric that assesses participation and equitable development within the system is not realistic.

The 2016 Teaching and Learning Quality PEAR continued to assess participation as insufficient, flagging it as an aspect to work onto reduce disparities in access to both a quality learning process, and a favourable



physical environment. It also showed that pre-primary education had done well, as reflected in the 2014 MTR assessment, in reaching its targets for participation. The 2017 ASPR still showed large gaps between the ten highest and ten lowest participating districts in terms of exclusion, but also revealed that participation targets had been met at a very high rate, activating all disbursement linked indicators (DLIs). The 2018 WB assessment echoed this positive assessment.

Because of the numerous methods used to assess participation and disparities in learning and inclusion, a detailed analysis must be conducted to obtain a full picture of the evolution. The main finding is that Bangladesh society must continue its path towards greater inclusion in the education sector. This must be supported by a change of mindset within the population at large, as well as among teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Only in this way can the country create an environment that promotes inclusive ideas.

The evaluations have raised the need to improve two important aspects, namely, social mobilization and communication. More communication and the mobilization of all communities can help raise awareness in the importance of inclusive education, which is necessary to bridge the gender, disability, ethnic and geographical divides that still hamper efforts to create a fully participatory education system.

### **Decentralization and Effectiveness (Component 3)**

Component 3, decentralization and effectiveness has two result areas: (1) the decentralization of school-level planning; and (2) the increased effectiveness of budget allocation. PEDP3 is characterized by using a SWAp. An increasingly important form of budget allocation are DLIs which were used to finance the SWAp in PEDP3. The MTR highlights that 70% of funding for PEDP3 is determined through DLIs that correspond to 9 of the 29 sub-components of the 6 result areas.<sup>6</sup> Four of the nine are linked to Component 3. One of these sub-components is the decentralisation of school management governance. With almost three-quarters of allocation being determined by DLIs, it makes for a prime indicator and analytic tool to determine the effectiveness of allocation. It demonstrates that decentralization for planning at the school-level, via governance, is crucial in the release of funds and, consequently effectiveness. The highly critical JRA characterizes DLIs as 'proving effective' as of 2014. Inversely, the JRA stated that DLIs are stronger benchmarks than a form of comprehensive understanding. It also stated that DLIs are instrumental in shifting conversation and focus to outputs and outcomes, the ultimate metric of success.

By creating a set of predetermined indicators which would enable the release of funding, DPs and the GoB have promoted greater decentralization at the school-level. This approach was effective in allowing for governance systems to achieve targets within their structures, rather than using a top-down disbursement model based on policy and decision making at the highest and furthest removed levels. Not only does the decentralised approach promote autonomy at the school-level, but it creates a system in which the budget is not spread across ineffective nodes that may further squander their allocated

<sup>6</sup> Bangladesh Third Primary Education Development Program Mid-Term Review (2012-2013)

resources. At the same time, expecting DLIs to cover 100% of the budget allocation is unrealistic as unexpected situations may arise where a unique allocation model is required. However, DLIs should be utilized to their maximum potential in order to stimulate results-based actions and allow for greater focus on outputs and outcomes.

### Planning and Management (Component 4)

Component 4 of PEDP3, planning and management, coincides with one result area, programme planning and management. The midterm review (MTR) conducted in 2013-2014 was the first comprehensive look at the implementation of PEDP3. It led to a series of recommendations for the successful continuation and expansion of the scope of the programme. The MTR highlighted Results-Based Management (RBM) as an anticipated outcome for Component 4 of PEDP3 alongside improved sector planning. It found that RBM has been working more effectively since PEDP2. This was a necessary improvement to maintain increased effectiveness and more efficient budget allocation during the implementation process.

However, MTR also noted at the time that RBM was not being fulfilled to its full potential and needed to be enhanced via training. It suggested that a cascade training model from the divisional level to the central level be undertaken to further the RBM approach and enhance the monitoring activities of PEDP3. By the time the JRA was carried out, RBM had not been satisfactorily implemented. The JRA stated that RBM had, 'not advanced significantly', and that the programme lacked a logic framework or a ToC. This was hindering decision-makers from achieving results as well as validating them, despite the acknowledgement of RBM's importance as a pivotal tool to plan and manage activities in PEDP3.

By the time the Teaching and Learning Quality PEAR was released, RBM had been instrumental in creating a sustainable management process in terms of the interventions designed and implemented in PEDP3. This, in turn, created a favourable atmosphere for more accountability towards sustainable development by funding allocations through SWAp. The 2017 ASPR reaffirmed the importance of RBM as the primary means of organizing data in the planning and management process through a results chain logic, shifting away from the activity-driven approach in PEDP2.

Although only briefly mentioned in the 2018 World Bank report as a means of financial planning, RBM has permeated all facets of PEDP3 planning and management, and is now playing a leading role in the financing methods for the project, helping to focus on results rather than inputs. Therefore, RBM is a fundamental tool used for the cyclical assessments of PEDP3, primarily in those composed of planning and managing the programme. It is a useful analytic tool for addressing Component 4 and its result areas. Hopefully, RBM can be implemented in all management aspects as part of the strategy to focus systematically on results.



## CONCLUSION OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Each of the four components of PEDP3 are unique. Therefore, they must be looked at separately to assess their effectiveness and ideas for improvement. At the same time, it is not possible to entirely disaggregate these components. All the analytic themes covered by each component play a vital role in relation to the other three components. RBM can not only be applied to planning and management, but to all others, such as teaching and learning, where it can also be applied to create a results-based system. Therefore, a dual approach is necessary to look at the themes comprehensively and elicit the lessons of PEDP3 in a holistic manner. While giving individual attention to each component is necessary to look at specific benchmarks, those very benchmarks need to be used in a system-wide approach to understand the interrelatedness of the components of the programme. In the final analysis, PEDP3 is a single programme whose success can only be assessed by looking at the outcomes.

These evaluations of PEDP3 have identified many lessons, which can inform the design and implementation of future programs in a practical manner, including PEDP4 and the UNICEF Education Country Programme. The first key lesson is that proper resource disbursement methods must be extended to interventions focusing on quality improvement. Even though the programme reached its goals for coverage and has made impressive progress in the learning component, quality as an outcome has suffered. Addressing this issue with proper resource allocation must be a priority, with the objective of creating an environment conducive to facilitating more effective interactions between teachers and students.

The second lesson is on the importance of giving schools and divisions the authority and capacity to interact without centralized oversight. The third lesson is that effective social mobilization and frequent communication can facilitate programme implementation through more socially conscious communities. Finally, the evaluation has shown that clearly defined responsibilities and mission focus are key ingredients of good implementation to promote overall effectiveness.

## INTEGRATION OF THE PEDP3 RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE 2017-2020 UNICEF COUNTRY PROGRAMME

The following section focuses on the lessons learned and recommendations with respect to the key components of the PEDP3 and their implications for the UNICEF Bangladesh Country Programme 2017-2020. For this comparison and given that the PEDP is focused on primary schooling, this section addresses Outcome area # 2 of the Country Programme: "Girls and Boys of primary school age". Overall, the Country Programme shows a positive, responsive focus to the major lessons emerging from the PEDP3 and the introduction of new educational approaches.

The Country Programme recognizes that, despite the multiple improvements in the primary education sector in Bangladesh, there are still major challenges faced by the country's most vulnerable population groups. The challenges include: (1) insufficient learning outcomes, resulting from poor quality education;

(2) large disparities in access to education and quality among children living in different parts of the country based on socio-economic status, gender, and ethnicity; (3) a lack of awareness of the detrimental effects of violence against children; and (4) a lack of inclusive sanitary infrastructure in the schools. According to the Country Programme, the challenges persist, driven by a combination of factors including enabling environments, education supply, demand for education, and quality of education.

Similar to PEDP3, the Country Programme's "overall vision of success/impact is that boys and girls of primary school age, especially from hard-to-reach, vulnerable and marginalized areas, will learn equitably in an environment that is healthy, safe and resilient" (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2016). This proposed outcome is driven by a specific focus on the quality of learning, the degree of inclusiveness of education, and the prevention of violence against children. Its working approach is through the generation of evidence, policy dialogue, advocacy, equity responses, resilient service delivery, partnerships and community participation. Its three outputs are:

- A strengthened national and sub-national capacity to legislate, plan, coordinate, have a gender-responsive budget, and promote inclusive social protection measures and programmes benefiting all girls and boys of primary school age, in a child-friendly and disaster-resilient environment.
- National and sub-national education as well as WASH and protection systems have strong technical, management and financial capacities to provide quality learning, services and protection against violence aimed at girls and boys, including children with disabilities, children in hard-to-reach areas, and those in emergency and non-emergency situations.
- Parents and communities have improved capacity and knowledge of key care and protective behaviours that promote the well-being of primary, school-aged children (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2016, pág. 52).

The Country Programme introduces a rights-based approach, a gender mainstreaming plan, and a focus on reducing the prevalence and impact of violence against children. Such focal points were not a main part of the PEDP3 and as such, are new approaches. However, some of the new approaches do fall in line with several of the recommendations that emerged from the PEDP3. For example, the mid-term report had called for mainstreaming gender and inclusive education into all implementing divisions. The Country Programme seeks to mainstream gender, specifically into the curriculum, monitoring mechanisms, and teacher training. Children's educational achievements are affected by their gender in different ways and therefore, strategies to improve the quality of education need to be cognisant of those differences. In Bangladesh, boys are particularly affected by child labour while girls are hampered by child marriage. In terms of a rights-based approach, the Country Programme has a specific focus on raising children's awareness that they have a right to education. It seeks to do this through mass media and communication efforts, and it has also been incorporated into several of the key progress indicators for the programme. The focus on child rights seeks to challenge a "welfare approach" to addressing education for vulnerable children by promoting the recognition of all children as rights holders. There is also a focus on children with disabilities who have been identified as one of the most vulnerable



population groups in the PEDP3 evaluations. The focus on strategies that are specifically targeted to the needs of vulnerable population groups was also a key recommendation emerging from the PEDP3. For example, the annual sector performance report called for specific strategies to address the needs of the various groups of out-of-school children. The Country Programme responds specifically to this recommendation through Second Chance, alternative offerings, and life and livelihood skills training targeted at the most vulnerable populations.

The Country Programme considers several of the recommendations emerging from the PEDP3 evaluations, stressing the need to focus on the quality of education and learning outcomes. The Country Programme states that, “strategic advocacy will be carried out in support of increased, improved investments in the quality of education and ensuring girls’ and boys’ progress to secondary education (both formal and non-formal/Second Chance), bolstered by stronger monitoring of these investments within child-based budget analysis”. More specifically, UNICEF, “will strengthen the capacity of teachers to implement gender-responsive, ability-based inclusive teaching/learning methods in classrooms and Second Chance Education learning centres for improved learning achievement”. The focus on classroom practices derives from the recommendations presented by the teaching and learning quality report. The focus on second chance education derives from the annual sector performance report to improve the learning outcomes of vulnerable populations. The Country Programme also includes multiple quality indicators such as the existence of a well-functioning classroom assessment, quality standards consistent with child friendly schools, and learning outcome measurements.

While the Country Programme does not mention strengthening the RBM approach as recommended by the PEDP3 evaluations, it does endorse the need for consolidating the SWAP approach. This would help develop need-based capacities and focus on better integration with other sectors. Finally, the “whole school” development strategy represents a bottom-up community-driven, and evidence-based approach which the PEDP3 evaluations have also identified as an essential success factor.

# RESULTS





# RELEVANCE AND APPROPRIATENESS

The assessment of the relevance and appropriateness<sup>7</sup> of the UNICEF Education Programme (2017-2020) considers the evaluation questions presented in Table 5.

**Table 5** EVALUATION QUESTION FOR RELEVANCE AND APPROPRIATENESS

EVALUATION QUESTIONS (TOR)	
1.1	How closely aligned is the Education Programme, its interventions and plans, with relevant planning and policy framework of the GoB?
1.2	How aligned are the education programme interventions with the outcomes and results the programme expected to achieve?
1.3	Is ToC being followed? Does it include all the factors necessary for the ToC to be relevant? Does it need to be adjusted in any way?
1.4	How closely linked are the specific interventions chosen with the full scope and scale of beneficiaries' needs in Bangladesh, both in an emergency and a development setting?
1.5	How well is the program preparing for changing needs as Bangladesh transits to a middle-income country (MIC)?
1.6	Has the Education Strategy 2017-2020 appropriately reflected and contextualized UNICEF's common principles such as the UNICEF Strategic Plan, the SDGs, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies?
1.7	How appropriate is UNICEF's current approach to education systems building, by focusing on education system strengthening in light of Bangladesh' s context of lower middle-income country?
1.8	Where within the Education Sector has the UNICEF Education Program been established as a critical actor that must remain present? Where has UNICEF not achieved critical status and needs to either become better or to consider exiting in favour of a better equipped stakeholder?

Source: Terms of reference of the evaluation

Finding 1.1: The UNICEF Education Programme is highly relevant as it is closely aligned with the relevant planning and policy framework of the GoB, and it responds to the identified main challenges of the country in education. It reflects UNICEF's common principles and is internally aligned with the expected outcomes and results that the programme hopes to achieve.

<sup>7</sup> According to Chianca (2008), the OECD/DAC criteria defines relevance as "the extent to which the programme is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor."

### The UNICEF Education Programme is closely aligned with the relevant planning and policy framework of the GoB.

The UNICEF Country Programme and the Education Programme, derived from the Country Programme, was developed in “close dialogue” with the GoB. National interviewees confirmed it is in full alignment with the Bangladesh’s education policies supporting the country’s efforts in, “advancing the universal realization of the rights of children, particularly the most disadvantaged and excluded” (CPD).

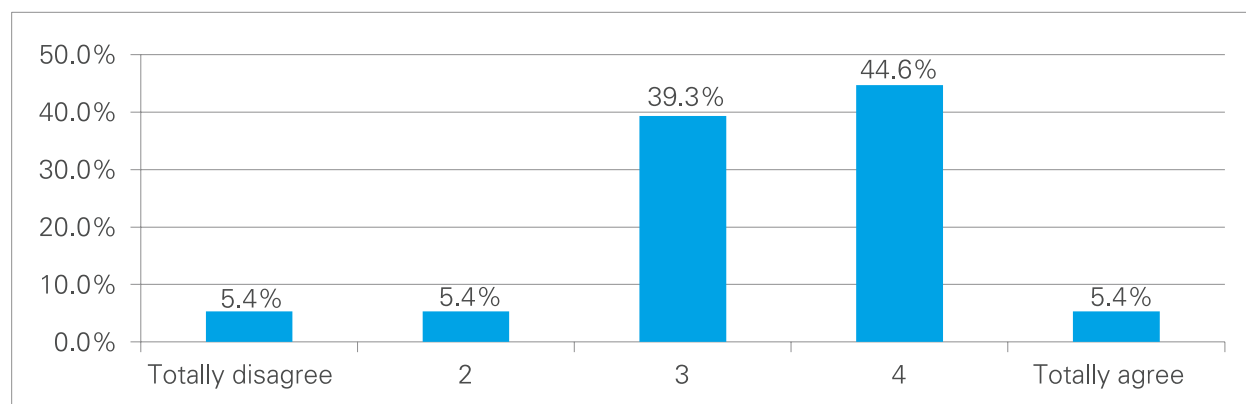
UNICEF Education Programme Outcome 1: To Expand opportunities for early stimulation and learning. The GoB adopted a comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, within which the UNICEF Education Programme stands as an effective operationalization and implementation plan.

UNICEF Education Programme Outcome 2: To create equitable access to inclusive quality education and to reduce the number of out-of-school children. The Fourth Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP4) is the “government’s flagship in the education sector for 2019-2023” (ADB, 2018). It uses a sector-wide approach. The overall objective of PEDP4 is to provide quality primary education for all children in the country from the pre-primary level to fifth grade, through an inclusive and equitable education system. It is clustered around three key outputs: quality, equitable access and participation, and management, governance, and financing. The UNICEF Education Plan focuses on, “strengthening the system’s capacity to increase learning achievements and also reduce the number of out-of-school children,” with an overall approach of working with the “education system through the current SWAP to influence sector plans and activities” (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2016).

The alignment and support that UNICEF has given to the PEDP4 are relevant, as is stated in the online survey answers. Most of the national stakeholder respondents partially agree with the statement that, “PEDP4 is well prepared for changing needs of the education sector for social development, as Bangladesh transits to a middle-income country (MIC)”. It received an average score of 3.39 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is “totally disagree” and 5 is “totally agree”.

**Figure 2**

**PEDP4 is well prepared for the changing needs of the education sector for social development, as Bangladesh transitions to a middle-income country (MIC):**



Source: Econometria, online survey March-May 2019.  
Per cent of respondents according to the level of agreement with the statement



UNICEF Education Programme Outcome 3: Access to education for adolescents: The 7th five-year development plan emphasises secondary and higher education, vocational and technical education, and skill development training for employment and life-skills training programmes (Government of Bangladesh, 2015). Inclusive actions are focused on disadvantaged groups, such as women, children, and persons with disabilities. Enhancing quality through expanding the capacity of the teachers, using ICT, and bettering infrastructure is also the core of the plan. The UNICEF Education Programme stands for, “mainstreaming life skills-based education throughout the secondary education system, creating alternative learning pathways for out-of-school adolescents that link them with employment” (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2016).

UNICEF Education Programme objectives are also aligned with:

- The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) with a life-cycle approach, including, among others, children and active labour market programmes with a special focus on youth and vulnerable women (Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 2015).
- The draft of the Education Act of 2016 that contributes to the establishment of a legal framework to guarantee children’s rights to education. Among other topics, it introduced pre-primary education, different penalties for applying corporal punishment, and that all institutions maintain a core curriculum.
- The Children’s Act implements the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (Government of Bangladesh, 2013). It brought about major change by defining children as persons under the age of 18. In the past, persons under the age of 14 were considered children.

According to the information provided in the 2019-2020 Rolling Work Plan, the planned activities are aimed towards improving the quality of education, mainly through training, advocacy, design, implementation framework development, and communication strategies. Aside from this, issues like the lack of water, lack of sanitation facilities, and the refugee crisis are considered specific activities related to education in emergency and WASH programmes.

### **The Education Programme interventions are closely aligned with the outcomes and results the Country Programme expected to achieve.**

Each of the Education Programme strategies contributes to the achievement of the Country Programme outcomes, enabling different outputs to be achieved. Vice versa, the Country Programme enables the completion of the Education Programme Headline Results (HLR). It provides complementary elements that address the multisectoral barriers related to equitable access of education. This is related to ECCD, primary and secondary education.

HLR1. Expanding opportunities for early stimulation and learning include:

- Technical assistance to develop strategies, guidelines, costed action plan, standards.
- Building systems capacity to facilitate operationalization of the ECCD policy.

- Innovating cost-effective resilient service delivery models to reach the most marginalized and excluded young children.
- Supporting the development of quality monitoring systems and structures to ensure quality of services.
- Promoting network collaboration and GoB-NGO-private sector partnerships to increase coverage of ECD services.

These strategies contribute to CPD outputs as they:

- Develop a comprehensive operationalization and implementation ECCD policy plan.
- Strengthen the national and sub-national systems to operationalize ECCD policy.
- Provide early stimulation and evidence of learning interventions ready to scale up.
- Promote favourable behaviours for ECCD.

HLR2. Improving equitable access to quality inclusive education and reducing the number of out-of-school children (OOSC) includes strategies of:

- Technical assistance to align and incorporate pedagogical issues for better learning outcomes and to develop strategies to reduce OOSC.
- Integration of evidence-based interventions for better outcomes.
- Whole school development approach using existing systems and structures.
- Building capacity of the system to facilitate and demonstrate quality.
- Partnering, and networking with different potential service providers.

These strategies contribute to CPD outputs because they:

- Provide a long-term strategy to reduce the number of OOSCs.
- Support better learning achievements, linking curriculum-teaching learning process-assessment and inclusiveness.
- Provide student learning achievements and OOSC intervention based on evidence ready to scale up.
- Provide a national communication strategy to modify behaviours in favour of learning achievements and the reduction of OOSC.

HLR3. Access to education for adolescents includes strategies of:

- Technical assistance to incorporate and address issues in the national strategies, plan, and curriculum to increase access and retention in education.
- Building capacity of the system to facilitate and demonstrate skill-based and alternative education.



- Innovating cost-effective resilient service delivery models to remove barriers to continuing education and to entice out of school adolescents to enrol in school.
- Partnering and networking with different education service providers.
- Mobilization and engagement of adolescents through existing platforms.

These strategies contribute to Country Programme outputs because they:

- Identify and address issues and bottlenecks using costed plans for adolescent education to increase access and retention.
- Provide the removal of barriers for continuing secondary education and OOS adolescent interventions based on evidence ready to scale up.
- National strategies promoting expected behaviour and practices for facilitating adolescent education.

### **The ToC has been followed and includes all the factors necessary to be relevant.**

The ToC allows to identify a sequence between the headline results, the implementation strategies, and the relation between the Country Programme's outputs and outcomes. It also makes the risks and assumptions explicit.

Following the ToC, it is understood that the Education Programme uses a mix of strategies, searching for a balance between upstream and downstream work to achieve the Country Programme's outputs. These strategies are the following:

1. Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy
2. Equity-responsive and resilient service delivery
3. Partnership and participation

Through these strategies, the Education Programme expects to achieve the Country Programme outputs:

1. **Policy, legislation and coordination** by comprehensive ECCD policy operationalization; reducing OOSC and improving quality of education; and, increasing access and creating alternative education options for adolescents.
2. **Technical & management capacity to provide service** by modelling and innovating early stimulation and a learning intervention for OOSC and quality improvement; and for addressing OOS adolescents.
3. **Demand creation** with strategies of C4D for early stimulation and learning; for reducing OOSC and improving quality; and increasing access and options for adolescents. These outputs are directly related to the Country Programme's outcomes (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2016).

**The specific interventions are closely linked with the full scope and scale of beneficiaries' needs in Bangladesh, both in an emergency and a development setting. It is appropriate for the changing needs as Bangladesh transits to a middle-income country.**

The Education Programme, in the context of the Country Programme, was constructed based on a comprehensive diagnosis of the country's main challenges. They are expected to contribute to addressing the determinants of social norms, structural gender differences, unequal power dynamics between the genders, the availability of essential inputs, and adequate services. This is accomplished in a cross-sectoral response, where education is one of the issues. In the interviews done, key stakeholders affirmed that the programme is aligned with the needs of the Bangladesh education sector, and with the socio-economic reality of Bangladesh people.

The programme responds to these challenges with strategies that are adapted to UNICEF's strengths and are appropriate in a country that is attempting to transition to a middle-income country. These strategies are the following:

- Close dialogue and alignment with the GoB
- Balance of upstream and downstream work
- Focus on capacity building: Technical assistance for the strengthening of the capacity building, generate evidence-based resilient interventions, tested and ready to scale up, develop C4D strategies that may modify undesirable behaviours and facilitate actions to eliminate harmful social norms and practices
- Include a life-cycle approach and the overall goal of supporting the efforts of the GoB to "advance the universal realization of the rights of children, particularly the most disadvantaged and excluded from the education system". It aims to contribute to Bangladesh's transition to a middle-income country.

**The Education Strategy 2017-2020 appropriately reflects and contextualizes UNICEFs common principles, such as UNICEF Strategic Plan, the SDGs, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies.**

Considering the Education Programme headline results of expanding opportunities for early stimulation and learning, equitable access to quality inclusive education and reducing the number of out of school children and access to education for adolescents, the Education Programme fully reflects the following points:

- The UNICEF Strategic Plan result aims to, "improved learning outcomes and equitable and inclusive education; improved and equitable prevention of and response to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children; improved policy environment and systems for disadvantaged and excluded children, guided by improved knowledge and data". The Education Programme reflects the purposes of the UNICEF Strategic Plan. It includes specific activities related to the education rights throughout the life cycle.



- UNDAF outcome: “develop and implement improved social policies and programs that focus on good governance, reduction of structural inequalities, and advancement of vulnerable individuals and groups.” In addition, principle 1, “Leave no one behind” is accomplished through the integrated Education Programme’s principles of eliminating inequalities and discrimination, addressing the root causes of multidimensional poverty, building capacities for resilience, and strengthening national systems and processes of accountability to monitor progress and provide remedies. These integrated programming principles are closely related to UNDAF principle 2, “human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment”; UNDAF principle 3, “sustainability and resilience”; and UNDAF principle 4, “accountability”.
- The Education Programme responds entirely to SGD4: “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning”; SDG 5: “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”; SDG 10: “reduce inequality within and among countries” and SDG 16: “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.
- The Education Programme is highly relevant toward the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989): Article 28 states that, a child has a right to education. Article 29 states that, “Education shall aim to develop the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent. Education shall prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society and shall foster in the child respect for his or her parents, for his or her own cultural identity, language and values, and for the cultural background and values of others”. Article 32 of child labour states that, “the child has the right to be protected from work that threatens his or her health, education or development”.
- Also, the Education Programme activities relating to education in emergencies responds to the Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (UNICEF, 2005). That states, “Children in the midst of armed conflict and natural disasters such as drought, floods, and earthquakes have the same needs and rights as children in stable countries”. Access to “quality early learning and education for all children in affected communities, with a specific focus on girls” should be promoted with a focus on education.

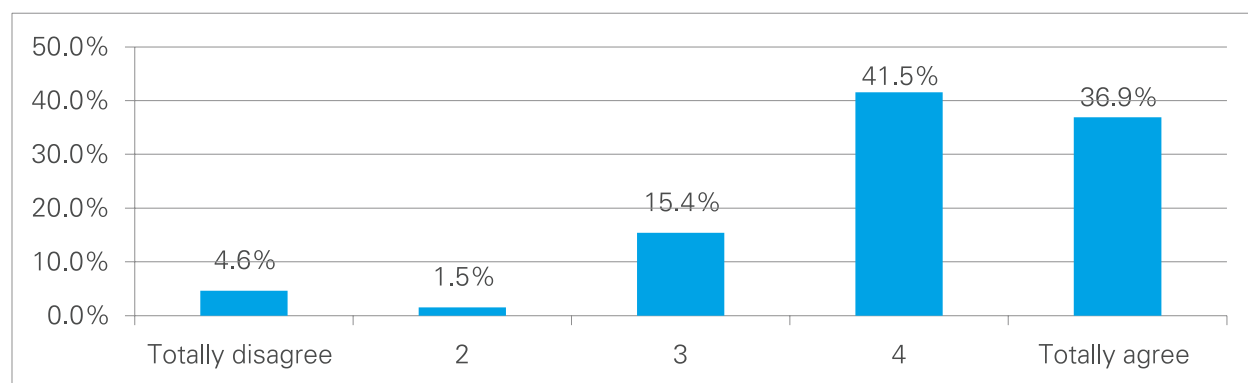
The alignment of the UNICEF Education Programme (2017-2020) with national policies and the full scope of the people’s needs also includes the gender perspective, considering that girl’s access to education and basic services is part of the national strategy to assist vulnerable populations in Bangladesh. It is also part of UNICEF’s common principles.

**Finding 1.2:** According to the stakeholders, UNICEF is recognized as a credible and reliable actor in technical assistance and strategy advocacy, especially at the national level. It is recognized as being well-equipped to accompany the GoB to respond to the current and changing needs as the country transits to a middle-income country. At the local level, there are opportunities for improvement in its role in advocacy of budget allocation, and technical assistance.

<sup>8</sup> The score was from 1 to 5, where 1 was totally disagreed and 5 totally agree.

One of the areas where UNICEF is identified as a key actor, according to the online survey, is the provision of technical assistance. Most of the respondents stated that they fully agree with the affirmation, “UNICEF has achieved a critical status regarding technical assistance within the education sector that must remain present.” The average score was 4.05 out of 5.

**Figure 3** UNICEF has achieved critical status regarding technical assistance within the Education Sector that must remain active: Percentage of interviewees according to the level of agreement with the statement



Source: *Econometria*, online survey March-May 2019.

Another area in which stakeholders strongly recognized UNICEF contributions is strategy advocacy at the national level. For example, even though the implementation of the national ECCD policy is in its initial stage, stakeholders recognize the efforts that UNICEF has taken to advocate at the national level. Some stakeholders even propose an extension of the programme’s technical assistance for institutional reform of the pre-primary system.

In contrast, stakeholders argue that UNICEF’s contributions in areas such as advocacy of budget allocation and technical assistance at the local level is not sufficient. According to the interviewees, it is necessary to improve and reinforce technical assistance to teachers for the development of structured work plans, class planning, etc., at the local level of the Education Programme. They also recommend that UNICEF take a more active role in advocating for a large enough budget allocation to enhance the national ECCD policy from the Government.

## COHERENCE

According to UNICEF, coherence is defined as UN partners working together to increase effectiveness (improved results), relevance (alignment with national priorities), and efficiency (reducing duplication and transaction costs at the country, regional and global levels) (UNICEF, 2015).



Table 6 shows the research questions related to the coherence of the programme.

**Table 6** EVALUATION QUESTIONS FOR COHERENCE

Evaluation questions	
2.1	How clearly are the programme’s objectives, and the means to achieving them understood by key stakeholders?
2.2	How comprehensive are the projects chosen as a necessary and sufficient suite of interventions to support high-quality education services and a robust education system? In particular how comprehensive are those that are most likely to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the quality and access of education services to all children</li> <li>• Expand opportunities for early stimulation and learning</li> <li>• Increase equitable access to quality inclusive education</li> <li>• Reduce the number of out of school children</li> <li>• Increase access to education for adolescents</li> </ul>
2.3	Taking as a starting point the Bangladesh Situation Analysis, did UNICEF select priority program elements with due consideration for its comparative strengths, government expectations and the capacities of other actors in different sectors? <i>(this question does not have enough information to be answered)</i>

Source: Terms of reference of the evaluation

**Finding 2.1:** Stakeholders have a clear understanding of the Education Programme objectives related to strategic advocacy and technical assistance, at the national level, where UNICEF has comparative strengths. There is room for improvement in the understanding of education-services provision, evidence development and local level actions.

National stakeholders identified UNICEF’s role in recognizing gaps and weaknesses of the education system for ECCD and providing advice for improvements. UNICEF’s strengths in advocacy and technical assistance on quality of education, funding, education in emergencies and enrolment for primary education, were highlighted. Other implementing partners identify supporting education programmes in emergency situations and coordinating activities as UNICEF’s roles during emergencies. Partners such as SUROVI and Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) consider UNICEF as a main donor agency during emergencies in Bangladesh and recognize its roles of providing assistance to the government, supporting the development of the teachers work plan structure and developing life skill education.

The interviewees did not mention the Education Programme’s role in the evidence generation or its contribution to improve the delivery of education services. On the other hand, as was mentioned before, UNICEF’s role is mainly perceived as operating more centrally in advocacy at the national level and less about providing capillary support to service delivery at the local level.

Although there are some initiatives piloted, the Evaluation Team did not find evidence of results documentation, such as specific reports, best practice description, documents or videos of piloting results, among others, with exception of the information included in the yearly UNICEF COAR. Also the stakeholders interviewed have no knowledge of the piloting results and lessons learnt.

**Finding 2.2:** Finding 2.2: The UNICEF Education Programme addresses the main structural causes that generate the disparities in the attainment of education rights across different population groups. However, there are still structural deficiencies of the education system in Bangladesh in which UNICEF may contribute.

The main disparities between attaining education rights and their key structural changes were highlighted by the Analysis of Women and Children in Bangladesh. (UNICEF, 2015). They are coherent with the main education challenges of Bangladesh, identified from the interviews done during the inception mission and the desk review, seen in Table 7.

**Table 7** Main disparities of attaining education rights, their key structural changes and main education challenges

Analysis of children and women in Bangladesh: Needs	Main education challenges
An acute need for systems or institutional strengthening, including the sub-national levels, to address insufficient capacities for equity-based planning, implementation, coordination and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complex and disarticulated institutional structure with several bodies responsible for operating the educational system</li> <li>• Low public budgets and financial sources</li> <li>• Inadequate career development opportunities and high turnover of personnel</li> <li>• Highly centralized system for education service delivery that stifles local initiatives and contributes to weak management, lack of transparency, and little accountability</li> <li>• Lack of continuity in policies over time and no evidence-based decision-making process</li> </ul>



Analysis of children and women in Bangladesh: Needs	Main education challenges
A strong need for a culturally sensitive transformation of social norms to eliminate harmful practices, and to ensure respect for the rights of all women, adolescents and children	Cultural and social factors highly influence school attendance, permanence, and graduation. Low-income families do not value education as an investment to break the circle of poverty. Child labour and early marriage are still common practices.
Inadequate knowledge and awareness, particularly at the family level, in good household practices and their benefits	
The persistence of widespread poverty despite national economic progress, which continues to influence the life choices of many families	
A need to direct more substantial attention to quality services in disadvantaged areas lagging in human development, including urban slums and hard-to-reach areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate career development opportunities and high turnover of personnel</li> <li>• Weak recruitment and deployment policies for teachers</li> </ul>
Bangladesh's continuing heightened vulnerability to disasters and subsequent emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bangladesh is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, causing migrations, child labour, schools to be used as shelters, etc.</li> <li>• Disasters are a significant disruptor of education</li> </ul>

Source: UNICEF, *Analysis of children and women in Bangladesh; Econometria, fieldwork, 2019*

During the fieldwork exercises, parents, teachers, SMC and PTA members stated that a lack of understanding from parents on the importance of education may be the main cause for children dropping out or not enrolling in school, reinforcing the challenges stated above.

There are answers addressing the main education challenges mentioned when reviewing the UNICEF Education Programme in the context of the Country Programme.

- System or institutional strengthening
- Improving the quality of education, and resilience by “ensuring girls’ and boys’ progress from early learning to secondary education”, where a particular concern is to address the children who have barriers due to disabilities
- Developing C4D strategies to transform harmful cultural and social norms with an evidence base. In this regard, it is important to mention that the Country Programme includes social inclusion and increased awareness of children’s rights as outcome 4.

However, there are opportunities for UNICEF to make a stronger impact by advocating for the adjustments of the institutional scheme of the education system and for its decentralization.

Finally, because this challenge applies to both girls and boys, the gender perspective is included in the objectives to ensure equal access to quality educations. For example, the objectives include increasing and maintaining access to education for both boys and girls and to avoid harmful practices to guarantee the rights of adolescent women, men and children

## EFFECTIVENESS

The OECD/DAC define effectiveness as a measure of the extent to which a programme attains its objective (Chianca, 2008). This assessment of the effectiveness of the UNICEF Education Programme 2017-2020 considers the level of achievement of its intended outcomes. The definition of the Outcome scale rating is the extent to which the education programme's major relevant objectives were achieved (or are expected to be achieved). The achievement is attributable to the activities or actions supported by the programme.

The following scale and a proxy range score are used to rate the programme under evaluation:

- *High* The programme exceeded or fully achieved its intended outcome or is likely to do so. When seventy-five per cent or more of the target/indicators are achieved.
- *Substantial* The programme almost fully achieved its intended outcomes or is likely to do so. When between fifty and seventy-five per cent of the target/indicators are achieved.
- *Moderate* The programme partly achieved or is expected to partly achieve its intended outcomes. When between twenty-five and fifty per cent of the target/indicators are achieved.
- *Negligible* The programme barely achieved or did not achieve (minimal achievement, if any) its intended outcomes. When less than twenty-five per cent of the target/indicators are achieved.

The assessment of the effectiveness of the UNICEF Education Programme 2017-2020 considered the evaluation questions presented in Table 8.

**Table 8** Evaluation Questions for Effectiveness

Evaluation Questions	
3.1	How effective has the programme been and which changes in development and implementation of education and multisector policies, strategies and costed action plans need to happen?
3.2	How effective has the programme been, and which changes need to happen to strengthen sector coordination and governance?
3.3	How effective has the programme been, and which changes need to happen to create an evidence base and build capacity at the national and sub-national level for evidence and equity-based planning and budgeting?



Evaluation Questions	
3.4	How effective has the programme been, and which changes need to happen to identify successful interventions that need to be scaled up through government systems?
3.5	How effective has the programme been, and which changes need to happen to strengthen management information systems and institutionalize quality improvements? <i>Not information available to respond this question.</i>
3.6	How effective has the programme been, and which changes need to happen to adopt an education system strengthening approach for achieving effective coverage of education services?
3.7	How effective has the programme been, and which changes need to happen to adopt an education system strengthening approach for achieving effective coverage of education services?
3.8	How effective has the programme been, and which changes need to happen to mobilize and engage families, communities, local government bodies and key influencers through C4D strategies to address socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks, increase demand for utilization of education services and promote the practice of desired behaviours?
3.9	How effective has the programme been, and which changes need to happen in terms of what intended outcomes, positive as well as negative, have resulted from the programme?
3.10	How effective can the new country programme structure of a life-cycle approach be where different sections work jointly within an outcome (life phase) conducive to achieving the results of the education programme?

Source: Terms of reference of the evaluation

The evaluation team reviewed the Theory of Change and assigned indicators to measure the Programme outputs and outcomes in the results framework, as well as the corresponding UNICEF Monitoring Yearly Reports 2017-2018. This information was complemented by the field work interviews, school observations, interviews with key stakeholders, the analysis of relevant government documents, and evaluations carried out by other donors.

Following the review and analysis of the available information in the documentation provided by UNICEF, including its monitoring Year Reports the evaluation team conducted a triangulated analysis using primary data collected from the interviews at the national and local levels, the stakeholder’s survey, focus groups meetings, and direct observations in schools and centres in order to find evidence and possible explanations to understand the secondary data. This provided useful input to examine the Bangladesh Education System’s challenges within the context of the UNICEF Education Programme under review.

**Finding 3.1.** The Education Programme has been moderately effective in achieving the target output indicators. According to the UNICEF reports, 11 out of 14 output indicators are on track to achieve their final targets by 2020. Current trends indicate that almost all results will be achieved during the remaining one and a half years of programme implementation. However, due to the remaining time for implementation, it is too early to find evidence on the outcomes and on the

impact of the programme that are related to overcoming the main challenges of the education system.

Outcome 1 and its related outputs have been Moderately achieved (Table 9)

**Table 9** ACHIEVEMENT OF OUTCOME 1- RELATED INDICATORS

RESULTS	INDICATORS	BASELINE/TARGET	STATUS AT DATE EVALUATION COLLECTED DATA	ASSESSMENT/EVIDENCES
Outcome 1 By 2020, women, infants and young children in Bangladesh, especially the most disadvantaged, <sup>9</sup> (with disabilities or living in urban, remote and disaster-prone areas), will have access and utilize high-quality social services	Proportion of boys and girls aged 36 to 59 months who are on track in at least three of four development competencies (literacy/ numeracy, physical, socio-emotional, learning)	64% (2013)/ 80% (2020)	36.8% of children aged 6-59 months attended an early childhood centre/school/ institution. 17.1% of children did not attend an ECD centre due to lack of availability/ accessibility	NEGLIGIBLE Due to the low level of attendance, it is impossible to monitor the indicators, especially given that ECD centers do not offer any structural activities to develop the physical, cognitive, or socio-emotional competencies, as observed during field visits. Furthermore, the care providers do not measure nor keep record of the development competencies.
	Proportion of young children enrolled in grade I with Pre-Primary exposure	51% (2014)/ 75% (2020)	2018 Boys: 79.8% Girls: 80.3% All: 80.07%	SUBSTANTIAL On track

<sup>9</sup> Defined in the CPD as children, adolescents and their communities living in poverty and hard-to-reach areas, vulnerable to climate change and disaster, living in urban slums, living with disabilities, and infected, affected or at risk of HIV/AIDS, as well as those from ethnic and religious minorities.



RESULTS	INDICATORS	BASELINE/TARGET	STATUS AT DATE EVALUATION COLLECTED DATA	ASSESSMENT/EVIDENCES
Output 4: By 2020, the quality of integrated service delivery and effective coverage will have been strengthened in national and subnational education systems to support the well-being of children under 5 years of age and their mothers, in emergency and non-emergency situations, including urban.	Existence of an effective early learning policy with clear budget allocation in place - score (1-4)	1 (baseline score) / 3 (target score)	The Government has an ECCD policy, but not a clear budget allocation for early learning. Currently, this budget is combined with the education budget or total ministry budget like MoWCA	MODERATE Stakeholders, and local and national authorities perceive that the government does not have ownership of the existing early learning policy, and it is considered to belong to the academic and private sector. The stakeholders have asked UNICEF to further advocate for this issue.
	Number of boys and girls benefiting from early childhood education through alternative approaches with support from UNICEF (such as a home-based provision of ECD, accelerated school readiness models, parent education, among others)	341,000 (2015)/ 420,000 (2020)	During 2017 and 2018: 109,059 and more than 50% are girls	MODERATE On track. The data shows that for the evaluated years the intervention have achieve the results expected to reach the target
	Number of boys and girls benefiting from upstreaming interventions of UNICEF on early learning and pre-primary education (input for curriculum, teaching learning package, training etc.)	2.8 million (2015)/ 3.4 million (2020)	A total of 1.92 million were enrolled in 2018	SUBSTANTIAL. On track

RESULTS	INDICATORS	BASELINE/TARGET	STATUS AT DATE EVALUATION COLLECTED DATA	ASSESSMENT/EVIDENCES
Output 6: By 2020, communities and institutions will have improved capacity and knowledge regarding essential household behaviours and practices that promote the overall well-being of infants, young children and their mothers, in emergency and non-emergency situations. Communication for Development	Early learning policy and early learning programme ensuring parents' and communities' involvement - score (1-4)	3 (baseline score) /4 (target score)	At the National level, there are some actions and instruments to ensure parent and community participation but it is not reflected at the local level	MODERATE  Stakeholders, and local and national authorities request more involvement with regard to technical and budget concerns from UNICEF in relation to these actions.

Source: Elaborated by Econometría Consultores based on UNICEF Revised Monitoring Framework 2017-2020 UNICEF (2017) and 2018 Monitoring Year Report (2019)

This outcome and the corresponding outputs and indicators in the Education Program, fundamentally represent the support that UNICEF gives to ECD and pre-primary education policies. Both fall under ECCD. The main result from the analysis of the primary information is that the ECCD policy is newly established. Therefore, there is room for further effort to build capacities in early childhood policy and implementation. The Ministry of Primary Education should build ownership and commit to implementing the policy nationally, and provide enough financing to do so as one of these efforts. At time the interviews were conducted, the main responsibility for implementing this policy fell on the international, private and academic partners, according to the stakeholders interviewed.

According to the online survey, there is a general agreement among more than 50% of the respondents with the following statement, "There is a sharp increase in the number of boys and girls, ages three to five, who are developmentally on track in at least three of the following four domains, literacy-numeracy, physical, social-emotional and learning" The average score was 3.46 out of five (Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys).

The primary information collected shows an important difference in the quality of services provided between the ECD centres and the pre-primary education spaces in terms of strengthening capacities to operationalize ECCD policy for early childhood education. Both the ECD centres and the pre-primary education spaces are part of the early learning programme. The close relationship between pre-primary

education and the primary education sector has generated more development compared to the ECCD centres. The primary data indicate a greater development of infrastructure, teacher training, planning, and pedagogical materials in the pre-primary education classes than in the activities carried out at the ECCD centres. This can be explained by the Government’s slow progress in implementing the ECCD policy, reported by the national stakeholders.

The primary information collected showed that not only have enrolment rates increased, but there is also a wide perception of improvement in the physical environment of schools for children with disabilities and the progress made towards the achievement of the learning outcomes’ in Child-Friendly Schools.

Some indicators about the progress in the achievement of the outputs related to Outcome 2 are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10** OUTCOME 2- RELATED INDICATORS

RESULTS	INDICATORS	BASELINE/TARGET	STATUS AT DATE EVALUATION COLLECTED DATA	ASSESSMENT/EVIDENCES
<b>Outcome 2</b> By 2020, boys and girls of primary school age, especially from hard-to-reach and vulnerable areas, are learning equitably in an inclusive, healthy, safe and resilient environment.	Primary education net attendance ratio (adjusted)	Girls: 73% (2013) / 100% (2020) Boys: 71% (2013) / 100% (2020)	2018; Girls: 98% Boys: 98% All: 98%	SUBSTANTIAL
	Proportion of girls and boys achieving nationally defined learning competencies in Grades 3 and 5 in Bangla and Mathematics	In Grade 3 Bangla: 75% (2013) / 85% (2020) Mathematics: 57% (2013) / 75% (2020)  In Grade 5: Bangla: 25% (2013) / 50% (2020) Mathematics: 26% (2013) / 50% (2020)	<b>In Grade 3: *</b> Bangla: 74% (2017) Mathematics: 41% (2017)  <b>In Grade 5*</b> Bangla: 12% (2017) Mathematics: 17% (2017)	NEGLIGIBLE  There was a significant change in overall student achievement between the 2017 assessments and the previous ones. Performance has gradually decreased since National Student Assessment (NSA) 2011 mainly in Math for 3rd grade and Bangla and Math for 5th grade.  This is consistent with the perception of all stakeholders that very few interventions addressed the key factor that affect the learning outcomes of the students such as: teacher preparation, teacher practices innovation, learning materials etc.

RESULTS	INDICATORS	BASELINE/TARGET	STATUS AT DATE EVALUATION COLLECTED DATA	ASSESSMENT/EVIDENCES
	Reduction of Out of School Children aged 8-14 years	To be determined/50% from the baseline	11% reduction of out of school children aged 8-14 years children in 2018	SUSBTANTIAL
Output 2: By 2020, national and subnational education systems have the technical, management and financial capacities to provide high-quality learning services to girls and boys, including children with disabilities and children in hard-to-reach areas, urban areas and in emergency and non-emergency situations.	Existence of an Education Act	No/Yes	The Education Act still in draft and not endorsed as Act by the parliament	NEGLIGIBLE Not achieved and will probably not be achieved - Stakeholders believe that the political conditions and the level of advocacy from the education sector are factors that might prevent the Education Act from being approved soon
	Availability of quality Child Friendly Schools (CFS)/ Child Friendly Education(CFE) standards that are consistent with CFS/ education or similar models in schools supported by UNICEF- score (1-4)	2 (baseline score) /3 (target score)	N.A	MODERATE Local authorities and school head teachers expressed in the interviews that they use quality standards to teach and improve the learning environment at the classroom level. However, the institution and classroom observations do not reflect that this happens. Stakeholders at the national level believe this is not an approach that has been well understood by the teachers.
	Learning outcomes are measured in all schools supported by UNICEF with Child Friendly Schools/ education or similar models - score (1-4),	1 (baseline score) /3 (target score)	N.A	MODERATE Head teachers and teachers in the interviews stated they carry out a formative assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom level using an education friendly model. However, there are no quantitative or qualitative pieces of evidence about this. Stakeholders have also expressed their concern about the extent to which those approaches have been understood by teachers and head teachers.



RESULTS	INDICATORS	BASELINE/TARGET	STATUS AT DATE EVALUATION COLLECTED DATA	ASSESSMENT/EVIDENCES
	Out of school boys and girls throughout the reporting year accessing formal or non-formal education with the support of UNICEF <sup>10</sup>	18,000/200,000	104,399	SUBSTANTIAL On track The data shows that for the evaluated years the intervention have achieve the results expected to reach the target
	Number of (?) UNICEF-targeted children in humanitarian situations accessing formal or non-formal basic education (including pre-primary schools/ early childhood learning spaces)	0/50,000	132,513	SUBSTANTIAL Achieved past target due to the Rohingya refugees.
	Active involvement of school management committees at primary and secondary levels in the development of school improvement plans and the monitoring of schools - score (1-4)	2 (baseline score) /3 (target score)	At the national level, there are many school-based management activities. There is no evidence that this will continue at the local level.	NEGLIGIBLE The interviews and observations at the school level showed that the head teacher had continued to decide the priorities of school plans and most of the interventions are related to improving the physical conditions of the school rather than to promoting student learning activities by themselves. The participation of teachers and parents has not been very strong. There was no evidence on monitoring the plans. Stakeholders recommend a high level of involvement at the local level to provide technical assistance to the school head teachers in this area to UNICEF.

Source: Elaborated by Econometria Consultores based on UNICEF Revised Monitoring Framework 2017-2020 UNICEF (2017) and 2018 Monitoring Year Report (2019)

\*Results of 2017 National Assessment Test appear in an unpublished government report

<sup>9</sup> Links to GAP Indicator 5a

Outcome 2 of the Education Programme and its outputs and indicators correspond to the support that UNICEF gives to primary education in terms of increased access and improved quality in both humanitarian and non-humanitarian situations. Outcome 2 also refers to the strengthening of school-based management and community participation.

According to the latest test results compiled by the Government (not published), 41% of grade 3 students are reaching or exceeding grade level targets, whereas only 17% of grade 5 students achieve the targets for that level.

Conversely, the main concern is that nearly 59% of grade 3 students and 83% of grade 5 students are testing much below their grade level, according to the results compiled by the Government a positive note was that gender differences in mathematics targets were very small.

There was meaningful change in aggregated student achievement over the course of four assessments in 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017. In 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017, student achievement in of grade 3 Bangla remained consistent on average during the NSA, 68%, 75%, 65% and 74%, respectively. However, there was a drop in grade 5 Bangla from 25% in both 2011 and 2013, to 23% in 2015, and only 12% in 2017. The mean performance in mathematics in grade 3 and 5 has gradually decreased since the NSA 2011. While the difference was very small between 2011 and 2013, it was significantly larger between 2013 and 2015, as well as between 2015 and 2017.

One of the most important factors determining the quality of education is the quality of the teachers. The survey and stakeholder interviews show that the quality of training for teachers is perceived as poor, and there is concern about the lack of innovative pedagogical techniques and materials used at the classroom level. This concern applies to all education levels.

The information collected shows how teachers and head teachers have acknowledged receiving training in leadership, ICT and other education specific topics. Regardless, they claim that it does not have any impact on their career development. As a result, they do not see such training as a useful incentive for the work they do or as a benefit to their careers.

Over the past five years, the participants of the FGDs who are in an SMC or PTA have seen progress in the admission of students into primary education. There has been a marked increase in the enrolment and pass rates. Most stakeholders agree that access to education has increased due to a larger number of teachers and students. Parents are also more aware of the importance of enrolling their children at this level.

The FGD information revealed that some schools have been repaired, and water and sanitation systems have been developed. Some of the schools have been fitted with new electrical systems.



One important finding in terms of improved school management is that the government, with UNICEF’s support, has changed the criteria for allocating and transferring budgets to the schools in a positive way, linking the process to the preparation and implementation of school improvement plans. All stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental, agree that this is a very important change that will positively impact not only school efficiency and equity but also provide instruments for better accountability.

Some indicators about the progress in the achievement of the outputs related to Outcome 3 are presented in Table 11.

**Table 11 OUTCOME 3- RELATED INDICATORS**

RESULTS	INDICATORS	BASELINE/TARGET	STATUS AT DATE EVALUATION COLLECTED DATA	ASSESSMENT/ EVIDENCES
By 2020, adolescent girls and boys in Bangladesh, especially the most disadvantaged, will have utilised basic, quality, social services in a safe and protected environment, and will be resilient and empowered as active agents of change.	Secondary school net attendance ratio	<b>Overall: 46% (2013)</b> Girls: 52% (2013); Boys: 40% (2013)/ <b>Overall: 75% (2020)</b> Girls: 75% (2020); Boys: 75% (2020)	2018: Boys: 54.88% Girls: 67.92% Total: 61.23%	MODERATE On track
Output 4: By 2020, the Government and stakeholders in the education sector, at the national and subnational levels, will have increased capacity to expand and deliver quality package of services to keep adolescents in school and/or create alternative pathways for out-of-school adolescents aged 10-18 in emergency and non-emergency situations and urban settings.	Life skills and citizenship education embedded in the policy and curriculum frameworks - score (1-4)	2 (baseline score) /3 (target score)	The decision and commitment of the Government and the multilateral banks to include this approach, methodology and instrumentation in all the projects included in the five-year plan for improving the secondary education level, ensure the sustainability and positive impact of these is interventions.	SUBSTANTIAL On track

RESULTS	INDICATORS	BASELINE/TARGET	STATUS AT DATE EVALUATION COLLECTED DATA	ASSESSMENT/ EVIDENCES
	Number of schools that have included life skills and citizenship education in their school plans with UNICEF support	66/200	250	SUBSTANTIAL Achieved past target and highly sustainable
	Secondary school-aged out of school children in the reporting year accessing formal or non-formal education with the support of the UNICEF programme <sup>11</sup>	5,000/12,000	10,250	SUBSTANTIAL On track
	Strong engagement of local communities in life skills and citizenship education - score (1-4)	1 (baseline score) /3 (target score)	ND	A separate engagement strategy will be designed for adolescents by school cabinet.

Source: Elaborated by Econometría Consultores based on UNICEF Revised Monitoring Framework 2017-2020 UNICEF (2017) and 2018 Monitoring Year Report (2019)

Outcome 3 and its outputs and indicators in the Education Programme correspond to the support that UNICEF gives to secondary education in terms of opportunities for access to formal and non-formal education, as well as obtaining life skills and citizenship education.

Access to education for adolescents has been a challenge for UNICEF. It has taken a long time since 2017 to design the interventions and build a consensus with the Government, stakeholders, and partners at

<sup>11</sup> GAP Indicator P5.1 will be addressed through delivery against this output.



the national and international levels. Achievement in this respect should be analysed based on the policy, strategy and implementation context. This area of intervention was new and therefore much preparation was needed before starting implementation.

Coordination and supervision of service delivery in secondary education represents “a most pressing challenge” (World Bank, 2017). The institutional arrangement for this area of intervention is a public-private partnership where non-government schools account for more than 95% of all secondary enrolment. As a result, the sector is characterised by low and unequal learning levels. The national implementation partners rated institutional capacity at the secondary education level at 3.5 out of 5, one being the lowest score and five being the highest. They explain that the number of schools is not sufficient and therefore many non-government schools have been called upon to fulfil the demand that the government cannot respond to. There is no proper supervision of academic standards. Also, there is no specific path for the professional development of teachers. The perception of stakeholders is that all these factors negatively affect the quality of education.

UNICEF has provided substantial technical support to the government to design and implement the education strategy for out-of-school children. With UNICEF’s support, the Government has already reached 100,000 out-of-school children through PEDP3. UNICEF has also provided technical support to design PEDP4’s out-of-school children component, which aims to reach one million out-of-school children. Technical support is ongoing to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the intervention. UNICEF is also working with CSO on a pilot programme that supports an innovative, flexible model named Ability-Based Accelerated Learning, which the Government has already taken over to scale up.

Life skills and citizenship education is embedded in the policy and curriculum frameworks. The high number of schools that have included life skills and citizenship education in their study plans is one of the successful results of this intervention supported by UNICEF. This is one of the interventions with the highest potential impact and sustainability, in part, because of the decision and commitment of the Government and the multilateral banks to include this approach, methodology and instrumentation in all the projects included in the five-year plan for improving the secondary education level.

From a gender perspective, the evaluation found that access to education for boys and girls is similar. No significant disparities were found in their exposure to pre-primary education, nor in their primary and secondary school net attendance ratios. In terms of dropout rates, there is a significant difference between boy and girls in secondary school. It is almost 6 points higher for boys than girls, which may be attributed to higher prevalence of child labour among boys.

As mentioned before, in terms of learning achievements, in 2017 mathematic test results gender differences in grade 5 was equivalent of less than one score point on the tests, hence not likely to be significant.

The most significant finding from a gender perspective is that most of the actors in the education sector: teachers, stakeholders, education authorities and even parents do not perceive that there are any different education indicators for gender disparity. All the interviews at the national and local level, and the parents' views expressed in the focus group indicate that the opportunities for access are the same for girls and boys and that the treatment they receive at the school level is not discriminatory in any way.

The evidence analysed regarding the three outcome results and the level of achievement at the time of the evaluation provides the following answers to the research questions:

**The programme has been moderately effective in developing and implementing educational and multisectoral policies. Some changes and adjustments are needed.**

The stakeholder interviews and the national survey indicate that UNICEF has been effective in the design and planning of the ECCD policy, but the policy does not appear to be very effective regarding quality. The average score from the online survey for the following statement is 3.64 out of 5: "The early learning policy and early learning programme include the quality early learning curriculum and standards". The main concern of the stakeholders is the lack of ownership of this policy at the ministry level, because the policy appears to be essentially driven by academics and the NGO sector.

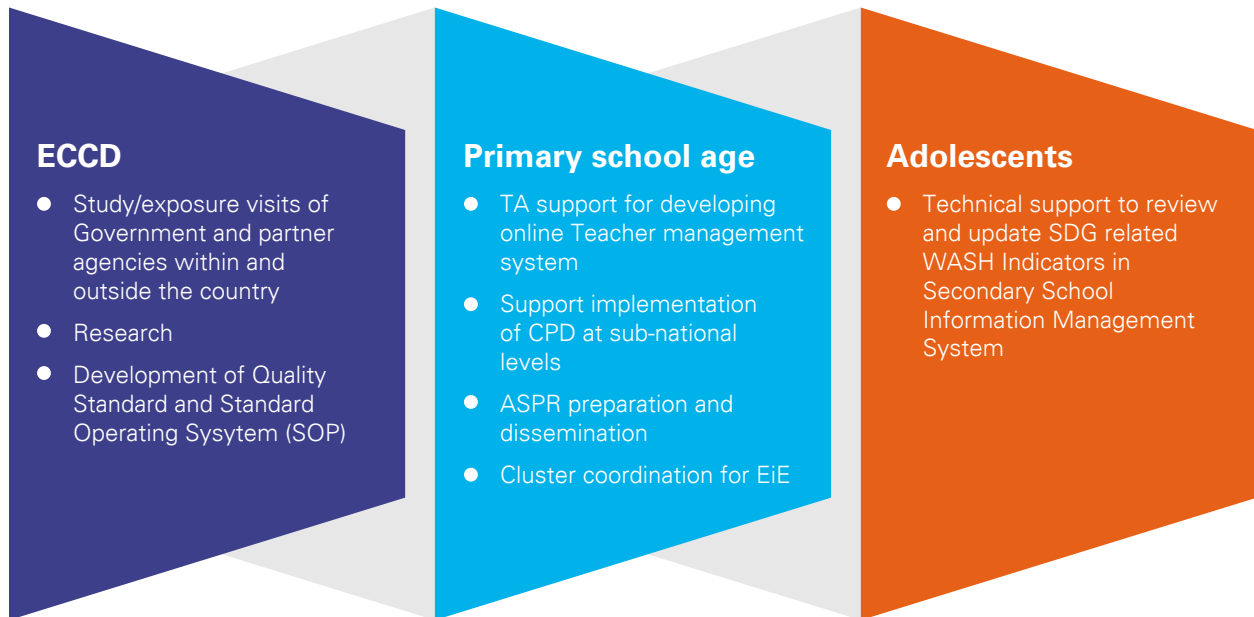
**The programme has been moderately effective in strengthening sector coordination to promote a good governance model, management information and build institutional capacity at the national and local levels for achieving effective coverage of education services.**

There are no specific activities in the areas of institutional improvement and education system strengthening. Nevertheless, some of the activities implemented, such as management information and planning processes, have the potential to help government institutions with capacity building if the approach being considered would support alignment among early childhood, primary education and secondary education institutions. This must be done at the national and local levels, and in the latter case it must be adapted to local contexts.

Considering the importance of accountability, monitoring and information management, the interventions remain scattered and with limited scope to strengthen the management capacity of the overall education system, and to improve institutional capacity and quality at the school level.

Figure 4 presents the activities related to management information systems and quality processes.

**Figure 4** Management systems-related activities of the Education programme



Source: Elaborated by Econometría Consultores based on UNICEF 2019-2020 Rolling Work Plan and UNICEF (2017)

These activities are too narrowly focused and lack a comprehensive approach to promote the development of relevant information and to monitor systems on a large scale. Some interventions are more likely to suffer from the lack of capacity for monitoring and follow-up, as exemplified by the case of ECD. The field visits showed the absence of actual follow up mechanisms to measure the physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development of children attending ECD centres.

**The programme has been satisfactorily effective at creating an evidence base in some successful interventions that could be scaled up through government systems.**

The identification of successful interventions that could be scaled up is related to the innovative approach of the UNICEF Education Programme, which is presented in Figure 5 in bold.

Identifying successful interventions is the first step to scale them up. The second step requires the availability of enough funds. According to Goss Gilroy Inc (2016), UNICEF has the ability to obtain the necessary financial resources to continue the implementation of successful initiatives, either through its own channels or through external donors, since the UNICEF name and brand carry a lot of goodwill. Two of these innovations, Life skills and Citizenship education, and alternative learning pathways for out-of-school adolescents, have received the full commitment of the Government and the multilateral banks (ADB, WB) who are willing to include and finance them as components of the projects for the five-year Secondary Education Development Programme.

### Factors promoting or hampering effectiveness

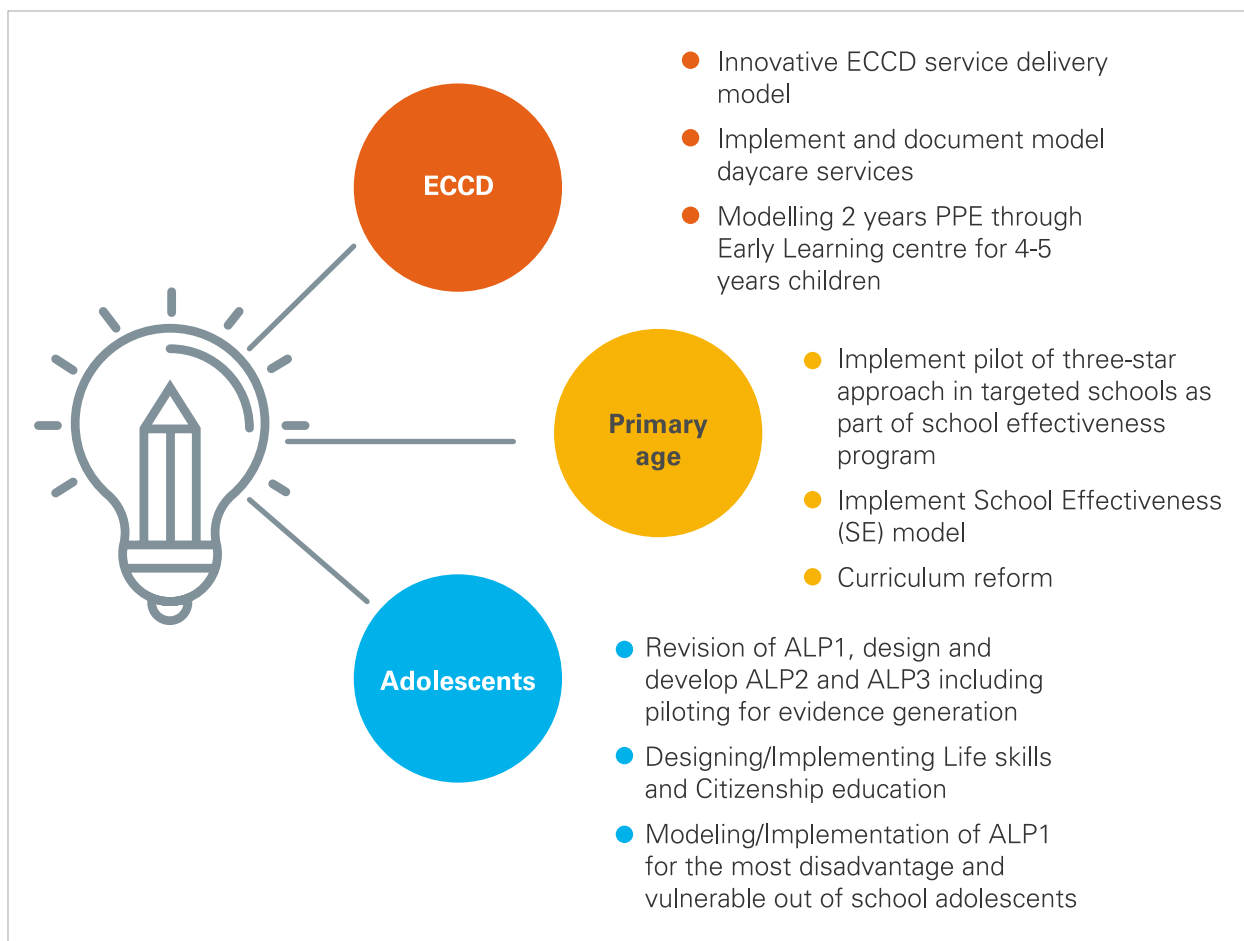
The main two factors which increased the effectiveness of the Programme were the following:

- Efficient teamwork and a close relationship between the UNICEF Education team and the Ministry of Primary Education and the Ministry of Education. This was acknowledged by all people interviewed at all levels.
- All stakeholders are aligned and committed to helping the Government of Bangladesh, using evidence-based interventions to overcome the main challenges faced by the education system, such as investment in ECD, quality of education at all levels, governance and capacity building, and limited opportunities for adolescents. Most of the projects financed by the international stakeholders are designed to work on the same issues that UNICEF is working on.

The main factors which hampered the effectiveness of the programme were the following:

- The complex institutional structure of the education sector in Bangladesh creates serious obstacles to achieve the planned outcomes. It stifles progress in the basic education system because of the lack of homogenous curriculum across the two levels. The curriculum in each of the two levels should be fully aligned, since these two education levels are consecutive, and the provision of primary education has considerable implications for the quality of secondary education provision.
- There is low institutional capacity and insufficient empowerment for local authorities (government and education). Bangladesh has a highly centralized system for education service policy-making, delivery and supervision. School principals do not have enough managerial training. Consequently, they have little knowledge of and experience with the planning processes, personnel management, financial management, community participation and the quality assurance processes. Most of the time, they depend on guidance and instructions from the central level.
- Social and cultural factors (such as lack of recognition of importance of education for girls, child labour practices, early marriage, etc.) hinder policies which increase coverage in education at all levels and result in high dropout rates.

**Figure 5 Successful interventions that could be scaled up**



Source: Elaborated by Econometría Consultores based on UNICEF 2019-2020 Rolling Work Plan

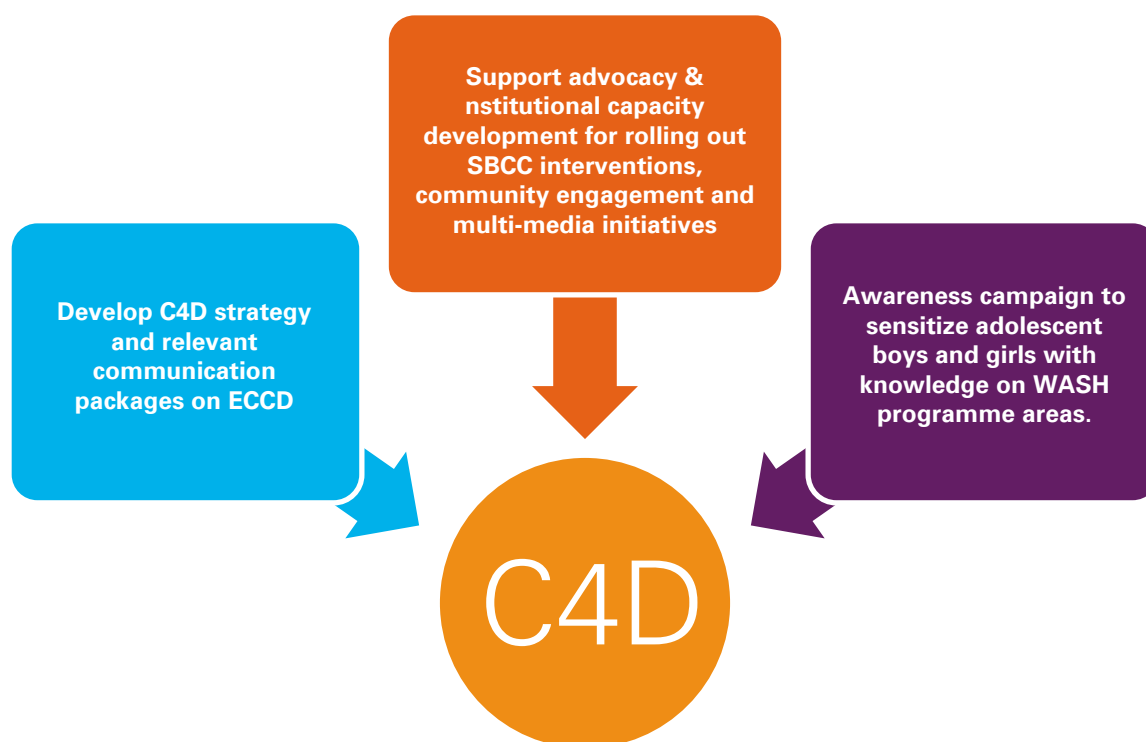
The Government has adopted other innovative interventions, such as the School Effectiveness model as part of its strategy to increase accountability and equity in the distribution of the budget at the school level. The stakeholder interviews revealed that this is an important step in favour of the decentralization process and that it contributes positively to the empowerment of school authorities. However, they recommend monitoring the process closely and to offer training to the head teachers to support them.

The programme has been moderately effective in mobilizing and engaging families, communities, local government bodies and key influencers through C4D strategies that would address socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks, increase demand for utilisation of education services and promote more desirable behaviours.

C4D and changes in behavioural initiatives are highly concentrated on specific areas like “the health benefits of washing hands” and not on addressing social barriers and comprehensive needs, such as the “benefits of going to school”, the “dangers of child labour”, and the “drawbacks of early marriage”. UNICEF is not taking full advantage of the potential of these awareness campaigns to generate widespread awareness about the importance of education.

Figure 6 presents the C4D activities, which are mainly focused on communication in ECCD, community engagement and WASH awareness for adolescents.

**Figure 6** C4D – related activities in the Education Programme



Source: Elaborated by Econometría Consultores based on UNICEF 2019-2020 Rolling Work Plan and UNICEF (2017)

These C4D initiatives fall short of addressing the magnitude of bottlenecks and barriers found in the education system of Bangladesh. As mentioned before, awareness of the importance of education remains low among families, particularly when it comes to the developmental needs of young children. The major obstacles identified by the implementation partners interviewed during the fieldwork for children attending schools were extreme poverty, child marriage, lack of girls’ safety, sexual harassment and child labour. UNICEF should invest more resources and implement more communication strategies to address these problems. Here are a few testimonies illustrating these challenges from remote areas such as Shahpuri:



*“Despite our positive intention to send children to school we can’t because we cannot timely afford stationeries and decent dresses for school due to shortage of money and for poverty. Another reason is that there is a tendency among young people to go abroad” (FG with secondary school student parents).*

*“Some of the parents don’t want to educate their girls anymore after spending a few years in the school. They think that girls will get married soon and go to their in-laws’ house. Thus, letting girls study for long will not bring any benefit” (FG with secondary school student parents).*

Parents participating in focus groups located in enclaves stated:

*“Lack of security for girls is another reason. The slum environment is not good- also a reason in this regard. Both mother and father work; hence, if there are little children in the house, the big ones have to look after them.”*

The positive aspirations of boys and girls should also be raised by C4D strategies, where UNICEF has extensive experience. Adolescents who attended the focus groups during the fieldwork, including in tea gardens and enclaves, see themselves as being successful professionals in ten years. Some of the professions they would like to become are teachers, doctors, engineers, artists, and lawyers. Many want to study computer science and business, among other areas of study. No differences could be detected by gender.

There is partial agreement, as evidenced by an average score of 3.44 out of 5 from the online survey, concerning the community engagement with the following statement: “There has been an improvement in the engagement of adolescent boys and girls from selected communities in developing desired behaviours and facilitating actions to eliminate harmful social norms and practices, with a focus on ending child marriage”

### **It is too early to measure how effective the programme has been in terms of attaining the planned outcomes.**

Considering the time left for implementation and that most of the output indicators are on track, there is a good chance of achieving the goals of the programme. To that effect, UNICEF needs to include additional actions to address the structural challenges of Bangladesh’s education system, for example supporting the Education Act and measuring learning outcomes. Both measures would help with the sustainability of all results achieved under the UNICEF programme.

**The new country programme structure based on a life-cycle approach has a very positive impact mainly because it is aligned with the education levels and allows various groups within UNICEF to work jointly towards a common objective (life phase) of achieving the results of the education programme as well as addressing the main challenges faced by the education system in Bangladesh.**

The life-cycle approach is aligned with the education levels, and there is a snowball effect from one level to the next. For example, children who had access to quality ECCD education are likely to perform in primary education and so on. However, according to the interviews with stakeholders, this would be an opportunity for UNICEF to promote a structural change within the public agencies that govern the education system, ministries, or at least push for greater dialogue and coordination, given that in Bangladesh the education levels are managed by different ministries with different rules and guidelines and there is insufficient coordination and communication among them. This is indispensable to ensure that the transition between educational levels occurs in a fluid way and that all education programmes operate within the same parameters.

According to the COAR (2018), UNICEF field offices and implementation partners stated in interviews that insufficient coordination among the multiple ministries with responsibility for education and skills-related services is a challenge. The existence of separate institutional structures for higher education, primary education, secondary education, and training for technical and vocational education, makes integrating a common life-cycle approach very difficult.

## Potential Impact

Impact is defined as the positive or negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly and intended or unintended (Karousakis, 2018). Table 12 shows the ToR's evaluation questions related to the impact assessment.

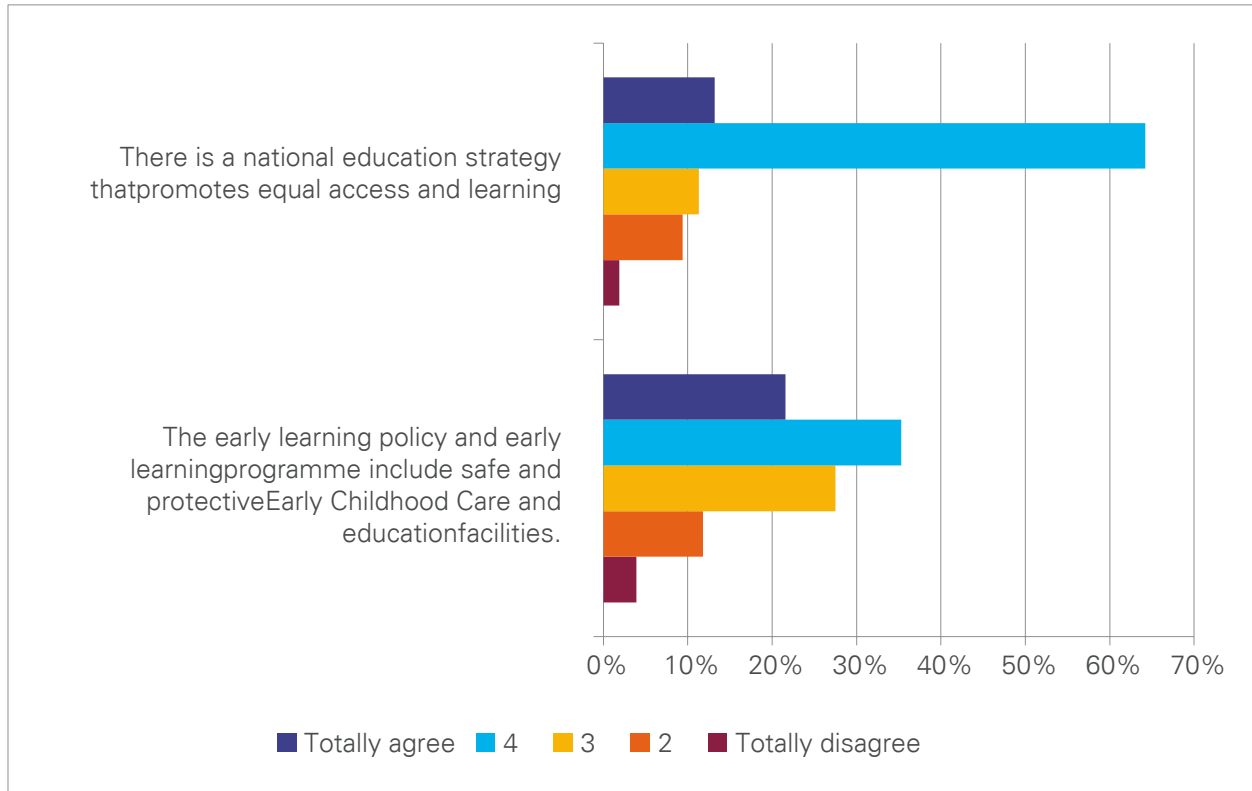
**Table 12** EVALUATION QUESTIONS IMPACT

EVALUATION QUESTIONS
How successful has the programme been to date, and are there signs of early impacts in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding opportunities for early stimulation and learning?</li> <li>• Increasing equitable access to quality inclusive education?</li> <li>• Reducing the number of out of school children?</li> <li>• Increasing access to education for adolescents?</li> <li>• Ensuring education in emergencies?</li> </ul>
To what extent are these gains directly attributed to the programme's intervention?

Source: Terms of reference of the evaluation

**Finding 4.1:** There is ample recognition of the advances being made in Bangladesh with regard to the development of the legal framework, plans, programmes and strategies to promote equitable access to education.

**Figure 7** Per cent according the level of agreement with statements related to the existence of policies, plans and programmes to promote equitable access to education



Source: *Econometria*, online survey March-May 2019.

Likewise, formal and non-formal education for the adolescent framework is being strengthened by UNICEF. According to the COAR 2018, UNICEF will give the non-formal Bangladesh Education Bureau support to build its institutional planning capacity, programming and information management.

The qualitative data is consistent with the quantitative and documentary data presented. Stakeholders recognize UNICEF's role in the development and implementation of the ECD policy. However, there is still room for improvement, especially in the consolidation and implementation of the policy, that is directly linked to a low institutional capacity of the Government of Bangladesh.

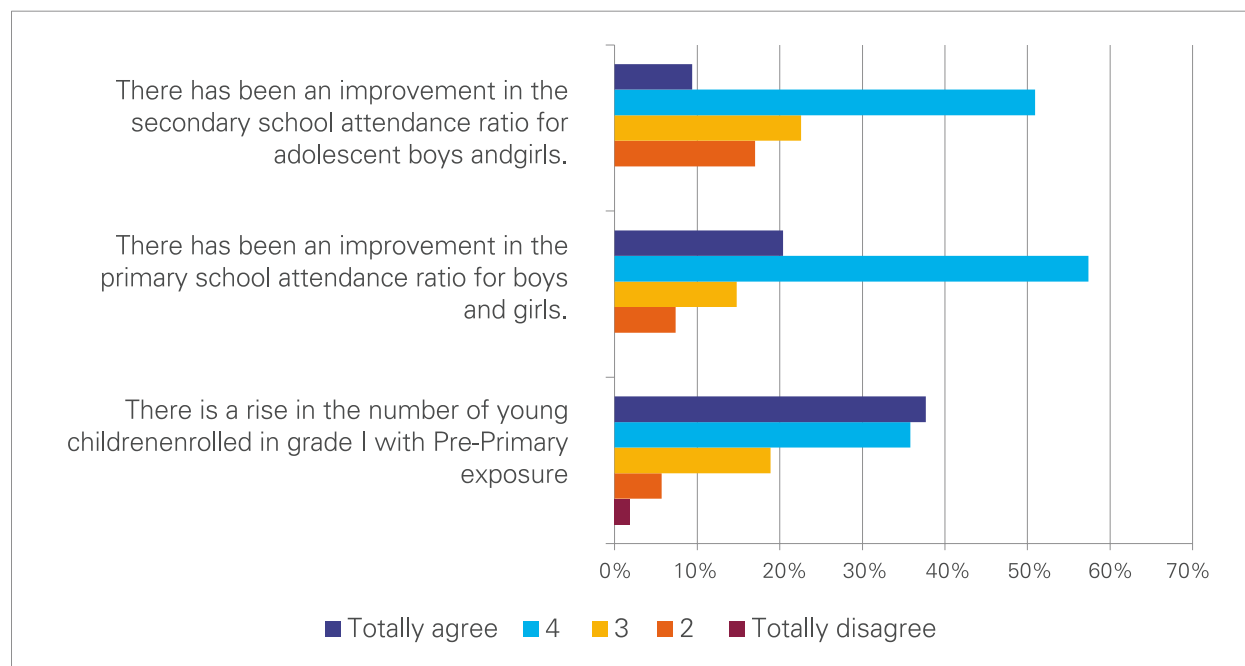
Also, the majority of stakeholders identify critical issues in terms of institutional capacity. Mainly, the problems identified are the commissioning of a career plan from the MOPME, the validation of ELDS, the development of a national ECD curriculum and accompaniment for the implementation of PEDP strategies and programs. UNICEF can help with advocacy processes, C4D, and funding implementation processes in the territories.

**Finding 4.2:** For the majority of stakeholders, there is an empirical rise in the number of children enrolled in school, specifically at the pre-primary and primary levels. These perceptions are confirmed by the data.

Enrollment rates in Bangladesh improved at all levels of education from 2010 to 2017. At the pre-primary level, more than 3 million children were enrolled in 2017, three times more than in 2010. At the primary level, the net enrollment rate increased from 94.8% in 2010 to 97.7% in 2017, with almost 18 million children enrolled. Finally, at the secondary level, there were 10 million boys and girls, and a net enrollment rate of 54.7% in 2017. There has been a significant rise in enrollment, from 44.45% in 2010 to 57% in 2017 for boys and 55.09% in 2010 to 67% in 2017 for girls (Banbeis Report).

Parallel with the data, the majority (73.5%) of online respondents believe there is a rise in the number of young children enrolled in first grade with pre-primary exposure. Also, the majority agree that there has been an improvement in the primary school attendance ratio for boys and girls (77.8%). In contrast, for the improvements of the attendance ratio for adolescent's boys and girls, the per cent of respondents who agree is much lower (60%) and the per cent of respondents who disagree is 17%.

**Figure 8** Level of agreement with statements related to the improvement of the attendance ratio for boys and girls



Source: *Econometria*, online survey March-May 2019.



According to UNICEF COAR 2018, corresponding to the reduction of the number of out of school children, the organization is using an “ability-based learning model” by which nearly 13,400 out-of-school children, 8 to 14 years of age, were enrolled in learning opportunities in 2018. Fifty-three per cent were female. This model is being scaled-up by the Government to approach the PEDP4 target.

In this case, the analysis of qualitative data is also consistent with quantitative and documentary information. The stakeholders, including about the safety of girls and drug and alcohol abuse, especially in adolescents, that become a risk for the permanence of children in the school system.

**Finding 4.3:** There are important challenges in terms of achieving child-friendly inclusive schools, particularly for girls, and for children with disabilities. There is room for improvement.

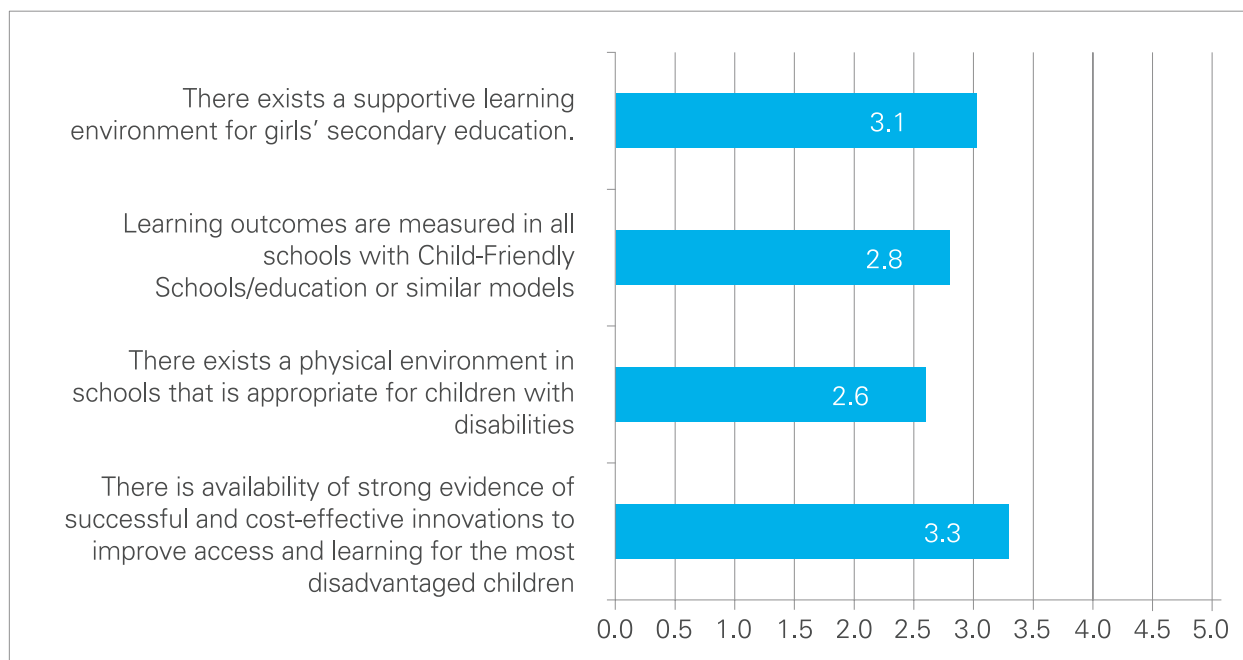
UNICEF has been developing evidence generation for approaches and models to keep girls in school, including skills-based education. Also, , there have been “innovations to promote adolescent participation and empowerment, while promoting positive gender socialization and empowerment of girls” (COAR 2017). WASH actions focused on girls have been put in place to provide information on hygiene practices to 19,000 adolescents, including menstrual health. They installed separate toilets for girls and boys in 35 schools. They also supported the modelling of a gender-responsive adolescent nutrition programme in 40 adolescent clubs at secondary schools in districts which UNICEF is concentrating on. Over 28,300 students, nearly 1,200 adolescent peer leaders, and around 800 teachers and school council members took part in the nutrition education sessions, including those addressing specific issues related to adolescent girls’ nutrition (Ministry of Finance, 2018).

All these efforts are crucial. Head teachers interviewed confirmed that there are important challenges to overcome in order to provide child-friendly schools. Improvements in infrastructure and in sanitary facilities are needed. There is also a need for greater availability of computers.

On the other hand, parents who participated in FG shared reasons why they perceive girl adolescents are dropping out school. Parents perceive that there are incentives to take girls out of school because it is not a secure place for them. Girls are vulnerable to harassment in school and also while commuting back and forth from school to home.

Accordingly, in the online survey, the average level of agreement (from 1 to 5) to the statements relating to having an adequate and inclusive learning environment was 3 (Figure 9). The average score was 2.6 out of 5 with regards to the existence of a physical environment in schools appropriate for children with disabilities. However there is an evidence of successful and cost-effective innovations to improve access and learning for disadvantage children.

**Figure 9** Average level of agreement (from 1 to 5) to the statements related to equitable access to quality inclusive education



Source: *Econometria*, online survey March-May 2019.

**Finding 4.4:** UNICEF is on track to achieve its target for out-of-school children accessing education with its support, but there are still limitations to delivering high-quality outputs.

The Programme's Monitoring Report from the UNICEF Education Programme shows advances in achieving equitable access to quality education. There have been 161,594 boys and girls who have enrolled in education<sup>12</sup> between 2017 and 2018 through UNICEF-supported programmes. Also, 132,513 Rohingya refugee children enrolled in early learning and primary education with the support of UNICEF between 2017 and 2018.

UNICEF supported 294,114 children during 2017 and 2018 by accompanying programmes that provided education materials. This is in relation to improving learning outcomes. Finally, UNICEF has supported skills development programmes in which 15,152 children benefited during 2017 and 2018.

Although there have been improvements in the number of children impacted, there are quality and budget concerns that remain to be addressed. At the local level, secondary education authorities

<sup>12</sup> Formal or non-formal early learning, pre-primary, primary and secondary education



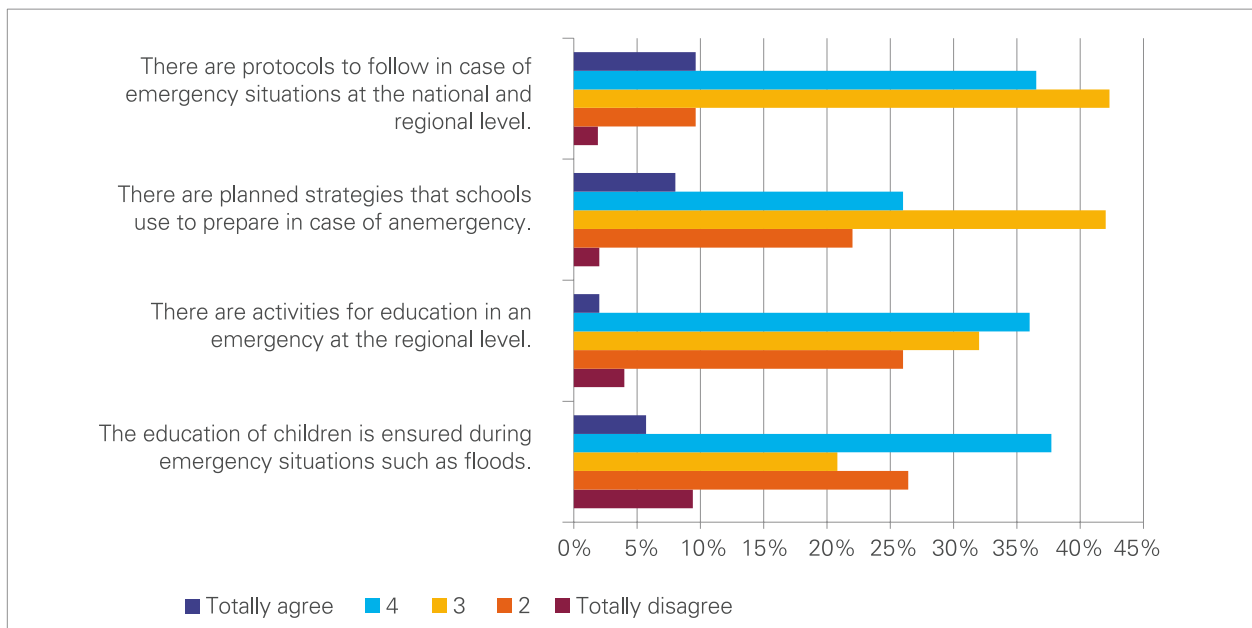
mentioned how difficult it is to implement programmes designed at the national level with no allocated budget, or due to time constraints. High school head teachers and secondary education authorities also mentioned that the scarcity of teachers, and infrastructure problems such as inadequate classroom space, sanitary facilities, computers, laboratories, etc., are limitations for delivering secondary education services.

**Finding 4.5:** At the regional level, during emergencies, education is not guaranteed, and protocols and strategies to follow in case of an emergency are not fully established.

According to the FGDs and interviews conducted, during emergencies like floods, it is difficult to continue schools activities. Some schools are used as shelters. If not, it is highly difficult to access the schools. Teachers explained that they try to maintain some study activities through homework, which was also mentioned by some girl students who explained that during floods, teachers condensed three days' worth of lessons into a single day's worth when their school was closed.

Only 43% of the online respondents agree that the education of children is ensured during emergency situations such as floods, and 38% agree that there are activities for education during an emergency at the regional level. On the other hand, around 40% of the respondents took a neutral path with respect to the existence of school protocols to follow in case of an emergency, and the use of planned strategies to prepare in case of an emergency.

**Figure 10** Average level of agreement (from 1 to 5) to the statements related to equitable access to quality inclusive education



Source: *Econometria*, online survey March-May 2019.

Although there is a perceived increase in access to education by stakeholders for both girls and boys, achieving child-friendly, inclusive schools and having a supportive learning environment in secondary education for girls remains a challenge in Bangladesh.

## Efficiency

The OECD and DAC define efficiency as a measure of the outputs compared to the inputs. Efficiency is used to identify the least costly use of resources possible that is required to achieve the expected results (Chianca, 2008). Table 13 presents the research questions related to the efficiency of the programme.

**Table 13** Evaluation Questions for Efficiency

Evaluation Questions	
5.1	How efficiently has UNICEF used the resources dedicated to the programme to deliver high-quality outputs in a timely fashion, and to achieve targeted objectives, i.e., is UNICEF expending the least amount of resources to achieve programme effects?
5.2	How successfully has UNICEF coordinated with other key actors, e.g., implementation partners, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Education and other line ministries, other entities conducting complementary interventions, to ensure non-duplication of efforts, a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities within joint programmes, and the overall success of the programme's implementation?
5.3	How has the focus on 22 districts, tea gardens, city corporations and enclaves and their type, i.e., poor performance, child marriage, and climate change, affected efficiency in service delivery interventions?

Source: Terms of reference of the evaluation

**Finding 5.1:** The efficient use of the Education Programme resources is optimized by its high connectedness with the different components of the Country Programme. The Education Programme is a cross-sectional response framed within the Country Programme.

In order to assess the efficiency of the programme, it is important to define and understand the inputs and resources dedicated to the Education Programme to achieve its expected outputs. The UNICEF Education Programme has a total budget of approximately USD 64 million for the total duration of the programme. This budget is distributed among the 4 headline results. (See Table 14)



**Table 14 Total Budget of the UNICEF Education Programme**

Country Programme components	Education Programme component	USD (in thousands)		Total
		Regular resources	Other resources	
Young children and their mothers	Early Stimulation and Early Learning	\$ 1,750	\$ 14,018	\$ 15,768
Boys and girls of primary-school age	Improving Learning Achievement	\$ 1,800	\$ 11,567	\$ 13,367
	Reducing the Number of Out of school children	\$ 2,800	\$ 17,600	\$ 20,400
Adolescents as agents of change	Education and Skills for Adolescents	\$ 1,650	\$ 13,200	\$ 14,850
	Total	\$ 8,000	\$ 56,385	\$ 64,385

Source: UNICEF Bangladesh education strategy notes 2017-2020

These monetary resources are proportional to 18.9% of the total budget allocated to the UNICEF Country Programme (Table 15). However, the Country Programme design, planned activities and interventions support the achievement of the Education Programme outcomes through its multisectoral approach. The interpretation of the allocation of resources of the Education Programme cannot be reduced to a percentage of the whole Country Programme. It is fundamental to take into account the contribution of WASH, nutrition, health, protection and C4D for the expected outcomes of the Education Programme.

**Table 15 Percentage of the Education Programme budget over the Country Programme budget**

Country Programme components	Education Programme component	Regular resources	Other resources	Total
Young children and their mothers	Early stimulation and early learning	11.7%	12.7%	12.6%
Boys and girls of primary-school age	Improving learning achievement	23.0%	77.8%	58.7%
	Reducing the Number of Out of school children			
Adolescents as agents of change	Education and skills for adolescents	8.3%	24.0%	19.8%
Social inclusion and increased awareness on child rights	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Programme effectiveness	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total		8.9%	22.6%	18.9%

Source: UNICEF Bangladesh education strategy notes 2017-2020 and UNICEF Bangladesh country programme strategy notes 2017-2020

As explained in the UNICEF Bangladesh Education Programme strategy notes, the use of these resources is earmarked to cover activities related to programme management, technical assistance and coordination. “These include policy, guidance and technical support on such issues as performance monitoring, evaluation, external relations, public advocacy, DRR and climate resilience, field services, the harmonized approach to cash transfers, gender mainstreaming, supply and information technology as well as office compliance with carbon off-setting standards” (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2016).

**Finding 5.2:** There is effective coordination between UNICEF and implementing partners, UN organizations and local governments. Additionally, there are clear mechanisms of coordination with the Government of Bangladesh.

Data from the interviews with national stakeholders show that UNICEF has participated in a donor consortium platform with other UN agencies and multilateral banking entities.

COAR 2017 states that UNICEF has renewed several partnerships and formed new ones to strengthen integrated approaches. The objective of this is to mobilise religious leaders, strengthen university curriculum, and improve health service delivery. In addition, “a high-level partnership with the Cabinet Division was launched to enhance coordination between the field administration and sectorial ministries on child rights through local government” (UNICEF, 2017).

According to the Country Office Annual Report from 2018, Bangladesh’s education sector developed a learning framework from preschool to eighth grade for refugee children. A field office with a dedicated operations team was established in Cox’s Bazar to provide timely and effective support to level 3 emergency response. This was done by forging strong strategic partnerships with implementing partners.

UNICEF led the national WASH and nutrition cluster and co-led the education cluster with Save the Children and the child protection sub-cluster with Plan International. They conducted sub-national orientation sessions to strengthen sectorial coordination and emergencies. The 2018 COAR also stated that emergency preparedness and response plans were developed by each of the seven UNICEF field offices, and at years-end, they were establishing contingency partnerships with CSOs to be activated during emergencies. A contingency plan for earthquakes was also under development at years-end (UNICEF, 2018).

At the national level, UNICEF belongs to the PEDP4 Development Partner Consortium (DPC), responsible for coordinating the donor activities in the primary education sector and working closely with the Government. From the national stakeholder interviews, data shows that there are regular meetings between the DPC and the Government. Also, a DPC has also been introduced in the secondary education sector, though it is not as well established as it is in the primary education sector.



Also, data from national stakeholder interviews evidence the coordination between the MoE and donors. To ensure non-duplication of efforts and a clear delineation of roles, donors share their plans with the MoE and then the ministry adjusts their plans within its action plan. There is also coordination at the local level through local meetings with implementers.

**Finding 5.3:** There is not enough evidence yet to be able to assess the efficiency in service delivery interventions affected by the geographic scope of the programme, but there is evidence about the unbalanced relationship between demand and needs, and the available resources that finance the education sector's operations in each Upazila.

The resources that financed the programme's implementation are allocated to the field offices by the Bangladesh Country Office at the national level and are implemented by UNICEF's local partners. They are prioritised in the Programme Compliance Associate (PCA) that also runs congruent with the Annual Work Plans (AWP) signed between local governments and field offices.

However, the field offices are clear in stating that the expenditure is directly linked to the Government's priorities and that UNICEF only complies with government actions to implement the policy. The following was stated by one of the field officers.

*"The decisions of the field office of UNICEF are actually the decision of the government. UNICEF does not make any particular decision separately."*

The interviews show that the relationship between demand and needs, and the available resources that finance the education sector's operations in each Upazila, are unbalanced. In addition, several interviewees stated that there is no coherence between planning activities at the national level and the money allocated for the development of these activities. On several occasions, local authorities had to finance the projects being dispersed at the national level.

The efficiency of the Education Programme is reflected in activities aimed to increase the access and quality of the education of both girls and boys. However, the unbalanced relationship between demand and resources can include specific needs of girls related to education and sanitation spaces or other aspects relevant for them.

## Connectedness

The assessment of the connectedness of the programme is related to the interactions and degree of alignment between UNICEF and other actors. Table 16 presents the research questions corresponding to connectedness.

**Table 16** Evaluation Questions for Connectedness

Evaluation Questions	
6.1	How effectively has the Education Programme coordinated with other UNICEF sections (e.g. C4D, Health, Nutrition, WASH, SPEAR) ) to ensure that further building blocks are in place that lie outside the scope of the present programme?
6.2	What is the perception of the partners of the UNICEF education programme in terms of technical salience, comparative advantage, cooperativeness, and sectorial alignment with other stakeholders?
6.3	How successful has the programme been in establishing and strengthening key and innovative partnerships and government-NGO-private sector partnerships for promoting quality of education services?
6.4	How well is the Bangladesh Country Office Education Programme supported by UNICEF HQ Education team and staff? How well does the Bangladesh Country Office Education Programme effectively draw from the UNICEF HQ Education team and staff? Are the benefits of being in a multi-tiered organization being maximized? <i>Not enough information available to respond this question.</i>

Source: Terms of reference of the evaluation

**Finding 6.1:** WASH and C4D are the programmes that are seen to be most connected with the Education Programme. EP. Not only because both of them have had many interventions at the school levelled but also because they share three main strategies with the education section: (1) advocacy, (2) training and awareness, and (3) infrastructure improvement and access to services that directly support the achievement of the Education Programme outcomes.

In interviews, both the stakeholders and the authorities at the national and local levels recognized that supporting adequate WASH facilities in secondary schools and the different campaigns to influence behavioural change and increasing knowledge about life skills have been key elements in increasing school retention of adolescents and the level of participation of adolescents in out-of-school activities.

The important positive results of the WASH and C4D connection with the Education Programme are linked to the fact that the WASH strategy, social mobilization, and community engagement were fully included as components and strategies in the PEDP4 programme to sensitizes the education sector to the “three-star approach”, designed to improve primary education outcomes.

**Finding 6.2:** Even though the partners and stakeholders recognize that UNICEF has played an important role in supporting the GoB in the design of education policies and guidelines, they perceive that the timeframe established to accomplish the different outcomes is too short, and



that the assumptions made for the simplification of the scenarios that are structural and require important social and cultural changes over a long period of time are underestimated. Therefore, more advocacy activities and a higher budget allocation from UNICEF are needed for investment in the Education Programme.

The activities proposed in the work plan cover many of the important issues required to address improvements to support the education of school-aged children in Bangladesh. However, the outcomes generated, and the key stakeholder perceptions suggest that the scope exceeds the actual capacity of the Government to generate comprehensive results at the local level.

For example, the key stakeholders recognized that the Education Programme is aligned with the needs of the Bangladesh education sector, and with the socio-economic reality of the people of Bangladesh. However, operationalization of the policy is taking longer than expected, which does not depend exclusively on UNICEF but on the Government's constraints and implementation capacity. Interviews with national stakeholders also point to this slow progress.

UNICEF's role in supporting ECD is considered very important but the stakeholders believe more involvement is needed since this policy is new and has not been institutionalized within the ministries in terms of advocacy and technical assistance to boost ECCD policy and implementation.

UNICEF's assistance to institutional reform for the pre-primary system is considered essential for achieving positive results, and it should be further extended to ECD and for a longer period of time. Data from the national stakeholder interviews suggest that, UNICEF can also provide technical assistance in developing life skill-based education since early years of life-cycle.

Many stakeholders at the national level think UNICEF should be involved in resolving some of the structural problems such as education career development, and formal participation in pre-service and in-service teacher training. It was also pointed out that UNICEF should provide extra attention to the Child Rights Convention, particularly in terms of government policy and recognition of the value of the various child education programmes. Effective monitoring of the Child Brigade Programme has not been done.

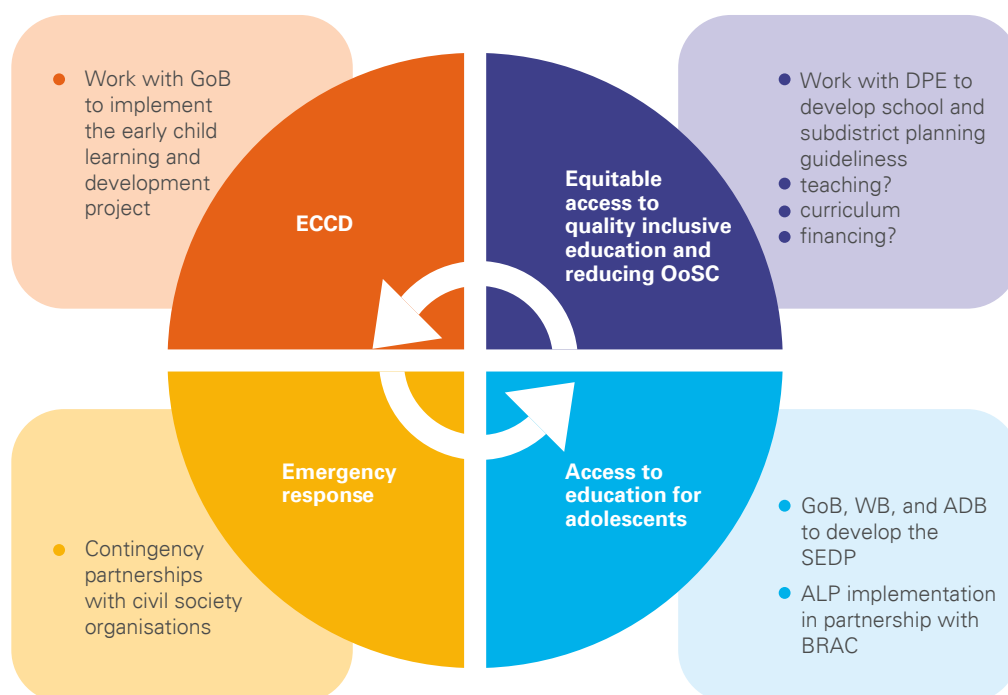
Some of the stakeholders consider that the participation of UNICEF should be more strategic with a long-term vision perspective. For example, one of the accounts concerning the prior statement was, "UNICEF's money should be invested for long term benefit". Moreover, this long-term vision must consider the specific needs of girls and adolescent women, the goal of maintaining their equal access to education services, and addressing the challenges that still remain.

Additionally, previous assessments have found that UNICEF needs to enhance its capacities to facilitate partnerships and focus on providing policy support at the national level and programme implementation at the sub-national level (Goss Gilroy Inc, 2016).

**Finding 6.3:** The Education Programme includes innovative partnerships between the Government and NGOs, and between the Government and development organizations, as well as private sector partnerships for implementing specific initiatives. However, the evaluation found that a comprehensive strategy for coordination between them is lacking.

Figure 11 presents the partnership activities as reported in 2018 for implementing education-related activities.

**Figure 11** Innovative partnerships proposed in UNICEF Bangladesh Education Programme



Source: Elaborated by Econometría Consultores based on UNICEF Bangladesh COAR 2018

The information collected and analysed suggests that the partnerships in ECD, and some aspects of equitable access to quality, inclusive education are focused on the implementation of specific activities, but not sufficiently integrated into a comprehensive coordination strategy that covers all the key aspects related to strategic and long vision policy to provide education services in those areas. For example, stakeholders demand that UNICEF must be more strategic in bringing together all actors around the ECD policy. At present, there is not enough government involvement to ensure human resource and budget allocation to implement what the academics and NGOs have designed.



There are three areas where the documented evidence and interviews show that UNICEF has been strategic in bringing on board and supporting different partners and stakeholders to work with the Government through sustainable interventions and structural changes. These areas are life skills, citizenship development, an emergency education response, and school improvement plans. UNICEF has been involved in bringing different partners and stakeholders together to work under the same frame of reference and to pool not only the financial resources, but also to play to the comparative advantages of each one of the partners. This way, the impact and the possibility of sustainability at the government level will be greater. According to the testimonies of several stakeholders, one good example is the life skills strategy for adolescents that was adopted as part of the projects financed by the ADB and the WB in support of the transformation of secondary education in the country. The process led to the establishment of a permanent working group focused on this issue.

When online survey respondents were asked about UNICEF providing technical assistance to the Government in terms of education in an emergency or coordinating actions regarding education in an emergency, the respondents with an average score of 4.19 out of 5. This perception was also confirmed in the national interviews, where UNICEF is highly recognized as a central actor supporting education in an emergency. Another example of the technical assistance provided by UNICEF is the partnership that UNICEF helped form with development agencies and the MoPME to elaborate a new budget transfer model to the schools in the context of the educational decentralization reform.

## Sustainability

The assessment of the sustainability<sup>13</sup> of the UNICEF Education Programme 2017-2020 considers the evaluation question presented in Table 17.

**Table 17** Evaluation Questions for Sustainability

Evaluation Questions	
7.1	How successful has the programme been in equipping the government and strengthening government systems to scale-up and sustain the successfully proven interventions once UNICEF support comes to an end?

Source: Terms of reference of the evaluation

**Finding 7.1:** UNICEF has strong links with the national government and the key decision makers in the education system, e.g., the Ministry of Primary Education and the Ministry of Education. There is clear evidence that the level of national ownership of certain interventions supported by UNICEF is very high.

<sup>13</sup> According to Chianca (2008), the OECD/DAC criteria sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.

There is preliminary evidence provided by the programme concerning the benefits of interventions such as ECD, school management and accountability, as well as opportunities for adolescents (formal and non-formal educations, life skills and citizenship education). Both the analysis of the methodological approaches and pedagogical material developed for these three elements of the program, and the views expressed by the national stakeholders on how the pilots are developing, indicate positive results. It is worth noting that some of the pilots are still in progress. These activities seem to be efficient in solving fundamental problems.

This is seen particularly in the case of the model ECD centres, where there are 2,500 SMC members trained to support the implementation of improvement plans in 271 schools. The comprehensive skills framework for adolescents, implemented by 250 secondary schools, and the alternative learning programs for adolescents in areas such as Cox's Bazar, have achieved close to 50% participation by girls. UNICEF also worked closely with the Government, the WB, and the Asian Development Bank in preparation for the five-year secondary education development programme. As a result, all three international organizations decided to commit resources to support skills-based education and alternative learning pathways for out-of-school adolescents through the projects that they finance.

All of the above, positive results represent an important justification for the continuation and scaling up of these interventions. However, to ensure that all the interventions are well implemented at the local level and to guarantee the long-term sustainability of their results, UNICEF should provide technical assistance to the Government and carry out advocacy work during the remaining time of the programme.

The following aspects must be carefully included and implemented.

- Investment in human capital training both at the national and local level, targeting officials and administrators of the education system, including head teachers and teachers.
- Improvement in governance and strengthening of the institutional capacity at both the national and local levels, including school-based management.
- Increase in budget allocation to enhance the national ECCD policy.

These three sets of measures were suggested during the interviews by the majority of the stakeholders, governmental, non-governmental, and international partners, as well as local authorities.

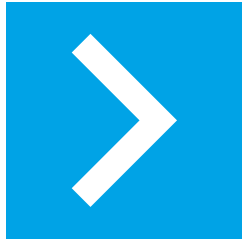
**Finding 7.2:** The field work and interviews have revealed that the risk factors identified in UNICEF's Theory of Change still exist, notably in organizational structures, institutional capacity, and work processes. Specific actions are needed to overcome these risks for the purpose of guaranteeing the sustainability of the interventions.



The national stakeholders have made it clear that, although the Education Programme is effective, it is constrained by external factors that need to be addressed. These specifically include complex organizational structures such as the existence and operation of two ministries of education, the presence of many institutions involved in education decisions, and the weak institutional capacity and the high degree of centralization in decision-making. Working on these obstacles will guarantee the continuity of the programme. This requires strong advocacy from UNICEF and further efforts towards developing C4D strategies, where public-private partnerships are required. This advocacy should also consider gender mainstreaming in order to address the challenges identified to ensure friendly education services for girls and adolescent women.

# CONCLUSION





This section presents the conclusions of the four headline results of the evaluation, organized by the links in the Education Programme's value chain. These are based on the reported findings for each criterion and evaluation question and are the basis for the recommendations presented in the next section.

In terms of the main education challenges that emerged from a comprehensive analysis, discussions with the GoB, the PEDP3 evaluations and the main PEDP4 objectives, the evaluation shows that the UNICEF Education Programme has successfully respond to them. It is evident that it is fully integrated into the Country Programme implementation as it is a cross-sectorial response specifically with WASH and C4D, where education is one of the components in the life-cycle approach. However, the evaluation did not find any direct no relation with child protection. In any event it was not included in the terms of reference and the research questions. Also, the Programme is closely aligned with the relevant planning and policy framework of the GoB, education and technology in the 7th Five-Year Plan, the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, and the PEDP4. It is closely aligned with the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS), the draft of the Education Act of 2016, and the Children's Act.

Therefore, based on the evidence we can say that the HLR also respond to the main education challenges identified, and therefore, they can be considered relevant as guiding principles of the education program. Expanding opportunities for early stimulation and learning (HLR1) are important in early childhood education, because that is the phase where education inequalities start. Improving equitable access to quality, inclusive education and reducing the number of out-of-school children (HLR2) is meant to address the issues of insufficient learning outcomes, resulting from poor quality education, and areas of exclusion of gender equality, children with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and children living in geographic poverty. Access to education for adolescents (HLR3) responds to the issues of high adolescent dropout rates, and the lack of alternative pathways for out-of-school adolescents to employment.

The successful response to Bangladesh's main education challenges can also be linked to the general perception of UNICEF as a credible technical advisor and a reliable partner by the different stakeholders at the national level, specifically the GoB. Consequently, UNICEF Bangladesh has a strong capacity to

impact the improvement of the education sector by overcoming the challenges identified. Nevertheless, at the local level, UNICEF's recognition is weak, hence the importance to improve technical assistance at this level.

On the other hand, the evaluation shows that the UNICEF Education Programme includes developing evidence generation through piloted initiatives. However, the Education Team did not systematize the results, and the stakeholders have no knowledge of any activities related to the analysis of these results and lessons learnt from those pilots.

It is too early to measure how effective the programme has been in attaining the planned outcomes, and how impactful it has been in Bangladesh's education challenges. When considering the time left for implementation and that most of the output indicators are on track, there is a good chance of achieving the programme's goals.

The evaluation also concluded that the generation of evidence, policy dialogue, advocacy, equity response, resilient service delivery, partnership and participation are adequate strategies to reach the Education Programme's objectives, because they take advantage of UNICEF's strengths. As the education sector in Bangladesh is highly centralized, UNICEF has an appropriate strategy by partnering with the central government and gathering evidence from the local level. This can be seen from the evidence generation activities which are ready to scale up models and strategies in innovative, cost-effective resilient service delivery models, in the development of a comprehensive operationalization and while implementing an ECCD plan, among others. However, from the local level, some are calling for more education-service provisions, evidence development and local level actions.

In terms of implementation, the Programme has delivered valuable results in terms of: (1) supporting the development of an early learning policy and early learning programme, ensuring parent and community involvement; (2) increasing access in early childhood education for 109,059 children and for more than 50% of girls during the first two years of the programme's implementation; (3) contributing to a net increase in primary education enrolment by 8.4 percentage points between the baseline date and 2018, 73% in 2013 to 81.4% in 2018, where the enrolment of girls increased by 8.3 percentage points and boys by 7.5 percentage points (76% in 2013 to 84.31% in 2018 for girls and 71% in 2013 to 78.56% in 2018 for boys).

There is also evidence of the important results in terms of: (1) increasing access to informal basic education in humanitarian situations (it was more than the target because of the Rohingya refugees situation); (2) modelling a budget allocation for new schools based on the number of students and quality investment guidelines adopted by the Government; (3) life skills and citizen education embedded in the policy and curriculum frameworks through the new five-year secondary programme.

Where the budget is concerned, the UNICEF Education Programme has a total of approximately USD 64 million, which is 18.9% of the total budget allocated to the UNICEF Country Programme. However,



it is essential to take into account the contribution of WASH, nutrition, health, protection and C4D for the expected outcomes of the Education Programme. Because there is effective coordination between different activities, there is efficient allocation of resources which strengthens the Education Programme's capacity to achieve the headline results. According to UNICEF, this is the planned figure for the country programme period. It does not include Rohingya funding but includes funding for other emergencies.

Aligned with the main challenges in education, the evaluation can conclude that UNICEF has been instrumental in supporting the progress made in Bangladesh in terms of the legal framework, plans, programmes and strategies to promote equitable access to education. The data analyzed during the evaluation confirmed that there is a significant rise in the number of children enrolled in school, specifically at the pre-primary and primary levels. Yet, evidence shows that there is room for improvement to achieve the Programme's goals. Even though the evaluation found that UNICEF is on track to achieve its target for out-of-school children accessing education, there are still limitations to delivering high-quality outputs. Evidence also shows that there are critical issues in terms of the GoB's institutional capacity, especially regarding the implementation of the ECD policy and career plans. Additionally, improvements are still required in terms of achieving the objective of organizing child-friendly inclusive schools, particularly for girls, children with disabilities, and on the development and implementation of protocols and strategies to follow in case of an emergencies (education in emergencies).

From the fieldwork interviews and focus groups, the main conclusion is that there is plenty of room for improvement in the effective implementation of policies, plans and programmes at the local level, e.g., in improving school infrastructure, sanitary facilities, ICT, adaptation for disabled children, availability of teachers and teaching materials, and a child-friendly and disaster-resilient environment. All of these may demand an extended timeframe, especially where important social and cultural changes may occur.

Bangladesh is unique in having two education ministries for their primary and secondary levels. There is a common positive perception of UNICEF's experience in advocacy among stakeholders and partners at the national and local levels, such as the public and NGO sectors. Therefore, they demand UNICEF be involved more in the structural changes of the education system to ensure better quality and equity in education. For example, there are opportunities for UNICEF to make a greater impact through advocacy for the reorganization of the institutional arrangements of the education system and decentralization. All sector analysis from donor agencies and the interviews conducted for this evaluation show that the complex institutional structure of the education sector in Bangladesh creates serious obstacles. It stifles progress in the basic education system and weakens an aligned, homogenous curriculum across the two levels.

Finally, an increase in access to education services has been achieved for both girls and boys, and there is no gender inequality in this regard. However, identified female-specific challenges are related to child-friendly inclusive schools for girls and a supportive learning environment for girls in secondary education. In addition, there is evidence of the unbalanced relationship between demand and resources that may include services that are demanded only by girls, e.g., sanitary services.

# LESSONS LEARNED





*UNICEF and other partners adopted holistic approaches to improve learning that took into consideration a range of contextual, social, institutional and individual level factors. However, learning outcomes have not improved. While the design was appropriate, the implementation was ad hoc and so children did not benefit from the combination of inputs required to reform schools and in doing so, improve learning. More effort should be put into intentional implementation of designed programmes in order to achieve the desired results. Considering the limited financial resources of various donors, the impact of a holistic approaches could be more difficult than a more target intervention.*

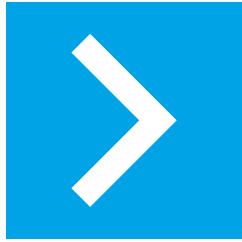
*The coherence between Education Programme, WASH and C4D can be defined as a good practice in terms of program design. Evidence show important results for Education Programme related to both WASH and C4D interventions at the school level. Also, WASH and C4D share three main strategies with the education section: (1) advocacy; (2) training and awareness; and (3) infrastructure improvement and access to services that directly support the achievement of the Education Programme outcomes. This should be seen as a successful example of articulation when designing programs with holistic impacts*

*As part of the Education Programme development UNICEF Bangladesh learned how to maximize its comparative capacities, focusing on advocacy, policy dialogue, and technical assistance. Its credibility and recognition allow for a building of an innovative and strategic partnership with the GoB, and other national stakeholders, a strategy that should be reinforced and maintained.*

*The Country Programme life cycle approach is an effective response to the pathway required from early childhood education to secondary education and enhances collaboration between sections to support this pathway. This multi-sectorial intervention is a response to the pathway required from early-childhood education to secondary education. The approach is highly appropriate for an education programme which includes objectives at all education levels.*

# RECOMMENDATIONS





The evaluation team proposes the following recommendations for the UNICEF Education Programme and for the role that UNICEF should play in support of the Bangladesh education system.

This chapter was structured as follows: each recommendation has a description of the related findings from which it was derived from and a description of the steps defined for its implementation. Finally, the implementation timeframe and the stakeholders of both UNICEF and the GoB responsible are included. It is important to notice that the timeframe was used as a priority element to organize the recommendations.

## Recommendation 1

Strengthen the strategic positioning of UNICEF activities at the local level, in the remaining period of the Education Programme implementation framework and the new country programme in order to ensure alignment with upstream work. Ensure national and field offices have clarity on their roles and responsibilities for the actions that UNICEF must take to achieve the desired outcomes and complete the outputs and are supported accordingly. This would mean, at the national level, focusing on advocacy and TA to support the design of national policies, and at the local level, TA to support local efforts to improve educational interventions. The local TA should aim to strengthen UNICEF field offices, taking into account Bangladesh's transition to a middle income country, and thus UNICEF must plan to transition from delivering services to a supportive role upstream.

## Related Findings

- From the local level, there are some voices calling for more education-service provisions, evidence development, and local level actions. Due to the highly centralized education system in Bangladesh, there is a need to downstream the national standards, protocols, and guidelines and make them more applicable at the local level. Consequently, at this level, there are opportunities to improve technical assistance.
- There is clear evidence that the level of national ownership of certain interventions supported by UNICEF are very high. However, there are others like ECD policies that are seen as academic and private responsibility. The evaluation has revealed that the risk factors identified in UNICEF's Theory of Change still exist, notably organizational structures, institutional capacity, and work processes.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short Term

**Main stakeholders responsible:** UNICEF Education office and UNICEF field offices in coordination with MOE and MOPME

## Recommendation 2

Develop a standardized approach to designing, implementing, documenting and scaling up pilots. This can be achieved by strengthening the systematization and socialization of the Education Programme piloting activities through “implementation research,” but also operational evaluations and in general, a strong and systematized monitoring framework that covers all stages of the ToC of the programme, including a well-developed dissemination strategy.

### Related Finding

- The UNICEF Education Programme includes developing evidence generation through piloted initiatives, although the Evaluation Team did not find systematization of results. Also, stakeholders have no knowledge of the results and lessons learnt from those pilots.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short-Term

**Main stakeholders responsible:** UNICEF SPEAR

## Recommendation 3

Develop a comprehensive coordination strategy to strengthen the linkages and quality of policy dialogue among the existing mechanisms (ELCG, DPC, etc.) where education policies and strategic direction are discussed or decided. The strategy should help to map and align the development and implementation timeframe for major policies and programmes where possible. This should feed discussions about approaches and value addition among partners, considering their own institutional capacities, and Bangladesh’s cultural and social challenges.

### Related Findings

- Evidence shows that the Education Programme includes innovative partnerships between the Government and NGOs, and between the Government and development organizations, and private sector partnerships for implementing specific initiatives. Nevertheless, the evaluation found that in terms of those innovative partnerships a comprehensive strategy for coordination among them is lacking.
- Even though UNICEF has played an important role in supporting the GoB in the design of education policies and guidelines, data shows that the timeframe established to accomplish the different outcomes is too short, and that the assumptions made for the simplification of the scenarios that are structural and require important social and cultural changes in a long period of time are underestimated.



- For example, the information collected and analysed suggests that the partnerships in ECD, and some aspects of equitable access to quality and inclusive education, are focused on the implementation of specific activities, but not sufficiently integrated into a comprehensive coordination strategy. Stakeholders demand that UNICEF must be more strategic in bringing together all actors around the ECD policy. At present, there is not enough government involvement to ensure human resource and budget allocation to implement what the academics and NGOs have designed.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short Term

**Main stakeholders responsible:** GoB with the technical support of UNICEF Communication, Advocacy and Partnership.

## Recommendation 4

Develop and implement a comprehensive C4D strategy that addresses the positive professional aspirations of boys and girls evidenced in the results of the evaluation, supports the engagement of adolescents boys and girls in developing and practicing desired behaviours, and to facilitate actions to eliminate harmful social norms and practices, for example child marriage and drug abuse.

### Related Findings

- Adolescents who attended the focus groups during the fieldwork, including in tea gardens and enclaves, see themselves as being successful professionals in ten years. Some of the professions they would like to become are teachers, doctors, engineers, artists, and lawyers. Many want to study computer science and business, among other areas of study. No differences could be detected by gender.
- As evidenced by an average score of 3.44 out of 5 from the online survey, there is partial agreement, concerning the community engagement with the following statement: “There has been an improvement in the engagement of adolescent boys and girls from selected communities in developing desired behaviours and facilitating actions to eliminate harmful social norms and practices, with a focus on ending child marriage”.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short-Term

**Main stakeholders responsible:** UNICEF CO and UNICEF C4D office.

## Recommendation 5

Advocate for and support the Government of Bangladesh to undertake a system wide review of the administration of Education in Bangladesh which looks at all Ministries and agencies involved in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, their mandate, and fit for purpose. This review should include strategies for advocacy to adopt and implement the plan emerging from this review.

## Related Findings

- All sector analysis from donor agencies and the interviews conducted for this evaluation show that the complex institutional structure of the education sector in Bangladesh creates serious obstacles. It stifles progress in the basic education system and weakens an aligned, and homogenous curriculum across the two levels. Bangladesh is unique in that it has two education ministries for their primary and secondary levels.
- The interviews show that the relationship between demand and needs, and the available resources that finance the education sector's operations in each Upazila are unbalanced. In addition, there is no coherence between planning activities at the national level and the money allocated for the development of these activities.
- Evidence also shows that there are critical issues with GoB's institutional capacity, especially in the implementation of the ECD policy, and career plans. Additionally, improvement is still required in terms of achieving child-friendly inclusive schools, particularly for girls, children with disabilities, and on the development and implementation of protocols and strategies to follow in case of an emergency to guarantee education in necessary territories (education in emergencies).

**Implementation Timeframe:** Mid-Term

**Main stakeholders responsible:** UNICEF Country Office in coordination with GoB

## Recommendation 6

Undertake a detailed analysis of gender in the education system and the ways the various practices and behaviours of education personnel affect retention and performance of girls, especially at higher levels. The review should also look at the components of the system critical to girls' performance including curriculum, learning materials, facilities, teaching practices and student participation. The analysis should be aligned with current national reforms and make specific recommendations for UNICEF programming.

## Related Findings

- The increase in the access to education services has been achieved for both girls and boys. There is no gender inequality in this regard. However, female-specific challenges identified are related with child-friendly inclusive schools for girls and a supportive learning environment for girls in secondary education. In addition, there is evidence of the unbalanced relationship between demand and resources that might include the specific needs of girls.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Mid-term

**Main stakeholders responsible:** GoB with the technical support of UNICEF Education office



## Recommendation 7

Support the Government of Bangladesh in designing a comprehensive strategy to substantially reduce the high level of school dropouts among boys. The strategy may include interventions that the education system can directly manage, such as introducing more attractive pedagogies (problem-based curriculum and active learning methods), strengthening the citizen and socio-emotional skills and competencies program, as well as developing the vocational training program. Beyond what the education sector is responsible for, the Government could include a conditional cash-transfer programs based on the positive experience of other countries.

### Related Findings

- The increase in the access to education services has been achieved for both girls and boys. There is no gender inequality in this regard. However, female-specific challenges identified are related with child-friendly inclusive schools for girls and a supportive learning environment for girls in secondary education. In addition, there is evidence of the unbalanced relationship between demand and resources that might include the specific needs of girls.
- The dropout rate presents a significant difference between boy and girls during the last years. By 2018 there were almost 6 perceptual points higher for boys than girls. One of the main reasons is the need to increase family's income.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Mid-Term

**Main stakeholders responsible:** GoB with the technical support of UNICEF Education office

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