

Evaluation Title: UNICEF Tajikistan Child Protection/Protective Environment Programme Evaluation

Region: Europe and Central Asia

Office: Tajikistan

Evaluation Year: 2022

Person-In-Charge for Follow-up to Management Response: Chief, Child Protection; Shukufa Ibodova, M&E Specialist.

Overall Response to the Evaluation: *Include here Senior Management general impression on the process and outcomes of the evaluation, adequacy of evidence collected, and reasonableness of and the concurrence with findings. Were there shortfalls or limitations in the process and/outcomes? Are there any additional insights not articulated in the recommendations?*

The evaluation was conducted in close consultation with the government and with involvement of youth representatives. The interagency Evaluation Reference Group was established by the government. Although the evaluation provided a useful perspective of programme beneficiaries, local governments and implementing partners, very low representation of government key informants from the primary counterpart ministries was one of major limitations. Although the scope of the evaluation did not intend to cover the individual assessment of each component of the Protective Environment (PE) programme (combining child protection and social protection issues), the evaluation lacks an in-depth understanding of complex PE programme, thus the recommendations are considered rather generic.

Planned Use of Evaluation: *Include here what's the process to facilitate the intended use by the intended users, focusing on how evaluation findings will affect implementation of the programme and contribute to evidence-based decision making*

This summative and formative evaluation was commissioned by the UNICEF Tajikistan Country Office in 2021, towards the end of the 2016-2022 country programme. The evaluation process, especially the report finalization extended for longer period than planned, hence some recommendations may no longer be relevant to current programme cycle, while some recommendations may go beyond the PE programme (health and nutrition, education, skills, etc) and require an office-wide effort. The country office assigned a special representative programme taskforce to work on the management response. As presented below, the taskforce developed management response actions to ten most strategic, prioritised, and relevant recommendations out of 14 recommendations in the report, also considering the views from the Evaluation Reference Group. UNICEF will be working with the government and other partners in taking forward the recommendations to strengthen the implementation of child protection programming and policies at all levels of government. The evaluation findings will be used in child protection and social protection programming, including development of multiyear workplans within the new country programme for 2023-2026.

UNICEF Evaluation Management Response Template

UNICEF Evaluation Management Response Template (staff who will edit the Management Response in the EMR Tracker – Shukufa Ibodova, M&E Specialist; Parviz Yakubov, Planning Officer)

RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS:

Recommendation 1 (Responsible: UNICEF / Priority: **High**) – Develop narrative descriptions to complement current programme documents where objectives, intervention logic, planned activities, cross-cutting approaches, related SDGs and monitoring mechanisms (targets and indicators) are mentioned and explained. Such a narrative programme document can help to facilitate monitoring and evaluation beyond the indicators mentioned in the RAM reports, as well as the communication about the programme with external stakeholders.

Management Response: Agree (for the new CPD)						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: The narratives for the current programme documents are not necessary considering the end of Country Programme in 2022. The new set of outcomes/activities and comprehensive Theory of change have been developed for the new CPD.						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: (Not started, Underway, Completed, Cancelled)	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Develop the theory of change and result framework covering child protection and social protection as part of the new CPD development	TCO	DepRep	May 2022	Completed	Detailed ToC was developed for the Child Protection Programme. The Social Protection was aligned with the Social Policy agenda under a new outcome "Governance and Inclusion".	New ToCs
Recommendation 2 (Responsible: UNICEF and National Government / Priority: High) – Develop a specific gender-action plan for the programme including specific activities and targets/indicators to track progress. We recommend explicit reference to the specific cross-cutting issues in the theory of changes of future programmes, to clarify which aspects they intend to address, including specific activities (inputs).						
Management Response: Agree.						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: Whereas the office agrees to strengthen the gender dimension of the child protection programming, the recommendation relates to efforts that go beyond the PE programme. The office will focus on making the gender related interventions and results more visible and traceable.						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents

Develop a cross-sectional Theory of Change for Tajikistan country office to track gender- related results (including those the child protection programme is contributing to) for 2023-2026 CPD	Programme Effectiveness	SBC Officer, Gender focal point(s)	June 2023	Started	Three intervention points were identified for the whole office. Based on the key identified areas TCO will elaborate Gender theory of change that would be valid for the next CPD. Stocktaking would be done on regular basis at PMT meetings.	Gender ToC, PMT minutes
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Evaluation Recommendation 3 (Responsible: UNICEF and Government at all levels / Priority: **High**) – There is an emerging need for introducing a proper case-management system at the ground level, which the programme can contribute to. We recommend seizing this opportunity to introduce more detailed beneficiary registration forms, in line with the recommendations of the CRC concluding observations of 2017 around data collection, which also recommended UNICEF as a source of technical assistance. Integration of data collection in the daily case management and processes can be a critical step towards improved evidence base for targeted policies and support. This recommendation can involve an impact evaluation with a larger sample size and preferably at the household level during and after 2-3 years after receiving the support by the programme.

Management Response: Partially agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: This recommendation mixes together several different areas of work and it is extremely ambitious to implement all under one recommendation within limited timeframe. The case management (the paper-based tools) has been already introduced by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Population (MoHSPP). There are already three different detailed beneficiary registration systems in the country and UNICEF uses data from them. As a matter of priority, UNICEF will focus on supporting the efforts on digitalization of Child Protection case management tools.

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Support the MoHSPP in reviewing and revising the	Child Protection	Child Protection Specialist	December 2023	Not started		Progress on Rolling Work plans, Revised tools

case management paper-based tools						
Initiate the process of digitalization of case management tools	Child Protection	Child Protection Specialist	September 2024	Not started		Progress on Rolling Work plans with the government
<p>Evaluation Recommendation 4 (Responsible: UNICEF / Priority: High) – Taking into account the limitations of official district and provincial level data, as well as data access by UNICEF, consider using administrative data or commissioning primary data collection at household and district level to independently build composite vulnerability indexes (specific related to protection indicator and ideally including also standard development indicators such as the poverty probability index, life-satisfaction index or coping strategy index). Data collection can be eased with tools such as RapidPro, which UNICEF has been successfully using worldwide to build nationally scalable mobile applications. This can help to build capacities of government partners while validating/triangulating official data, helping to improve vulnerability targeting and disaggregation of data by multiple demographic variables (e.g., sex, age, education) and geospatial variables (e.g., village, jamoat, district and province levels).</p>						
Management Response: Agree						
<p>If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: We agree to focus on supporting administrative data more, as undertaking major household surveys in the child protection areas is not feasible. In addition, we suggest to seize the opportunities and entry points to include child protection related issues into planned major household surveys and enhance information systems.</p>						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Support Tajstat to review and revise data collection and reporting forms or tool on children in alternative care	Child Protection	Child Protection Officer	December 2023	Not started		Revised registration and reporting tools proposed by Tajstat
Support the development of a unified definition of vulnerability in the country and improve	Social protection	Social protection Specialist	September 2024	Started	With the development of the CPD, UNICEF specified categories of vulnerable groups	Draft bylaw of the definition

targeting mechanisms to access services					of children as primary focus for the new CPD. This work will feed into the national work on unification of the definitions	
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Evaluation Recommendation 5 (Responsible: UNICEF / Priority: **High**) – We recommend to improve / scale up the programme outreach to remote villages compared to urban areas. Adaptations to the needs of those participants in rural areas (e.g., additional focus on households whose livelihoods depend on cattle raising, which may be more vulnerable to child labour), can help to improve the programme performance. As from the regression model (see Annex 10.4.2), the participants who live in villages (41%) tended to attribute higher scores (0.15) to the programme compared to the participants who live in towns (59%). This indicates that the programme has been successful in answering the needs of participants living in both rural and urban areas, performing best in rural areas. However, most of the 203 interviewed beneficiaries in the phone survey lived in urban areas. While the likelihood of a beneficiary to answer phone calls can have an influence on the larger representation of beneficiaries in urban areas, results from other sources (KIIs/FGDs) also suggest the need to improve the outreach to rural areas, where the most vulnerable to multidimensional poverty are.

Management Response: Agree

• **If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:** The PE Programme interventions are needs and context-based, therefore blanket approach cannot be applied. National level interventions include advocacy for services to be available at the local level. Depending on needs some of the interventions are implemented at local levels (e.g villages and even mahallas). UNICEF’s programming approach focuses on scaling up programmes through partnerships with development partners and institutionalising projects and programmes into government action plans and strategies.

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Continue supporting the implementation of interventions on prevention of GBV, mental health, family and community-based support and advocating for more outreach interventions in rural areas.	Child protection (in emergencies) ADAP	Child protection officers ADAP Officers	December 2023	Ongoing	Activities are being undertaken within the ongoing Spotlight Initiative and EU Refugee Funds.	Annual reports and Project Progress reports

Strengthen collaboration with the World Bank on child poverty measurement to better inform programming for the most vulnerable children, also using real time in the frame of Listening 2 Tajikistan data collection	Knowledge/Governance and Inclusion	Social Policy Specialist	June 2024	Started	MoU with the WB is being negotiated and under finalisation.	MoU between UNICEF and WB on joint analytical notes on child (monetary) poverty and/or multi-dimensional poverty
Document lessons learned and best practices within UNICEF's country programme 2016-2022 which will capture various programmes that were scaled up/has potential for scale up.	TCO	DepRep	August 2023	Not started		CPD 2016-2022 documentation (ToR, Report)

Evaluation Recommendation 7 (Responsible: UNICEF / Priority: **High**) – We recommend scaling up activities related to building capacities and raising awareness for prevention of violence against children.

Management Response: Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Support Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) in development and rolling out of a module on prevention of violence against children in schools	Child Protection	Child Protection Officer	September 2024	Not started		Training module in local language

Conduct awareness raising and behaviour change activities on prevention of VAC under the Spotlight Initiative and within the new CPD	Child Protection	Child Protection Officer, SBC Officer	September 2024 (Or December 2023?)	Not started		Annual and progress reports
Support the MoES with institutionalisation and scaling up VAC/SGBV reporting mechanisms piloted under the Spotlight Initiative to cover other areas/schools	Child Protection Learning	Child Protection Officer Learning Officer	June 2023	Started	Existing VAC/SGBV Mechanisms are institutionalised and scaled up to cover more schools	Spotlight Annual 2022 Report Copy of order of MoES on VAC/SGBV reporting mechanisms
<p>Evaluation Recommendation 9 (Responsible: UNICEF and national government / Priority: Medium) – The participants in KIIs/FGDs suggested that children, adolescents and youth are more involved in the programme planning and management, including in terms of collecting more evidence about their problems and suggestions of solutions. Following a RBA (rights-based approach), we recommend building stakeholder interest groups to name representatives and hold yearly planning and review workshops to involve them, particularly involving beneficiary and government representatives. Such a participatory management approach can be used to jointly review and improve two-year work plans, and can improve the opinions about transparency and accountability, while supporting increased local ownership.</p>						
<p>Management Response: Partially agree</p>						
<p>If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: UNICEF will continue to involve adolescents, youth and other stakeholder groups in programme planning and review workshops more systematically. UNICEF’s Young People’s Advisory Group (YPAG) established in 2021 is an inclusive group, therefore building thematic stakeholder groups considered to be not feasible, as this may involve multiple and overlapping meetings.</p>						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Continue involving children and young people, women in child protection and social protection related activities	TCO	Section Chiefs	September 2024	Ongoing	Consultations with beneficiary groups are conducted before during and after project concept development in	PMT minutes, Annual Reports

					areas of migration, women's empowerment, social inclusion of children and women with disabilities, justice for children.	
Continue YPAG participation in in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of UNICEF initiatives.	TCO	Section Chiefs	September 2024	Ongoing	Young people were actively involved in the new country programme planning process; involvement of young people in programme implementation and evaluation has started within current CPD.	YPAG ToR, Annual Reports

Evaluation Recommendation 10 (Responsible: UNICEF / Priority: **Low**) – Children and adolescent FGDs also mentioned interest in more teachers of foreign languages, modern equipment in schools and seminars in technology-based topics such as programming and robotics. Although these suggestions go beyond the mandate of the PE programme, they offer an opportunity for cross-sectoral work on emerging digital child-protection issues (e.g., online safety, connected parenting), which could tap on cross-sectoral work with the Education sector. We recommend to contact actors such as the Lego Foundation, Google Foundation as well as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to explore the potential of the implementation of pilot projects in complement to the PE Programme, which could prepare the Tajik children, adolescents and youth to the digital era, while also approaching the challenges related to abuse of technology and mobile phones by children, adolescents and youths, data protection and guidance to parents and teachers on how to guide and support safer and healthier use of technology.

Management Response: Partially agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: As relevant to the Child Protection and cross-sectoral synergies, we agree with the recommendation to work on the emerging digital child-protection issues (e.g., online safety). The interventions to help children, adolescent and young people acquire digital learning and skills are supported by other UNICEF programmes (Learning Programme, Adolescent Development and Participation Programme, and Learning and Skills within the new country programme).

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Support MoES on development of regulatory/advocacy documents on security, safety, and privacy in the use of digital technology in secondary schools	Learning	Education Officer	September 2024	Not started		State Concept and National Roadmap on Digital Learning
<p>Evaluation Recommendation 11 (Responsible: UNICEF / Priority: Low) – The use of Activity Info (data aggregator) as well as PowerBI by the programme since 2019 is an example of best practice, although they were used only for specific projects/components. We recommend extending this to all programme interventions for consistent use and real-time monitoring. To allow for a more efficient and effective use of data, the system could be enhanced with the use of cloud computing (reproducible processing of raw data in an automated way) and modern data science tools, particularly for the integration of qualitative data, and up-to-date functionalities (e.g., predictive analytics, natural language processing and machine learning/artificial intelligence applications).</p>						
<p>Management Response: Partially agree</p>						
<p>If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: Before generalization, the office will first need to explore the feasibility of expanding the existing tools to all programmes and introducing new qualitative data tools with a view of confidentiality issues.</p>						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
The country office will explore the feasibility of expanding the use of Activity Info for all programmes and review the existing databases against the personal data protection guidelines and address any issues.	PME	PME chief	June 2023	Not started		Report /Activity Info

Seek RO/HQ guidance and opportunities to explore the introduction of modern data science tools (including cloud computing), particularly for the integration of qualitative data, and up-to-date functionalities in the new country programme	PME	PME Chief	December 2023	Not started		Communication with RO/HQ
Evaluation Recommendation 13 (Responsible: UNICEF and NGOs / Priority: Low) – Consider the inclusion of new activities cross-sectoral synergy with other UNICEF sectors, and/or an specific component on labour and job orientation (e.g., labour rights, financial education for credit consumer protection and micro business legislation). This can complement the current programme structure, particularly the protection issues which included child labour, and regarding the support to families to ensure children remain in the safe and protective family environment in addition to cash transfers.						
Management Response: Partially agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: The new CPD does not have any specific interventions on child labour, which is a child protection issue. However, UNICEF has a specific component “Learning to Earning” under Learning and Skills, which provides 21 century skills and competencies, career counselling opportunities to adolescents and young people. This creates safe environment in transition to meaningful adulthood. Although there’s not specific action point for the PE programme, the management agree there’s room to strengthen the cross-sectoral work						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Continue advocacy with inter- ministerial coordination council on prevention of the worst forms of child labour by the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment.	Child Protection	Child Protection Officer	September 2024	Ongoing	UNICEF participates in the regular meetings organized by MOLME.	Minutes
Continue implementation of “Leaning to Earning” approach of UNICEF Tajikistan office.	Learning and Skills	Employability Officer	September 2024	Ongoing	Three impact source hubs continue to promote impact source model to create employment	Annual reports

					opportunities for young people.	
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