

Evaluation of the Country Programme of Cooperation between the Government of Mozambique and UNICEF 2017–2020/1



This summary brief presents the Evaluation of the Country Programme of Cooperation between the Government of Mozambique and UNICEF, implemented by the UNICEF Mozambique Country Office (MCO) with the support of Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and in partnership with the Government of Mozambique (GoM).

The Mozambique Country Programme (2017–2021) and Context

Until 2016, Mozambique was one of the most rapidly developing countries in Africa, with annual growth averaging 7 per cent and resource expansion following the discovery of natural gas. Mozambique's growth was disrupted by a debt scandal in 2016 which resulted in the withdrawal of programme budget support by key development partners. Since 2017, the government has been confronted by non-state armed group (NSAG) attacks in the gas-rich province of Cabo Delgado, a conflict that has escalated significantly since November 2020.

In 2019, successive cyclones Idai and Kenneth were unprecedented in their timing and severity, causing untold damage to infrastructure, production, and livelihoods. Since March 2020, Mozambique has struggled to contain the COVID-19 pandemic while economic growth has slowed to an estimated 1.9 per cent.

In this very volatile country context that UNICEF has implemented its current Mozambique-UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation (CP), initially developed for the period 2017-2020 and extended to 2021.

Evaluation Background, Purpose and Scope

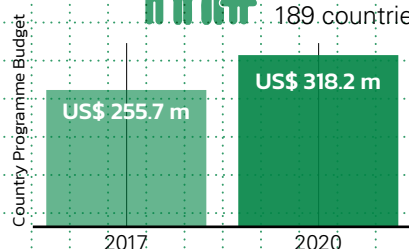
The Mozambique Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) was commissioned in August 2020, at the end of its current implementation cycle, to identify key lessons; to inform the development of the next UNICEF Country

Programme; and to strengthen UNICEF accountability to national stakeholders and the Executive Board. The evaluation was conducted from September 2020 to July 2021, structured around the Organisation for Economic

Mozambique

 **52%**
 <18 years old

 **0.446** H.D.I.
 181st out of 189 countries



The CP is structured around eight core outcomes related to:

- Nutrition
- Health
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH),
- Education
- Child/Social Protection
- Adolescents And Social Norms
- Social Inclusion
- Programme Effectiveness

The CP also includes an important focus on convergence, testing new approaches to multi-sector coordination and life cycle programming.

Co-operation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The scope of the evaluation covered the 2017-2021 implementation period, and programming at a national level in Mozambique. In keeping with the terms of reference, the objective of the CPE was to assess UNICEF's strategic positioning in Mozambique through a focus on two CP outcome areas – nutrition (outcome 1) and adolescents and social norms (outcome 6). The CPE also assessed cross-cutting issues (CCIs) of gender equality, humanitarian

action and disability as well as UNICEF's contributions to new programming areas. Operational considerations – including human and financial resource mobilization along with office decentralisation – were examined under the criterion of efficiency. The main users of the evaluation include: the Mozambique UNICEF Country Office (MCO); the Government of Mozambique; development partners in the country; the United Nations Country Team (UNTC); UNICEF implementing partners (government, civil society, academia); ESARO and UNICEF headquarters; as well as duty bearers and rights holders at the community level.

Key Findings

RELEVANCE

The CP was relevant for the needs of vulnerable populations, aligned with government priorities, supportive of UNICEF strategies and priorities, and harmonized with UNDAF/UNSDCF.

Multi-sector outcomes related to nutrition/stunting reduction and adolescents and social norms did not benefit from the same degree of government policy alignment as single sector outcomes in health and education.

UNICEF partnered with the government of Mozambique and other partners to elevate the importance of these multi-sector issues, although there remains need for ongoing policy dialogue.

UNICEF has proved adept at maintaining CP relevance over time by continuously adapting its programming to significant changes in the country context since 2017.

COHERENCE

UNICEF Mozambique launched very ambitious CP innovations in 2017 to increase internal CP coherence, including convergence, a life cycle approach, office

decentralization, and the elevation of communication for development (C4D).

Good progress was made on advancing convergence and C4D, which contributed to improved coherence, learning, programme quality, and cross-sectoral collaboration, particularly under Outcome 1 in nutrition/stunting reduction. The risks related to implementing these innovations were underestimated and required more time, resources, capacity and organizational change than originally anticipated; progress was slowed by UNICEF emergency responses and staff turnover.

UNICEF is perceived as strategically positioned in Mozambique, given the scope and focus of its country programme, the strength of its technical expertise, and its presence at national and sub-national levels.

UNICEF is seen as a team player in the UN system and among development partners. Leadership in the nutrition sector, coordination during emergencies and promotion of joint UN programming are particularly appreciated.

UNICEF Mozambique lacks a partnership management strategy and internal guidance to assess risk and determine what forms of partnership can most efficiently contribute to CP objectives for upstream, midstream, and downstream work, cross-cutting issues, or long-term vs. emergency programming.

Box 1 Approach, Methodology, and Limitations

This CPE was summative, adopting a theory-based approach to the assessment of outcomes 1 and 6 while combining elements of utilization-focused design with outcome harvesting, human rights, gender equality and equity-based approaches. An evaluation matrix was developed to guide data collection and analysis. There were three sources of data for this evaluation:

- over 350 documents were reviewed;
- over 130 stakeholders were interviewed individually or in small groups (43 per cent women);
- and site visits were conducted in Nampula and Zambezia provinces.

The evaluation design did not include data collection at the community level, with rights holders or direct beneficiaries, given considerations related to the focus of the CPE, UNICEF learning needs, sampling considerations, resource and time limitations. All CPE data collection was qualitative, and this was supplemented by analysis of quantitative data from UNICEF data bases, management information systems, special studies, and reports. The evaluation followed UN evaluation norms and standards. Key limitations faced during the evaluation included travel restrictions and other logistic challenges related to COVID 19, stakeholder and data availability, particularly related to outcome results data.

EFFECTIVENESS

Under Outcome 1, all key indicator targets linked to nutrition and stunting reduction in health, WASH, social protection, and C4D were either achieved or are on track. Promising trends are emerging related exclusive breastfeeding; improved detection and treatment of severe malnutrition; reduced rates of low birthweight; reduced rates of water-borne diseases; a decrease in open defecation; and greater access to safe water. UNICEF contributions to expanding the Community Health Workers/ (APE) programme, developing and testing the Child Grant pilot, and adapting it to emergency response, are seen as significant contributions to system strengthening.

Under Outcome 6, UNICEF laid the foundation for more robust programming on adolescence in the next CP. Two out of three output targets under Outcome 6 are on track, related to multi-sector coordination and adolescent engagement. The adolescent agenda in Mozambique is gaining importance and streamlined coordination for adolescents is slowly improving. With regard to Output 6.3 on adolescent engagement, UNICEF is making contributions to strengthening innovative adolescent participation platforms. Progress on Output 6.2 (social norm change) is 'constrained'. Social norm change is long-term, second decade issues addressed under Outcome 6 are culturally sensitive, while government systems to collect data are weak.

The CP programme strategies contributed to improved programme quality and relevance. Geographic convergence proved more challenging to implement, particularly at the district level and below. C4D and the use of community platforms have been crucial to promoting convergence and to supporting the humanitarian/development nexus.

It is challenging to assess CP performance or to determine a causal link between the programme strategies and CP outcome achievement because of limited outcome data and the ambitious nature of CP outcome statements.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The CP is supportive of key priorities in UNICEF Gender Action Plans and UNICEF Strategic Plans, although the depth and extent of mainstreaming gender equality, humanitarian action, and disability, have been inconsistent across CP design and implementation.

Efforts have been made since 2019 to elevate cross-cutting themes in CP implementation while improving internal capacity for mainstreaming. Mainstreaming efforts will require ongoing support and oversight by senior MCO managers in the next CPD.

EFFICIENCY

The CP expanded significantly in scope, focus and management complexity as a result of the debt crisis and successive emergencies, with UNICEF assuming new responsibilities, increasing the proportion of earmarked funding, as well as expanding human and financial resources. Office decentralisation proved beneficial to the quality and efficiency of programming, although determining the degree of decentralization, clarifying lines of accountability, levels of authority, roles, and responsibilities, between Maputo and field offices, represent ongoing challenges. Limitations with the country programme Results and Resources Framework, its alignment with outcome-level theories of change, and their coherence with annual plans and progress reporting, hamper UNICEF's ability to measure, account for and report on CP performance. Investment in evaluation has been modest relative to the size and complexity of this CP while a strategy is lacking to ensure that adequate evidence - for CP accountability, learning and influence - is generated and used.

Accountability and oversight for CP performance require clarification, while donors require improved reporting, including more analysis on outcome achievement and value for money.

Box 2 Lessons Learned

- 1 Implementing programmatic shifts to convergence and a life cycle approach depends on significant organizational changes in mind sets, systems, structures, and practices, requiring important investments in time, resources, and capacity.**
- 2 Convergence is interconnected with other change strategies at the programme level.** Its vision and strategy need to be driven by senior management at a level above section chiefs; its implementation needs to be adaptive, iterative and flexible; it needs to be viewed as a long-term organizational change process that inevitably takes more than one country programme cycle to achieve; while donor funding can provide the necessary impetus and pressure to drive the new convergent approaches to programming.
- 3 Transaction costs increase in direct proportion to any expansion in the scope, focus and/or size of the country programme.** The risks associated with programme expansion, if not carefully assessed and managed, can negatively affect programme effectiveness and efficiency.
- 4 Three overarching objectives drive evidence generation and use at the country programme level:** accountability for results, learning for ongoing programme improvement, and influence through advocacy and policy dialogue. A strategy is needed for evidence generation on a CP which addresses these three uses of evidence.

SUSTAINABILITY

Successive crises in Mozambique since 2016 have undermined economic growth and fiscal space. This volatility constrains the ability of government to sustain programming introduced by donors while the weight of successive emergencies takes its toll on sustainability, given the need to rebuild infrastructure, resettle populations, and shift resources between long-term development and emergency response.

Despite this challenging context, UNICEF Mozambique has made important contributions to sustainability including scaling up and replicating successful interventions in health, nutrition and social inclusion; supporting policy development in C4D, improving multi-sector coordination structures in youth and adolescent development, among other examples.

Recommendations

THE MOZAMBIQUE COUNTRY OFFICE SHOULD:

- **Comprehensively assess ongoing risks to CP performance and temper the ambition of the next CP accordingly**, in keeping with existing delivery capacity and a volatile country context.
- **Build on achievements in stunting reduction and adolescents and social norms from the current country programme** to improve programming relevance, coherence and effectiveness in the next CPD.
- **Develop a comprehensive partnership management strategy** to ensure optimal investment in partnership at the least cost and risk to the CP.
- **(to more effectively deliver as One UN), improve its efforts in joint programme management related to adolescents and social norms** (Outcome 6), while advancing collaboration with FAO on nutrition-sensitive agriculture (Outcome 1).
- **Further clarify country office decentralization**, with regard to roles, responsibilities, levels of authority, and mechanisms for accountability. The focus of country office contributions should be capacity strengthening while risk assessment of the field office function should be ongoing to ensure sustainability of results.

THE MOZAMBIQUE COUNTRY OFFICE AND ESARO SHOULD:

- **Ensure that mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues is better reflected in the design and implementation of the new CPD.**
- **Ensure accountability for CP performance by improving the next CP accountability framework**, ensuring that reliable data exists to measure performance up to the outcome level, and preparing quality reports that respond to stakeholder information needs.
- **Clarify accountability structures, roles, and responsibilities**, while further investing in and developing office capacity for planning, monitoring and evaluation (PM&E).
- **Review the implementation of its convergence strategy**, in collaboration with government, with a view to more explicitly and strategically defining convergence and its relationship to the lifecycle approach in the next CPD.

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Contact

Margot Rothman, Lead Evaluator
Universal Management group
Email: margot@msrevaluation.ca

Fabio Bezerra, Evaluation Manager
UNICEF Mozambique
Av do Zimbabwe 1440, Maputo, Mozambique
Tel. (+258) 855791769 / Email: fbezerra@unicef.org

Partner:



REPÚBLICA DE MOÇAMBIQUE

Martina Bennett, Evaluation Specialist
Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
Av do Zimbabwe 1440, Maputo, Mozambique
Tel. (+254) 207622215 / Email: mbennett@unicef.org

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