

UNICEF Evaluation Management Response Template

Evaluation Title: Formative Evaluation of Cash Based Assistance(CBA) Programme in Afghanistan 2020-2023

Region: ROSA

Office: Afghanistan Country Office

Evaluation Year: *(Please note the date should be the date of the report and not the year the information is been entered onto the system) December 2023*

Person-In-Charge for Follow-up to Management Response: Kenneth Anyanzo

Overall Response to the Evaluation: *The evaluation process was very comprehensive ensuring detailed consultations and interviews with all concerned UNICEF staff/Programme Sections and external stakeholders. As such, there was a very detailed amount of information available to the consulting firm to support the analysis. On a positive note, the evaluation confirmed many of the internal issues that need to be addressed by UNICEF e.g. fundraising, gender/SBC mainstreaming, capacity development, integrated programming, accountability mechanisms, granularity of vulnerability assessments and transparency in the implementation of cash transfers. While these operational aspects are critical for the efficient implementation of cash transfers, it would be important to highlight the key strategic areas of improvement in the recommendations based on lessons learned from the cash transfer programmes in the country. For example, what specific cash transfer programmes should UNICEF focus on?; Do the findings indicate whether UNICEF is ready to implement cash at scale and what steps need to be taken to ensure that this happens? How relevant was the UNICEF Afghanistan cash strategy to the context of Afghanistan?, What would be the most relevant cash strategy for the context and what steps should be taken towards this direction? How should UNICEF be approaching the contextual challenges that play a major role in influencing the scale, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of cash transfers e.g. ban on female workers, climate change, numerous sudden onset disasters on annual basis, existing macro-economic and fiscal challenges and inability to work directly with the government.*

Planned Use of Evaluation: *On a positive note, all the key recommendations mentioned in this Management Response have either been partially implemented or are underway. As such the evaluation provides a strong basis to strengthen and sustain effort in the areas highlighted in this document. UNICEF will widely circulate the evaluation with all concerned stakeholders to ensure that there is a common understanding on the findings and the direction that will be taken to ensure the implementation of the recommendations.*

Allowed Editor: *Include here name/s of person/s who will edit the Management Response in the EMR Tracker*

RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS:

Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 1: As UNICEF is planning to expand its CBA activities, the expertise coming from the PMU needs to be completely integrated into the country office architecture.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Review of the current SOPs for Cash Transfers to clarify current implementation arrangements and areas of synergy between PMU and other Sections.	ACO	Social Policy Section	N/A	Completed	Current SOPs were reviewed in consultation with PMU, country office Finance, Operations and Risk Sections. The review clarified the current implementation approach through PMU and requirements for full integration into the country office architecture in future.	SOPs for Cash Based Transfers.
Review and ensure implementation of Cash DOAP (HOPE System) to ensure more involvement of Social Policy in administrative processes related to	ACO	PMU/Social Policy	By December 2024	Underway	Discussions have been held between PMU and Social Policy regarding the involvement of Social Policy	Meeting minutes between PMU and Social Policy. Revised DOAP.

<p>cash transfer implementation and management beyond “reader rights”.</p>					<p>colleagues in cash transfer management using the HOPE System. Social Policy Social Protection Specialist is already part of the UNICEF Country Office HOPE coordination team. More consultations are underway to ensure more integration of Social Policy Section in PMU processes.</p>	
<p>Undertake capacity building of Country Office staff on Cash Transfer Implementation and Management</p>	<p>ACO</p>	<p>PMU/Social Policy</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>Training of relevant Country Office staff across various operational and programme sections was undertaken in mid-2023. This is so far the second training</p>	<p>Training reports on Cash Transfer Implementation and Management.</p>

					that has been undertaken for Afghanistan. The trainings focused on cash transfer design and implementation and was one of the initiatives to ensure transfer of knowledge on cash transfer programming to the relevant UNICEF sections.	
Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 2: Additional efforts should be invested into gender and social behaviour change-related activities especially when related to the Cash+ and regular cash programmes.						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Ensure the mainstreaming of gender and social behavioural change activities as integral components of cash-plus programmes with full	ACO	ACO management	Immediately. Note that this process has already been initiated and will be integral part of the cash transfer	Underway	SBC activities have been part of previous UNICEF cash transfer programmes especially in education and nutrition sensitive cash programmes. Under the revamped	Social Protection Programme Design Documents and Concept Notes. Evaluation TORs (e.g. MCCT).

<p>participation and leadership from both Gender and Social Behavioural Change Sections.</p>			<p>programme going forward.</p>		<p>Mother and Child Cash Transfer programme, the Social Policy Section has invested more resources on the SBC component and is working closely with the SBC section to develop a more robust customized SBC module for the programme. Women and children are the primary target group for social protection. Gender has been mainstreamed in all evaluations, monitoring and reporting processes.</p>	
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Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3: UNICEF should invest resources in measuring the outcomes of Cash+ and regular cash programmes to i) ensure expected outcomes are reached, ii) re-orientate programming if needed, and iii) provide evidence to donors for possible increased funding.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Partially Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

<p>Actions planned</p>	<p>Responsible Office</p>	<p>Responsible Person</p>	<p>Expected completion date</p>	<p>Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled</p>	<p>Actions taken</p>	<p>Supporting documents</p>
<p>Ensure that evaluations and evidence generation are an integral part of cash transfer</p>	<p>ACO</p>	<p>Social Policy with programmes</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>UNICEF has included an in-depth evaluation as a key component in the current Mother and Child Cash</p>	<p>Evaluation Terms of Reference. Evaluation Reports.</p>

<p>programmes to generate empirical evidence to inform the design, quality and scale of future cash transfer programmes.</p>					<p>Transfer Programme which is the main Social Protection programme for UNICEF Afghanistan. To improve the overall quality and independence of evaluations, UNICEF will partner with external research firms and think tanks as is the case with the MCCT programme where UNICEF is partnering with Maastricht University.</p> <p>For short-term emergency cash transfers, UNICEF undertakes Post Distribution Monitoring exercises which are based on a random sample with data collected by an independent firm.</p>	<p>Post Distribution Monitoring reports.</p>
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Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 4: UNICEF needs to continue working towards separating implementation partners and monitoring partners.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed	Actions taken	Supporting documents
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				Cancelled		
Hire independent firms to undertake evaluations, Third Party and Post Distribution Monitoring exercises.	ACO	Social Policy/PMU	N/A	Completed	All evaluations and Post Distribution Monitoring exercises are conducted by independent firms.	Cash Transfer Evaluation and Monitoring Terms of Reference. Third Party Contracts for Evaluations and Post Distribution Monitoring.
Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 5: UNICEF should find mitigation measures to ensure timely winter cash assistance.						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Explore internal advance funding mechanisms to fill the gap created by late donor funding.	ACO	ACO Management and Social Policy Section.	June to December 2024 (This will be recurrent and implemented on an annual basis).	Underway	The Winter strategy will be finalised by June of every year to allow for adequate time to identify internal resources as well as fill in existing funding gaps from external sources. Resource mobilization from internal sources will be an ongoing process from June until December given that some funding opportunities are	Country Office Winter Strategy. Minutes from Country Management meetings on agreed strategy for internal fundraising. Minutes from Country Office Cash Task Force meetings on internal resourcing for Winter.

					realised towards the end of the year.	
Using the winter strategy, undertake proactive donor engagement to mobilise external resources for Winter.	ACO	ACO Management and Social Policy Section.	June to December 2024 (To be undertaken annually given the seasonal nature of the winter needs).	Underway.	Using the preliminary Winter Strategy, UNICEF has already started mobilising funds externally for 2024/2025 winter with some funding already secured and others in the pipeline. Given the recurrent and annual seasonality of winter, priority will be given to developing a draft strategy at the beginning of each year for fundraising purposes with the final version finalised latest in June of every year.	Winter Strategy. Donor engagement documents e.g. presentations and concept notes. Minutes from donor meetings.

Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 6: To provide a more holistic response to the Afghan people, UNICEF should collaborate more with other actors so that the CBA results can be further leveraged. Partnerships with external actors in livelihoods, community-level WASH, etc. could enhance UNICEF core programming outcomes more sustainably.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Explore opportunities for integrated programming or	ACO	Social Policy Section	This is a continuous processes as part of the overall	Underway	UNICEF through the United Nations Common Cash Statement	CVWG Interagency resources e.g. guidelines, meeting minutes, response

<p>creating synergies across other programmes with UN sister agencies and development partners.</p>			<p>country strategy for social protection.</p>		<p>Coordination Mechanism (UNCCS), and the Cash and Voucher Working Group (CVWG) has established frequent coordination mechanisms. Through the above two mechanisms, UNICEF has taken positive steps in creating synergies with UN agencies and NGOs leading to harmonisation of approaches in the implementation of Social Protection, Humanitarian Cash Transfers and Sectoral Cash Transfer Programmes. While the CVWG coordination mechanism is working well, there is need to improve the UNCCS coordination processes as meetings are not frequent and attendance is irregular.</p>	<p>plans and reports and trackers UNCCS minutes and response trackers.</p>
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Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 7: UNICEF should support regional sub-offices to conduct detailed assessments to inform more localised vulnerability criteria for CBA programmes planned.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
<p>Conduct assessments at more granular level to enable more accurate targeting of the most vulnerable populations and efficient allocation of resources taking into consideration greater analysis of minorities and potentially underserved populations.</p>	ACO	Social Policy Data and Evidence Unit.	December 2024.	Underway	<p>Current assessments are representative at provincial level. This is the case for the latest MICS data. UNICEF is currently exploring the possibility of conducting small area estimates which will see the generation of data at district level.</p> <p>The Social Policy Data and Evidence team is already supporting field offices in generating sub-national provincial profiles on an annual basis.</p> <p>For Social Protection programming, in addition to in-house data e.g. MICS, UNICEF makes use of other data from partners which</p>	<p>Assessments and datasets from UNICEF and external partners e.g. OCHA, UNDP and WFP.</p> <p>Sub-national Provincial Profiles developed by UNICEF Field Offices with support from Social Policy Section in Kabul.</p>

					provide more detailed analysis including on minorities e.g. displaced persons and persons with disabilities.	
Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 8: During the participant selection process, UNICEF should ensure all measures are put in place to ensure a transparent and well-accepted procedure.						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
As part of the programme design and implementation process, ensure that UNICEF's targeting approach is based on a consultative approach with full participation of communities in targeting and monitoring cash transfer programmes.	ACO	PMU/Social Policy	This is already in place and an ongoing process.	Completed	For every cash transfer programme, UNICEF undertakes detailed consultation of communities and local authorities during which the programme objectives and targeting criteria are discussed both with communities and local authorities. Registration of beneficiaries is conducted at household and community level with full participation and observation by community	Programme Design Documents, GRM system and reports, PDM and Third-party Monitoring Reports.

					<p>representative during the entire process.</p> <p>UNICEF has a detailed mechanism in place to analyse issues that affect participant selection. This includes a detailed grievance collection and redressal mechanism (GRM) in addition to independent Third-party monitoring and Post Distribution Monitoring.</p> <p>UNICEF Social Protection team recognises that engaging communities in a transparent manner is very critical for effective programme delivery. As such, UNICEF will continue providing trainings and orientation to partners before the commencement of every project and as a continuous process of capacity building and</p>	
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					assuring compliance with programme standards.	
Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 9: UNICEF should ensure that communication around the different CBA components is better disseminated:						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Ensure extensive communication and thorough engagement of communities on cash transfer programmes implemented in the country.	ACO	PMU/Social Policy	N/A as this is an ongoing process.	Completed	Community engagement and consultations prior to any cash project as well as communication of selection criteria is part of every cash transfer project. UNICEF however needs to ensure that the partner continues enforcing the above requirements.	Programme design documents, progress reports, field monitoring reports, TPM reports and PDM reports.
Work in collaboration with IPs to ensure communities are fully aware of the UNICEF hotline and other feedback and complaints mechanisms.	ACO	PMU/Social Policy	N/A as this was already initiated and is an ongoing process.	Completed.	GRM and hotline are already in place and disseminated to communities. However, continuous communication and engagement of communities is important to sustain	Progress reports, TPM reports, PDM reports, GRM reports.

					awareness on the feedback mechanism.	
Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 10: The cost of transportation to the distribution points should not be borne by the participants.						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Establish registration points close to communities to ensure that beneficiaries do not spend on transportation.	ACO	PMU/Social Policy	Ongoing process for all cash transfer programmes.	Underway	<p>UNICEF undertakes registration at household and community level. This way beneficiaries should not be incurring any costs to register for the programme.</p> <p>A small number of beneficiaries indicate incurring costs to register. UNICEF will continuously review and monitor registration processes to ensure that this is in compliance with the set standards and procedures.</p>	Programming Implementation and field monitoring reports, progress reports, TPM reports and PDM reports.