

VOLUME I - EVALUATION REPORT

Formative Evaluation of Gender Transformative Programming through Investment in Adolescent Girls' Leadership in Eastern and Southern Africa

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Formative Evaluation of Gender Transformative Programming through Investment in Adolescent Girls' Leadership in Eastern and Southern Africa

VOLUME I

Final Evaluation Report

Formative Evaluation of Gender Transformative Programming through Investment in Adolescent Girls' Leadership in Eastern and Southern Africa

Final Report

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ACRONYMS

AB	Adolescent Boy
ADAP	Adolescent Development and Participation
AG	Adolescent Girl
AYAC	Adolescent and Youth Advisory Council
BEAD	Basic Education and Adolescent Development programme
CHV	Community Health Volunteers
CHW	Community Health Workers
CO	Country Office
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSOs	Civil Society Organisation
EAGL	Every Adolescent Girl Learns
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESAR	Eastern and Southern Africa Region
ESARO	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
FGD	focus group discussions
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GBV	Gender based violence
GEG	Girls Empowering Girls
GEM	Gender Equality Marker
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GRREAT	Girl's Reproductive Health, Rights and Empowerment Accelerated
GT	Gender transformation/gender transformative
GTA	Gender Transformative Approaches
GTP	Gender Transformative Programming
HCD	Human-Centred Design
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MER	Monitoring, reporting and evaluation
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoH	Ministry of Health
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RAAG	Regional Adolescent Advisory Group
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communications
SDDirect	Social Development Direct
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
UN	United Nations
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings and recommendations from the formative evaluation of Gender Transformative Programming through investment in adolescent girls' leadership in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Overview

This formative evaluation examines how current programmes and investment in adolescent girls' leadership are shaping UNICEF's gender transformative programming (GTP) approach in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR). It is purposely focused on adolescent-girl-intentioned programming as part of a gender transformative approach¹.

The objective of this forward-looking evaluation is to draw out learning and recommendations from UNICEF's implementation of their Gender Action Plan GAP 2 (2018–2021) and GAP 3 (2022–2025) for future programming in the region and elsewhere, recognising that this is a new area of work for the region and a new priority introduced in the most recent GAP. This is a previously under-explored area of investigation for the region. The formative evaluation used the following definition of gender transformative programming and adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership (see Box 1).

Box 1: Definitions

A **gender transformative approach** addresses the root causes of gender and social inequality by transforming unequal gender norms with the aim to change structural power and social relations. It is underpinned by an **intersectional analysis**, recognizing that lives are shaped by identities, relationships and social factors. It places adolescent girls in all their diversity at the heart of an intervention, enhancing their relative position at the individual and group levels, as well as institutional, policy and structural levels.

Adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership have been placed at the centre of UNICEF's girl-focused programmes.

Agency means the ability to act or to choose what action to take, and to exert control over one's own life and circumstances.

Voice is the ability to express thoughts, opinions and ideas, and to be heard.

Leadership involves empowering adolescent girls, building their self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence to play active roles in shaping their lives, and to become agents of change in their communities.

This evaluation was conducted from November 2022–November 2023, and covers the period from 2018 to early 2023 (GAP 2 and start of GAP 3). It employed a country-case study approach examining programmes in a sample of the 21 countries in UNICEF's Eastern and Southern Africa Region. Case studies led by in-country National Consultants were undertaken in three countries, and in-depth, desk-based reviews in three additional countries. The countries selected were:

- In-country case studies: Mozambique, Namibia and Uganda
- In-depth, desk-based reviews: Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe

Findings and recommendations are focused on the region but it is hoped they will have relevance to all 21 UNICEF Country Offices (COs) in the region and beyond. The intended audience for the evaluation includes the UNICEF ESARO Gender Team, ESARO Gender and Adolescent Working Group, Regional Office management and other sectors as well as the COs in the region. Other UN staff, global, regional and national partners, and donors will also be interested in the findings and recommendations, as will practitioners working in the gender and adolescent spaces.

An adolescent-friendly video and poster have been produced to share findings and recommendations back with the young people who participated in both the evaluation and other UNICEF programmes. It is hoped that UN agencies interested in supporting GTP approaches will find the findings and recommendations from this evaluation useful and will support wider dissemination.

¹ The evaluation also considers the importance of working with men and boys as critical to achieve transformative change, as highlighted in UNICEF's Gender Policy, and Gender Action Plan (GAP), to a lesser extent.

Methodology

Our approach is based on two core methodologies: 1) adapted outcome harvesting against the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) continuum and 2) participatory, youth-friendly approaches. Outcomes have been identified both through the document analysis as well as through stakeholder engagement and mapped against the GESI continuum.

We employed a range of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to explore the views and experiences of different stakeholders in different contexts, whilst balancing the need to answer the specific evaluation questions.

Data collection consisted of key informant interviews and focus group discussions (73 KIIs and FGDs), data collection with adolescent girls and boys (112 young people), document review (300 documents), and a regional survey (166 respondents). In order to centre the voices of adolescent girls and young women in this evaluation, we worked with 12 youth researchers as part of an Adolescent Panel in each of the in-depth case study countries, who supported data collection and sensemaking. A Regional Adolescent Advisory Group of 11 young people supported validation and fed into the recommendations.

In addition, the evaluation team held multiple consultations with the EASR Office and Country Offices selected for the case studies, the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) and Regional Adolescent Advisory Group (RAAG). These meetings took place regularly throughout the evaluation, from the early inception to the development of the final report.



Figure 1: Data collection in numbers

Summary of Key Findings

Please find below a summary of the key findings. Detail and evidence for each of these is found in the main evaluation report.

Overarching question: To what extent are UNICEF ESAR COs investing in adolescent girls' voices, agency and leadership as a central approach within their gender transformative programming?

The evaluation found that all the case study countries are addressing girls' voice, agency and leadership to differing degrees as part of their adolescent-focused programming. A number of promising programmes and outcomes have been identified relating to individual girls feeling more confident and empowered, and exercising leadership, which are explored in the full report. Examples of individual transformation were more common than examples of wider attitudinal or societal change, which is needed for effective GTP. But this type of change takes time to demonstrate results at this level and since the approach has only recently been emphasised in the GAP 3, it is not surprising that there is not yet strong evidence of this yet.

Relevance: To what extent is country programming designed to address the Social Development Direct

specific needs of adolescent girls in the region, and do adolescent girls meaningfully engage in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and policies?

Many of the projects/programmes reviewed in the country case studies were designed to meet the needs of adolescent girls and are based on robust analysis, research and surveys, drawing significantly on secondary research and data sources. Programmes have both reacted and changed thematically in response to emerging trends. One way to empower adolescent girls and support their voice, agency and leadership is to engage them meaningfully and safely in all aspects of programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation found strongest evidence of adolescent girls being engaged in implementation and monitoring activities, with less evidence of their engagement in programme and policy design and evaluation.

The evaluation found that projects and programmes are most often designed by staff

members, or centrally mandated with limited opportunities for adolescents to meaningfully participate in their design.

Coherence. To what extent do adolescent girl-focused interventions align with UNICEF strategies and global policy commitments to support adolescent girls' leadership and agency through GTP in ESAR? In what ways is UNICEF cooperating with other UN entities and donors/ development partners?

ESARO and the COs programmes are aligned to global policies, commitments and government policy and legal frameworks. More attention could be made on alignment to global policy commitments for girls with disabilities, and other forms of intersectional, structural marginalisation, including diverse sexual orientations, gender identity and expression, where safe and appropriate.

Policy and programming is guided by the GAP and the Adolescent Girls Programme Strategy 2022-2025. The evaluation found that country office ambitions are still most often linked to 'gender mainstreaming' and 'gender sensitivity' rather than 'gender transformation' – the goal only made explicit in the recent GAP 3. Nonetheless, this alignment signals strong potential for embedding a deeper focus and understanding of gender transformative change.

Partnerships with girls' and women's rights organisations and youth-led organisations are a key strategy for UNICEF in the GAP 3, although nascent, and the evaluation found examples of these. The transformational potential of joint programming has yet to be fully leveraged.

Effectiveness. To what extent have UNICEF ESAR's adolescent girl-focused interventions integrated gender transformative approaches, contributing to increasing their voice, agency and leadership in current planned programmes?

There are many promising examples of COs employing a range of programmatic approaches to contribute to gender transformative outcomes², through developing adolescent girls voice, agency and leadership. At the individual level these include mentorship, upskilling, and capacity building activities, along with safe spaces and school clubs. At an interpersonal level, programmes have developed peer-to-peer approaches and intergenerational dialogues. Examples were found of work engaging men and boys in support of greater

gender equality, fostering positive masculinities as part of a gender transformative approach.

There is a varied understanding of the concept of gender transformative programming and the GAP 3 across UNICEF staff and partners in the region, which may have contributed to an inconsistent approach to implementing gender transformative programming.

Efficiency. To what extent has UNICEF allocated adequate resources to gender transformative, adolescent girls programming in ESAR? Do UNICEF programmes' monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) systems address GTP?

Most COs have been able to undertake some gender transformative work largely through taking a mainstreaming approach as advocated in the GAP 3. ESARO's resource allocation is perceived to be insufficient to implement GTP, particularly for adolescent girls in all their diversity, and in emergency contexts. In these contexts, "where almost everything is lacking", basic needs are perceived to be the priority, making it difficult to implement adolescent GTP.

Mandatory gender tagging processes act as an incentive to higher-level reporting, but the system is complex and not perceived to be an accurate reflection of GTP.

Sustainability. To what extent are the positive changes and effects of gender transformative programming on adolescent girls' leadership and agency sustainable at the national level, and / or likely to be scaled up by government or civil society?

UNICEF supports and prioritises partnerships with government and civil society to implement programmes with the view to building ownership, capacity and resources to support government scale up or take up by other partners. The evaluation found evidence that programmes designed in line with government sector plans and priorities are more likely to have clear sustainability goals articulated. However, these goals are not necessarily related to gender transformative outcomes, as in many countries in the region governments' understanding of GTP is limited.

Key partners for UNICEF ESARO and country offices, including in humanitarian and emergency contexts, are youth-led and women's rights organisations³. These partnerships have been limited to date and

² Effective models have been identified based on the outcome harvesting approach the evaluation team undertook to identify programmatic approaches across the

GESI continuum, and based on evidence of what works for gender transformative programming.

³ As highlighted in the GAP 3 and the Adolescent Strategy

more could be done at the country level to explore ways of working together.

Impact. To what extent are new or planned interventions likely to lend themselves to achieving transformative change for adolescent girls in future?

Effective interventions for improving adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership were mostly found at the individual level of the socio-ecological model. Whilst the strongest evidence was found of interventions taking place at the gender responsive level, emergent examples were found of approaches at the gender transformative level on the GESI continuum.

Examples were found of interventions that place adolescent girls in their diversity at the heart of an intervention, and some consideration of intersectionality is informing programme design and implementation. However, this is not happening systematically and more could be done to strengthen the analysis and ensure greater inclusion.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Investing in adolescent girls' voice, leadership and agency. This approach has led to positive changes among individual adolescent girls in relation to their confidence, self-esteem and self-belief. Change has been centred at the programme level, with less evidence of how this has translated into changes in their lives outside of the programme. These individual level outcomes are indicative of the focus of the GAP 2, but there is strong potential for girl-intentioned programming to become more transformative with the operationalisation of GAP 3.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3

Conclusion 2: Sustainability. Good alignment with government priorities, global frameworks and UNICEF's strategic plans supports sustainability, but there are capacity challenges among decision makers and lawmakers where more needs to be done to explicitly emphasise and situate this work within the context of gender transformation, and to engage them in a more sustainable and gender transformative way.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 4.1, 8.2, 8.3

Conclusion 3: Coordination. At country level coordination between UNICEF, other UN agencies, national governments and other

key partners and donors is supportive of and in line with country priorities. Additional opportunities exist to improve coordination and learning further through joint programmes and south-south partnerships, where promising practice is emerging, to support GTP.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 4.2, 4.3

Conclusion 4: Promising models and approaches are being implemented across different sectors to contribute to gender transformative outcomes. These approaches are still small scale and confined to specific projects. Limited measurement to evidence wider impact and support lesson learning is hampering scale up and replication of these approaches to other programmes in the region.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 5.3, 7.6, 9.6

Conclusion 5: Capacity gaps. The shift from gender responsive to gender transformative policy and programming has inevitably unearthed some capacity challenges and knowledge gaps across a range of stakeholders. Understanding of GTP and how, and why, to do it varies considerably. Resources and greater prioritisation are required to ensure capacity and buy-in is strengthened across the board.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 1.3, 5.1, 7.4, 7.5, 8.5, 9.4

Conclusion 6: Humanitarian programming GTP is less evident in humanitarian and emergency programming, and the 'gender agenda' may be deprioritised in these settings due to a focus on 'life saving' priorities and service provision. A lack of a critical understanding of why GTP is essential and how it can be achieved in these contexts is contributing to this de-prioritisation.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 5.4, 6.2, 7.2

Conclusion 7: Expenditure tracking. The complexity of the systems and processes in place to track gender transformation, such as the gender tagging system, makes it difficult for COs to track the scale of investments on adolescent girl programming. It is also leading to inconsistent implementation and inaccurate data. The GAP 3 requires information to be presented differently, and revised guidance and processes need to reflect this.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 6.1, 6.2, 6.5

Conclusion 8: Ensure involvement is meaningful. Ensuring adolescent girls are involved across the programme cycle is a

widely adopted approach. However, involvement varies significantly across the programme cycle and is not always meaningful. More could be done to leverage existing platforms of youth-led organisations to reach a wider diversity of adolescent girls and young people and publicise opportunities widely.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 8.7, 9.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The **Gender Action Plans are useful tools to drive change at country level**, and GAP 3 signals a strong potential for embedding a deeper focus on transformational change. It takes time and resources to build awareness and understanding of any new approach or strategic intent. Targeted and sustained capacity building that includes critical reflection and experiential learning are the most effective ways to build knowledge and awareness of what gender transformative programming is.
- Whilst **adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership are key aspects of a gender transformative approach**, it should be seen in the context of the socio-ecological model systems approach, an important tool to understand gender transformative programming. This wider understanding can support the strengthening of programme approaches that move beyond the realms of the individual to address wider structural and root causes of gender inequality.
- **Partnering and working with men and boys is crucial for gender transformative programming** but it must be done in the context of supporting wider gender equality programming, as gender inequitable norms harm both adolescent girls and boys, especially harmful concepts of masculinity which drive girls' and women's disempowerment. We are seeing an increasing backlash around girl-intentioned programming across a range of countries and contexts, as boys are perceived to be left out of development efforts. These perceptions need to be addressed by engaging in critical reflection of the patriarchal structures that are influencing this discourse, at all levels.
- **Constraints for women and girls in humanitarian and emergency contexts are often so severe** that gender transformative programming is often not considered a possibility. However, these situations do present significant opportunities through partnering with girls' and women's rights organisations. Evidence shows that these contexts can encourage transformational change provided girls and women are at the heart of those approaches and empowered in leadership roles, within a longer-term approach to partnership.
- **There is strong potential for Joint Programmes to lead to gender transformative outcomes** provided they are designed and delivered in such a way that the comparative advantage of different agencies is clear, and mechanisms for collaboration are clearly established and maintained. UN agencies need to work more collaboratively to build on each other's inputs to maximise potential for transformative outcomes.
- Improving **UNICEF's budget tracking and tagging** to include better disaggregation to understand intersectional identities would improve the understanding and awareness of the extent to which programmes are addressing intersectional and equity dimensions.
- **Tight timelines for programme design or multi-country/joint programmes designed** in a top-down way at central level should be avoided. These leave little space for adolescent girls to engage meaningfully in the design and development of programmes, or for feedback to be given.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are linked to the evaluation's findings and conclusions and take into account consultation workshops held with the Evaluation Reference Group and the Regional Adolescent Advisory Group, where conclusions and recommendations discussed to ensure they were practical, forward facing and grounded in the findings. A summary of the recommendations is presented below; further detail and explanation are provided in the main evaluation report.

Strategic

Recommendation 1: Multi-sectoral, girl-led, rights-based programming should be more centred within overall ESAR CO programming to ensure the commitments of GAP 3 are met. CO management needs to integrate cross-sectoral coordination and investment at scale.

Potential actions for UNICEF COs

[BASED ON CONCLUSION 1,3, 4](#)

Recommendation 2: UNICEF ESARO should review and adapt the mechanisms in place to support stronger south-south coordination and partnership across countries to share experiences and learning from each other on what works in gender transformative programming, including outside existing joint or multi-countries programmes.

Potential actions for UNICEF HQ, ESARO and COs.

[BASED ON CONCLUSION 3](#)

Recommendation 3: Acknowledging the efforts of UNICEF ESARO to map Women, Girls and Youth Organisations and networks at country and regional level, and to promote partnerships with these organisations, UNICEF COs should accelerate their engagement with these organisations, in line with GAP 3 recommendations. These partnerships must be based on equitable principles, and ways of working should contribute to gender transformative outcomes in terms of power sharing, capacity strengthening and engaging with a wide diversity of women and girls. A systematic country mapping of existing and potential WGOs and YLOs, and their specific expertise, interest and capacity should be undertaken.

Potential actions for UNICEF HQ, ESARO and COs

[BASED ON CONCLUSIONS 6, 8](#)

Process

Recommendation 4: Review current expenditure tracking and coding processes to ensure the required data is being captured to monitor the GAP 3. This needs to be better reflected in the guidance and refresher training.

Potential actions for UNICEF HQ

[BASED ON CONCLUSION 7](#)

Recommendation 5: Improve documentation, monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management, in particular strengthening indicators and other methodologies used to measure gender transformative outcomes. More qualitative measurement and disaggregated data is needed to ensure intersectional characteristics are included where it is safe and ethical to do so. Disseminate recently developed good practice, e.g., the Global M&E framework for adolescent girls and the promising work undertaken by Tanzania CO on the Adolescent Girl Empowerment Index.

Potential actions for ESARO and COs

[BASED ON CONCLUSIONS 1 4 8](#)

Recommendation 6: Stronger feedback loops need to be developed and consistently applied to ensure that any actions taken, or not taken, as a result of adolescent girls' inputs and contributions are communicated to them to strengthen meaningful involvement in decision making.

Potential actions for ESARO and COs

[BASED ON CONCLUSIONS 4 6 8](#)

Programmatic

Recommendation 7: A tailored and segmented training package and toolkit on how to build on the work supporting adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership to lead to gender transformative change across the socio-ecological model should be developed. The toolkit should explore 'what is gender transformative programming and how to do it' for different sectors and in different contexts, building on existing materials and providing promising, practical programme examples.

Potential actions for UNICEF ESARO and COs.

[BASED ON CONCLUSIONS 1 2 4 5](#)

Recommendation 8: Engage men and boys in gender transformative action across programmes to promote concepts of positive masculinities and support greater gender equality (e.g., gender-transformative parenting initiatives). This needs to be done in the context of addressing root causes, patriarchal systems and structural inequalities.

Potential actions for COs

[BASED ON CONCLUSIONS 1 4 5](#)

1. INTRODUCTION

Social Development Direct (SDDirect) was contracted by UNICEF’s Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) Evaluation Section to conduct a Formative Evaluation of Gender Transformative Programming (GTP) through Investment in Adolescent Girls’ Leadership in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA).

The data collection phase took place between April and July 2023. In-country data collection was undertaken in Mozambique, Namibia and Uganda, across a range of locations. Desk-based data was also collected for case studies on UNICEF’s work in Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. For more information on the methodology, see the ‘Evaluation Methodology’ section below. The evaluation team comprised a Team Leader (Jo Feather), Deputy Team Leader (Julie Tumbo), Evaluation and Adolescent Expert (Liza Akinyi), two Evaluation Specialists (Lucia Soldà and Olivia Jenkins), and three National Consultants (Unaiti Costa, Sarah Kalembe and Brigit May Loots).

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the formative evaluation and was written by the SDDirect team in September and October 2023. The report is structured as follows:

- Background to the evaluation and UNICEF’s focus on adolescent girls
- Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation
- Evaluation methodology
- Key findings, structured according to the evaluation questions
- Conclusions and lessons learned
- Recommendations

This main report (Volume I) is also accompanied by a number of Annexes (Volume III), as well as six country case study reports (Volume II).

2. BACKGROUND

Adolescent girls are agents of change. At this point in history, more than ever before, adolescent girls are a leading voice of change and action. They are demanding action and speaking up in their communities, from the climate crisis response to prevention against sexual harassment and abuse. In this way, adolescent girls are key to accelerating progress against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for example SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), amongst others.

However, adolescent girls face discrimination based on their intersectional characteristics, including age and gender, but also based on their disability or HIV status, their geographical location, migrant status etc, and all too often their voices are not heard. During adolescence, paths for girls and boys diverge considerably. Social and gender norms constrict adolescent girls’ access to public spaces, socialize girls to be docile and obedient (‘good girls’), and reinforce perceptions that girls’ appearances, and

“Equipped with the right resources and opportunities, the world’s **600 million adolescent girls** can become the largest generation of female leaders, entrepreneurs and change-makers the world has ever seen.”

*UNICEF Adolescent Girls Strategy
2022-2025*

potential and actual role in care work, is valued more than their studies in school, leadership in business, or voice in policymaking. This leads to girls being left behind across multiple dimensions, such as education and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Across Eastern and Southern Africa, adolescent girls are facing challenging circumstances and outcomes. The rate of adolescent girls⁴ who are out of school across the region is 63% and rates of child marriage are among the highest in the world. Eastern and Southern Africa has one of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy among girls aged 15-19 in the world (equivalent to a birth rate of 107 per 1,000 girls aged 15-19).⁵ The region is the epicentre of the HIV epidemic and new HIV infections in adolescent girls are nearly six times higher than among adolescent boys.⁶ Adolescent girls are vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV) including sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse and harmful practices. These risks are heightened during humanitarian crises, for example with the risk of child marriage increasing as part of negative coping mechanisms for survival.⁷

The reasons for this are complex and multi-faceted, with unequal gendered power dynamics being a root cause. There are high rates of poverty across the region, and the region is facing several humanitarian crises related to conflict, public health emergencies, food insecurity and climate-related disasters. Deeply entrenched discriminatory gendered and age-based social norms, and limited access to and control of resources and assets, means that adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to the worst effects of humanitarian crises and climate-related disasters. For example, research in South Sudan identified Child Early and Forced Marriage as a coping mechanism for the economic insecurity caused by the conflict, and 26% of adolescent girls surveyed in South Sudan stated that they had thought at least once of ending their own life in the previous 12 months.⁸ Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected adolescent girls across the ESA region, for example, by negatively impacting their financial security, education and wellbeing outcomes. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 100 million girls were already at risk of child marriage in the next decade, and now, up to 10 million more girls worldwide will be at risk of marrying as children over the next decade because of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹

UNICEF is responding to this context by placing adolescent girls at the centre of its work. This is evident in the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025, which highlights gender-equality programming for transformative results as one of nine change strategies and is explicit in the focus on adolescents. The Strategic Plan was developed alongside the new UNICEF Gender Policy 2021-2030 and Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2022-2025 (GAP 3) which operationalises this policy across programmes and workplaces, and at the time of this formative evaluation (2023), was in the early stages of implementation. These plans are designed to align to the **Sustainable Development Goals, and the UN System Wide Action Plan on Gender Quality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP).**

The GAP 3 builds on the learnings and ambitions from the previous GAP 2018-2021 (GAP 2). UNICEF's ambition has increased from the 'gender-responsive' ambition in GAP 2, with a new commitment in GAP 3 to operate at the 'gender-responsive' level as a minimum throughout all of UNICEF's programming, institutional policies, partnerships and capacities, whilst aiming for 'gender-transformative' results. This includes the work across all UNICEF sectors, such as education, WASH, and social and behaviour change. Based on the Inter-agency Working Groups' GESI Continuum, UNICEF recognises gender-responsive actions to identify and address the different needs of girls and boys, women and men, promoting equal outcomes for all, whilst gender-transformative actions explicitly seeks

⁴ The UN defines adolescent girls as those aged 10-19.

⁵ Source: [Girls' education | UNICEF](#)

⁶ Source: [UNAIDS Global AIDS Update 2022](#)

⁷ Adapted from the Terms of Reference for this Formative Evaluation, no references cited.

⁸ Source: [Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices from South Sudan \(plan-international.org\)](#)

⁹ Source: [International Day of the Girl 2023 | UNICEF](#)

to redress gender inequalities, remove structural barriers and empower disadvantaged populations.¹⁰ More information on how a gender-transformative approach is defined and used in this formative evaluation can be found in [Box 2](#).

The GAP 3 notes that achieving gender-transformative results will require deliberate and targeted gender integration throughout the programming cycle. The GAP 3 uses a twin-track approach, combining gender mainstreaming across UNICEF's five goal areas and targeted priorities, whilst emphasising structural and norms change within the whole socio-economic model. The approach includes interventions that go beyond responding to the manifestations of gender inequality to tackle its underlying drivers, including by engaging boys and men to support a positive shift in inequitable and non-violent masculinities; advancing upstream financing and policy solutions; and supporting girls' agency and voice.

The GAP 3 emphasises adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership. Across all areas of its work, the GAP 3 compels UNICEF to support opportunities for girls to be leaders of the change they want to see, by promoting the voice and agency of adolescent girls. The focus on strengthening adolescent girls' voice and agency is both a programme aim and intended way of working to achieve greater impact and results, alongside the twin-track approach. The GAP 3 promotes targeted actions to advance the leadership and well-being of adolescent girls, as girls are both disproportionately affected by gender inequality and have tremendous potential to be leaders for change. Across four of the five goal areas, there are priority actions to advance adolescent girls' leadership and well-being, including: (a) promoting adolescent girls' nutrition and pregnancy care and preventing HIV/AIDS and human papillomavirus; (b) advancing girls' education, learning and skills, including science, technology, engineering, mathematics and digital skills; (c) eliminating child marriage and early unions; and (d) promoting accessible and dignified menstrual health and hygiene services, including tackling taboos with respect to menstruation.

To give further guidance on UNICEF's work with adolescent girls, UNICEF's new Adolescent Girls Strategy 2022-2025 centres girls' voice, agency and leadership in effectuating change, alongside increasing access to quality services and addressing deep rooted gender and social norms which limit girls' participation and potential. It promotes multi-faceted, multisectoral, integrated approaches, shifting away from programmatic and sectoral silos; supports research and the generation of quality data and evidence; and strengthens partnerships including those with girl-led networks and organisations. It notes that, despite demonstrating positive results, most adolescent girl-focused programmes have not reached national scale, and few programmes are generating multiple outcomes for girls that are transformative, such as improving self-efficacy, employability, voice, leadership, and agency. It takes a three-pronged approach, focusing on quality data and evidence, partnerships (including with girl-led networks and organisations), and multi-faceted, multi-sectoral and integrated approaches.

In the Eastern and Southern Africa region (ESAR), UNICEF's work is led by the UNICEF ESARO and Country Offices (COs). UNICEF is active in 21 countries across the region: Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

There is a wide variety of different economic, political, cultural and social contexts across these 21 countries. Correspondingly, UNICEF's own work across the region differs widely. [Table 1](#) gives an overview of key markers of UNICEF's work and the context across the 21 countries. [Volume 3, Annex 1](#) gives further details. Four countries experience institutional or social fragility (Burundi, Comoros, Eritrea, Zimbabwe) whilst three are conflict affected states (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan). Eleven out of the 21 countries are classified as low-income countries, seven as lower-middle income and

¹⁰ Source: [Gender Transformative Programming, UNICEF](#)

three as upper-middle income countries. The Human Development Index (HDI), a statistical composite index of life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators, averages at 0.544 across the countries, with the lowest HDI values in South Sudan, Burundi and Mozambique, and the highest values in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. There are high birth rates for adolescent girls, a proxy of the situation for adolescent girls, across several countries, particularly Mozambique, Angola, South Sudan and Madagascar. UNICEF Country Office (CO) budgets vary in the region, with the largest budget in Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, and the smallest in Botswana, Comoros, Eswatini, Lesotho and Namibia. Analysis on the budgets for gender-transformative programming can be found in the section below on Efficiency.

UNICEF COs work with several other stakeholders on the situation for adolescent girls and other priorities. Key UN partner agencies include UNFPA and UN Women, with UNHCR as a key partner in humanitarian contexts. At the regional level, UNICEF collaborates with Southern African Development Community (SADC) and East African Community (EAC). At the country level, UNICEF frequently works closely with governments at national and sub-national levels, as well as civil society, including youth organisations.

Table 1: An overview of key markers of UNICEF's work and the context across the 21 countries

Key: In-country case studies in this formative evaluation					
Key: Desk based country case studies in this formative evaluation					
	Fragile or Conflict Affected Situations/ States	<u>Income</u>	<u>HDI</u>	<u>Adolescent birth rate</u>	Budget of UNICEF's previous + current CPD
Angola		Lower-middle income	0.586	163	100M-300M
Botswana		Upper-middle income	0.693	53.3	0-100M
Burundi	✓	Low income	0.426	58.2	100M-300M
Comoros	✓	Lower-middle income	0.558	38	0-100M
Eritrea	✓	Low income	0.492	76	100M-300M
Eswatini		Lower-middle income	0.597	87.1	0-100M
Ethiopia	✓	Low income	0.498	73.5	1B+
Kenya		Lower-middle income	0.575	81.1	300M-600M
Lesotho		Lower-middle income	0.514	90.8	0-100M
Madagascar		Low income	0.501	150.8	300M-600M
Malawi		Low income	0.512	101.8	600M-735M
Mozambique	✓	Low income	0.446	180	600M-735M
Namibia		Upper-middle income	0.615	63.9	0-100M
Rwanda		Low income	0.534	31.8	100M-300M
Somalia	✓	Low income		118	600M-735M
South Africa		Upper-middle income	0.713	43.9	100M-300M

South Sudan	✓	Low income	0.385	158.1	600M-735M
United Republic of Tanzania		Lower-middle income	0.549	138.9	300M-600M
Uganda		Low income	0.525	127.9	600M-735M
Zambia		Low income	0.565	135	300M-600M
Zimbabwe	✓	Lower-middle income	0.593	107.9	1B+

3. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND AUDIENCE

This formative evaluation aimed to identify learning and good practice in relation to how current programming, investment and practices in adolescent girls’ leadership, voice and agency, are shaping UNICEF’s gender transformative programme approach in ESA. The selection of this theme was made by the Gender Team at ESARO in recognition that this is a relatively new area of work for the region and a new priority introduced in UNICEF’s GAP 2022 – 2025, as well as a previously under explored area of investigation in UNICEF ESARO’s reviews and evaluations. The evaluation is purposely focused on adolescent -girl intentioned programming to explore the extent to which ensuring a focus on interventions that support their leadership, voice and agency as part of a gender transformative programming approach will lead to great impact. It is important to note that working with men and boys is also critical to achieve transformative change, and is highlighted in the UNICEF’s Gender Policy, and Gender Action Plan (GAP). This evaluation considers how programmes in the region have worked with men and boys in this context in recognition that inequitable gender norms can harm both adolescent boys and girls, but the primary focus of the evaluation was on adolescent girls. The evaluation aimed to generate evidence on the current state of UNICEF’s performance in gender transformative programming in ESAR, learn from the implementation of the GAP 2018 – 2021, and inform the continued implementation of the gender transformative commitments in the GAP 2022 – 2025 which, at the time of this formative evaluation (2023), was still in the early stages.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Provide a preliminary assessment of UNICEF’s GTP in ESAR vis-à-vis issues of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact with a specific focus on programming investing in girls’ voice, agency and leadership.
- Examine if the interventions currently being implemented or in the pipeline are evaluable, determining whether or not the programmes are adequately defined and their results verifiable.
- Identify key lessons and the most impactful approaches, unpacking what kinds of investments have been made so far and identifying the structure and resources necessary for realising UNICEF GAP 3 (2022-2025) commitments.

- Generate actionable recommendations that enable country offices (COs) to support replication and scale-up of more ambitious gender transformative interventions across sectors and the region with a specific focus on adolescent girls' leadership.

The evaluation was country-focused, using country case studies as illustrative examples to inform the planning and programming of GTP through investment in adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership in ESAR.

The scope of the evaluation

Period: The evaluation covered the period from 2018 (the beginning of the implementation of GAP 2) up until the beginning of 2023 (covered by GAP 3).

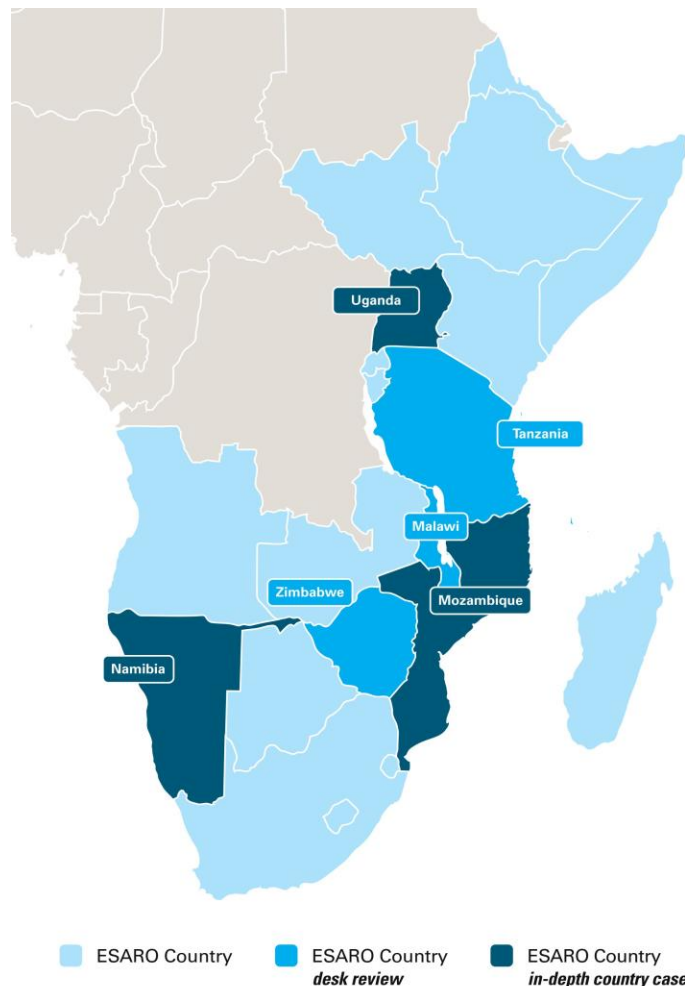
Regional/country level: This evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF ESARO and therefore took a regional approach, with findings and recommendations primarily focused on the region. It has employed a country-case study approach with deeper dive analysis in six countries. However, lessons learnt will be of relevance to all UNICEF COs in the region. A regional survey was undertaken to solicit views and insights from a wider range of UNICEF stakeholders across the region.

Geographical coverage: As shown in [Figure 4](#) below, whilst the geographical coverage for the evaluation was all 21 countries in UNICEF's Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, a sample of countries was selected for in depth-country and desk-based reviews, which has meant that findings and learnings are largely derived from these case studies. The sample was chosen to represent different contexts in the region, including lower- and middle-income countries, and those in more stable development contexts and humanitarian or emergency settings. See the 'In-country case studies' section for the country case study selection methodology. The countries selected were:

- In country case studies: Mozambique, Namibia and Uganda
- In-depth desk-based reviews: Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe

Interventions: The evaluation has focused its review on adolescent girl-focused programming so any UNICEF intervention targeting adolescent girls and taking place within the time period and geography were included within the scope of the evaluation, including regional interventions and joint United Nations (UN) initiatives. The evaluation team relied on COs sharing relevant information and documentation regarding these programmes to inform the sample, so the thematic scope was largely driven by the Country and Regional Offices.

Figure 2: Map of case study countries



Thematic fields: All UNICEF sectors (health and nutrition and HIV, education, child protection, WASH, social protection, other cross sectoral programming and priorities including social and behaviour change (SBC), Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), and environment and climate change as an overall organisational priority) are included within the scope of the evaluation. However, as the evaluation emphasised the themes of gender, adolescent voice, agency and leadership, the evaluation team selected the sectors where adolescent girls are the focus and priority groups for inclusion. This was done in consultation with the COs and largely based on their selection of programmes for review.

The total budget for the evaluation was \$213,423.50, made up of \$18,221 of expenses and \$195,202.50 of fees.

The target audience: The evaluation's intended users are primarily the UNICEF ESARO Gender Team, ESARO Gender and Adolescent Working group, Regional Office management and other sectors as well as the COs in the region as they will benefit from the learning and evidence presented to make the case for future gender transformative programming for adolescent girls.

Other UN staff, global, regional and national partners and donors will also be interested in the findings and recommendations, as will practitioners working in the gender and adolescent spaces. It is hoped that UN agencies interested in supporting GTP approaches will find the findings and recommendations from this evaluation useful and will support wider dissemination.

Intended use: The evaluation will produce dissemination products to support the sharing of learning and recommendations emerging from the findings for all the different target audiences, including an adolescent friendly product that can be shared widely by the Regional Adolescent Advisory Group and adolescent panel members. It is expected that the evaluation will provide useful lessons to guide future programming, and advocacy to strengthen support and funding for adolescent girl-focused transformative programming. The evaluation team also notes that a global evaluation of the GAP 3 is planned to start early 2024, and it is hoped that this regional evaluation will provide relevant reflections and learning for that work.

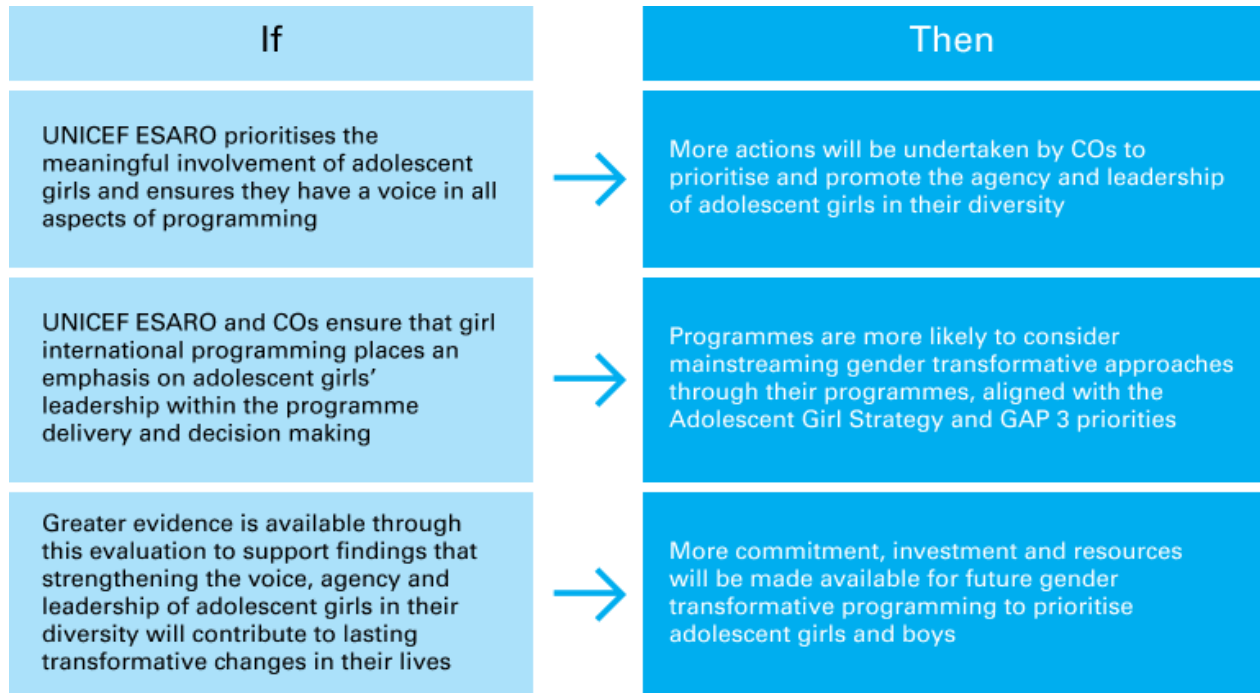
Theory of change

Central to the approach for this evaluation has been the hypothesis which was identified both in the original terms of reference (see the Terms of Reference in [Volume 3, Annex 14](#)) and re-emphasised by the ESARO team and, which states that:

Investing in adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership, as a key aspect of gender transformative programming, will lead to greater impact across programmes and sectors.

The evaluation team developed a simple theory of change, below, which set out our understanding of the purpose of the evaluation and what UNICEF ESARO hope to learn from it. It is to be noted that this theory of change is different from the theory of change that exists for UNICEF gender transformative programming. The final element in the [Figure 3](#) is the anticipated outcome of this evaluation if evidence is generated to prove the hypothesis. The assumptions for the evaluation are included in the full evaluation matrix ([Volume 3, Annex 2](#)). This hypothesis is further discussed under the overarching question in the 'Key Findings' section below and has informed our analysis.

Figure 3: Theory of change



A number of key terms have been used in this evaluation which are important to keep in mind when reviewing the findings presented in [Box 2](#) below.

A **gender transformative approach** addresses the root causes of gender and social inequality by transforming unequal gender norms with the aim to change structural power and social relations.

It is underpinned by **intersectional analysis**, recognising that lives are shaped by identities, relationships and social factors. It and places adolescent girls in their diversity at the heart of an intervention, enhancing their relative position at the individual and group levels, as well as institutional, policy and structural levels.

The **socio-ecological model** is used to illustrate the importance of networks of people and structures that surround an individual, in this case an adolescent girl, supporting their well-being and sense of agency, and addressing wider structural inequities.

Adolescent girls' leadership, voice and agency is promoted in a meaningful and sustainable manner, with evidence of their involvement in decision making and leadership spaces.

Meaningful engagement and participation of adolescents: Throughout an intervention, adolescents are given a safe and inclusive space to form and express their views. They can express their views freely. The audience listens to their views. Their views have influence and are acted on appropriately.

Adolescent leadership: Adolescents are empowered to exercise authority and influence over themselves and/or others.

Voice: The ability to express views freely, and for them to be heard.

Agency: The capacity to make decisions about one's own life and act on them to achieve a desired outcome, free of violence, retribution or fear.

4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Evaluation questions and sub-questions

Table 2 below summarises the overarching evaluation questions that the evaluation team mapped against the OECD/DAC criteria that were outlined in the original Terms of Reference during the inception phase. The full evaluation matrix is included in [Volume 3, Annex 2](#).

Table 2: Evaluation questions

Evaluation Question	Sub Question
HYPOTHESIS: Investing in adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership, as a key aspect of gender transformative programming, will lead to greater chance of impact across programmes and sectors.	
OVERARCHING QUESTION E.Q.1. To what extent are UNICEF ESAR COs investing in adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership as a central approach within this gender transformative programming?	
Relevance	
E.Q.2. To what extent are country programmes/projects designed to address the specific needs of adolescent girls in the region?	E.Q.2.1. To what extent do adolescent girl programmes/projects at country level engage girls meaningfully in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programmes and policies?
	E.Q.2.2. To what extent have recent shifts and trends in gender outcomes for adolescent girls been considered in their programming (e.g., COVID-19, climate related shocks etc)?
Coherence	
E.Q.3. To what extent do adolescent girl focused interventions (both within UNICEF and external) align with UNICEF strategies, and global policy commitments, to support girls' leadership and agency through gender transformative programming in ESAR?	E.Q.3.1. To what extent have GAP priorities linked to gender transformative programming approaches been consistently integrated into UNICEF's girl focused programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy, in ESAR?
E.Q.4. What have been the areas and ways of cooperation with other UN entities and other donor and development partners in regard to gender-transformative programming with and for adolescent girls in ESAR?	E.Q.4.1. What are the mechanisms for UN entities to collaborate and how well coordinated are they to ensure coherent approach to gender transformative programming (i.e., Joint and multi-sectoral programmes/working groups etc.)?
Effectiveness	
E.Q.5. To what extent have UNICEF ESARO's adolescent girls focused	E.Q.5.1. To what extent have different models/approaches been effective in contributing to gender transformative

programmes and interventions mainstreamed gender transformative programming, contributing to increasing their voice, agency and leadership, in current planned programmes?	outcomes in various country contexts, particularly those affected by conflict or other humanitarian crises, and why?
	E.Q.5.2. What are the key contributory factors for this change (if any)?
	E.Q.5.3. What are the differences, if any, in planned, intended or achieved outcomes between a multi-sectoral approach versus targeted gender-transformative programming?
Efficiency	
E.Q.6. To what extent has UNICEF allocated adequate resources to adolescent girls programming that is gender transformative and supports their leadership and agency in ESAR?	E.Q.6.1. Are gender and intersectional dimensions integrated into resource allocation, budget planning, budget reporting, and activities implementation, particularly to address the differing needs of women and girls in all of their diversity?
	E.Q.6.2. How many countries have invested in adolescent girls and in which ways?
E.Q.7. To what extent do UNICEF programmes' monitoring, reporting and evaluation (MER) systems explicitly, or implicitly address gender transformative programming with a view to generating evidence on UNICEF and public sector performance?	E.Q.7.1. What incentives are in place for monitoring and reporting on gender transformative outcomes?
	E.Q.7.2. Are UNICEF ESAR COs embedding evaluations of gender transformative programming, and resourcing them, in order to demonstrate attributable impact?
Sustainability	
E.Q.8. To what extent are the positive changes and effects of gender transformative programming on adolescent girls' leadership and agency sustainable at the national level, and/or likely to be scaled up by government, or civil society?	E.Q.8.1. To what extent is the sustainability of gender transformative results and explicit aim stated in new or planned girl-focused programmes?
	E.Q.8.2. What systems and partnerships has UNICEF put in place to build ownership, capacity and resources to support government scale up or take up by other civil society partners?
Impact	
E.Q.9. To what extent are new or planned interventions likely to lend themselves to achieving higher level change for adolescent girls in future?	E.Q.9.1. What have been, or are most likely to be, the most impactful gender transformative approaches (GTA) or models in relation to improving adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership in the region so far?

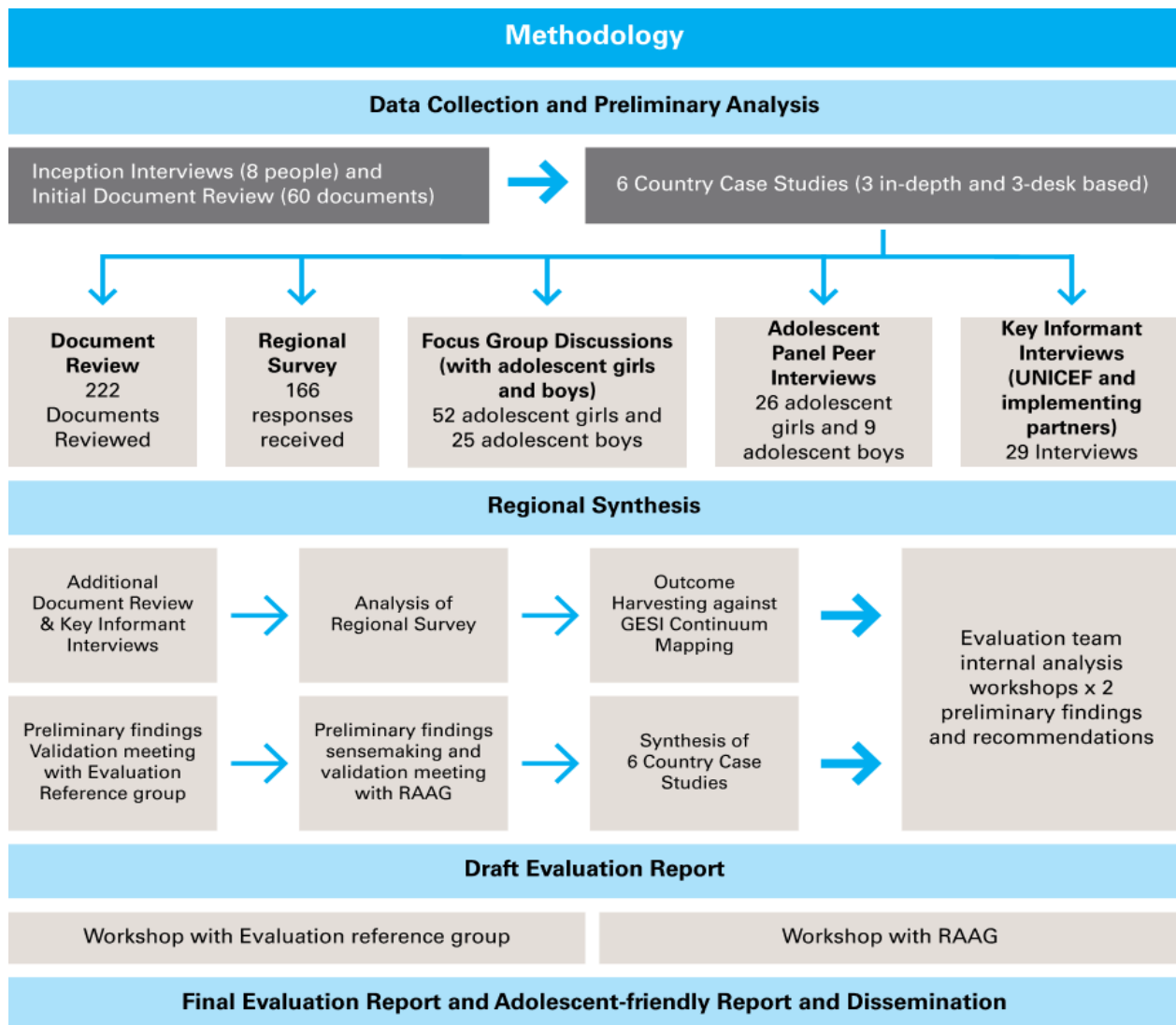
Summary of methodology

Our approach is based on two core methodologies: 1) adapted outcome harvesting against the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) continuum and 2) participatory, youth friendly approaches. Outcomes have been identified both through the document analysis as well as through stakeholder engagement (i.e., KIIs and focus group discussions (FGDs)) and mapped against the GESI Continuum. The process has been adapted to focus on outcomes related to adolescent leadership, voice and agency among a range of programmes but was not limited to a set of fixed results or indicators.

Participatory and youth friendly approaches were used to ensure that adolescent girls and young women, as well as adolescent boys and young men, were put at the centre of this evaluation as a core part of our methodological approach. We have developed and adapted our topic guides and FGD methodology to be appropriate and accessible to a range of adolescent girls and boys. In order to centre the voices of adolescent girls and young women, as well as adolescent boys and young men, in this evaluation we have worked with an Adolescent Panel in each of the case study countries to support data collection and sensemaking. We have also worked closely with the Regional Adolescent Advisory Group (RAAG) to support validation and feed into the recommendations. The RAAG and the Adolescent Panels in each of the case study countries were key to enabling us to hear from the adolescent girls and boys involved in UNICEF programmes directly. They have also been crucial to the sensemaking and validation processes.

We employed a range of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to explore the views and experiences of different stakeholders in different contexts, whilst balancing the need to answer the specific evaluation questions. The methodological approach was divided into three main stages, as shown in [Figure 4](#) below: data collection and preliminary analysis; regional synthesis; and development of the final evaluation report. The evaluation used a mix of data collection methods and tools to generate evidence and examine findings to support triangulation. This consisted of **key informant interviews** (KIIs), **consultations** and **focus group discussions** (FGDs) with adolescent girls and boys, **document review**, and **a regional survey**. The approach involved multiple consultations with the ESARO, COs selected for the case studies, and the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) and Regional Adolescent Advisory Group (RAAG). These meetings took place regularly throughout the evaluation, from the early inception to the development of the final report.

Figure 4: Evaluation methodology stages



At the country case study level, data collection consisted of secondary data (document review), and primary qualitative data collection: KIIs and FGDs with UNICEF staff, staff from government partners, civil society organisations (CSOs) partners, other UN agencies partners, FGDs with adolescent girls (AGs) and adolescent boys (ABs), and interviews carried out by the Adolescent Panel members in each country. We spoke to 57 UNICEF and partner staff and 76 adolescent girls and 26 boys across the 6 countries and reviewed 218 documents. **At the regional level**, we reviewed 82 documents, conducted 16 interviews with UNICEF staff and a regional survey was sent to all staff, with 166 people reply from across all 21 countries covered by ESARO. [Figure 5](#) below shows the numbers of documents reviewed, key informants and young people interviewed.

Figure 5: Data collection in numbers

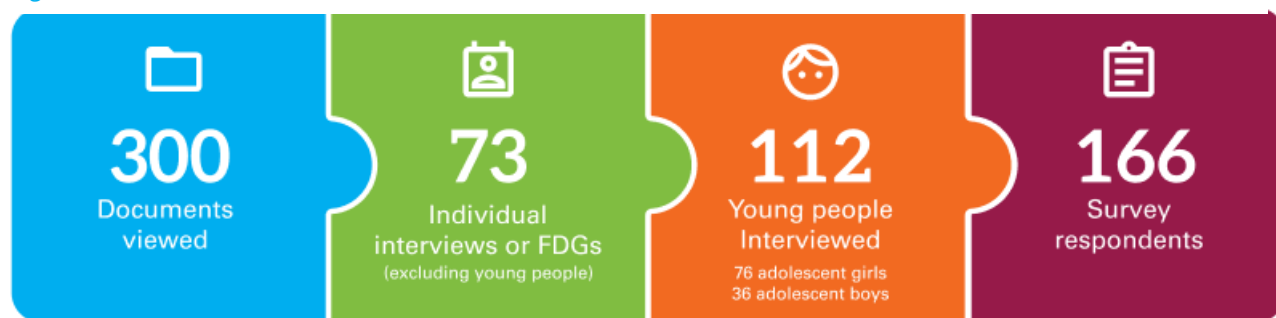


Table 3 shows the number of respondents and documents reviewed across the evaluation.

Table 3: Total number of data sources

COUNTRY LEVEL						
	Mozambique	Namibia	Uganda	Tanzania	Malawi	Zimbabwe
Docs reviewed	39	23	31	43	54	28
Kills	11 (UNICEF, UN partners, CSO partners) (4 male, 7 men)	7 (UNICEF, CSO partners) (5 male, 2 female)	18 (UNICEF, govt reps, UN partners, CSO partners) (7 male, 11 female)	5 (UNICEF, CSO partner) (1 male, 4 female)	1 (UN partner) (1 male)	N/A
FGDs	N/A	2 (5 people) (government reps, UN partners) (1 male, 4 female)	N/A	N/A	2 (6 people) (UNICEF) (6 female)	1 (4 people) (UNICEF, CSO partners) (female)
FGDs with AGs and ABs	3 (20 AGs and 10 ABs)	3 (15 AGs and 6 ABs)	2 (9 AGs and 9 ABs)	N/A	1 (4 AGs)	1 (2 AGs and 2 ABs)
Adolescent Panel Interviews	14 (10 AGs and 4 ABs)	13 (10 AGs and 3 ABs)	8 (6 AGs, 2 ABs)	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL interviewees per country	55	46	44	5	11	8
TOTAL interviewees	169 interviewees					
REGIONAL LEVEL						
Docs Reviewed	82					
Regional Survey	166 respondents					
Key informants	16 (UNICEF HQ, regional offices, COs)					

For a full list of documents consulted and key informants interviewed see [Volume 3, Annex 3 and Annex 4](#) respectively. The full case study reports are presented in [Volume 2: Case Study Reports](#).

Online survey for UNICEF and other UN staff

The evaluation team carried out an online survey as part of its quantitative data collection (see full questionnaire and full results in [Volume 3 Annex 5](#) and [Annex 6](#) respectively). The aim was to solicit wider regional experience and involvement from across a range of UNICEF staff in different positions and roles within UN agencies in the region to provide information against our evaluation questions. The survey was pre-tested with a small group of UNICEF ESARO staff prior to launching more widely.

The survey was developed in Kobo Toolbox¹¹ and shared widely with ESARO and 21 COs via UNICEF ESARO Gender and Adolescent Team and Evaluation Manager, through emails and newsletters. Descriptive and sub-group analysis was conducted in Excel. Due to the large number of respondents from Ethiopia (see [Figure 8](#) below) we conducted analysis both with and without Ethiopia's responses to ensure accuracy. For each EQ, the evaluation team compared the survey findings with the qualitative data from KIIs, FGDs, panel interviews, and the document review, to triangulate the findings. They are presented together under each EQ below.

Responses received from the case study countries where they were also triangulated with other findings from primary data collection and desk review. The survey was launched in April and was open for around 6 weeks. The survey respondents' demographics are shown in [Figure 6](#) below.

Figure 6: Survey respondents demographics

42% Female	57% Male	1% Nonbinary
97% Without a disability	2% With a disability	1% Prefer not to say
87% Country office-based	13% Regional office-based	
23% Development context	11% Humanitarian context	65% Both

The respondents' sectors are shown in [Figure 7](#) below.¹²

¹¹ A free and open-source data collection tool: [KoboToolbox](#)

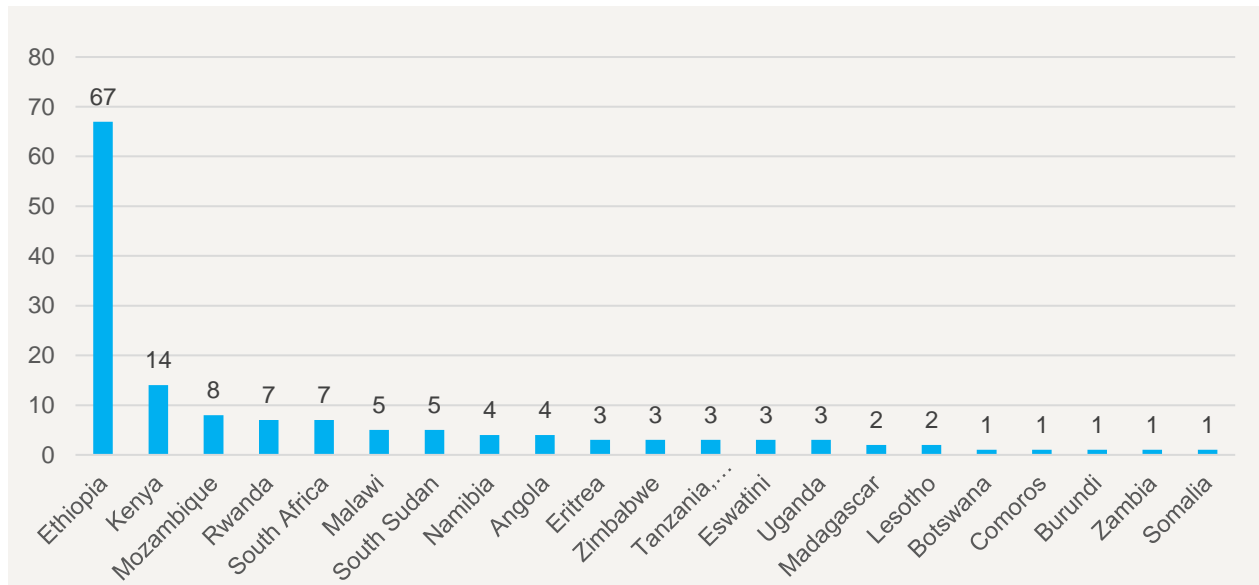
¹² Other sectors/roles mentioned: Implementing Partnership Management, Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers, Executive specialist; Safety and Security; Emergency Preparedness and Response; Emergency & field operation; Field Operation; Emergency.

Figure 7: Respondents' sector distribution (the larger the boxes in the diagram the more representation they had in the survey)



Figure 8 below shows the number of respondents by country. Of note is the high number of respondents from Ethiopia. We analysed the survey responses by both including and excluding Ethiopia from the data. For most questions the high number of respondents from Ethiopia did not change the overall results from the survey, but where they did have an impact, we have presented the data both with and without Ethiopia's responses.

Figure 8: Number of respondents by country



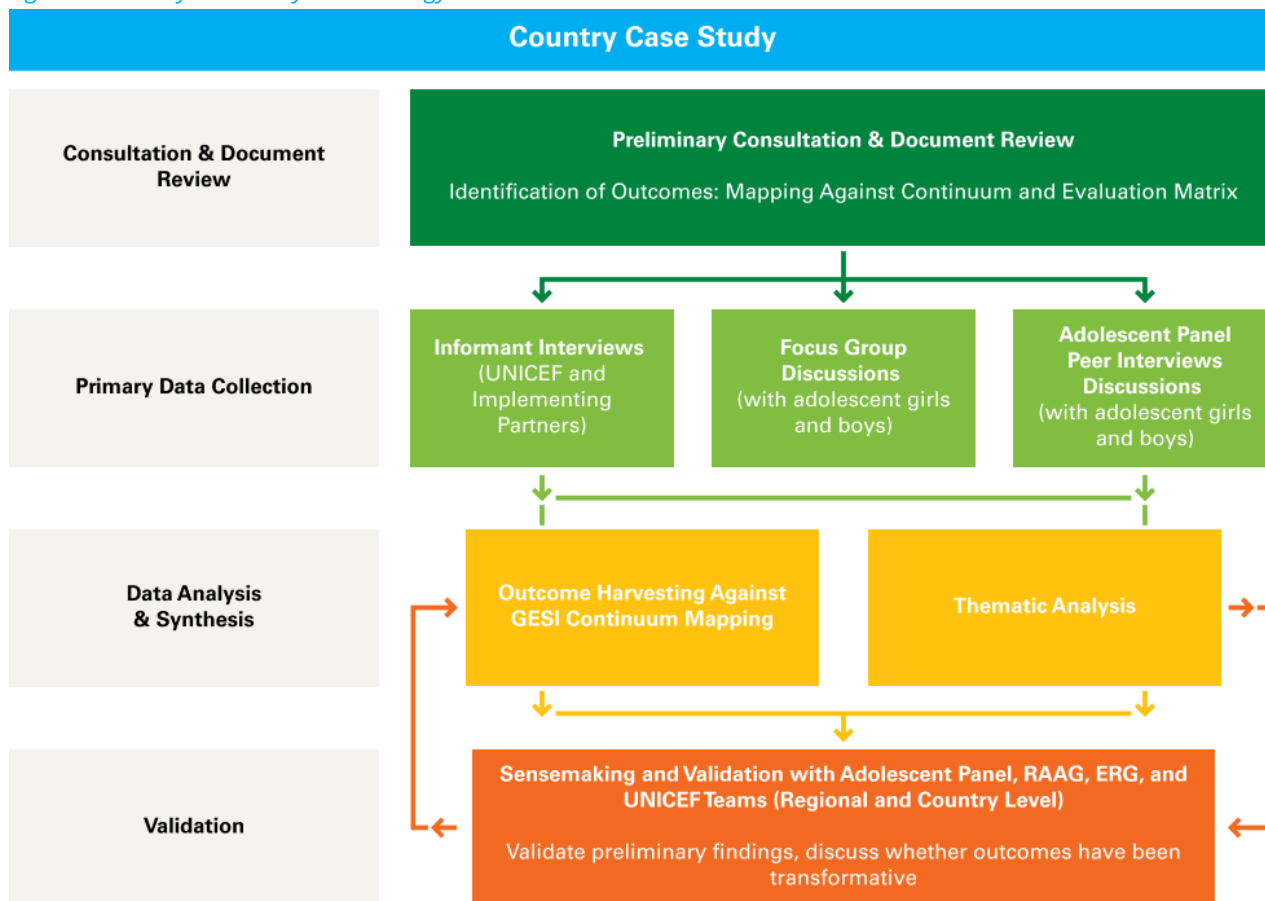
Data for some of the survey questions was also analysed by sub-group to extract any more nuanced, disaggregated findings by gender, by setting (development and humanitarian), by sector, and by regional office or country office.

In-country case studies

Three countries were selected by the UNICEF ESARO Gender Team for in-country primary data collection – Uganda, Mozambique and Namibia. They were selected as they represented a range of different contexts, different sized programmes and different sectoral priorities.¹³

As detailed in the Inception Report and the individual country case study reports ([Volume 2](#)), our country case study methodology approach in each of these three countries involved the steps shown in [Figure 9](#) below.

Figure 9: Country case study methodology



¹³ These countries were selected by the ESARO prior to the evaluation being contracted. Assumptions were validated during inception phase and the countries were agreed upon. Reasons for selection include:

- **Uganda** (adolescent agenda has been a priority for the CO; forced displacement-protracted crisis with work with refugees and internally displaced persons; CO is part of 3 global programmes: Global Programme to End Child Marriage, Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation and Spotlight and also on quality of maternal and newborn care).
- **Namibia** (upper-middle income country, small CO, strong inter-agency collaboration)
- **Mozambique** (significant investment on adolescent agenda; would be interesting to examine how national engagement in this space is influencing (or not) the programming in conflict affected areas in the northern part of the country).

Desk-based case study reviews

To complement the country case studies, the evaluation team undertook desk-based reviews in the three additional countries selected for a deep dive desk review: Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.¹⁴ The desk-based reviews consisted mostly of a document review of programme reports and evaluations, complemented with a small number of KIIs/FGDs with UNICEF staff, other UN partners, CSO partners and/or young people. [Table 3](#) above provides the breakdown of the interviews and documents reviewed.

Primary data collection

For the country case studies, [Table 4](#) outlines the in-country stakeholders we prioritised for inclusion in each country. We **used purposive sampling** to select individuals with whom to speak. We developed a stakeholder list in consultation with the country offices, complemented by our document review and interviews. We spoke with relevant stakeholders in the programme districts we visited and were supported by UNICEF and their implementing partners to mobilise the adolescents and young people. In order to ensure a representative and diverse group of young people we developed criteria, similar to that which we used for the adolescent panel:

- Participating in UNICEF programmes
- Age (older adolescent range - 10-19 years)
- Location (balance urban/rural)
- Diversity in gender, education levels, geographical location, socio-economic background, religion, education, abilities, children's interests and country context.

Table 4: Types of respondents

In-country stakeholders	How
Adolescent girls and boys, participating in UNICEF programmes	Peer interviews - 4 Adolescent Panellists interview their peers
	Focus group discussions
CSO partners	Key informant interviews
Government representatives	Key informant interviews
UNICEF Country Team	Group interviews or KIIs
Other UN agencies where relevant (JP partners)	Group interviews of KIIs

A standard topic guide for UN respondents can be found in [Volume 3 Annex 7](#).

Working with Adolescents

Ensuring adolescent girls and boys and young women and men in all their diversity were meaningfully involved in this evaluation has been very important to the design and execution of the case study and the

¹⁴ The three countries were selected through a mapping of the 21 countries in in ESARO region against a set of key criteria proposed in the evaluation ToR, through a review of documents provided by UNICEF ESARO, and other publicly available documents. Criteria, included in the ToR and refined during the inception phase, can be found in the Inception Report. From this mapping, we applied criteria to ensure the achievement, through a combination of countries (including those selected for the country case studies), the highest coverage of the several criteria. We identified a short list of five countries from which we selected three that could, together with the three country case studies, cover as many contexts as possible and provide a snapshot of the region. These were confirmed in consultation with ERG and the Gender Team.

regional synthesis report. To ensure their voices, views and opinions were represented in our methodology and approach, and the findings, conclusions and recommendations we worked with adolescents in three main ways.

Regional Adolescent Advisory Group

At the regional level together with UNICEF ESARO and the CO, we established a RAAG. The RAAG was made up of 11 young people who actively engaged, 8 girls and 3 boys, from 7 countries between the ages of 15-19. One participant was visually impaired. The RAAG's role has been to engage with the evaluation team to:

1. Share their thoughts on the evaluation questions and ensure they are relevant to them, and reflect their perspectives,
2. Share their ideas on the best way to involve adolescents and reflect their views on their engagement with UNICEF,
3. Provide insights on findings and recommendations to increase the programmatic relevance and credibility of adolescent programming focused on girls' leadership, voice and agency,
4. Validate the findings and recommendations to ensure wider relevance to different contexts,
5. Enhance accountability to adolescents themselves, by supporting the feedback loop between UNICEF ESARO, the evaluation and adolescents involved in programmes.

The RAAG met virtually three times during the evaluation period, once during inception / design, once after data collection to discuss preliminary findings and finally towards the end of the evaluation to discuss and validate the recommendations.

Adolescent Panel

In each of the three country case studies, we established an Adolescent Panel of four young people (three young women and one young man) who worked closely with the National Consultant to collect the views and insights from their peers. All the young people selected were familiar with UNICEF's programmes, either involved as a participant, or in a facilitator or leadership role, this meant that they were familiar with the ethical and safeguarding processes and had received some training in facilitation and peer led approaches.

Criteria for selection included:

- Participating in UNICEF programmes
- Age (older adolescent range - 16-19 years)
- Location (balance urban/rural)
- Education level, with basic literacy skills
- Skills (facilitation/interviewing)

Once the young people had been selected, they received training and orientation from the National Consultants, to introduce them to the evaluation, the purpose, approach and evaluation questions. Together, they refined the methodology and questions that the Panel members used.

All members of the Adolescent Panel received remuneration to compensate them for their time and any travel requirements they had. We discussed with the three UNICEF COs to ensure our process aligned with theirs and the compensation was neither too high nor low, to not put the young people at risk.

The Adolescent Panel members worked with the National Consultants to refine the specific questions to ask their peers, to discuss and review the findings and participate in sensemaking workshops to feedback the findings from their discussions. They ensured that the findings are relevant and truly reflect the views of the young people we spoke with.

See the Adolescent Panel members agreement template in [Volume 3 Annex 8 and Annex 12](#) for the Adolescent Panel orientation pack.

Key informants

Adolescents and young people were also key informants in our evaluation. The country case studies included primary data collection with a small number of adolescents involved in UNICEF programmes, both through direct discussions with the National Consultants, and interviews with the adolescent panels. The National Consultants conducted group discussions for the most part, based on advice from the RAAG during our RAAG inception meeting.

Evaluation Management and Governance Arrangements

The evaluation was managed by the ESARO Evaluation Section with support from ESARO Gender and Adolescent section. Technical oversight of the evaluation was provided by an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), chaired by the ESARO Evaluation Section, who reviewed all evaluation deliverables (including this report). The ERG was made up of 12 UN staff members from the ESA regional and countries offices and HQ, representing different sectors and other UN agencies in the region (UNICEF, UNFPA and UNWOMEN).

The main purpose of the ERG was (a) to ensure ownership from relevant stakeholder groups of the evaluation process, (b) and to provide expert advice, inputs, and support to the evaluation as it unfolded. It was important to the utility of this evaluation to work in a collaborative way with the ERG throughout this process to ensure co-ownership of the evaluation, and that the recommendations were implementable and widely supported.

Three virtual meetings were held with the ERG: i) to launch the evaluation, introduce the team, and explore the scope and approach to the evaluation; ii) to present the preliminary findings from the case studies; and iii) to validate the findings and discussion implications and recommendations.

A key part of the ERG's role was to support the evaluation team to access key stakeholders and documents to guide our work, which was largely provided by the UNICEF ESARO team.

Analysis

The evaluation's analysis and synthesis took place in two phases: (1) individual case studies; and (2) overall synthesis of the findings from the six country case studies and regional survey and further triangulation and validation meetings at the regional level.

The evaluation team used thematic analysis approach to analyse qualitative data from KIIs and FGDs and to identify key trends and patterns across the evaluation questions. A coding framework was designed in alignment with the evaluation questions and assumptions outlined in the matrix and key indicators in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Continuum. Emerging evidence was mapped against the GESI continuum. Examples from UNICEF ESARO programming built a picture of how UNICEF ESARO was performing against the continuum and where there are strong examples of gender-transformative approaches.

The evaluation team triangulated findings from key informants both by ensuring similar questions were asked of all key informants and through the document review, ensuring different sources of data were validated, for example programme reports with external evaluations.

We involved the RAAG members and the ERG at key points in the validation process to improve findings, sensemaking and recommendations, along with the UNICEF ESARO gender team and Evaluation Manager.

Ethical considerations

The evaluation was guided by a set of ethical principles. These principles were applied to the evaluation to minimise the risk of doing harm, while seeking to maximise the benefits of the evaluation. The principles translated in a several practical measures to ensure confidentiality, informed consent, data protection, reduction of direct and indirect risks to interviewees, safe and meaningful participation, independence, impartiality, credibility, avoidance of conflicts of interest, and accountability.

Our data collection was informed by ethical and safety considerations for research and informed by the United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines, World Health Organisation's ethical research guidance,¹⁵ UNICEF Ethical Guidelines and standards for research and evaluation and Ethical Research Involving Children, UNICEF Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation.

SDDirect's Ethical Policy outlines our principles, approach, and methods for maintaining high ethical standards throughout all stages of our work. Our Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults (safeguarding) Policy sets out our values and principles and describes how we meet our commitment to create a positive and safe environment for children and vulnerable adults who may be connected to our work. All staff have received an induction on these policies, including the National Consultants who attended an online workshop which covered all ethical principles and procedures in the evaluation. The training included SDDirect's safeguarding policies, including how to report suspected safeguarding concerns and how to act if a participant discloses situations of violence and/or abuse.

We convened an internal Ethical Committee that advised on ethical issues, and potential risks of all research and evaluation work. The following ethical principles applied to all staff involved in SDDirect's work, including in-house and programme staff, consultants, and researchers:

1. Our work should lead to clear social development benefits in people's lives.
2. Our work is conducted to a high standard in ways that are fit for purpose and ensure only the gathering of information that is relevant to the goals of our work.
3. The safety of our researchers and participants is paramount.
4. We are inclusive, ensure that marginalised groups are not excluded and are respectful of and informed by cultural differences and sensitivities.
5. Participants take part voluntarily, based on valid informed consent. Respect for young women and girls' agency was central to this approach, respecting their wishes to answer specific questions and to be named in the evaluation or not. Free and informed consent was sought from all participants. Where the young people participating in this evaluation were under the age of consent, we ensured we secured parental consent for their involvement along with their informed assent. All consent forms are included in [Volume 3, Annex 9](#). Information was provided on: the purpose of the evaluation; what is involved in participating and why certain people are being asked to participate; benefits and risks; voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any point; how the data would be used; how the data would be kept confidential; and any further details of the research (funder, contact details, and how to file a complaint).
6. Referral pathways were mapped prior to data collection as per the safeguarding policy and procedure.

¹⁵ See [UNEG Code of Conduct for UN evaluation](#) (2008) and WHO [Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Intervention Research on Violence Against Women](#) (2016) and [UN Protocol on SEA](#) (2018)

7. We compensated the adolescent research participants for their involvement taking into account their transport and childcare needs, guardians or carers support and other reasonable accommodation to ensure inclusive participation, as well as their safety and wellbeing.
8. Personal information is treated confidentially, and the privacy and anonymity of participants is preserved unless there is a belief that the information puts the life of the participant or another person at risk. No participant's name, address or other personal or identifying information was recorded or used in this report. Quotes and examples used are presented in such a way as not to threaten confidentiality.
9. The security and protection of primary data, including notes and recordings, is paramount. Access to data collected as part of this evaluation was restricted to members of the evaluation team only and will be kept securely and deleted after use. See [Volume 3 Annex 10](#) for data protection and security protocol.
10. We endeavour to work with clients to ensure all relevant research and evaluation findings are shared and communicate back with evaluation participants and relevant stakeholders (in consultation with UNICEF ESARO).
11. We adhered to regional, national and local ethics approval processes within the countries we worked in.

Ethical clearance at the regional and national level

In addition to adhering to our internal ethical policies, we sought **independent review board approval** for the regional evaluation which we obtained through the UNICEF ESARO's Long Term Agreement with Health Media Lab on 16 September 2022.

We also sought ethical clearance in each of the three country case studies, owing to the participation of human subjects in the evaluation, particularly adolescent girls and boys. This was granted by the Ministry of Health and Social Services in Namibia and by both Makerere University Social Sciences Research Ethical Committee and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology in Uganda. For Mozambique, there was not a requirement to secure a national independent review board approval.

Approval letters for ethical clearance can be found in [Volume 3 Annex 13](#).

Quality Assurance

Technical quality assurance (QA) was undertaken of all project deliverables, in accordance with our internal SDDirect QA policy. This requires us to integrate QA into all stages of the project cycle, using peer review across the core Evaluation Team, and our senior in-house experts to QA all written outputs.

A Technical Director from SDDirect reviewed the report to make sure it met the quality and ethical standards as identified in our QA policy. The Team Leader was responsible for the overall delivery, project management and quality assurance as the project progressed, liaising with the UNICEF ESARO focal point on a regular basis.

Our diverse, multi-disciplinary team offers exceptional knowledge and expertise in gender equality and women's empowerment, feminist evaluation approaches, mixed-methods, theory-based, utilisation-focused, participatory, and gender and human rights focused evaluations. The team included team members from the region and case study countries, who also provided a deep understanding of the local context and necessary language skills.

Clear roles and responsibilities were assigned to specific team members with clearly defined lines of accountability between team members and UNICEF ESARO to support quality deliverables. Regular dialogue with UNICEF ESARO ensured that requirements and expectations were agreed and understood throughout the evaluation, and relevant information was shared throughout the evaluation.

Limitations and constraints

Key limitations of this evaluation are captured in [Table 5](#) below and related to the scope, challenges with securing national ethical clearance, and the availability of evidence and results.

Table 5: Limitations & constraints and mitigations

Limitations & Constraints	Mitigations
<p>We experienced several challenges securing ethical clearance at country level. The process in Namibia was very unclear from the outset and it was difficult to get clarity on what we needed to do. In Uganda the process for securing ethical approval changed, and having secured from Makerere University, we then needed to reapply to the Uganda National Council for Science And Technology. These uncertainties created delays in data collection and production of the reports.</p>	<p>We worked closely with the UNICEF teams in both Namibia and Uganda who helped us to navigate the processes.</p> <p>Fortunately, we had budgeted for ethical clearance in Mozambique that we didn't need and so we were able to cover the additional costs required in Uganda to secure the second clearance from UNCST.</p>
<p>Our findings related to resources and evaluability are limited as a result of a paucity of financial and monitoring data and documentation provided to the evaluation for some countries.</p>	<p>The evaluation team followed up with interviews and document requests to UNICEF HQ and Regional Office to try and secure additional sources of information and data.</p>
<p>The evaluation team was largely reliant on COs to share the relevant documentation with us, as there were different levels of engagement among the COs, for a variety of reasons. This has meant that some case studies included fewer documents in their review and may present a less comprehensive picture.</p>	<p>Through thematic analysis the evaluation found a great deal of commonality among the country offices in terms of approach and learning to gender transformative programming. Several promising practice examples were identified through the documents and discussions we had. Validation meetings with the Regional Office and ERG confirmed our findings resonate.</p>
<p>We initially had a very slow response to the regional survey and were supported by ESARO to encourage CO staff to respond. As a result of their efforts, we had a very successful response. However, almost 1/3 of total respondents came from one country – Ethiopia, and we were concerned this would skew the results.</p>	<p>The evaluation team ran the analysis of the survey both with and without Ethiopia's data. For most of the questions there was not a significant difference in results. However, where the results were different, we presented the data with and without Ethiopia. See Volume 3, Annex 6 for the summary of survey results.</p>
<p>The focus of the evaluation on assessing if investment in voice, agency, and leadership is contributing to gender-transformative programming, was guided by the ToR and the ERG/Gender Team and may have skewed responses away from a more systematic consideration of gender transformative programming.</p>	<p>This issue has been discussed at length with both the UNICEF ESA regional and UNICEF HQ and has become a finding in itself.</p>

5. KEY FINDINGS

5.1. Overarching question

E.Q.1. To what extent are UNICEF ESAR COs investing in adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership as a central approach within this gender transformative programming?

Summary of findings

- 1.1. The evaluation found that all the case study countries are addressing girls' voice, agency and leadership to differing degrees as part of their adolescent-focused programming, but this is not always done as part of a gender transformative programming approach.
- 1.2. Most programmes are working at an individual level and have not yet made the transition to working in a more gender transformative way.
- 1.3. The understanding that gender transformative programming is about "*transforming systems*", whatever system that might be, and requires interventions to work beyond "*individual transformation*", does not appear to be well embedded or evidenced at country level.

This question is central to the evaluation hypothesis that was identified by the ESA regional team, to understand whether girl-intentioned programmes that focus on supporting adolescent girls' voices, agency and leadership are contributing to and doing that within an understanding of gender transformative programming. This focus on gender transformation represents the main shift from GAP 2 to GAP 3; Whilst GAP 2 was focusing more on mainstreaming and gender sensitive programming, GAP 3 is seeking countries to be more ambitious in their approach to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

The evaluation found that whilst all the case study countries appear to address girls' voice, agency and leadership to differing degrees as part of their adolescent-focused programming, this is not always done as part of a gender transformative programming approach or with an understanding that supporting adolescent girls' empowerment is just one part of the holistic approach that is needed.

There is a strong ambition centrally to shift programmes from focusing on participation and increasing adolescents' confidence and ability to speak up, to thinking more about systems change within a broader empowerment framework (as part of a GTA). However, this shift has not happened in all country offices yet. This resonates with our findings from the country case studies which have shown **that most programmes are still working at the individual level of the adolescent girl, rather than the wider ecosystem surrounding her, and have not yet made the transition to working in a more gender transformative way.** This is explored further under EQ9 - Impact below.

Mozambique and Uganda are part of the Global Programme to End Child Marriage which has been hailed as a strong example of multi-sectoral, gender transformative programming. The Mozambique case study has highlighted programming working across the socio-ecological model, starting from placing the girl at the centre to build her skills and agency, to engaging men and boys to critically reflect on prevailing gender inequitable attitudes and norms, through to working at community level and addressing systemic institutional issues. The Tanzania Country Office has been investing in adolescent girls' voice, agency and

leadership within several programmes, and whilst this is clearly an important aspect of addressing the individual level of the socio-ecological model (SEM), the other levels of the SEM do not appear to be getting as much emphasis, perhaps due to limited capacity and understanding:

“UNICEF is still not really sure what gender transformative programming means. The focus on voice, leadership and agency was an attempt to make this more tangible, but the risk is clear that voice and agency themselves are intangible concepts and may also not have been well understood” (UNICEF)

“Maybe we communicated GTP in too complicated a way” (UNICEF)

In Malawi, both the Spotlight Initiative and Joint Programme on Girls Education include a focus on addressing harmful gender norms which impinge on the voice, agency and leadership of adolescent girls’ and perpetuate gender inequality, gender-based violence and harmful practices, as part of a gender transformative approach.

The Technical Note on Gender Transformative Approaches in the Global Programme to End Child Marriage highlights that:

“successful gender-transformative approaches work from the individual level of girls who are not empowered to advocate for their rights through to the level of communities where girls’ choices are limited, and through systems such as education where gender-unequal pedagogies flourish. Using a socio-ecological model helps us to understand and track changes in social expectations of boys, girls, and male and female roles, and in gender-based values, beliefs and practices.”

The understanding that gender transformative programming is about “transforming systems”, whatever system that might be, and requires interventions to work beyond “individual transformation”, does not appear to be well embedded or in evidence at country level.

5.2. Relevance

E.Q.2. To what extent are country programmes/projects designed to address the specific needs of adolescent girls in the region?

The evaluation sought to explore how far analysis and programme design undertaken at country level ensures that the specific needs of adolescent girls are identified and addressed. A key part of this was to explore whether these priorities and needs were identified in a participatory manner, ensuring meaningful consultation with adolescents and young people in the process.

Summary of findings

- 2.1 Many projects/programmes were designed to meet the needs of adolescent girls and are based on robust analysis, research and surveys. However, there were only a few examples of adolescent girls themselves being meaningfully engaged in these analyses.
- 2.2 Projects and programmes are often designed by staff members or centrally mandated, which can limit opportunities for meaningful adolescent participation. Some examples of adolescent girls being consulted in relation to project/programme design were identified, however, these seemed to be ad hoc and not part of a strategic, systematic approach.
- 2.3 The evaluation did not find any evidence of documentation to track how programme design was adapted based on adolescent engagement and feedback. Anecdotally, key informants shared that training materials and approaches and some messaging changed as a result, but it is not possible to verify that through documentation.
- 2.4 Adolescent girls' and boys' involvement in the implementation of projects and programmes was by far the most common way COs sought to engage them meaningfully. Every case study country had strong examples of adolescents and young people implementing activities within the projects and programmes, however, this was not often consistently applied.
- 2.5 Adolescents and young people were predominantly involved as respondents in monitoring and evaluation activities and rarely were findings from their involvement fed back to them in a meaningful way. There were more examples of adolescent girls and boys participating in monitoring activities that in evaluation activities.
- 2.6 Programmes have both reacted and changed thematically in response to emerging trends in relation to economic, socio-political, legal or cultural drivers as they occur, or designed new interventions in response to these changing circumstances. In some rare cases, this has been done in consultation with adolescents and young people, although this is less evident.

The evaluation found that many projects and programmes were designed to meet the needs of adolescent girls in the region in all our case study countries and are based on robust analysis of specific needs of adolescent girls, taking into account research and data that exists in country.

We asked UNICEF staff in the regional survey about how frequently needs assessments were undertaken and 26% reported that they were either always or often undertaken for all new adolescent focused programmes, the same number reported they were sometimes undertaken, 15% said they were rarely or never undertaken, and 33% did not know. These responses demonstrate quite a spread of responses, and an inconsistent approach across countries and sectors. When asked what the constraints and challenges were to be undertaking these, a number of respondents reported 'a lack of time and interest', 'tight deadlines', 'planning being done in a hurry', 'limited funds', 'lack of prioritisation' or 'competing priorities'. Responses were very similar among respondents.

The sectors that had the highest percentage of respondents stating that needs assessments are undertaken always or often for all new adolescent-focused programmes were WASH and data, research, evidence and analysis (including MER). Respondents reported that needs assessments happened more frequently in humanitarian settings (37%) than development settings (16%) for all new adolescent focused programmes.

In our case study countries, **we found strong evidence of programmes being designed to meet the needs of adolescents and young people based on robust analysis and research and secondary data, but across all case study countries, there was limited evidence of adolescents actually being involved in these processes.** For example, in Tanzania, the 'Educate a Child' programme included a gender analysis to examine the social, economic and cultural drivers that lead to girls dropping out of

school to support the design of gender transformative programmes addressing the root causes of school dropout among girls and boys.

There was also evidence of regional and global programmes being adapted to different contexts according to the needs of adolescents and young people. For example, the UPSHIFT programme is a UNICEF Global programme that has been developed to be adaptable and scalable in different contexts, it is now being implemented in 38 countries.¹⁶ In Namibia, UPSHIFT interventions were adapted to the specific contexts of young people in the intervention sites. So, for example in the Khomas region where young people have better access to technology, the programme has been designed to include online mobilisation activities, whereas in Omaheke and Kavango East regions, the programme is targeting the most vulnerable and economically marginalised young people, who do not have access to technology, so the design has been adapted accordingly to reach them in person.

Another example is with the new Malawi CPD (2024-2028) which was informed by research undertaken by the University of Malawi: “*Voices of Children and Adolescents in UNICEF’s Country Program Document*” (2023). In Zimbabwe, the Adolescent and Youth Advisory Council¹⁷ (AYAC) has been established to provide UNICEF Zimbabwe with a better understanding of aspirations and experiences of adolescents and young people to feed into programmes across the project cycle. The AYAC has been involved in CO 2023 Annual Planning, as well as in monitoring and evaluation processes. In a focus group with members of the AYAC for the case study, adolescent girls reported that their involvement in UNICEF’s programmes was empowering and helped build their confidence at home and in school. In Tanzania, the CO is involving young people in consultations around the Country Programme Document. In July 2021, the Education Section consulted with 50 school children (10-16 years old) on their priorities for education and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) to feed into the next five-year programme. The following year, a 2-day conference was held bringing together 70 in-school and out of school children and adolescents for a consultation on education reform.

E.Q. 2.1

To what extent do adolescent girl programmes/projects at country level engage girls meaningfully in the design Implementation monitoring and evaluation of programmes and policies?

A central approach to UNICEF’s ambition is to ensure that adolescent girls are meaningfully involved in all aspects of the programme. Below we explore examples and approaches to adolescent girls’ participation at different stages of the programme cycle.

The Spotlight Initiative’s Programme in Malawi conducted an online survey¹⁸ as part of their mid-term assessment (2021) which found that **adolescent girls and young women participate in the implementation and monitoring of the programme but were less involved during the design stage**. This finding resonates with the findings across the country case studies.

Design

Projects and programmes are often designed by adults, or centrally mandated leaving little space for meaningful adolescent participation. Some examples of adolescent girls being consulted in relation to project/programme design were identified, however these seemed to be ad hoc and not part of a strategic systematic approach.

¹⁶ More information at [UPSHIFT | UNICEF Office of Innovation](#)

¹⁷ The AYAC currently has 18 members – 11 girls and 7 boys from across the country.

¹⁸ Respondents included government officials, UN staff and implementing partners.

“When I joined the radio everything had been decided. I was explained what the project was about and undergo training to become a presenter” (boy, 13, Mozambique)

COs use a variety of mechanisms to engage with adolescents and young people including Youth Advisory Councils in Namibia, Adolescent Volunteer Initiatives in Uganda, and youth parliaments and student councils in Malawi. Respondents to the regional survey also mentioned a variety of mechanisms for youth participation in decision making and programmes including Adolescent and Young People’s Advisory Councils, networks of Youth Advocates, Annual Children Summits (Rwanda) organised with UNICEF and the National Child Development Agency and the Ministry of Gender and Family promotion, to encourage youth agency and participation in decision making processes. In Uganda, the Children’s Reference Group consisting of 25 adolescents and children, has been formed by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development with support from UNICEF CO, to meaningfully engage in decision making with national and sub-national level stakeholders in Kampala City on issues affecting adolescents. Each Children’s Reference Group cohort is designed to serve a 2-year tenure.

Whilst examples from our case studies related to adolescent girls’ and boys’ engagement in design were not extensive, there are some good examples to highlight. The Girl’s Reproductive Health, Rights and Empowerment Accelerated in Tanzania (GRREAT) programme proposal in Tanzania included a gender analysis which involved participatory consultation with 231 adolescents (55% girls) and identified several recommendations for implementation by the programme, for the donor (Global Affairs Canada), or for UNICEF/UNFPA through their activities. This is a strong example of how adolescent girls were able to actively participate in a design process and affect the outcome.

Several county offices have employed a human centred design¹⁹ process which centres the voices of adolescents and young people throughout the design and implementation process. Examples of this were found in Namibia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

In Namibia, 28 girls participated in a Human-Centred Design (HCD) workshop which supported the development of training materials for the Skills4Girls programme. The Skills4Girls Final Report (2022) highlighted that *“girls’ lived realities, ideas and experiences are at the heart of the programme”* and that *“the programme is responsive to the needs and realities of the girls”*. Members of the Namibia CO felt that this was largely as a result of the HCD process that could be of value to other programmes in Namibia. In Uganda HCD processes have been used to develop behaviour change communication messaging for peers.

Whilst there were fewer examples of adolescent girls and boys being involved in designing programmes, there are some cases when adolescents have been involved in designing components of a programme. The evaluation did not find any evidence of documentation to track how programme design was adapted based on adolescent engagement and feedback. Anecdotally key informants shared that training materials and approaches and some messaging changed as a result, but it was not possible to verify this through documentation.

Evidence from both Uganda and Namibia from the UPSHIFT programme illustrates how the programme has been adapted to these different contexts in consultation with adolescents and young people.

For example, in Namibia a curriculum design workshop was arranged to enable Namibian young people to input into the adaptation of the generic curriculum for their context. Youth led organisations and young people were among the participants:

“Being part of the UPSHIFT workshop was a great experience for me. I am excited about UPSHIFT starting in Namibia because this is what we as young people need. I believe UPSHIFT

¹⁹ [HCD](#) is an approach to solving complex problems and designing more human centred services, designing directly with the user.

*will be an open platform to help us (the youth) achieve positive social change in our communities”
(Young person, 19, Namibia)*

Similarly in Uganda, young people were involved in a skills mapping conducted for the design of the i-UPSHIFT programme, and the vocational training component of that work.

In most cases, the mandate to design projects, including identifying objectives and activities were developed by adult staff members of UNICEF or partner organisations.

“We have been doing much of tokenism, that is, we have to do it because it's a donor requirement. The adolescents have not many times led the talking about their issues, we lead the talking and programming as adults. There's often no representation of adolescents at the decision-making table” (UNICEF respondent, Uganda)

In Malawi, respondents confirmed that most programmes inform adolescents and young people when programmes are being rolled out, and undertake some kind of consultations with adolescents, mostly through their implementing partners, at the outset or during implementation. Examples shared included the Spotlight Initiative, the Joint Programme on Girls Education, and ‘Afikepo’ programme which held district level consultations with adolescent girls or conducted baselines or assessments which required adolescents to complete a survey of some kind. Young people were consulted on a successor programme to ‘Akifepo’, and their feedback on the adolescent component was integrated into the new phase of programming.

Implementation

The involvement of adolescent girls and boys in the implementation of projects and programmes was by far the most common way countries offices sought to engage them meaningfully. Every case study country had strong examples of adolescents and young people implementing activities within the projects and programmes, however this was not often consistently applied.

In Mozambique young people were trained on issues of SRHR and violence against girls and harmful practices, and leadership and economic empowerment. They support their peers with knowledge and information and referrals to SRHR services, and where to report cases of child marriage. Another programme in Mozambique trained young people in media skills, public speaking, and Vox Pop where they were then able to produce and present radio programmes to raise awareness of key issues facing young people.

“I was trained in public speech, do interview and Vox pop and now I present the programmes which are heard by my fellow peers and its contributing to increase awareness on the programme topics” (Girl, 15, Mozambique)

In Uganda, there are examples of young women living with HIV supporting information provision and counselling for peers using the Young People and Adolescent Peer Support Model. There is also a specific focus on peer support specifically for adolescent girls and young women living with HIV for which UNICEF is part. Peer leaders were also recruited for programmes including the ‘Adolescent Development and Participation Programme’ (ADAP), ‘Girls Empowering Girls’ (GEG), the Spotlight Initiative, and i-UPSHIFT, which involved young women implementing activities and working with their peers through in-school or out of school clubs.

Peer mentorship is also an approach used in Zimbabwe to support implementation for example through the Champions of Child Protection, an interactive and peer-led approach that aims to strengthen young people’s voice, agency and leadership in community structures. This approach is used in a variety of different programmes. The ‘Prevention of Violence Against Children through challenging social norms that

condone/promote violence against children with Plan International' (2020) uses the Champions of Child Protection to run peer mentor sessions with adolescents in single sex and different age groups (11 -14 years and 15-18 years).

The '2gether 4 SRHR' programme in Tanzania included community dialogues with adolescent and young people, including young sex workers and young people with disabilities, to share different SRHR challenges and participate in sensitive conversations in safe spaces. Dialogue participants came up with recommendations and suggestions for the programme, but the evaluation is unable to say whether those recommendations were taken forward, as documentation is not clear on any follow-up actions taken.

An example of where feedback from adolescents and young people led to changes in how the programme was delivered was in the nutrition programme in Malawi. Consultations with young people in the districts led to adolescents requesting UNICEF change the appearance of iron-folic acid supplement tables which they did, with a view to increasing uptake. Young people also requested more support to improve their livelihoods, and an entrepreneurship component was added to the programme.

A number of **challenges** were also raised in relation to adolescent involvement in the implementation of activities.

- It was often the same young people who were selected for these roles and responsibilities, and they were not always aware of the opportunities until after they had been allocated.
- Adolescent involvement in implementation was still on a small scale, and often seen as an afterthought. It needs to be more intentional at project design level and include adequate budget to facilitate their meaningful involvement.
- Adolescent involvement at design or implementation stage was not found to be carried out consistently, adolescent girls (and boys) were more often than not seen as 'beneficiaries' or 'programme recipients' rather than participants or having a more substantial role in designing and directing the programme.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

The evaluation found that, in the case study countries, adolescents and young people were predominantly involved as respondents in M&E activities and the findings from those activities were rarely fed back to them. There were more examples of adolescent girls and boys participating in monitoring activities than in evaluation activities. The evaluation found only one example of young people involved in designing the evaluation, co-creating evaluation tools, or participating in validation or sensemaking activities.

The exception to this was found in Tanzania, where through the 2gether 4 SRHR joint programme, 50 adolescents and young people (64% female), including young people living with HIV, were trained to collect, analyse and use information related to access and utilisation of SRHR and HIV services. Adolescents and young people monitored HIV and SRHR service provision at the community level as well as engaging local government staff for planning and implementing corrective measures for the gaps found in service provision.

Also in Tanzania, during the mid-term assessment for the GRREAT programme, the assessment team conducted consultations with 26 adolescent girls and 19 adolescent boys across three regions in Tanzania. The purpose of these meetings was to check selected questions in the Girls' Empowerment Index survey tool for comprehension, sensitivity and age-appropriateness, including concepts such as 'girls' empowerment', 'gender norms' and 'harmful cultural practice'. Based on adolescents' feedback, no changes were made to the relevant questions tool, but it was recommended that enumerators build a strong rapport with adolescents prior to conducting the surveys to build trust. This feedback was taken on

board and shared to enumerators during their training sessions. **This is a positive example of meaningful engagement of adolescents in programme monitoring and evaluation.**

In Zimbabwe, young people participate in M&E work through the AYAC, which has produced field visit feedback reports providing recommendations to UNICEF and implementing partners on how to adapt their programming to better meet the needs of adolescents. The Zimbabwe CO also sought feedback from young people participating in a workshop through asking them to produce first person narrative reports reflecting on their involvement and participation in the Gender in Emergency Preparedness Workshop. It was interesting to see how the CO has encouraged young people to share their voice and reflect on their experiences at the workshop. What is not clear is how their experiences may have led to any changes.

In Namibia, girls involved in the 'Galz and Goals' programme have been provided with cameras to capture their stories of change as part of programme monitoring. In Mozambique, the CO uses the radio programme, 'SMS Biz', as a way to hear from young people directly through polling and surveys, which has created platforms at provincial level to reach out to a more diverse group of young people. Tools such as U-Report and focus group discussions were often cited as examples of how young people were involved in feeding back, but these approaches were often viewed to be tokenistic or extractive rather than meaningful.

"During the implementation, monitoring and evaluations, we listen to what young people say and integrate with the view to become more responsive to their needs and achieve the intended results" (CSO KII, Mozambique)

"We are not involved in the design/elaboration of the project, but we are involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes where we contribute with recommendations and afterwards a follow up plan to implement the recommendation." (CSO youth representative KII, Mozambique)

During the recent Country Programme Evaluation in Uganda, two adolescents (one girl and one boy) were involved in the Evaluation Reference Group, and their feedback helped to inform the design of the evaluation and supported validation of the findings.

Participants of an adolescent focus group discussion in Uganda reported that they were not frequently involved in M&E activities, and where young people were involved, it was often the same people who were asked to participate, those who were already peer leaders and actively involved in project activities. In Malawi, the findings were similar with respondents confirming that there is limited involvement of adolescent girls and boys in data collection, although they are sometimes consulted as respondents through U-Report. However, the Malawi CO piloted the *Fun and Funky Fusion Approach* to build the capacity of adolescent girls and boys in data collection, research and evaluation in schools. The approach is to work with university art students at the University of Malawi to share learning and disseminate research and evaluation reports with adolescent girls and boys in school on key issues emerging from UNICEF reports which impact young people. This approach has won a Global Knowledge Management Inspiration Award.

These are all illustrations of positive examples of projects and programmes putting in place systems and processes to engage adolescent girls and boys and young people more meaningfully at different stages of the project cycle, although they are currently done on a small scale and are still to be fully integrated across all COs interventions. The following quotations from young people illustrate some of the challenges from their perspectives:

“We raised some of the constraints that we face when doing our work, mostly related to insufficient resources, but so far nothing changed. We still struggling to implement some activities because we need, for example, to achieve an x number of beneficiaries but we don’t have sufficient resources for that” (girl, 16, Mozambique)

“As young people [...] we need to have that the feeling our views are listened and respected. Sometimes we are only invited for the sake of saying ‘kids were here/were invited’, we are there just to warm seats and take pictures with ministers, they did not ask my views. We need to feel we have been invited for a reason and views are being accepted. When we have events, children need to be also part of the planning, directing and MC’ing. This has never happened in UNICEF events, but in other events we were there just so it looked like they are involving kids.” (female RAAG member, Zimbabwe, 16 years)

At a **policy** level, there were several examples of young people engaging in advocacy and awareness raising events with decision makers at different levels. In Mozambique, for example, a youth observatory²⁰ has been established as a platform for young people to contribute to the implementation of national plans, policies, and priorities. Recently the Youth Observatory gave a series of recommendations to the Government to ensure tangible benefits for young people across a range of issues. The Uganda case study highlights numerous examples of adolescent consultation feeding into national policy development, through school clubs, surveys, and direct consultation events at district and national levels.

One of our RAAG members from Eswatini shared an example from her experience of the Youth Advisory group:

“the youth advisory group in Eswatini has been very impactful. Members were MCs and facilitated and took part into panel discussions with lawmakers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education...they were even taking notes on what we had to say! We got a platform to being heard. It’s been such a beautiful experience for us and students involved in schools. Many students are now looking forward to applying to the youth advisory group. We exist and our role is important and there are people who rely on us.” (Female RAAG member, Eswatini, 19 years)

The evaluation used Hart’s Ladder of Participation²¹ as a participatory tool to explore with adolescent girls and boys what their perceptions were of their participation and engagement in UNICEF’s projects and programmes. Across all case study countries, and during our discussions with the RAAG young people placed themselves towards the middle of the ladder, around number 5: *Adults make decisions, young people are consulted and informed.*

“I generally feel we’re at level 5 because adults make the decisions, then we’re informed, and we follow what they want us to do.” (Girl, Uganda)

The regional survey asked the same question about adolescent participation also using the Hart’s Ladder. Results are outlined in [Table 6](#) below. On average across sectors, 50% respondents selected the level of participation 5-6, with three quarters of respondents working in WASH selecting the same levels of participation, followed by over half of HR/operations (58%) and social policy (57%). Looking at the lower

²⁰ Youth Observatory is a platform that provides space for young people to lobby, advocate and actively participate in public decision-making and influencing decision-makers to increasingly involve youth in national development agenda. It also enables a space to strengthen network/alliances and monitor and evaluate the level of compliance with youth-targeted interventions implemented by the government, private sector and other non-state actors.

²¹ See: [Resource sheet 1: Hart’s Ladder of Participation \(ovcsupport.org\)](#)

levels of participation, roughly a third of respondents selected levels 3-4, with over half respondents in the health and data, research, evidence and analysis (including MER) sectors selecting these levels. In terms of the lowest levels of participation (1-2), the average across sectors is 6%, with a peak among respondents working in nutrition – a third of respondents chose levels 1-2.

Table 6: Survey results: Looking at the Hart’s Ladder of Youth Participation image and thinking about your sector/programming, where would you position adolescent girls’ participation? (8 is the highest level of meaningful participation and 1 is the lowest)

	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8
Adolescent development and participation	12%	18%	53%	18%
Child protection	10%	32%	48%	10%
Education	4%	26%	52%	17%
Health	6%	53%	29%	12%
Nutrition	31%	15%	38%	15%
WASH	0%	15%	75%	10%
Social and behaviour change	0%	27%	45%	27%
Gender equality	0%	38%	44%	19%
Social policy	0%	43%	57%	0%
HR/Operations	0%	33%	58%	8%
Data, research, evidence and analysis (including MER)	7%	50%	36%	7%

Respondents working in the development sector tend to report higher levels of adolescent girls’ participation, with half of them reporting the three highest levels (6-7-8) of girls’ participation, compared to 42% for those working in humanitarian, and 29% for those working in both settings. The most frequent level of participation selected by development workers (with over a third of respondents) is level 6. The most frequently selected level for humanitarian workers is also level 6 (32%), and for those working in both sectors it is level 5 (27%).

E.Q. 2.2

To what extent have recent shifts and trends in gender outcomes for adolescent girls been considered in their programming (e.g. COVID 19, climate related shocks etc)?

Programmes have both reacted and changed thematically in response to emerging trends in relation to economic, socio-political, legal or cultural drivers as they occur, or designed new interventions in response to these changing circumstances, and in some cases, this has been done in consultation with adolescents and young people, although this is less evident.

Both case study and survey respondents largely felt that they had been able to adapt programmes to recent trends and shocks, with participants from humanitarian settings more likely to report positively than those in development settings, perhaps unsurprisingly given the nature of humanitarian programming. 35% of survey respondents stated that they had been able to adapt their programmes to respond to shifts and trends in gender outcomes for adolescent girls, with 59% stating they had somewhat

been able to adapt. More than half of respondents working in the humanitarian sector (53%) stated they had been able to adapt, compared to a quarter (26%) in the development setting.

Most of our case study examples highlighted COVID-19 as the main global shock that they had had to respond to during the period under review. Many programmes were able to adapt their interventions and delivery modes, including by delivering some programme activities virtually and through radio. Lots of awareness raising activities moved online and involved more creative use of social media. In Mozambique the SMS Biz programme played an important role in ensuring empowerment and life skills messages were reached by adolescents as well as information about COVID-19 safety protocols.

“During COVID-19 the SMS Biz platform played a crucial role to pass on messages because we couldn't get groups together for mentoring sessions. We also included COVID-19 specific topics besides dating, sexuality, violence, HIV” (UN KII, Mozambique)

In Namibia the UPSHIFT programme also explored increasing the digitisation of the programme by encouraging the use of online tools and spaces for participant mobilisation, application and recruitment. This has led to further discussions between UPSHIFT countries - UNICEF Namibia and Sierra Leone have engaged in south-south learning around how to develop a digital version of e-UPSHIFT which can be accessible on and off-line. This would revamp the UPSHIFT delivery model in Namibia to a school-based, teacher-led model with an associated blended (face-to-face and self-paced) learning approach supported by digital content.

A number of programmes reported delivering mentoring sessions through community radio, which also had the unintended consequence of making sessions more accessible to other people who were not part of the mentoring sessions. In Malawi, the Joint Programme on Girls Education II began to deliver SRHR and SGBV mentoring sessions through radio programmes, similarly in Mozambique:

“Mentoring sessions were done through community radio stations; social networks: short videos on Facebook, information about SRHR services, GBV – collaboration of young artists/influencers who pass on the messages” (CSO KII, Mozambique)

Programmes also moved to provide more livelihood support. In Mozambique this was in the form of business kits and support to saving groups to help them migrate their money to mobile money platforms for adolescent girls. Similarly, the i-UPSHIFT programme in Uganda adapted its socio-economic innovation model for out of school adolescents which included the integration of life skills and vocational skills to boost self-esteem, confidence and employability.

The 'Rapariga Biz' programme provided psychosocial support to girls and young women via telephone, to help them deal with the additional stress and challenges caused by the pandemic.

The Spotlight programme in Mozambique redirected a total of USD 831,000 to COVID-19 adaptation plan, to support the continuation of lifesaving services. The Gender Programmatic Review in Malawi (2022) highlights how UNICEF was able to adapt to COVID-19 to mitigate its impact on girls' education, supporting the delivery of emergency and non-emergency education services to almost four million children (56% girls), with over 200,000 girls having completed a Safe School's empowerment transformation and active citizenship training to protect themselves from violence and demand protection services in ten targeted districts. In Uganda the country office supported home based learning and virtual education programmes for adolescent girls and boys.

In Zimbabwe, in response to the increased number of teenage pregnancies and child marriages following the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF Zimbabwe conducted a National Assessment on Adolescent Pregnancies in Zimbabwe (2023) to inform government policy. This identified the root causes of adolescent pregnancy, particularly in wake of COVID-19, alongside key national drivers of economic

recession leading to poverty, unemployment, depletion of family savings, falling prices of agricultural produce, and migration of parents and caregivers, as well as increased prevalence of gender based violence experience by adolescent girls and young women globally as a result of the lockdowns and increasing levels of poverty.

Further, in Uganda UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and district local governments with the review and implementation of the education sector COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan. UNICEF's regional expertise was leveraged to provide the MoES and Ministry of Health (MoH) with a roadmap to re-opening of schools and supported the vaccination of teachers. UNICEF supported the review of the Guidelines for Prevention and Management of Teenage Pregnancy in School Settings in Uganda (2020).

In Tanzania COVID-19 did not feature very strongly in terms of responding to shifts, possibly due to them having experienced one of the shortest lockdowns, with schools only closed for three months. However, the major shift for Tanzania CO was in the political environment with the arrival of the new president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, who overturned the policy excluding pregnant girls from attending school. Having advocated for this change for a long time, UNICEF Tanzania is now working with the government to re-enrol girls in school.

In Mozambique there were also situations of escalating armed conflict in central provinces, and some Joint Programmes were adapted to ensure displaced people, including adolescent girls and boys, were reached by the programmes.

In Namibia programmes like UPSHIFT have been addressing issues related to climate change and building environmental resilience. For example, the programme documents states:

the purpose of the program is to “develop the resilience of communities in climate, energy and environment through solutions, products and services created by young people” and “to promote climate change advocacy by adolescent girls and young people”.

In Malawi, examples were also shared about how the programmes have been adapted to certain climate shocks for example the 'Green Girls Platform', which has a climate change focus. It adapted activities in response to the cyclone and floods, and based on feedback from adolescent girls who felt that more activities needed to be focused on the adolescent girls displaced and living in camps.

In some cases, programmes did not necessarily pivot in response to shocks but rather these shocks influenced the design of new programmes. This was seen in both Zimbabwe and Uganda. In Zimbabwe, the 'Social and Behaviour Change' programme sought to inform adolescents on health and behaviour in response to impacts of COVID-19 and lockdowns, and in Uganda many of the programmes reviewed²² which were designed after the COVID-19 pandemic, have incorporated components of life skills, mentoring, vocational skills, and peer-to-peer approaches, to support adolescents post-pandemic. The "Go Back to School" peer led campaigns, for example aimed to encourage adolescent girls, including teenage mothers, to re-enrol in schools in response to large numbers still out of school following the pandemic.

²² GEG, i-UPSHIFT, Adolescent Volunteer Initiative groups, ADAP and Basic Education and Adolescent Development programme (BEAD)

5.3. Coherence

E.Q.3. To what extent do adolescent girl focused interventions (both within UNICEF and external) align with UNICEF strategies, and global policy commitments, to support girls' leadership and agency through gender transformative programming in ESAR?

Summary of findings

- 3.1 ESARO and the CO programs were found to be aligned to global policies and commitments like the SDGs, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and strong alignment to government policy and legal frameworks. Less alignment was found in relation to global policy commitments for people with disabilities.
- 3.2 All of our case study countries were found to have aligned their CPD to one of the GAPs, either GAP 2 (2018–2021) or GAP 3 (2022–2025), and in some cases with the Adolescent Girls Strategy. The evaluation did not find strong evidence that programmes were intentionally designed and delivering gender transformative outcomes across the areas identified in the GAP 3. Ambition is still more often linked to 'gender mainstreaming' and 'gender sensitivity' rather than 'transformation'.

The above evaluation question looked at the extent to which UNICEF's work to strengthen girls' voice, leadership and agency through gender transformative programming is aligned to the strategies and policy commitments of UNICEF at country, ESAR and global levels.

Based on our document review, all the ESARO and the COs programmes were found to be aligned to global policies and commitments like the Sustainable Development Goals, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. However, the evaluation found that UNICEF engagement with people with disability through the programmes has still been limited and therefore there has been less alignment to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We found strong alignment to government policy and legal frameworks in the case study countries. Aside from the global commitments, the UNICEF COs involved in the case studies all demonstrated strong alignment to the respective government policies, laws, and strategies in their work with adolescents and young people in the region. The main areas of alignment are in sectors concerning, gender equality, women and human rights and empowerment, youth, HIV, SRHR, Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and GBV among others.²³

E.Q.3.1

To what extent have GAP priorities linked to gender transformative programming approaches been consistently integrated into UNICEF's girl focused programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy, in ESAR?

All of our case study countries were found to have aligned their Country Programme Documents to one of the GAPs, either GAP 2 (2018 – 2021) or GAP 3 (2022-2025), depending on its timeframe. Some of them were also aligned with the UNICEF Global Adolescent Girls Strategy. In terms of the

²³ Some examples mentioned included the GBV/VAWG policies and laws, national multisectoral strategic frameworks for HIV, youth SRHR policies, gender mainstreaming policies, and others.

adolescent girl focused interventions that were reviewed for this evaluation all of them aligned with and contribute towards at least one of the goals areas specified in terms of sectoral programming. The GAP 3 makes much more explicit an ambition on gender equality programming leading to transformative results. Examples of how the CO core values are aligned to GAPs are outlined in [Box 3](#). The extent to which programmes are designed and achieving gender transformative outcomes is explored further under E.Q.9 but suffice to say limited evidence was provided that responded to the goal related to ‘sustainable transformative systems that equitably promote the rights of all children, adolescents and women’.

Ambition is still more often linked to ‘gender mainstreaming’, responsiveness and ‘gender sensitivity’ rather than ‘transformation.’

Box 3: Examples of how the CO core values are aligned to the GAP.

- The UNICEF Malawi CPD 2024-2028 broadly covers all five priorities in the GAP 3. In addition, the CO’s current Gender Equality Strategy is aligned to the GAP 2, while having a strong focus on adolescent girls, although it does not mention GTP.
- UNICEF Mozambique has taken deliberate actions to integrate GTP into girl-focused programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy. Among others the CO works to tackle structural changes that accelerate gender equality, empower girls and women.
- The Namibia CO Strategic Plan 2022-2025 works on the GAP through various programs which resonate with the vision of the GAP including UPSHIFT, Skills4Girls, Galz and Goals, Children’s Parliament.²⁴
- The Tanzania Country Programme Document (CPD) (2022-2027) recognises that the CO must accelerate the integration of GTP, especially around the rights of adolescents and children.²⁵ The CO implements a Gender Strategy (2018) that was developed to accelerate gender equality results and aligned to the GAP.
- The vision, approaches, and values of UNICEF Uganda’s work with adolescents are guided by GAP 3, the Gender Policy (2021-2030) and UNICEF Adolescent Girls Programme Strategy 2022-2025. It includes a commitment to undertaking gender analysis in all contexts prior to programming.
- In Zimbabwe the Adolescents and Youth Strategy for UNICEF Zimbabwe 2023 to 2026 mentions a separate adolescent girl strategy demonstrating a commitment to meaningfully engage young people and adolescents, including girls.

E.Q.4 What have been the areas and ways of cooperation with other UN entities and other donor/development partners in regard to gender transformative programmes with and for adolescents in ESAR?

Summary of findings

- 4.1 The evaluation found examples of strong alignment and coherence of UNICEF’s work with the governments, other UN agencies, development partners and in a few cases with girl’s and women’s rights organisations and youth led organisations.
- 4.2 Where joint programmes are designed and delivered in such a way that the comparative advantage of different agencies is clear, these have the potential to lead to stronger outcomes, including in terms of gender transformation. But they are not often designed intentionally to achieve gender transformative outcomes, but rather geared more towards delivering programmes against their mandate.
- 4.3 In many programmes UN agencies still work in silos and do not collaborate with others at the stages of programme planning or implementation.

²⁴ Skills4girls and UPSHIFT are both programs that increase skills aimed at promoting either employability (marketing, administration, social media skills through UPSHIFT and digital and financial literacy, STEM through Skills4Girls) or entrepreneurship and social innovation among young people.

²⁵ Tanzania CPD states that “UNICEF will seek to empower Tanzanians at family, community, and national levels to address harmful social norms, including discriminatory gender norms and those related to violence against children. Gender socialization and positive masculinities for men and boys will be promoted. All programming will aim to remove the structural barriers to gender equality.”

The evaluation found examples of strong alignment and coherence of UNICEF’s work with governments, other UN agencies, development partners and in a few cases with girl’s and women’s rights organisations and youth led organisations. 59% of those who responded to the regional survey felt that to some extent UNICEF has cooperated effectively with other UN agencies or development partners in GTP, including in adolescent girls’ leadership, voice, and agency, 35% said ‘to ‘a great extent’, 4% said ‘completely’ and 2% responded ‘not at all’.

All of our case study countries provided examples of how they were working closely with national governments to ensure UNICEF programmes are aligned to their mandates and priorities. For example, in Uganda the CO supported the development of national guidelines and curricula for Life Skills Education. In Zimbabwe the CO supported the development of the National Child Protection and HIV Sensitive Disability Parenting Training of Trainers Manual. In Mozambique UNICEF has been supporting the Ministry of Education to establish a referral and reporting mechanism for VAC in schools. These partnerships are explored further under E.Q. 8.2. in the ‘Sustainability’ section.

Where joint programmes are designed and delivered in such a way that the comparative advantage of different agencies is clear, these have the potential to lead to stronger outcomes, including in terms of gender transformation. The regional survey found that 73% of UNICEF staff believed that COs were stronger and better able to generate stronger results on gender transformative programming, including strengthening adolescent girls voice, agency, and leadership, within UN Joint Programmes than standalone/single-agency approaches. 27% of the respondent staff felt that joint programming made them weaker in their GTP work.

E.Q. 4.1

What are the mechanisms for UN entities to collaborate and how well coordinated are they to ensure coherent approach to gender transformative programming?

Collaboration among UN agencies was more common where clear normative mandates were established that address the varied needs of the adolescent girls.²⁶ This alignment has in some programmes already showed GTP achievement which is driven by Joint Programming, for example in the GPECM, which is seen as one of the strongest examples of multi-sectoral, Joint Programming demonstrating transformative outcomes.

The evaluation found that through Joint Programmes, UN agencies leverage each other’s strengths within a continuum of complementary interventions that allow adolescent girls to build their skills, knowledge, and agency to meaningfully engage and make decisions in matters that impact their life. However, this alignment and collaboration is often only maximised where the donor requires and has availed resources for that; but not as an intentional or default way in which UNICEF works with other UN agencies.

UN agencies have also at times jointly crafted and communicated similar communications and advocacy messages with one joint voice for support for adolescent girls. This complementarity strengthens gender transformation benefits in the lives of the targeted girls at the required numbers, voice, scale, and impact. UNICEF and other UN agencies working together with the girls gain a stronger advocacy voice when working together.

Although there is collaboration and coordination among the different UN agencies, some respondents in our case study countries noted the tendency to collaborate more when there is an ongoing programme and when it ends, the close collaboration lessens. UN agencies do not always share impacts and best

²⁶ For instance, while UNFPA looks at SRH needs, UN-Women looks at gender and women rights.

practices from a particular Joint Programme to enable them plan for the next activities that would strengthen their collaboration. [Box 4](#) below gives examples of collaboration in Mozambique.

Box 4: Examples collaboration spaces in Mozambique

Examples of collaboration in Mozambique include:

- UNCT Gender Thematic Group for UN coordination on the implementation of the gender equality agenda.
- Humanitarian Gender Thematic Group for the incorporation of gender equality in humanitarian action, including emergency preparedness and response (and UNICEF has been co-chairing this group since 2022).
- Coalition of the Willing for Gender Equality that gathers bilateral donors, multilateral entities, UN agencies.
- The Inter Cluster Coordination Group has gender equality as a standing agenda point.

These platforms represent important spaces to create synergies and collaboration opportunities on gender transformative action.

Although UN agencies coordinate and collaborate in different adolescent programming areas, it is not solely for purposes of achieving gender transformative outcomes, but it is often focused on delivering programmes against their mandate. Each of the UN agencies have different mandates that they aspire to fulfil through Joint Programming.

Collaboration often happens through thematic working groups which exist at country level. These might be focused on gender, adolescent girls or sector-focused (for example Education, Health, WASH), or by context, such as humanitarian programming. Membership of these groups vary, but they are generally seen as useful forums to enable different organisations to collaborate and update on their plans. The effectiveness of these groups largely depends on personalities and individual commitment. For some Joint Programmes, specific coordination groups are established. For example, the Spotlight Initiative is run centrally by the Regional Coordinator's Office in most countries, and they convene interagency dialogues, working groups and planning sessions. See [Volume 3, Annex 11](#) for further details of the collaboration found in each of the case study countries.

In many programmes, UN agencies still work in silos and do not collaborate with others at the stages of programme planning or implementation. The main unresolved challenges and limitations for collaboration which were found by the evaluation were as follows:

- There is competition among UN agencies, especially in the context of shrinking donor funding.
- Some UN staff perceive that Joint Programming processes can slow down the pace of work. That was cited as being because of bureaucratic administrative and decision-making procedures and the extra time required to build consensus when undertaking joint work.
- Occasionally there are conflicting priorities and mandates among UN agencies and therefore some may be concerned that their priorities and results may be sidelined through collaboration and joint planning.
- There are other agencies whose staff do not fully understand the need for gender programming let alone gender transformative programming, or even the importance of spending time and resources on collaborating. They feel their work does not focus on GTP as a priority.

These are examples of where perhaps more effort needs to be invested in building trust, openness, transparency, and a mechanism to coordinate the joint work of UN agencies.

5.4. Effectiveness

E.Q.5. To what extent have UNICEF ESARO’s adolescent girls focused programmes and interventions mainstreamed gender transformative programming, contributing to increasing their voices, agency and leadership, in current planned programmes?

Summary of findings

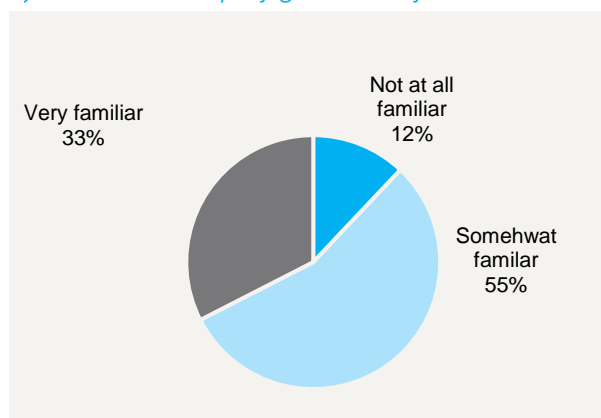
- 5.1 The evaluation found many promising examples of different gender transformative approaches employed to increase adolescent girls’ voices, agency and leadership
- 5.2 Country offices are employing a range of different models to contribute to gender transformative outcomes and many of these are found to be effective. No one model by itself will lead to gender-transformative results. Mentorship/upskilling/capacity building appear to be the most popular effective models used across the region, followed by safe spaces/school clubs, social behaviour change communications/media, positive masculinities/investing in boys, and a peer-to-peer approach.
- 5.3 Little evidence was found on the effectiveness of different models/approaches in countries affected by conflict or other humanitarian crises, but the same models seem to be used in these different contexts, with adaptations made.
- 5.4 There is a varied understanding of the concept of gender-transformative programming across UNICEF staff and partners in the region
- 5.5 Key contributory factors include resources, staff capacity, political will and a partnership strategy.
- 5.6 Programmes using multi-sectoral approaches are more common than those using a targeted approach. However, multi-sectoral programmes seem to usually have a ‘lead’ sector, working with other sectors.

Familiarity with the concept of gender-transformative programming

There is a varied understanding of the concept of gender-transformative programming across UNICEF staff and partners in the region. The regional survey found that although a third of UNICEF staff are ‘very familiar’ with the concept, 12% are not at all familiar, whilst the majority (55%) are somewhat familiar (see [Figure 10](#)). Female respondents seem to be more familiar with the concept of GTAs than male respondents, with 93% female respondents reporting to be very familiar or somewhat familiar with the concept compared to 84% of male respondents.

When disaggregated by sector, the top three sectors in terms of self-reported familiarity with the concept of GTAs are gender equality (69% very familiar with the concept), child protection (52%) and adolescent development and participation (47%). The sectors with the lowest self-reported familiarity with the concept of GTAs are data, research, evidence and analysis (including MER) (36% very unfamiliar with the concept), social and behaviour change (18% very unfamiliar) and HR/Operations (17% very unfamiliar).

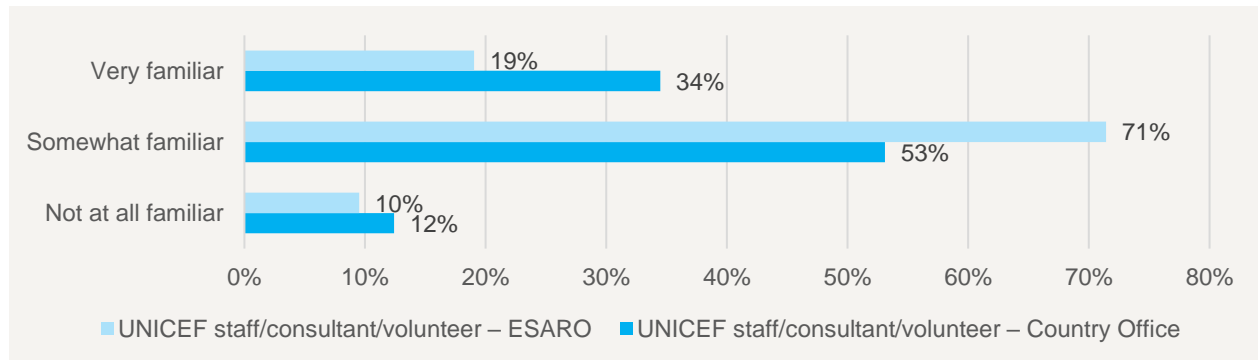
Figure 10: Regional survey results: ‘How familiar are you with the concept of ‘gender transformative



“Honestly, I would be lying that all of us understand GTP the same way. This is a newer concept that people need to understand better” (UNICEF Uganda respondent)

As shown in [Figure 11](#), when disaggregated by office type, the survey found that staff in country offices (34%) report higher levels of familiarity with the concept of GTAs compared to staff in the regional office, with 34% and 19% respectively feeling very familiar with the concept of GTAs. UNICEF ESARO staff are more likely to feel somewhat familiar (71%) than country office staff (53%).

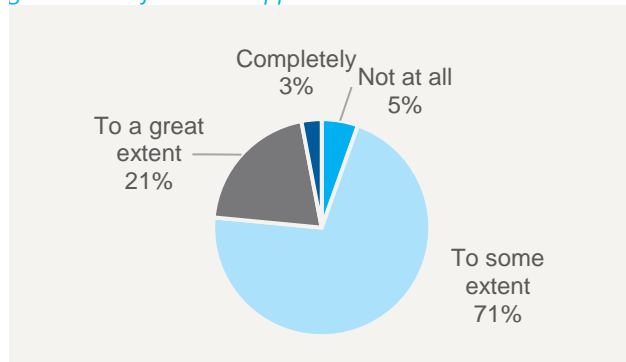
Figure 11: Regional survey results: How familiar are you with the concept of 'gender transformative approaches'?, by office type



The country case studies also found varied levels of understanding of gender-transformative programming amongst country office staff. In Malawi, high staff turnover has been a factor in limited institutionalisation of GTAs in all programming, despite 24 staff having received training on GTP in 2021 (Malawi Country Programme (2019-2023) evaluation, 2023). Two interviewees for the Tanzania case study noted that although gender-transformative programming and GAP 3 may not be well understood amongst UNICEF staff, that does not mean that staff are not undertaking gender-transformative programming and contributing to the GAP.

In terms of understanding amongst UNICEF’s partners, the regional survey found that 71% of UNICEF staff respondents agreed to some extent that UNICEF’s partners share the same understanding of GTA, whilst 21% agreed to a great extent, as shown in [Figure 12](#).

Figure 12: Regional survey results: 'To what extent do you think UNICEF's partners share the same understanding of gender transformative approaches?'



The country case studies found that UNICEF’s partners are generally recognised to have lower levels of familiarity with GTA. From the Uganda case study interviews, among the implementing partner respondents, only two out of seven were able to explain what GTP was. In Tanzania, a midline gender assessment of the GRREAT programme found understanding of ‘gender-transformative programming’ to vary greatly between GRREAT stakeholders. Of the 41 GRREAT stakeholders interviewed, none had a clear and complete understanding of the term or what is needed for programming to be truly gender-transformative, although some

stakeholders – notably UNICEF and UNFPA staff – had clearer and more complete understandings than others, which they noted was evolving. In Namibia, it was suggested during several KIIs (five out of eight) that the Namibia CO, government, and other key partners could benefit from capacity building and further learning in the concept of GTP. In Mozambique, CSO key informant interviews found that there is no common understanding regarding what a gender transformative approach is but both UNICEF and

UNFPA are providing capacity building for their implementing partners (CSO and Government institutions) including religious leaders and traditional leaders. In Malawi, one interview with a staff member from a UN agency partner found a worrying view that the involvement of adolescent boys in programme activities was positive as “*they are the ones who will make decisions for the family*”, which is not in line with a GTA in terms of addressing harmful gender norms around intra-household decision making.

Documentation and consistent integration of gender transformative programming approaches

There are varied levels of documentation of gender transformative programming across the region. For example, very little documentation was identified in Zimbabwe whereas the Tanzania CO has strong documentation of their gender-transformative programming approaches, including through the Gender Programmatic Review (2023), Gender Transformative Programming in Tanzania (2023) and a large number of documents from the GRREAT programme.

Mainstreaming gender transformative programming to increase adolescent girls’ voices, agency and leadership

Some promising examples have been found of mainstreaming gender transformative approaches to increase adolescent girls’ voices, agency and leadership. UNICEF Mozambique was found to have made extensive and significant contributions to increasing adolescent girls and young women voices and agency through supporting innovative and safe platforms and spaces, both offline (mentorship sessions – all programmes) and online (SMS Biz – Rapariga Biz programme and radio programmes - GPECM), to build girls’ skills and capacities to lead, influence change, voice their opinions and be empowered. In Namibia, both the UPSHIFT and Skills4Girls programs were found to be contributing to increased voice, agency, and leadership in AG participants through mentoring and peer-to-peer approaches.

“I make decisions on my own, I am respected, and my decisions are considered in the family; I now participate in decision making processes of important things in my house; I decide when to marry because no one is forced to marry and to use my money” (girl, 17, Mozambique)

UNICEF Uganda has made concerted efforts to mainstream gender transformative programming across their interventions, however, the contribution to increasing voices, agency and leadership is moderate overall. Despite the existence of the different voice expression platforms, these are not consistently used by adolescents in Uganda to challenge harmful norms and practices affecting them. UNICEF’s programmes have led to a moderate increase in agency, with some programmes more agency-oriented than others (e.g. i-UPSHIFT). Exercising agency by adolescents was found to be more challenging within families due to the prevalence of traditional norms within the family in which decision making is more frequently dominated by adults. In terms of leadership, adolescent girls have demonstrated their capabilities in UNICEF Uganda’s programming, but this could be better reflected and directed towards tackling harmful norms and practices threatening their well-being and participation in development.

E.Q. 5.1

To what extent have different models/approaches been effective in contributing to gender transformative outcomes in various country contexts, particularly those affected by conflict or other humanitarian crises, and why?

Country offices are employing a range of different models to contribute to gender transformative outcomes and many of these are found to be effective.

Table 7: Overview of effective models being used by COs, as evidenced in the case studies

	Malawi	Mozambique	Namibia	Tanzania	Uganda	Zimbabwe	Count
Mentorship/upskilling/capacity building	✓	✓	✓		✓		4
Safe Spaces/school clubs	✓	✓			✓		3
Dialogues (interpersonal, intergenerational, community)		✓		✓	✓		2
Social behaviour change communications/media	✓	✓			✓		3
Positive masculinities/investing in boys	✓	✓		✓			3
Peer-to-peer approach			✓	✓	✓		3
Engaging with parents and caregivers				✓	✓		2
Cash transfers to adolescent girls					✓		1
Economic empowerment/social enterprise				✓	✓		2

Table 7 above gives an overview of the different effective models²⁷ which were found to be used by each CO. **This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but instead shows which models came through the most strongly as effective in the case study analysis.** It shows that mentorship/upskilling/capacity building is the most popular effective model used across the region. This is followed by safe spaces/school clubs, social behaviour change communications/media, positive masculinities/investing in boys, and a peer-to-peer approach. It is worth noting that all these interventions focus very strongly at the individual level.

No one model by itself will lead to gender-transformative results. These types of models need to be used in tandem by COs to complement one another, and work at different levels of the socio-economic model in order to lead to the types of structural changes which are needed to shift unequal gendered power and lead to gender-transformation.

At the individual level, in order to promote girls' voice, agency and leadership, the following models have been found to be effective:

- Mentorship/upskilling/capacity building
- Safe Spaces/school clubs
- Cash transfers to adolescent girls
- Economic empowerment/social enterprise

At the interpersonal and community levels the following models have been found to be effective:

- Peer-to-peer approach
- Engaging with parents and caregivers
- Dialogues (interpersonal, intergenerational, community)

²⁷ Effective models have been identified based on the outcome harvesting approach the evaluation team undertook to identify programmatic approaches across the GESI continuum, and based on evidence of what works for gender transformative programming.

At the systems/institutions level, and policies/legislative levels, no particular gender-transformative models emerged in the evaluation. However, UNICEF has been engaged in gender-transformative work at these levels. See the 'Impact' section for more details.

At the **engaging men and boys level**, the following models have been found to be effective:

- Mentorship
- Dialogues (interpersonal, intergenerational, community)
- Economic empowerment/social enterprise

Little evidence was found on the effectiveness of different models/approaches in countries affected by conflict or other humanitarian crises, but the same models seem to be used in these different contexts, with adaptations made. In Mozambique, joint programme interventions have been adapted to include displaced persons in areas which have seen an increase in displaced people due to armed conflict in neighbouring areas. In Uganda, the i-UPSHIFT programme, a socio-enterprise programme which includes programme participants living in refugee settlements, has been found to have positive impacts, particularly at the individual level.

"i-UPSHIFT improved my critical thinking skills, including the way I stand in front of people and talk. I am now confident and can express myself without thinking that maybe my ideas are wrong. I have learnt to believe in myself; however, our confidence needs to be tested outside the refugee settlement and see if we can influence any change. Here in the camp, people are traumatised by war and can accept anything" (i-UPSHIFT Adolescent girl within the age range of 16-19 years in Nakivaale refugee settlement, Isingiro District)

The approaches used by i-UPSHIFT include upskilling and mentoring, peer-to-peer approaches, social behavioural change communication and a human-centred design methodology. i-UPSHIFT is a social innovation model programme aimed at turning the young people's innovative ideas into reality and therefore has a strong intentional element on agency, but less so on voice and leadership. The evaluation found that agency was exercised more among the FGD respondents from the i-UPSHIFT programme participants, compared to GEG programme participants. However, the male participants were found to have more capacity to make their own decisions in the different spaces and act on them compared to girls.

E.Q. 5.2

What are the key contributory factors for this change (if any)?

Key contributory factors for successfully mainstreaming gender-transformative programming have been identified predominantly through the case studies, particularly via interviews and focus group discussions. These are not meant to be an exhaustive list. These are:

- **Technical leadership to build staff capacity** on gender-transformative approaches (Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique)
- **Senior/management staff buy-in and accountability** for gender-transformative programming (Tanzania).
- **Integration of the GAP 3 into the current CPD or Annual Management Plan** to guide the work of the CO and prioritise gender-transformative results (analysis based on [Volume 3, Annex 1](#)).
- **Adequate budgets with targeted resources** for gender-transformative programming are needed, for example to ensure that MER systems are assessing gender-transformative impacts effectively (all case studies).

- **Meaningful involvement of young people**, from the design of a programme through to its implementation and MER, requiring young people to be willing to engage in UNICEF's programming (all case studies).
- **Gender-responsive MER** to track progress meaningfully (all case studies).
- **Coherent partnerships and collaboration** with government, UN agencies, development partners and implementation partners, with shared goals for gender-transformation (Mozambique, Uganda).
- **Political will and supportive Government policies** to engage with gender-transformative approaches (Tanzania, Uganda).
- **Designing models and approaches which can be adapted to different contexts** (humanitarian, conflict, and development contexts) (Uganda, Mozambique).
- Sometimes it is **requirements from donors** which drive more gender-transformative approaches (Tanzania).
- **Multi-sectoral collaboration** and complementarity across agencies to pool expertise, resources, connections and expertise (Uganda, Mozambique).

E.Q.5.3

What are the differences, if any, in planned, intended or achieved outcomes between a multi sectoral approach vs targeted gender transformative programming?

Programmes using multi-sectoral approaches are more common than those using a targeted approach. However, multi-sectoral programmes seem to usually have a 'lead' sector, working with other sectors. For example, an adolescent education programme might have education as a 'lead' sector, but also be working with the social protection sector on a cash-incentive element of the programme. This type of cross-sectoral work led by one sector is likely to be more efficient than a more collaborative approach, due to the benefit of having clear roles and responsibilities between sectors.

It is not always clear whether there are differences in outcomes between a multisectoral approach and a more targeted approach, but there is a general sense that multisectoral approaches have better outcomes for gender-transformation. However, more evidence is needed to understand more deeply what the different value adds might be of the two types of programming. In Mozambique, three joint UN girl-intentional programmes use a multi-sectoral approach at different levels of the socio-ecological model, and all have the potential to contribute to gender transformative outcomes. In Malawi, the Gender Programmatic Review (2022) highlighted that many issues such as prevention of child marriage, initiation ceremonies, GBV, or sexual abuse, require multisectoral interventions. In Tanzania, interviewees felt that multisectoral programmes are more likely to be successful as gender transformation needs a holistic approach. In Zimbabwe, both multisectoral and targeted approaches to programming were referenced in the documents reviewed, but there was limited evidence available of either of these approaches aiming to be explicitly gender transformative.

The Uganda case study found that to a large extent, there are more benefits from implementing a gender transformative programme using a multi-sectoral approach compared to targeted GTP. In Uganda, a multi-sectoral approach has ensured that adolescent girls are supported and transformed more holistically by different sectors and actors compared to targeted GTP, since social and economic needs are intersectional and one single sector may not be able to address most of the needs of adolescent girls. For example, for the GEG programme in Uganda, the Education component in GEG is the mandate of the MoES to implement, the health services provision is the mandate of the MoH, while income generation, social protection and cultural aspects are under the mandate of the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social

Development (MoGLSD). This multi-sectoral programme approach has helped to support adolescent girls and boys in the GEG programme and ensures that their needs are addressed holistically. Another example in Uganda of a positive multi-sectoral gender transformative intervention is UNICEF's support for menstrual hygiene management interventions for awareness creation and the provision of adolescent girl friendly WASH facilities in some schools. It falls within the education, health, and social protection sectors of the country. As a result of the multi-sectoral arrangement, menstrual hygiene management has improved in schools.

The GAP 3 situates gender-equality programming for transformative results as a cross-cutting organisational priority for all five Goal Areas (health and nutrition; education and skills; protection from violence and harms; WASH and climate; social protection). However, gender-transformative approaches were found to be stronger in some sectors than others. For example, in Uganda, it is stronger in the social protection and education sectors than the health sector. For UNICEF to up its game on gender-transformative programming, all sectors need to implement gender-transformative approaches in a consistent and joined up manner.

5.5. Efficiency

E.Q.6. To what extent has UNICEF allocated adequate resources to adolescent girls programming that is gender transformative and supports their leadership and agency in ESAR?

Summary of findings

- 6.1 UNICEF's resource allocation is not perceived to be sufficient to implement GTP particularly directed at AGs in all their diversity – but most COs are able to undertake some gender transformative work despite limited resources for mainstreaming gender transformation (GT).
- 6.2 The scarcity of resources for GTP in emergency/humanitarian contexts is perceived to be due to ongoing crises and efforts focusing on lifesaving humanitarian response. In these contexts “where almost everything is lacking”, basic needs are perceived to be the priority making it difficult to implement GTP targeting AGs.
- 6.3 UNICEF ESARO spends 2.2% of their total budget on gender transformative programming. When accounting for programmes addressing adolescent priorities, the total spend on transformative programming increases to 9%.
- 6.4 Although most AGs-focused programming under review seems to have adopted some inclusive approaches, no evidence was found of budget lines allocated for intersectional dimensions, such as to ensure accessibility for girls with disabilities, refugee girls, and AGs in hard-to-reach areas.
- 6.5 Gender tagging is inconsistently undertaken by staff who often do not have the appropriate training or understanding of gender equality programming and as such has limited usefulness in terms of understanding the extent of funding allocated to gender transformative or gender responsive programming.

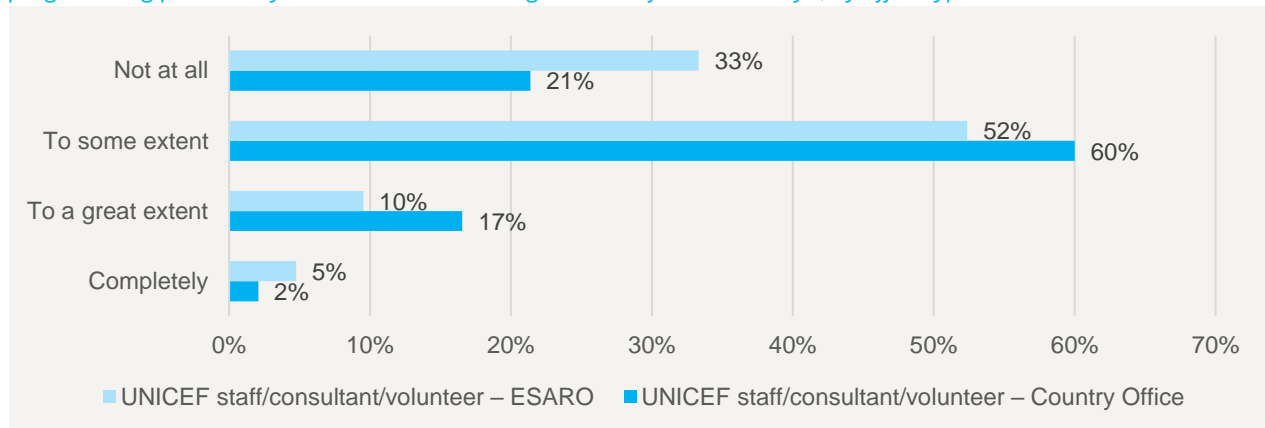
E.Q.6.1.

Are gender and intersectional dimensions integrated into resource allocation, budget planning, budget reporting and activities implementation particularly to address the differing needs of women and girls in all of their diversity?

The evaluation team was limited in our ability to conduct a detailed analysis of resources allocated by the COs to GTP specifically aimed at increasing the voice, leadership, and agency of AGs in all their diversity due to the limited budgets and financial reports that were shared with us. Whilst we learnt that in most countries across the region, programmes are addressing gender and intersectional dimensions to different degrees, the extent to which they are integrated and trackable in budget and activity reporting is inconsistent.

A high proportion of UNICEF staff does not agree that UNICEF’s resource allocation is sufficient to implement GTP particularly directed at AGs in all their diversity, with some differences between regional survey respondents based in-country and those based in the regional offices, and those working in development/humanitarian settings. More than half of regional survey respondents²⁸ agree only *to some extent* and one out of four²⁹ do *not at all* agree that UNICEF’s resource allocation is sufficient to implement GTP particularly directed at AGs in all their diversity. Only 2%³⁰ *completely* agree with the same statement. Survey results differ between regional- and country-based respondents, as shown in [Figure 13](#) below, with 19% respondents working in COs agreeing *completely* or *to a great extent* that UNICEF’s resource allocation is sufficient to implement GTP particularly directed at AGs in all their diversity, compared to 15% ESARO respondents. Three out of five ESARO respondents do *not at all* agree that the resource allocation is sufficient. Some programmatic feedback, for example in Zimbabwe, identified challenges in terms of inadequate resources and time to adequately support gender and intersectional dimensions in activity implementation. Interviewees in Tanzania noted that resources are always a constraint and one of the main barriers to doing more on GTP – noting however that the CO has still been able to undertake some GT work despite limited resources, in particular through mainstreaming GT across policy and programming.

Figure 13: Regional survey results: ‘Is UNICEF’s resource allocation sufficient to implement gender transformative programming particularly directed at adolescent girls in all of their diversity?’, by office type



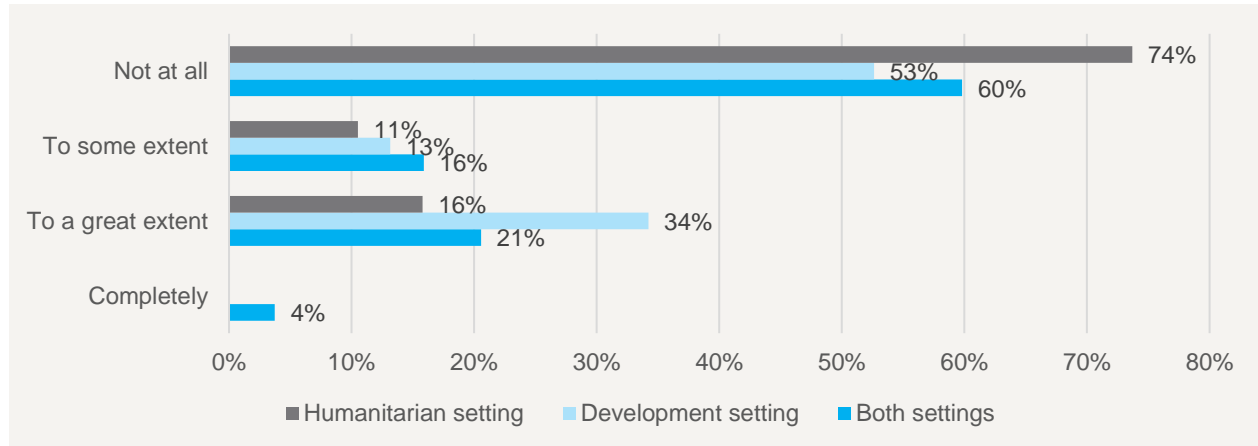
²⁸ 59%, or 55% if Ethiopia’s respondents are excluded from the analysis.

²⁹ One out of three if excluding Ethiopia’s respondents.

³⁰ 1% if excluding Ethiopia’s respondents.

In humanitarian settings where survey respondents operate, the resource allocation is reportedly not sufficient to implement GTP particularly directed at AGs in all their diversity. As exemplified by Figure 14 below, no respondents working in humanitarian settings or in the development setting, and only 4% respondents working in both settings, *completely* agree that UNICEF’s resource allocation is sufficient to implement GTP directed at AGs. A higher percentage of respondents working in humanitarian settings (74%) do *not at all* agree that UNICEF’s resource allocation is sufficient, compared to those working in both settings (60%) or in development settings (53%). The highest proportion of respondents – over a third –agree that *to a great extent* resources are sufficient in development settings.

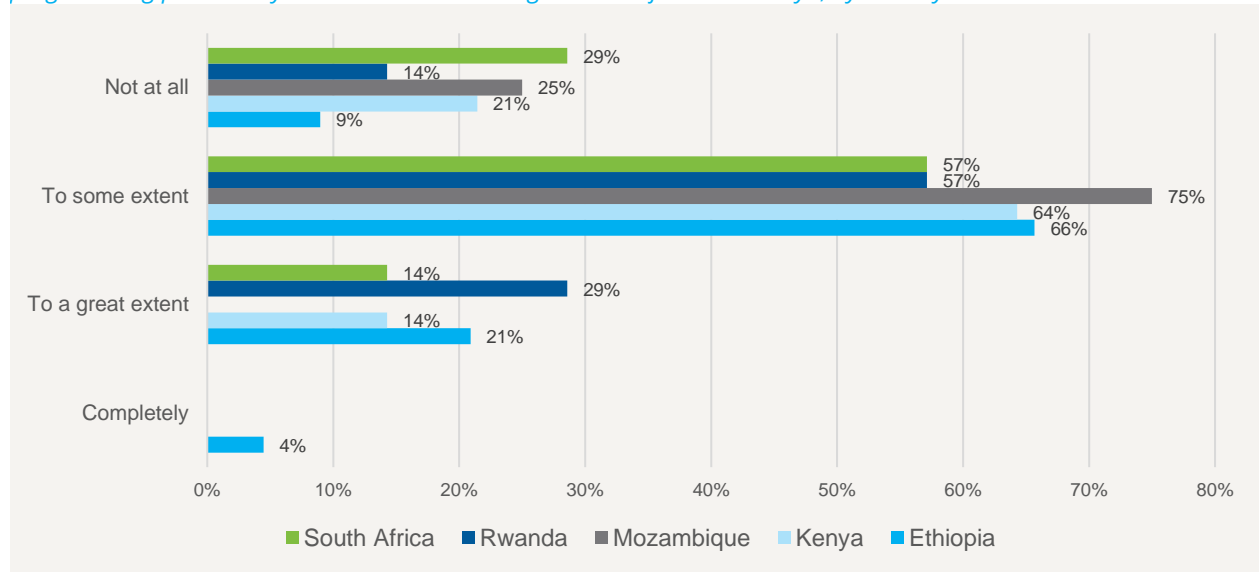
Figure 14: Regional survey results: ‘Is UNICEF’s resource allocation sufficient to implement gender transformative programming particularly directed at adolescent girls in all of their diversity?’, by setting.



The scarcity of resources for GTP in emergency/humanitarian contexts is perceived to be due to ongoing crises and efforts focusing on lifesaving humanitarian response. In these contexts “where almost everything is lacking”, basic needs are perceived to be the priority making it difficult to implement GTP targeting AGs. On the one hand, respondents also noted that countries receiving humanitarian funding with a one-year effective duration period experience a significant decline in multi-year development funding; on the other hand, it also challenging for upper-middle income countries like Namibia to raise funds for GTP targeting AGs as they compete for resources with lower incomes countries. UNICEF staff mentioned the limited use of gender budget lines in emergencies.

We undertook a more detailed analysis for five countries with at least seven respondents in the regional survey (Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa). Results are shown in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15: Regional survey results: 'Is UNICEF's resource allocation sufficient to implement gender transformative programming particularly directed at adolescent girls in all of their diversity?', by country



Among these countries, no respondents *completely* agree that UNICEF's resource allocation is sufficient to implement GTP particularly directed at AGs in all their diversity, except for only 4% respondents based in Ethiopia. Rwanda is the country where the highest percentage of respondents (less than a third) agrees *to a great extent* that the resource allocation is sufficient. Across the five countries, on average 64% respondents agree only *to some extent* that resource allocation is sufficient, with Mozambique having the highest proportion of respondents (75%). Across countries, on average, one in five respondents do *not at all* agree that the resource allocation is sufficient, ranging between 9% and 29%, with the highest percentage in South Africa (almost a third of respondents). For these five countries, an evident correlation does not seem to exist between the size of the previous and current CPD budgets and the levels of agreement with the statement that UNICEF's resource allocation is sufficient to implement GTP particularly directed at AGs, as shown in Table 8 below. In fact, the highest levels of agreements (29%) are found in Rwanda, which has a relatively low budget.

Table 8: Size of selected COs CPD budgets vis-à-vis the agreements to the regional survey that resource allocation is sufficient to implement GTP particularly directed at AGs in all their diversity

	Size of previous + current CPD budget	Agree <i>completely</i> or <i>to a great extent</i> that resource allocation is sufficient to implement GTP particularly directed at AGs in all their diversity
Ethiopia	USD 1,048,883,273	25%
Mozambique	USD 642,696,000	0%
Kenya	USD 502,176,000	14%
Rwanda	USD 260,121,000	29%
South Africa	USD 127,845,000	14%

E.Q.6.2.

How many countries have invested in adolescent girls and in which ways?

UNICEF has put in place a system to track gender expenditure using both gender markers and activity level gender tagging.³¹ This is done at the country level and is led by the monitoring and evaluation officers. The evaluation team was unable to access this level of detailed information for the case study countries. We did however receive information centrally on ESARO expenditure.

The expenditure on gender transformative interventions, which is measured by assessing the extent to which outputs are related to targeted priorities or well-articulated mainstreaming issues³², is approximately 2.2% (equivalent to USD 34 million) of the total expenditure in ESARO. The UNICEF global figure is 6%, thus ESARO is reporting only a third of that. **Expenditure tagged against adolescent priorities is reported to be USD 56.8 million, of which USD 5.1 million is considered to be for gender transformative outcomes, representing 9% of the total.**³³ On paper this seems to suggest that adolescent focused programmes are perceived to be more likely to have gender transformative outcomes, which is an interesting finding, even though we cannot confirm whether these outputs are in fact having transformative outcomes. Gender transformative expenditure in emergency amounts to 4.4%,³⁴ almost twice as much as the overall total.

The UN Systems Wide Action Plan on gender established a target of 15% for expenditure on gender equality. For the case studies countries for which the evaluation team was provided or able to extract data, it emerged that COs dedicated between 15% and 50% of their budgets to gender-focused interventions (across the continuum, and not necessarily for adolescents only).

However, expenditure tends to be reported by activity implemented, with limited gender and age disaggregation. **Although most AGs-focused programming under review seems to have adopted some inclusive approaches, no evidence was found of budget lines allocated for intersectional dimensions, such as to ensure accessibility for girls with disabilities, refugee girls, and AGs in hard-to-reach areas.** A budgetary analysis of UNICEF Uganda expenditure found that approximately half of the previous and of current CPD budgets delivered gender-focused interventions, with over half of those for the previous CPD and 85% of the current CPD budgets geared at catalysing efforts towards adolescent development and participation.³⁵ A budgetary analysis of UNICEF Namibia found that over half of the total actual CO budget was allocated to adolescent programming between 2019 and 2023.³⁶ However, similarly to what was found elsewhere, expenditure is not disaggregated by the gender of adolescents, and no intersectional dimensions were found in the budgets. According to the Gender Programmatic Review of UNICEF Mozambique country programme (2021), the CO dedicates considerable technical and financial resources in support of GTP programmes, with at least 15% of its institutional budget allocated to gender equality. Interviewees in Mozambique noted that resources are insufficient for GT work, including to set up offices in the provinces to support local organisations implementing gender transformative programming.

³¹ See UNICEF Gender Equality Marker and Gender Tag Guidance Note (UNICEF, N.D)

³² Meaning they are tagged with Gender Equality Marker 3, which correspond to gender transformative outputs (output making a principal contribution) principal contribution to advancing gender equality and/or empower women and girls. It is important to note that interventions targeting boys which contribute to gender equality may be rated as GEM 3, and interventions that target women and/or girls may not necessarily contribute to promoting gender equality so might not receive a high GEM rating,

³³ Data provided by UNICEF HQ.

³⁴ Global Gender Dashboard accessed 14/09/2023.

³⁵ UNICEF Insight Reports (2016-2023), Global Data Integrated system.

³⁶ Adolescents living with HIV, UP SHIFT, Skills4Girls programmes.

Issues with gender-tagging systems and reporting on gender. The tagging of activities using the Specific Intervention Code against the Gender Equality Marker (GEM) score, and gender tags at output level is done by either M&E personnel/Chief of Sections who often have limited gender equality background, or by gender specialists who have limited oversight of the interventions being tagged, the gender expenditure tracking is understood to be quite inaccurate. For example, while roughly one third of Tanzania CO's budget is allocated towards gender-responsive or transformative programming, the Gender Programmatic Review (2023) found that the actual expenditure is potentially lower due to the tagging system reliance on staff having a full understanding of the GEMs, which is not always the case. The lack of financial reports based on equity and gender-targeting was also found by UNICEF Malawi CPD evaluation (2023) as one of the areas for improvement. Additionally, when new gender specialists are onboarded and trained on gender tagging, they might proceed to a more accurate tagging, which might result in lower reported expenditures in the following years.

Most survey respondents' comments on financial resource allocation to GTP for AGs revolve around not being sure of, or arguing there is no adequate, specific and regular budget and funds allocated to GTP directed at AGs, with some commenting that it is "minimal at best" and "invisible", unless it is required by donors and/or specific funds. An example of this is Malawi SDG Acceleration Fund, which seeks to earmark a minimum of 30% of its resources to activities that promote the participation and empowerment of women, as well as gender equality.

Challenges to resourcing GTP targeted at AGs

In addition to the challenges described above faced by UNICEF staff in humanitarian settings, more challenges emerged around the resource allocation for GTP work with adolescent girls through the regional survey and case studies, which included:

- A lack of clear guidelines on how to allocate resources for AGs.
- COs that are under the budget bracket to staff a gender specialist face significant challenges to ensuring gender, and AGs, are at the forefront of their country programme without allocated staff.
- While gender is cross sectoral, it is not given a budget beyond supporting gender mainstreaming across sectors. It was noted that often sectors' staff do not involve gender specialists to integrate and address issues affecting AGs specifically in their sectors.
- A siloed approach to programming hinders the optimum use of resources and the adoption of an integrated approach to adolescent work.

*"The first challenge is that there is no direct funding for GTP. The funding we get is sometimes cross cutting. Gender issues are not clearly understood and prioritised. When I talk about maternal and child health, they will give me that money because it is clearly understood. When I talk about nutrition, they will give me that money, but if I talk about gender and nutrition, not many will understand me and the relationship between those two concepts. Little do they know that gender issues are a barrier to accessing nutrition by the mothers and adolescent girls. **So, unless I hide my gender inside that nutrition, I'm not going to get that funding"** (UNICEF respondent, Uganda)*

Some survey respondents among those believing that resources are available and sufficient noted that funds are not allocated intentionally but subconsciously,³⁷ and that earmarking funds for AGs is needed to

³⁷ However, the Uganda case study found that while resource a substantial allocation for AGs programming (in particular, adolescent participation and development) has been more intentional, including through programmes such as *GEG, ADAP, i-UPSHIFT, Life Skills Development*, and the *BEAD* among others, no international resource allocation is done specifically for GTP.

ensure that they are spent sufficiently on AGs. Survey respondents noted that funding is needed in particular to: implement a large-scale programme on the adaptation and creation of green jobs for adolescents; implement early childhood development work on gender norms and life skills education; tackle GBV at school level; reach more girls in existing programmes (e.g., school reintegration project); scale up pilot programmes and the strengthening of capacities; target AGs living with disabilities.

E.Q. 7 To what extent do UNICEF programmes' monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems explicitly, or implicitly address gender transformative programming with a view to generating evidence on UNICEF and public sector performance?

Summary of findings

7.1 The evaluation found limited evidence that gender transformative outcomes are consistently embedded in MER systems at country level and indicators are frequently focused on quantitative measurements and done at activity or output level, missing the more qualitative gender transformative elements. Where they are included it seems to be in response to more gender aware donors and included from the programme design stage.

E.Q.7.1.

What incentives are in place for monitoring and reporting on gender transformative outcomes?

At the corporate level, UNICEF have mandatory Corporate Standard Indicators which are reported on annually by COs and collated by the Gender Team at ESARO, and other regional offices. In ESAR, 7%³⁸ of outputs/vision are tagged with GEM 3 (equivalent to GT), lower than most other regions (except for LACR), and 34% in Emergency.³⁹

These mandated processes act as an incentive to ensure this higher-level reporting is done. However, the value of this data for understanding the true extent of transformative programming and generating evidence on effectiveness, impact and learning is minimal as much of the data is known to be flawed or tagged incorrectly or incompletely. It is also not capturing any qualitative information that is required to get a true understanding of the extent of transformative change. Staff responsible for this role varies from country to country, which may contribute to an inconsistent approach to tagging and some staff tasked with this role may not have a full understanding of the Gender Equality Markers (GEM) or Corporate Standard Indicators (CSI).

[Gender markers and gender tagging are] “..useful tools to track expenditure and investment, but maybe we put too much value in terms of what programming we are doing. This is an accountability tool and we shouldn't be using it as a way to benchmark our programming. This should be benchmarked in a different way.” (UNICEF)

MER systems are also in place at project/programme level and tend to follow donor requirements. Several respondents mentioned that where they were working with more 'progressive' or gender informed donors,

³⁸ 67% if using the corrected GEM (from Global Gender Dashboard, GAP Overview by region, 2022).

³⁹ Global Gender Dashboard accessed 14/09/2023.

programmes were more likely to include outputs and indicators related to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as starting to consider how to monitor and measure gender transformative outcomes. However, the evaluation found little evidence of this.

The analysis from the six case studies found limited evidence that GT outcomes are embedded in MER systems, often because those were not embedded in programmes' design in the first place.

Nonetheless some promising examples include:

- Tanzania has included two AG-specific gender-responsive indicators outcomes in the new CPD that support the GAP's adolescent girls' leadership and well-being results. While gender is mainstreamed in other sectoral indicators, the two new indicators focus on adolescent girls: alternative pathways and skills development for adolescent girls, and SRHR.
- The *GRREAT* programme in Tanzania which has developed a Girls' Empowerment Index⁴⁰ to measure the change in overall empowerment levels of girls (the ultimate outcome/impact level change of the programme). This has been used for the baseline and midline assessment, and will be used for endline, tracking several domains of change/empowerment, including on self-confidence and esteem, personal freedom, and leadership and influence, which are well placed to measure changes in girls' voice, agency and leadership. The index is disaggregated by respondents' location, age, education level, occupation, marital status, number of children and level of digital access. There are also optional questions to be included depending on context based on the Washington Group Questions (disability), migratory status, HIV status and income level of the household. However, this tool is not set up to measure gender-transformation and capture whether there are more structural changes, due to only exploring changes at an individual level. The index has been refined, with inputs from HQ and ESARO, and will be used in the integrated AGs programme and is likely to be further developed by UNICEF globally.
- Zimbabwe provided interesting examples of how they have combined qualitative and quantitative monitoring approaches (i.e. key stakeholder focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, pre and post-tests) to explore changes in social norms, behaviour, and attributions for change, including encouraging the young people to keep personal reflection diaries to track their transformative change, again at an individual level.
- The results framework for the GPECM includes a few specific transformative results areas and indicators that could be explored for us in other programmes, even outside of the end child marriage/child protection sector:
 - Proportion of girls who express increased sense of self-efficacy; who feel confident in their ability to negotiate and delay marriage; who feel comfortable speaking up without fear.
 - Adolescent boys, families, traditional and religious leaders, community groups, and other influencers demonstrate more gender equitable attitudes and support for girls' rights - *Proportion of adult respondents who can identify sanctions (punishments) and benefits (rewards) associated with child marriage abandonment; Proportion of respondents (community, traditional and religious leaders) who are willing to introduce sanctions if someone does not practice child marriage.*
 - Boys and men are engaged in gender transformative programmes (including CSE for boys) that promote healthy relationships and positive masculinities and gender equality.

There is consistency across the case studies that more needs to be done in terms of monitoring and reporting on gender transformative outcomes in programmes. As mentioned by one key

⁴⁰ Adapted from Oxfam's "[A 'how to' guide to measure women's empowerment](#)"

informant in Mozambique, “*the CO dedicates considerable technical and financial resources in support of programmes that are gender transformative, but measuring results remains weak*”. Where they are included, indicators to measure GT outcomes are only often quantitative, and mostly activity- or output-based, not capturing actual structural changes and changes to norms, attitudes, and practices.

In Uganda, gender is considered in monitoring and reporting and the thematic officers and implementing partners have to report on GTP indicators as part of the Core Standard Indicators,⁴¹ but most are quantitative, activity- or output-based. Therefore, even when they might cover voice, leadership and agency aspects, they do not really focus on GT outcomes, nor on social and gender norms change, beyond the participation of adolescents in certain programmes.⁴² Similarly, in Malawi, while there is evidence that some programmes collect baseline data (including on Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices) to monitor their impact, monitoring systems seem to be mostly quantitative and output based, with GTP monitored predominantly at activity level (reporting numbers or people reached or outputs delivered, rather than aiming to measure actual changes in attitudes and behaviours), which are not effective in capturing transformative outcomes. This was confirmed by the CPD evaluation (2023) which found that the focus of data collection was “*on gender responsive programming, as opposed to gender transformative programming, and that “most indicators have not focused on qualitatively tracking gender transformative results to reveal actual changes to norms, attitudes, and practices that the interventions are triggering.”* This is also the case in Tanzania and in Mozambique, with a key informant interviewed as part of the Mozambique case study saying that “*indicators are concerned with numbers and not quality, and working on human development takes more time*”, and another interviewee mentioning that changes effected are often not well captured by indicators: “*there is a lot of things that we do but the indicators do not reflect*”.

Lack of data disaggregation

Most case studies found that data is not disaggregated by gender and age and, when it is, it is not used. Documents reviewed for the Malawi case study did not often include disaggregation by gender, or by age, or other identity characteristics. The CPD evaluation (2023) found that Malawi CO reporting (RAMs) omitted gender disaggregated data which was a “concern for other evaluations too”. Most reports reviewed as part of the Uganda case study were gender disaggregated, but lacked a deeper analysis of intersectional characteristics, and aspects relating to voice, agency and leadership by groupings. The UNICEF Tanzania Gender Programmatic Review (2023) found that data for monitoring purposes is generally sex-disaggregated, but the data quality is occasionally questionable, and the reason for collecting sex-disaggregated data is not always understood by staff. The Tanzania CO Gender Strategy (2018) noted that when sex-disaggregated data is collected, it is not used strategically, and it is not clear whether this has changed over the past five years. Similarly, in Namibia, the UPSHIFT programme, despite reporting disaggregated data (by gender and disability), indicators look at individuals reached/trained and numbers of outputs rather than actual change.

Barriers

Barriers mentioned by UNICEF staff to doing more on MER on GTP include:

- Lack of necessary skills, a lack of capacity within small evaluation teams, short funding periods, and the cost involved with setting up more complex MER systems (Tanzania).
- Lack of adequate indicators to capture changes in attitudes, beliefs and practices (Mozambique) and lack of adequate indicators to capture empowerment: while female interviewees indicated feeling empowered within and beyond UNICEF programming (i.e. in other social structures such

⁴¹ For example, on ‘agency through personal empowerment, life skills and leadership through citizen education’.

⁴² See for examples the key programme indicators of the *Life Skills Education* programme.

as home, school), there is no formalised approach in capturing this information or therefore measuring these indicators for AGs (Zimbabwe).

- Difficulty to get disaggregated data from the government and implementing partners (Namibia).

E.Q.7.2.

Are UNICEF ESAR COs embedding evaluations of gender transformative programming and resourcing them in order to demonstrate attributable impact?

Limited documentation was provided which hampered our ability to conduct a fully comprehensive assessment of how far COs in ESA regularly embed and resource evaluations of GTP, in order to demonstrate attributable impact, and how they are resourced. Based on the available documentation and information shared, the evaluation found limited evidence that evaluations on GTP are being systematically commissioned. The quasi-experimental evaluation of Joint Programme on Girls' Education Phase I in Malawi led to changes in implementation for the second phase, based on the challenges identified, including the additional role modelling of girls (by engaging professional women teachers, police, and military women officers) to strengthen the position and debating power of girls in the community. The evaluation itself captured learning around the delivery of awareness raising activities, leadership training (including girls' empowerment), and SRHR activities with boys and girls, recognising that only targeting girls is not sufficient to achieve GT outcomes. Of the three evaluation documents shared in Tanzania, only the GRREAT programme documents showed evidence of evaluating GTP. More details are provided in [Box 5](#) below.

Box 5: GRREAT programme midline assessment (Tanzania)

The GRREAT midline assessment includes a gender assessment which assess four GRREAT interventions⁴³ against UNICEF's GESI continuum, including an assessment against the different levels of the socio-economic model (girls' skills, agency & empowerment; gender norms & inequalities; family & community mobilisation; systems and services; policy & structural change, and institutional partnerships; addressing masculinities & engaging men and boys). The assessment is based on a desk review of programme documents, a three-day [Gender-Transformative Accelerator](#) workshop with technical experts from UNICEF Headquarters and UNFPA Headquarters, 41 key informant interviews conducted with stakeholders working on the GRREAT initiative, and 30 focus groups with rights-holders and duty-bearers in Tanzania. Comprehensive qualitative analysis was conducted, with key themes and content mapped out for each of the four interventions across the six levels of the socio-ecological model, and a score (1 = gender unequal, 5 = gender transformative) was assigned for each intervention at each level of the socio-economic model. All four interventions were determined to be operating at the gender responsive (score = 4) level.

In Uganda, there is some evidence that the CO and implementing partners have documented some GTP impact stories, however, there are no exclusively allocated resources for conducting GTP impact evaluations. In Zimbabwe, where evaluation indicators were mentioned, they are not explicitly linked to GTP. In Malawi only two evaluation reports were shared with the evaluation team and recent publicly available evaluations commissioned by the CO do not cover GTP, despite generally including gender and equity considerations. The strategy note on school-age children pillar under the CPD claims that Malawi CO aims to adapt, implement, and evaluate evidence-based programming that includes young adolescent girls and boys and caregivers with the goal of developing more gender equitable relationships,

⁴³ 1) Training and mobilisation of community health workers, 2) Youth Peer Education, 3) Adolescent and youth friendly health services, 4) Life skills training for teachers

transforming harmful notions of masculinity and femininity, and, in so doing, improving sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Evidence for how far this has achieved has not been provided to the evaluation team. Some programme documents mentioned plans for final evaluation, such as for the Spotlight Initiative or Learning Never Stops Malawi. The Spotlight Initiative's Annual Narrative Report 2021 (2022) mentioned that an assessment of the Safe Space component of the programme was carried out, but no report was shared for inclusion in the desk review.

5.6. Sustainability

E.Q. 8 To what extent are the positive changes and effects of gender transformative programming on adolescent girls' leadership and agency sustainable at the national level, and/or likely to be scaled up by government, or civil society?

To answer this set of evaluation questions we set out to explore whether ongoing or planned girl focused programmes have considered sustainability strategies at design stage. We also explored how UNICEF COs are partnering with government, civil society and other development partners to ensure ownership of and commitment to the programmes, for sustainability and/or scale up.

Summary of findings

- 8.1 Very few examples were found where the sustainability of gender transformative results was an explicit aim in programme documents. COs' prioritisation of partnerships with government and civil society for the delivery of programmes appears to be a central strategy in their approach to sustainability.
- 8.2 Programmes designed in line with government sector plans and priorities are more likely to have clear sustainability goals planned for.
- 8.3 The sustainability of social and behavioural change is a key component of many of the programmes reviewed, and the assumption that these individual level changes are inherently sustainable is common among many COs, albeit with little documented evidence of these impacts.
- 8.4 Most programmes reviewed for the evaluation are implemented by government or civil society partners, with the view to building ownership, capacity, and resources to support government scale up or take up by other partners. This is often done through supporting government policy or developing national curricula.
- 8.5 Capacity building and training for government providers is viewed as a core contribution to sustainability, and a way to strengthen the partnership and improve gender mainstreaming in their work. Few examples of this training focusing on concepts of gender transformative programming as a central focus were evidenced.
- 8.6 Working with existing structures at community level, whether they are local government employees or existing community volunteers or members of community groups is another key aspect of UNICEF's ESAROs approach to sustainability.
- 8.7 A key partner for UNICEF ESARO are youth-led and women's rights organisations. However, their involvement does not appear to be considered in terms of an approach to sustainability, and this is a gap.

E.Q.8.1.

To what extent is the sustainability of gender transformative results an explicit aim stated in new or planned girl focused programmes?

Very few examples were found where the sustainability of gender transformative results was an explicit aim in programme documents. Although COs' prioritisation of partnerships with

government and civil society for the delivery of programmes appears to be a central strategy in their approach to sustainability.

Some of the most promising examples of sustainability strategies shared with the evaluation team were found in the Tanzania desk review, although none of these seemed to be explicitly programmed for at the outset.

- The Integrated Adolescent Girls programme included a focus on sustainability after the 2-year programme, and there are plans to undertake a lesson learned study, which will include answering the question “Can the model be replicated and scaled up using government system in other areas?” There is also an intention to collaborate with other UN agencies to replicate the programme model and to build capacity for parenting programmes to contribute to the national “Familia Bora, Taifa Imara” parenting framework which can be replicated easily and cost-effectively.
- The close-out report of the 2gether 4 SRHR Joint Programme reflects on the measures adopted to ensure the transition of responsibilities for improved sustainability. These included strong engagement with the regional government, contribution to regional priorities and working with local non-governmental organisations to build their capacity to deliver programmes more effectively to support the regional government to achieve positive outcomes for adolescents and young people. However, it is also important to note that the programme was only implemented in Tanzania for 9 months, which is a very short timeframe to be able to sustain transformative outcomes after project close.
- The GRREAT programme midline assessment includes a standalone 68-page Scalability Assessment which analyses the scalability of four interventions, finding that there are strong enabling factors to drive the scale-up of interventions, and that system strengthening is at the centre of each intervention’s approach.
- Every Adolescent Girl Learns (EAGL) programme also includes elements of sustainability and scale up of gender-transformative programming in the education sector. EAGL is in line with the government’s education sector plan (2022-2027), the revised draft Education and Training Policy and revised education curriculums. EAGL is also linked to the 2021 Re-entry Policy Guidelines (Government Circular 02 of 2021, and Guidelines) for students who dropped out of school, often girls who became pregnant.

These examples are some of the strongest we found across all the six case study countries where strategic approaches to sustainability have been explicitly documented and developed.

A number of UNICEF COs work with both government partners and civil society organisations, and this partnership is seen as a key strategy for sustainability with the expectation that these partners will continue the activities after project closure. Programmes designed in line with government sector plans and priorities are more likely to have clear sustainability goals planned for.

This is well illustrated by the Namibia CO in this excerpt from the UPSHIFT Namibia proposal of 2020, stated the following under the heading ‘Scale up and sustainability’:

“UNICEF works to support the Government in the delivery of the existing government commitment to a rights-based approach to service delivery, as presented in the Fifth National Development Plan (NDP5) and the respective Ministerial Strategic Plans. The most effective inter-ministerial coordination mechanism established over the last two years, the National School Health Task Force will be engaged for ownership of the project.”

The sustainability of social and behavioural change is a key component of many of the programmes reviewed, and the assumption that these individual level changes are inherently sustainable is common among many COs, albeit with little documented evidence of these impacts.

UNICEF Zimbabwe believes that gender transformative change can only be sustained if the adolescent girls who are most impacted by an issue are empowered to make correct choices and exercise agency. The CO has invested efforts and resources to build knowledge and skills for female and male youth advocates. These advocates are charged with the roles of holding duty bearers accountable for delivering the rights of the youth to access services. The knowledge and skills gained by the adolescent girls who are advocates are believed to help them continue to champion rights. Malawi also reported similar sustainable gains in the Spotlight Initiative's Annual Narrative Report 2021 (2022), which states that the graduated mentees from the Safe Spaces continue to contribute to the network by getting involved in mentoring and engaging newer mentees, leading to a growing network of girls who are standing together against VAWG in their communities. Similarly, UNICEF Uganda has partnered with, trained and supported girls who are living with HIV to undertake Social and Behaviour Change Communications (SBCC) and peer education among the peers through mass media. The Tanzania CO has trained Young Peer Educators under the GRREAT programme, who are now local resource persons who continue to work with communities while reporting to the local government authorities.

Mozambique CO also reported that some of the GTAs are already being scaled up. For example, the community dialogue methodology used in GPECM in Nampula has been scaled up under the Spotlight Initiative in two other provinces - Manica and Gaza. The adolescent engagement component is also being scaled up as part of the partnership with ASCHA in Gaza province under the Spotlight Initiative. In addition, UNICEF has scaled adolescent engagement to Nampula province using seed funding from GPECM along with Navarra Government and Rapariga Biz funding. These are examples of UNICEF's own scaling up of methodologies and approaches to cover more geography and more targets. However, the main challenge for scale up by government is whether they are able to retain the trained human resources in these areas and whether there will be enough resources to keep the young people engaged.

The evaluation did not receive or review any exit strategies and it is unclear whether programmes have exit strategies that were not shared. In Uganda, none of the four implementing partners who were interviewed had developed sustainability or exit strategies for their UNICEF supported work or had plans for how to sustain or resource programme interventions in future.

E.Q.8.2.

What systems and partnerships has UNICEF put in place to build ownership capacity and resources to support government scale up or take up by other civil society partners?

Most programmes reviewed for the evaluation are implemented by government or civil society partners, with the view to building ownership, capacity, and resources to support government scale up or take up by other partners. This is often done through supporting government policy or developing national curricula.

A number of examples were shared with the evaluation team of where programmes have been designed to explicitly further government policy and commitments, or support the development of national curricula including the following:

- The UPSHIFT and Skills4Girls programmes in Namibia work closely with the government to ensure UNICEF programmes are aligned to the mandate and priorities of the government. UNICEF's indicators, targets, and desired outcomes for GTP are included in the national plans

and strategies of the government. In addition, the government works with the CO to develop and execute the relevant laws and policies which are required for GTP to be achieved.⁴⁴

- The TUSEME programme in Tanzania was found to have been sufficiently scaled up by government and other stakeholders and therefore UNICEF decided not to continue supporting it (Evaluation of TUSEME Programme, 2015). However, the government has requested UNICEF to redesign the programme in a manner that is less costly and therefore easier for the government to sustain with its limited funding. This is an example of an instance whereby shortage of finances and a complex and cost-effective program design could deter scale up and sustainability, despite the government's willingness to do so.
- The Uganda CO has supported the development of the national school curriculum and the National Life Skills Education toolkit, which is being implemented in formal schools, vocational training centres and Non-Formal Education institutions and Centres.⁴⁵ They have also supported the formation of the Childrens' Reference Group which operationalizes the National Child Participation Strategy and the National Child Policy developed in 2016. The CO further supported the development of the national School re-entry Guidelines for teenage mothers after the COVID-19 Pandemic, National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy and the National Multi-Sectoral Framework for Adolescent girls (2018-2023), among other policy frameworks.
- The Spotlight Programme in Uganda works closely with the MoGLSD, as the programme sector lead, who is also the sector lead for the UN Adolescent and Youth Joint Programme in Uganda. The Uganda government plays a critical central oversight and coordination role for stakeholders engaged by the CO at all levels. The Uganda CO has supported the government to strengthen their focus on adolescent girls in policies and plans within education, health, gender, and social welfare through financial and technical support to the MoES, MoGLSD and MoH.
- The Zimbabwe CO supported the development of the National Child Protection and HIV-Sensitive Disability Parenting Training of Trainers Manual. This manual is where the government outlines the child protection system while also detailing the roles of various MDAs and stakeholders in child protection and parenting.⁴⁶ The government oversees the implementation of the system outlined in this manual and therefore the GTP roles of multisectoral stakeholders will be sustained and implemented over time.
- In Mozambique, UNICEF has been supporting the Ministry of Education to establish a referral and reporting mechanism for violence against children in schools. The CO has also strengthened the multisectoral coordination and response mechanism at provincial and district level which increased the capacities of service providers on integrated and quality service provision.
- Through the GRREAT programme in Tanzania, some of the targeted health facilities have adopted a youth friendly approach of extending their working hours to provide friendly and accessible health services for the youth. The resulting youth friendly practices are likely to be sustained for a long period of time.
- Also in Tanzania, UNICEF supports the "Familia Bora, Taifa Imara" program which is focused on strengthening capacity for parenting programmes that contribute to the national parenting framework and can be replicated easily and cost-effectively.

⁴⁴ Klls in Namibia's noted that government provides enabling legal and policy frameworks on gender equality creates a conducive environment to see government willing to work with UNICEF.

⁴⁵ The Uganda CO supported the Life Skills Tool Kit was adopted by 738 schools across 23 districts in 2022. In 2020 in the Karamoja sub region 80 schools had integrated life skills in their improvement work plans. 56 Teachers have been trained and these deliver the structured life skills sessions to the learners through the school clubs as a safe space for adolescents to learn.

⁴⁶ Ministry of Public Services, Labour, and Social Welfare; Ministry of Health and Child Care; Civic Society Organisations; Community Leadership; Organisations of Persons with Disabilities) and implementing partners (Zimbabwe Parents of Handicapped Children Association (ZPHCA); JF Kapnek Trust; Africaid; Plan International Zimbabwe; and Ministry of Health and Childcare). There is no clear evidence of capacity or resources for partners to take ownership or scale up the material.

Capacity building and training for government providers is viewed as a core contribution to sustainability, and a way to strengthen the partnership and improve gender mainstreaming in their work. The evaluation found few examples of this training focusing on concepts of gender transformative programming as a central focus were evidenced.

One such example was in Mozambique where the CO undertook a TOT training on male engagement and positive masculinity for key government officials and implementing partners of both UNFPA and UNICEF. This training aimed to develop critical reflection and efforts to address gender inequality and toxic masculinity. Participants developed dialogue to challenge and demystify norms, taboos, myths, and sociocultural values that reinforce and/or legitimise gender inequalities, harmful masculinities, and violation of human rights. The training is likely to have a longer-term impact on the culture of gender equality among those who were trained and others whom they may reach out to. The Mozambique CO also undertook a Gender Transformative Accelerator Initiative in 2021 where priorities outlined included addressing masculinities, engaging boys and men, community mobilisation, positive parenthood, and supportive family models.

The Mozambique CO works to strengthen government capacity to implement gender responsive activities after UNICEF's involvement ceases, as mentioned in an interview: *"We build our partners capacity; partners are strengthening their partnerships and have approaches that they can share with each other and create synergy. Having a pool of partners that can strengthen each other's in terms of capacity, approaches, join forces and work together therefore strengthens the sustainability component"*. UNICEF supports various training for government staff who are responsible for gender, youth, education, health, law enforcement and justice. The staff are trained in gender responsive aspects of planning and budgeting, child friendly procedures, conflict resolution and mediation, legal framework, making referrals, reporting, multisectoral coordination and others. As a UNICEF respondent put it, *"The culture of inter-sectoral coordinating is a key factor for success in transformative change, e.g., in the private sector/ early childhood development initiative. Colleagues from different teams work well to develop holistic programmes"*.

In Zimbabwe, UNICEF and Plan International provided SBCC training to Teen Mother Champions and Peer Mentors. The peer educators are now local resource persons who work with adolescent girls to address reproductive health issues within their communities. The government stakeholders who were part of the SBCC training were tasked to continue mentoring and supporting the teen mothers to utilise the skills gained during the training, as a means of sustaining the desired programme outcomes.

Working with existing structures at community level, whether they are local government employees or existing community volunteers or members of community groups is another key aspect of UNICEF's ESAROs approach to sustainability.

The evaluation found many examples of UNICEF COs designing and implementing programmes in partnership with communities to strengthen the capacity, skills and knowledge of communities to create lasting change. ESARO and COs have undertaken various training, mentorship, and other activities with an aim to strengthen the capacity of individual stakeholders and partner organisations to be able to work in a more gender transformative way.

A number of programmes are providing support to strengthen community level systems. For example, the 2gether 4 SRHR Joint Programme in Tanzania developed measures to ensure transitioning of responsibilities to regional governments and communities. These included strong engagement with the regional government, supporting communities to contribute to the identification of regional priorities, and working with local non-governmental organisations to build their capacity to deliver programmes. Strong collaboration between local CSOs and regional government was emphasised to enable them to gradually take on more roles in the program while UNICEF scaled down its involvement and phased out its

engagement. In the Spotlight Initiative in Malawi, UNICEF works closely with local government at district levels at a programme level to build their capacity and ownership, ensuring they are engaged in designing and implementing the project, bringing in contextual knowledge and greater understanding of community needs. Specifically, the programme works with child protection and extension workers, some of whom are volunteers and others being government employees. In Mozambique examples were also shared of how UNICEF CO works to strengthen community level systems. The CO trained Community Child Protection Committees and School Councils to identify and handle cases of sexual violence and child marriage within the system specified by the government. The community stakeholders are therefore better positioned to carry on their functions as specified when UNICEF leaves. Some of the mentors from the system reported that they normally continue their child protection sessions with girls during the holidays, so even without the UNICEF programme their mentorship activities will continue.

Another key partner group for UNICEF ESARO are youth-led and women’s rights organisations. However, their involvement does not appear to be considered in terms of an approach to sustainability.

In Mozambique the CO is empowering youth associations at the community level as a way of preparing them to be local resource persons based within their own districts. In this way, when another programme comes along, the youth can be engaged and employed since they already have the requisite knowledge and skills for influencing change within their own communities. This work that UNICEF has done when collaborating closely with the youth and community leaders is likely to continue in the long term. The Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe receives funding from UNICEF for its work on gender and child protection, which has a strong focus on emergencies and preparedness. This represents a starting point for sustaining GTP, but the stakeholders noted that the knowledge and skills gained by members of the coalition will be sustained when UNICEF has completed undertaking the series of other workshops planned for Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe (*“translating the knowledge received into doable actions will require continuous investment”*).

The Malawi CO has supported CBOs to create a network of trained trainers through a training of trainers, so they can support, coach, and encourage each other to sustain their work within the communities. The trained trainers were sourced from the local communities, and they are better able to sustain their work after the UNICEF programmes eventually come to an end.

Online resources are another area worth exploring for sustainability and scale up in SBCC, peer education and other work with networks of girls and government. While it is possible to rapidly scale up and increase coverage and reach in a cost-effective manner, online outlets have not been fully exploited by the government and other partners of UNICEF.

The private sector could also be an effective partner in scaling up the GTP work. It was also found that there has been limited engagement of the private sector to provide ideas, technical assistance, or finances for scaling up the UNICEF supported GTP work.

5.7. Impact

E.Q. 9. To what extent are new or planned interventions likely to lend themselves to achieving higher level change for adolescent girls in future?

Summary of findings

- 9.1 A number of interventions have been assessed to be effective in relation to improving adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership. However, this does not necessarily lead to gender-transformative outcomes or "higher level change".
- 9.2 The most evidence was found of interventions taking place at the gender responsive level, rather than the gender transformative level on the GESI continuum.
- 9.3 This evaluation identified the most impacts at the individual level of the socio-economic model, although evidence was found of some outcomes occurring at all levels. Primary data collection found evidence of strong positive impacts for adolescent girls and boys in improvements in self-esteem and confidence and being able to return to school.
- 9.4 Intersectional analysis and considerations of intersectionality are taking place and informing programme design and implementation. However, this is not always happening systematically and more could be done to ensure greater inclusion.
- 9.5 This evaluation focused on girl-intentional programming and found several strong examples of interventions which place adolescent girls in their diversity at the heart of an intervention. However, girl-intentional programming is not found in every CO in the region.
- 9.6 Whether new or planned programmes are likely to lend themselves to achieving higher level change for adolescent girls in the future depends on whether they cover all five key areas of gender transformation and have clear transformative outcomes and goals, and monitoring data and evaluations in place. This is not usually the case.

Interventions leading to higher level change

The above 'Effectiveness' section documents which effective gender transformative approaches or models are being used in the region to improve adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership⁴⁷. Whilst these have been assessed to be effective in relation to improving adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership, **this does not necessarily mean that they are gender-transformative or will lead to "higher level change"**. In order to analyse whether UNICEF's programming in ESAR is impactful and leading to gender-transformative results, we have used the GESI continuum.

E.Q.9.1.

What have been or are most likely to be the most impactful GTA or models in relation to improving adolescent girls' voice agency and leadership in the region so far?

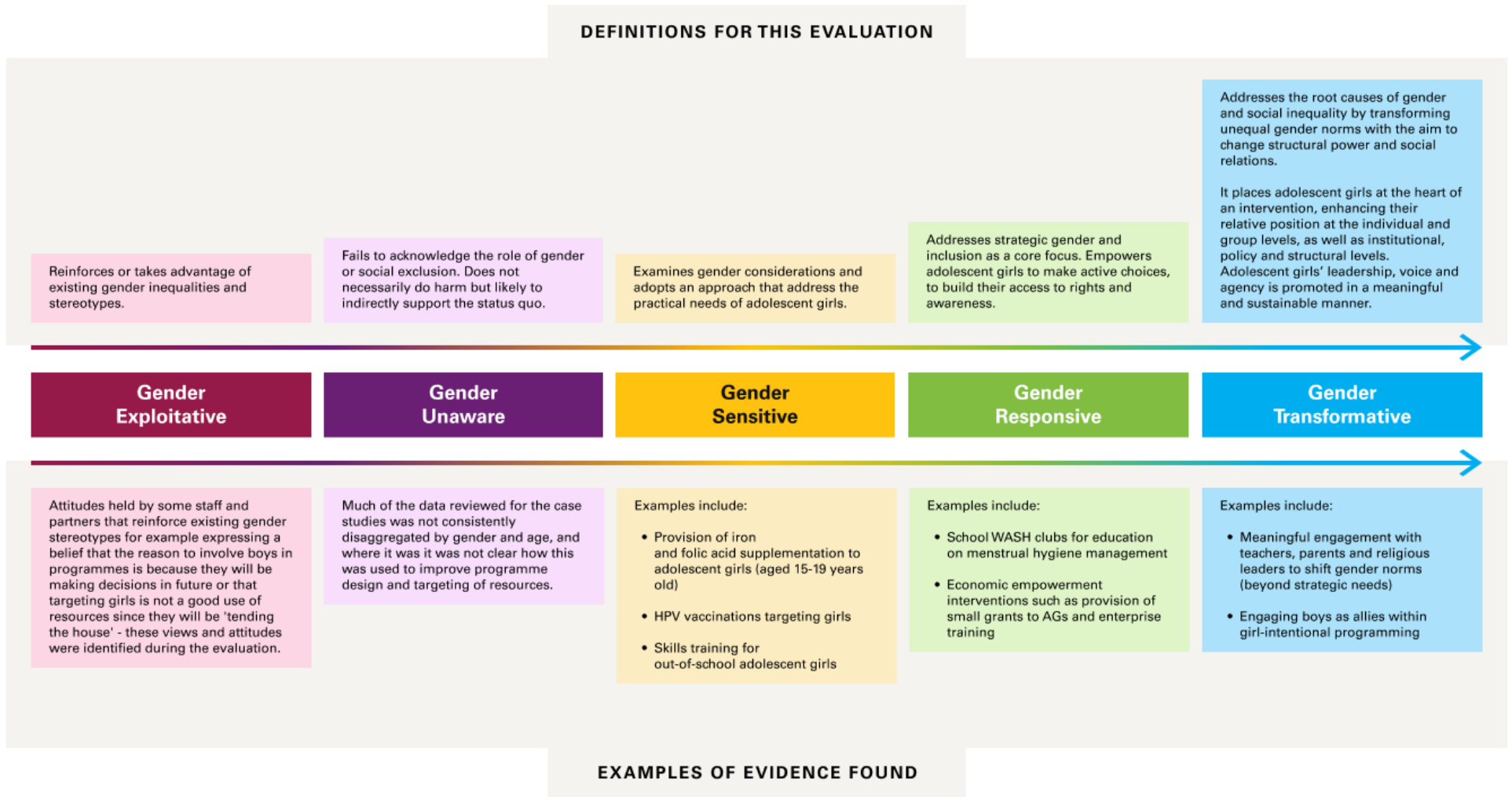
During the inception phase, based on an initial review of UNICEF documentation and KIIs, as well as external documents and SDDirect's previous work, the definition of a gender-transformative approach was developed – **Box 2** under Theory of Change. Based on this a GESI continuum⁴⁸ was developed as a tool for analysis in the evaluation. The GESI Continuum defines different levels of gender and social inclusion approaches, from gender exploitative to gender transformative. **Figure 16** below shows the evidence found in this evaluation of interventions which take place at all five levels of the GESI continuum, from gender exploitative⁴⁹ to gender transformative.

⁴⁷ See EQ. 5.1 **Table 7** for the overview of effective approaches

⁴⁸ Adapted from SDDirect's Moser Framework

⁴⁹ The example shared under gender exploitative is from a comment in a KII (not UNICEF staff) and appears to be an anomaly in terms of findings from this evaluation, but it is likely that these views are pervasive in many contexts.

Figure 16: GESI Continuum



The most evidence was found of interventions taking place at the gender responsive level, rather than the gender transformative level. It should be noted that not all activities need to, or are able to, be gender transformative. Although nothing which UNICEF does should be gender exploitative or even gender unaware, activities labelled as gender sensitive, which address girls' practical needs, or gender responsive, which empower adolescent girls, are still important within the overall portfolio. This being said, the GAP 3 has an ambition for its gender equality programming to deliver transformative results, and this does not appear to have been consistently applied.

To operate at the gender transformative level, according to the definition presented earlier in [Box 2](#), five key impacts need to be taking place:

1. Transforming unequal gender norms
2. Enhancing girls' position across all levels of the socio-economic model
3. Underpinned by intersectional analysis
4. Placing adolescent girls in their diversity at the heart of an intervention
5. Adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership promoted in a meaningful and sustainable way

Whilst examples are found of all five key impacts, these are not often happening together under one programme or CO. Below we highlight examples of where the five key impacts have successfully taken place.

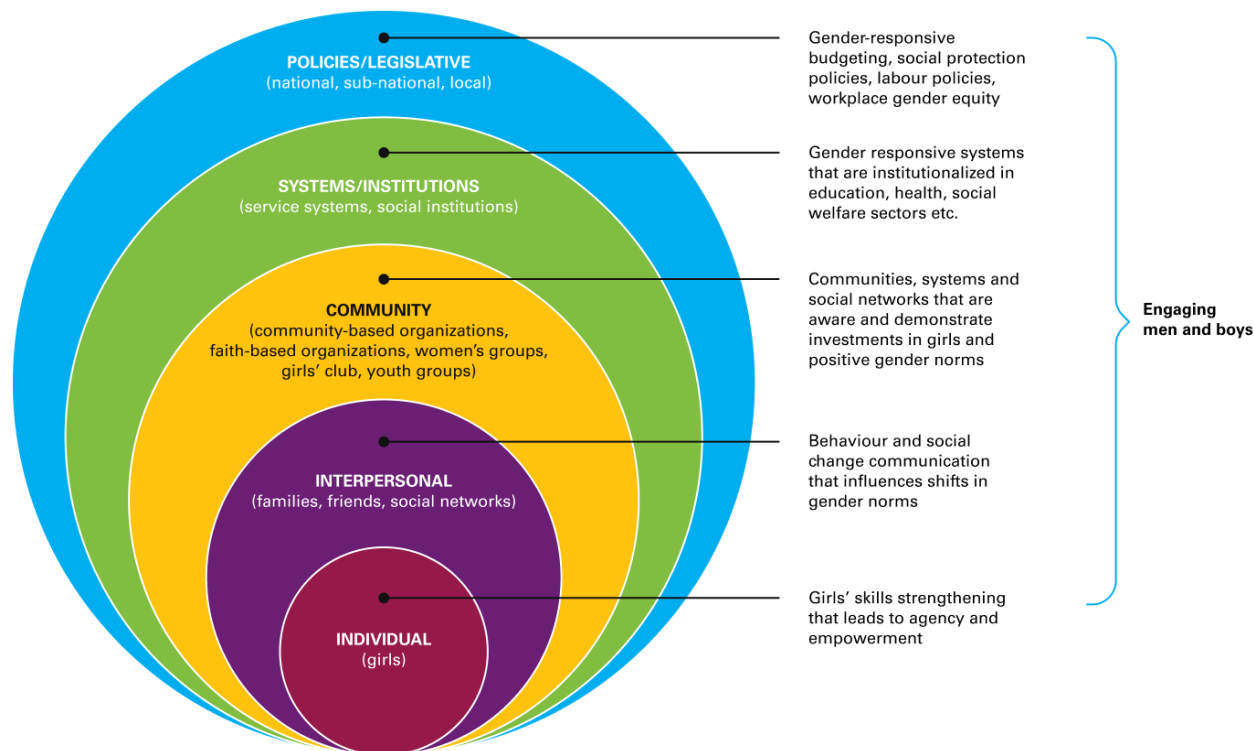
1. Transforming unequal gender norms

Examples have been found of UNICEF working to transform unequal gender norms. For example, in Mozambique, the programmes are challenging gender norms by addressing stereotypical female activities by supporting girls with skills perceived to be for men and boys while also engaging boys to share household and family responsibilities, therefore challenging gender roles and power dynamics. In addition, the CO is challenging socio-cultural harmful practices such as forced union and GBV with some evidence emerging of more people willing to report such cases leading to changes in the acceptability of harmful practices and GBV.

2. Enhancing girls' position across all levels of the socio-economic model

Gender-transformation requires changes across all levels of the socio-ecological model in order to shift unequal gendered power relations (see [Figure 17](#) below). For example, a gender-transformative policy change will not be effective without gender-sensitive institutions and communities which uphold it.

Figure 17: The socio-economic model and opportunities for gender-transformative programming (from the Technical Note on Gender-Transformative Approaches in the GPECM Phase II)



This evaluation identified the most impacts at the individual level of the socio-economic model, although evidence was found of some outcomes occurring at all levels. It should be noted that the evaluation had a focus on girls' voice, agency and leadership, which relates specifically to individual level change, and therefore may explain the absence of wider transformational outcomes that were shared.

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL (girls)

Primary data collection found evidence of strong positive impacts for adolescent girls and boys. During focus groups and adolescent panel interviews with 18 adolescent girls and boys in Uganda, the most frequently mentioned impact was that of improvements in self-esteem and confidence and being able to return to school. There was no significant difference in the responses between girls and boys. In Mozambique, girls participating in joint-UN programmes expressed feeling more confident to voice their views in the family and community; to make decisions about their SRHR and to report cases of harassment, GBV and forced unions, and reported feeling better equipped with skills to improve their potential for employment. Similarly, in Namibia, FGDs with adolescent girls from Skills4Girls, peer interviews with participants from UPSHIFT and KIIs with Namibia CO and implementing partners staff revealed that the UPSHIFT and Skills4Girls programs are mostly seeing transformative outcomes on an individual level. These include increased confidence, often associated with improved public speaking, articulation, and negotiation skills, but also in self-confidence (often described as a newfound realisation that they are capable of achieving dreams and that they can add value to community and society); Increased ambition, often associated with realisations made through programme participation that

working hard is important and a positive mindset; Increased innovation and problem solving, especially when talking about making positive changes in their own communities.

“I felt empowered. I felt seen. I felt relevant. I felt like my crazy thoughts and crazy ideas were like coming to life. It wasn’t just imagined but it could happen. UPSHIFT gave me that opportunity that I can change crazy ideas into something relevant” (Girl, 17 years, UPSHIFT, Namibia)

INTERPERSONAL LEVEL (families, friends, social networks)

In Uganda, at the interpersonal level, adolescents mentioned the impact of active participation in school clubs, and two adolescents indicated being better trusted and listened to by parents. There was no significant difference in the responses between girls and boys. In the FGDs with the young adolescents in school, the girls testified that boys supported them with making reusable menstrual sanitary pads. This was further echoed by one of the Government officials (a key informant) from one of the Ministries.

COMMUNITY LEVEL (community-based organisations, faith-based organisations, women’s groups, girls’ clubs, youth groups)

In Malawi, there have been changes in attitudes and behaviours which negatively impact adolescent girls, including those of boys and at community levels through mentorship programmes and awareness raising. For example, the Safe School programme is implementing gender transformative approaches which are starting to demonstrate changes in attitudes and beliefs with boys demonstrating more respect for girls and after the empowerment transformation training.

SYSTEMS/INSTITUTIONS LEVEL (service systems, social institutions)

UNICEF Uganda has supported the development of Uganda’s policy framework and establishment of government institutions to implement a gender responsiveness and transformation agenda. UNICEF Uganda has helped to establish the Gender Unit in the MoES and continues to fund and offer technical support to the unit.

POLICIES/LEGISLATIVE LEVEL (national, sub-national, local)

In Tanzania, in 2021 the government overturned a policy excluding girls who are pregnant from attending school effectively forcing them to drop out. UNICEF Tanzania had been advocating for this change, with others, for a number of years and is now working with the government to re-enrol girls in school, including by understanding and overcoming the barriers which girls face to re-enrol in school after pregnancy.

UNICEF Uganda supported the development of a similar policy to enable teenage and pregnant mothers to re-join and complete school.

ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS

Under the GRREAT programme in Tanzania, investment in boys to support girls' empowerment has improved boys' knowledge and sense of responsibility on sexual and reproductive health issues, and an improved awareness of gender inequalities and harmful gender norms. The involvement of boys was particularly successful when local authority figures including community leaders and teachers encouraged their participation, and when they participated in activities that presented opportunities for them, such as livelihood activities.

Under the Spotlight Programme in Mozambique, workshops have been help on promoting positive, nonviolent and equitable model of masculinity among men and boys at community level. Workshops with implementing partners highlighted the importance of comprehensive interventions where mentoring/behaviour change of men and boys are coupled with a intergenerational dialogue on shifts in masculinity. A similar approach was adopted in Uganda through the GEG and i-UPSHIFT programmes where boys are working alongside girls to support project activities.

3. Underpinned by intersectional analysis

Intersectional analysis and considerations of intersectionality are taking place and informing programme design and implementation. For example, in Namibia, UPSHIFT was found to be implemented differently in each region and is designed to adapt to the specific contexts of the different adolescent programme participants. In the Omaheke and Kavango East regions, reaching the most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged young people was made a priority in the mobilisation, screening, and selection strategy.

"[discussion on selection] we target the marginalised (the homeless, disabled, those not attending school, living with HIV) but criteria also included those demonstrating social innovation and a wish to help and uplift the marginalised in the community – UPSHIFT CSO implementing partner (KII), Namibia

However, this is not always happening systematically across the case study countries and more could be done to ensure greater inclusion. Sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data should also be collected in order to track outcomes for different groups.

"the voices of young people with disabilities are not heard in my country – they just stay at home. I went to secondary school and was trained on how to use PC and I was appointed a young reporter, an experience that makes me very happy. TV stations and radio stations call me to share my views. Now in my community and country there is an example of a girl with disabilities who shares her views." (RAAG member, South Sudan)

4. Placing adolescent girls in their diversity at the heart of an intervention

This evaluation focused on girl-intentional programming and found several strong examples of interventions which place adolescent girls in their diversity at the heart of an intervention.

Examples include global and regional programmes such as UPSHIFT, the GPECM, UNFPA-UNICEF

Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, the Spotlight Initiative. Examples were also found of girl-intentioned country-level programmes such as Galz and Goals (Namibia), Girls Empowering Girls (Uganda), Green Girls Initiative (Malawi), GRREAT (Tanzania) and Rapariga Biz (Mozambique).

However, girl-intentional programming is not found in every CO in the region. For example, no examples of girl-intentional programmes were found in Zimbabwe.

5. Adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership promoted in a meaningful and sustainable way

As discussed in the 'Relevance' section above, **there are few examples of adolescent girls being meaningfully engaged in the design of UNICEF programmes**. Adolescent girls' and boys' involvement in the implementation of projects and programmes was by far the most common way COs sought to engage them meaningfully. Every case study country had strong examples of adolescents and young people implementing activities within the projects and programmes, however, this was not often consistently applied. Adolescents and young people were predominantly involved as *respondents* in monitoring and evaluation activities and rarely were findings from their involvement fed back to them in a meaningful way.

As discussed in the 'Sustainability' section above, adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership is not always being promoted in a sustainable way. Whilst there are some promising examples of gender-transformative programmes emphasising sustainability and scale-up from the start, such as the GRREAT programme in Tanzania, there are also barriers to sustainability. For example, governments are seen as the main partner to continue UNICEF programmes, but they often face a lack of resources and capacity to work on gender-transformative programming.

Box 6 on the GRREAT programme below highlights a programme which is working across all five key impact areas outlined above, with varying levels of success.

Box 6: GRREAT operating across the five key impact areas

1. Transforming unequal gender norms

According to the GRREAT midline assessment, the programme is successful in transforming gender norms and inequalities. For example, the intervention is training and mobilising Community Health Workers (CHW) and Community Health Volunteers (CHV), including to identify gender-related barriers to accessing quality services, such as the need for approval from a male partner or family member, low purchasing power among women, and socio-cultural barriers to service-seeking behaviours. Reporting from the implementing partner suggests that the adoption of this training has built the capacities of CHWs to identify gender-based needs and enabled them to address harmful gender norms affecting the community's utilisation of adolescent sexual and reproductive health services. According to CHWs and CHVs, some significant harmful norms and inequalities have been addressed by their work. For example, CHWs and CHVs across the GRREAT's regions report that issues of sex abuse and violence have been greatly reduced.

2. Enhancing girls' position across all levels of the [socio-economic model](#)

The GRREAT midline assessment assessed four interventions against a GESI continuum at all six levels of the socio-economic model. All four interventions were assessed to be 'gender-responsive' overall, with rankings from 3 (gender aware) to 5 (gender transformative) across all levels of the socio-economic model. Looking at the different levels, the GRREAT programme is the strongest at the individual level (girls' skills agency & empowerment) and the interpersonal level (gender norms & inequalities), which both have average scores of 4.5 out of 5 across the four interventions. The policies/legislative (policy & structural change, & institutional partnerships) is the weakest, with an average score of 3.5 out of 5 across the four interventions.

3. Underpinned by intersectional analysis

The GRREAT proposal (2017) includes an extensive background gender analysis as a 62-page Annex. It includes a literature review and an in-depth analysis of different themes, such as attitudes towards sexual and gender-based violence, menstruation, and adolescent aspirations and concerns. However, the analysis does not take a strong intersectional lens. It is focused on adolescent girls and boys, with some disaggregation by age. However, there is little consideration of adolescents with disabilities, or other axes of marginalisation such as income, ethnicity, refugee status etc.

4. Placing adolescent girls in their diversity [at the heart of an intervention](#)

The GRREAT programme is a girl-intentional programme. A key strategy throughout the programme is the role of adolescent girls as agents of change. The programme aims to strengthen the capacity of adolescent girls to voice their opinions about problems they are facing as well as provide opportunities to create and implement their own innovative solutions that will address issues they are facing around SRHR. Men and boys in the programme are encouraged to lead by example in respecting and promoting the rights of women and girls.

5. Adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership promoted in a [meaningful and sustainable way](#)

The GRREAT promotes adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership. For example, under the learning package intervention for teachers on life skills, the capacity of teachers is

built to better enable students to develop and use life skills, help them identify challenges, and help them to provide effective education on SRH, HIV and AIDS, violence prevention, and gender equality. When asked directly about the extent to which this intervention had supported their empowerment, adolescents were generally unequivocal that it has been highly effective. In just a few of the examples of empowerment provided, adolescent girls noted: “[it has improved girls’ empowerment] to a very large extent because we have been able to understand our bodies better” (this was a sentiment shared widely); “we are now aware of the many instances of sexual abuse” and how to deal with them (this sentiment was also shared widely); and one teenager concluded, “it has helped in building our self-belief and confidence, which has boosted our performance in class.”

The GRREAT programme involves participation from adolescent girls, which is likely to be meaningful. The gender analysis in the proposal was based on consultations with 231 adolescents (55% girls), which were designed to be fully participatory and human-centred (e.g. Role Model exercise, River of Life exercise) and took both sex-disaggregated and unisex formats. These consultations fed into a series of recommendations targeted at particular stakeholders. During the GRREAT midline assessment, the assessment team undertook adolescent-led consultations with 26 adolescent girls and 19 boys, to check selected questions in the Girls’ Empowerment Index survey tool. Based on adolescents’ feedback, no changes were made to the relevant questions tool, but it was recommended that enumerators aim to build up a strong rapport with adolescents prior to conducting the surveys to build trust. This feedback was taken on board and shared to enumerators during their training sessions.

Adolescent girls’ voice, agency and leadership is promoted in a sustainable way. The GRREAT midline assessment includes a Scalability Assessment, which finds that there are strong enabling factors to drive the scale-up of interventions. System strengthening is at the centre of each intervention’s approach and is recognised as a key component of planning for scale up. Interviewees for this evaluation also gave evidence that the GRREAT programme is taking steps to ensure sustainability, for example by integrating the Young Peer Educators into local government structures.

New or planned interventions

Whether new or planned programmes are likely to lend themselves to achieving higher level change for adolescent girls in the future depends on whether they cover all five key areas of gender transformation as laid out above.

In order to have a full understanding of higher-level change in new or planned programmes, clear transformative outcomes and goals, and monitoring data and evaluations need to be in place. As outlined in the ‘Efficiency’ section above, this is usually not the case.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: Investing in adolescent girls' voice, leadership and agency. UNICEF ESAR Regional and Country Offices are investing in adolescent girls' voice, leadership and agency as a central approach to gender transformative programming, as laid out in the Gender Action Plan 3. This has led to positive changes among individual adolescent girls in relation to their confidence, self-esteem and self-belief. A significant focus on their agency and leadership skills appears to be more centred at the programme level, with less evidence emerging of how this has translated into changes affecting their lives outside of the programme, across the socio-ecological model. The ambition to be more transformative has been recently set out in the GAP 3, and therefore it is not surprising that there is limited understanding, and capacity, among staff and partners of how to implement more gender transformative programmes, which work across the socio-ecological model, and seek to change deep seated norms, and remove structural barriers. These strong outcomes at the individual level change are indicative of the focus of the previous GAP 2 and it is expected with continued emphasis, focus and resources girl-intentioned programming will over time become more transformative.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3

Conclusion 2: Sustainability. UNICEF COs and Programmes are well aligned with government priorities, global frameworks, and UNICEF's strategic plans, as such several sustainable benefits can be found within UNICEF programming, including contributing to national policies and training curricula, ensuring they include a gender focus and address the rights of adolescent girls, some of which is contributing to transformative policy or legal change. However, more explicit emphasis is required to situate this work within the context of gender transformation, to address the root causes, and structural inequities among decision makers and lawmakers at all levels to engage with them in a more sustainable and gender transformative way.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 4.1, 8.2, 8.3

Conclusion 3: Coordination. A large number of coordination mechanisms exist to support the collaboration among UN agencies at country, regional and global levels, including the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), thematic and sectoral working groups, and Joint Programming. Coordination at the country level between UNICEF, other UN agencies and national governments, as well as other key partners and donors, was generally found to be supportive and in line with country priorities. Additional opportunities exist to build on the coordination and shared learning at national and regional level both within the UN system and beyond to strengthening the position and influencing potential in support of gender transformative programming. South-south partnerships across countries in the region could be further leveraged to support the agenda for advancing the rights of adolescent girls and young women. Joint Programmes and collaborative initiatives, such as the GPECM and the Spotlight Initiative, present opportunities for this.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 4.2, 4.3

Conclusion 4: Promising models and approaches. A range of promising models and approaches are being implemented by UNICEF COs within projects and programmes across different sectors to contribute to gender transformative outcomes, across the different levels of the socio-ecological model. These approaches are still small scale and confined to specific projects. Limited measurement to evidence

wider impact and support lesson learning is hampering scale up and replication of these approaches to other programmes in the region.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 5.3, 7.6, 9.6

Conclusion 5: Capacity gaps. The shift from focusing policy and programming work on being gender responsive to working in a more gender transformative way has inevitably unearthed some capacity challenges and knowledge gaps across a range of stakeholders from UNICEF staff at country level, to partners and government stakeholders. The understanding of gender transformative programming and how to do it varies considerably. A gender transformative approach requires individuals and systems to challenge underlying assumptions that they hold at an individual, interpersonal and systemic level, and this requires intensive, long-term engagement at all levels, both within institutions and across society. Resources and greater prioritisation are required to ensure capacity and buy-in is strengthened across the board.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 1.3, 5.1, 7.4, 7.5, 8.5, 9.4

Conclusion 6: Humanitarian programming. Gender transformative programming is less evident in humanitarian and emergency programming, and there is a sense that the 'gender agenda' is deprioritised in these settings due to a focus on 'life saving' priorities and service provision. The absence of critical understanding of why 'gender transformative programming' is essential and how it can be achieved in these contexts is contributing to this de-prioritisation.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 5.4, 6.2, 7.2

Conclusion 7: Expenditure tracking. Current expenditure on adolescent girls is perceived to be far too low for a UN agency whose core focus is working with adolescent girls in their diversity. It is commendable that UNICEF are trying to challenge themselves with the ambition to be gender transformative and putting systems in place to track this. However, the complexity of the systems and processes in place to track gender transformation, such as the gender tagging system, is leading to inconsistent implementation, and inaccurate data. It is also making it difficult for COs to track the scale of funding investments on adolescent girl programming. The GAP 3 requires information to be presented differently and revised guidance and processes needs to reflect this. The tagging system is often incomplete or includes inaccurate data, and the individuals responsible for this at CO are not always equipped with the skills, knowledge, or authority to do this.

BASED ON FINDINGS: 6.1, 6.2, 6.5

Conclusion 8: Ensuring involvement is meaningful. Ensuring adolescent girls are involved across the programme cycle is an approach widely adopted by most of the programmes reviewed and seen as key to strengthening their voice, agency and leadership. However, this involvement varies significant across the programme cycle, and is not always as meaningful as it might be. The finding that adolescent girls are more involved in implementation and monitoring, speaks perhaps to limited opportunities and tight timelines for engagement in design processes, due to pressured deadlines from donors, or multi-country / Joint Programmes that have been designed at a central level in a more a top-down manner, leaving little space for others to engage more meaningfully.

This also appears to be contributing to a situation where only a small number of frequently the same adolescent girls are selected for roles and responsibilities, which is limiting the diversity of the adolescent girls involved. Young people felt that opportunities were not openly or widely publicised, and more could be done to leverage existing platforms of youth-led organisations to reach out to a wider diversity of adolescent girls and other young people .

7. LESSONS LEARNED

- The Gender Action Plans are useful tools to drive change at country level, and GAP 3 signals a strong potential for embedding a deeper focus on transformational change. It takes time and resources to build awareness and understanding of any new approach or strategic intent. Targeted and sustained capacity building that includes critical reflection and experiential learning are the most effective ways to build knowledge and awareness of what gender transformative programming is.
- Whilst adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership are important aspects of a gender transformative approach it is important that this is seen in the context of the socio-ecological model systems approach, which is an important tool to understand gender transformative programming. This wider understanding can support the strengthening of programme approaches that move beyond the realms of the individual to address wider structural and root causes of gender inequality.
- Partnering and working with men and boys is crucial for gender transformative programming but it must be done in the context of supporting wider gender equality programming due to the fact that gender inequitable norms harm both adolescent girls and boys, especially those that relate to harmful concepts of masculinity which drive girl's and women's disempowerment. There is an increasing backlash around girl-intentioned programming that we are seeing across a range of countries and contexts, as boys are perceived to be left out of development efforts. These perceptions need to be addressed head on by engaging in critical reflection at all levels of organisations and communities, of the patriarchal structures that are influencing this discourse.
- Constraints for women and girls in humanitarian and emergency contexts are often so severe that gender transformative programming is often not considered a possibility. However, these situations do present significant opportunities in this regard, through partnering with girls' and women's rights organisations and UNICEF's commitment to working in this way is detailed in a number of core guidance documents. However, when these partnerships do exist it is often within the context of implementing pre-designed programmes, rather than supporting their own work. Evidence shows that these contexts can encourage transformational change provided girls and women are at the heart of those approaches and empowered in leadership roles, within a longer term approach to partnership.
- Where joint programmes are designed and delivered in such a way that the comparative advantage of different agencies is clear, and mechanisms for collaboration are clearly established and maintained, there is a stronger potential to lead to gender transformative outcomes. Agencies need to work more collaboratively to avoid silos to build on each other's inputs to maximise potential for transformative outcomes.
- Improving the budget tracking and tagging to include better disaggregation to understand intersectional identities would improve the understanding and awareness of the extent to which programmes are addressing intersectional and equity dimensions.
- Tight timelines for programme design or multi-country/Joint Programmes designed in a top-down way at central level, leaves little space for adolescent girls to input and engage meaningfully in the design and development of programmes, or for feedback to be given to them on their involvement, and how their actions / inputs have influenced the programme design, implementation or evaluation.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are linked to the evaluation's findings and conclusions and take into account consultations held with the ERG and the RAAG. Separate workshops were held with the ERG and RAAG to present the findings and discuss the conclusions and recommendations to ensure they were practical, forward facing and grounded in the findings.

Strategic Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Multi-sectoral, girl-led, gender transformative and rights based programming should be more centred within overall ESAR CO programming in order to meet the commitments of GAP 3 which requires UNICEF to deliver gender-transformative results. COs' management needs to ensure proper cross-sectoral coordination and investment at scale to fulfil such programming.

Linked to conclusion: 1, 3, 4

It is crucial that ESAR Country Office leadership prioritise and promote gender transformative programming that centres adolescent girl leadership, voice and agency and meaningful involvement. The GAP 3 and Adolescent Girls Programme Strategy require a deliberate and targeted approach to ensure gender I is not only integrated across the programme cycle through a mainstreaming approach but also requires a strong emphasis on interventions addressing structural and norm change within the whole socio-ecological model.

Potential actions that can be taken by UNICEF Country offices

- Senior leaders and management at Country level need to demonstrate their commitment to and understanding of the importance of adolescent girl focused and led programming that is designed to deliver gender transformative results across the socio-ecological model. This can be done through what they say, and how they promote different programme models.
- Opportunities to show case learning and good practice from different sectoral programmes should be prioritised and clear actions for cross sectoral coordination identified and followed-up on.

Recommendation 2. UNICEF ESARO should review, and adapt, mechanisms in place to support stronger south-south coordination and partnership across countries to share experiences, and learning from each other, on what works in gender transformative programming, including outside existing Joint or multi-countries programmes.

Linked to conclusion: 3

Country level coordination with organisations outside the UN System is taking place and supporting stronger influencing of national policies and systems. Similar contextual challenges are likely to exist across countries where learning exchanges could both support quality programming and also build a culture of learning and reflection, that complements gender transformative programming principles.

Potential actions for UNICEF ESA Regional and Country Offices

- Review current process and systems in place for learning exchanges to ensure there is a stronger focus on gender transformative programming, to support a deepening awareness and

critical reflection of how existing and new programmes can be adapted to become more transformative.

- Opportunities for cross fertilisation across regions and countries, outside of existing global, or regional programmes should be explored.

Recommendation 3: UNICEF should re-examine its engagement with youth led organisations to ensure these partnerships are based on equitable principles, and the ways of working are contributing to gender transformative outcomes in terms of power sharing, capacity strengthening, and engaging with a wide diversity of young people. This should include a mapping of existing and potential youth led organisations.

Linked to conclusion: 6,8

UNICEF has identified partnerships with women led and youth led organisations as a key component of a gender transformative approach, but all too often these partnerships are based on a pre-defined set of activities or priorities and can be quite transactional. For these partnerships to be truly transformational they need to be based on a set of shared principles, and bring mutual benefit.

Potential actions for UNICEF ESA Regional and Country Offices

- UNICEF ESARO has undertaken a mapping of women and girls' organisations in the region that they are working with. This mapping should be re-shared with Country Offices who should be encouraged to conduct their own mapping of, and consultations with, women and girls' organisations they are currently working with or could potentially partner with. The mapping should include a participatory process to explore together the expertise and capacity gaps which can be addressed to build their organisational leadership and strategic skills to support greater sustainability and profile raising.
- The mapping should include an intersectional analysis to better understand the groups of young people that the organisations are working with to examine which groups may be missed out, or underrepresented by UNICEF's support.
- UNICEF should review their ways of working with youth led and women's rights organisations to ensure they are aligned with principles of power sharing, equity, mutual respect, trust and solidarity.

Process

Recommendation 4: Current expenditure tracking and coding processes need to be reviewed to ensure they are capturing the data required for GAP 3 monitoring. This needs to be better reflected in the guidance and refresher training provided.

Linked to conclusion: 7

The current budget and expenditure coding and tagging is complex and inconsistently implemented, resulting in unreliable data being produced, that many people have little confidence in. The system has been in place since before the GAP 3 and is not seen as fit for current requirements. Reviewing it now provides an opportunity to address some of the other gaps.

Potential actions for UNICEF Headquarters

- When reviewing the current budget tagging system, consider how to improve tagging against intersectional identities.

- Reviewing the roles and responsibilities at Country Office for tagging and quality assurance would also be helpful to address some of the capacity and consistency gaps, including ensuring that quality assurance is an integral part of the system.
- Programme monitoring and evaluation teams should be empowered to provide quality assurance and oversight of data entered.
- Refresher training needs to be provided to all stakeholders involved in the tagging process.

Recommendation 5: There is an urgent need to improve documentation, monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management in particular strengthening indicators used to measure gender transformative outcomes, including more qualitative measurement and data disaggregation to ensure intersectional characteristics are included where it is safe and ethical to do so.

Linked to conclusions: 1, 4, 8

Potential actions for UNICEF regional and country offices

- Ensure adequate budget is included in project / programme proposals where possible, to build in measurement of gender transformative outcomes, generally requiring more qualitative, attitude and practice-based measures.
- Develop a compendium of evidence-based indicators and tools, that can be used by different sectors to measure empowerment, changing practices and gender and social norms. Tools like the Gender Empowerment Index developed in Tanzania, and adapted for wider piloting, are a good example of this type of approach.
- Where possible, the Regional and Country Offices should explore what opportunities there are to conduct robust impact evaluations to better understand how gender transformative programming is working and what impact it is having. Whilst these are costly, the possibility of building one of these in during the CPD cycle could yield important learning and evidence that can be used to improve programming and generate additional resources.

Recommendation 6: Stronger feedback loops need to be developed and consistently applied to ensure that adolescent girls are informed about what action has (or has not) been taken as a result of their inputs and contributions by UNICEF or the programme.

Linked to conclusion: 4, 6, 8

Part of UNICEF's approach to strengthening adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership is through engaging them meaningfully in all aspects of the programme cycle. For the engagement to be meaningful, this must include adolescent girls being given a safe and inclusive space to express their views, to be able to express these freely so that people listen and for these views to have influence, be acted on appropriately and outcomes be of benefit to themselves as well as the person or process seeking their views.

This recommendation was strongly supported by the RAAG, as whilst young people felt they were given opportunities to engage in different aspects of the programme or CO operations, they were not always cited on the impact of their contributions which can feel disempowering. When asked whether the engagement was meaningful, they often didn't think so.

Potential actions for UNICEF ESA Regional and Country Offices

- Stronger feedback loops should be developed to ensure that, when adolescent girls are involved in different stages of the project cycle, how their inputs or contributions have been used and whether they resulted in any action being taken or not, is fed back to them.
- This needs to be properly budgeted and planned for. A frequently cited barrier for this not taking place is that the programme has come to an end or there are no resources to support this. Not doing this results in the process being more extractive than transformative and this should be seen as key to the transformative agenda.
- Longer lead times, and inception phases, need to be planned for to ensure there is adequate time for engagement and meaningful participation of adolescents and other community groups. This may require negotiation with donors as part of a values and good practice approach to programming.
- UNICEF needs to consider how to ensure that sufficient time is built into the design and close out phases of projects / programmes in order to have the optimal conditions in place for meaningful participation and accountability.
- UNICEF Regional Office could consider developing a requirement for all management responses developed for evaluations to include a question on how the findings and recommendations have been fed back to the adolescents and young people who participated.

Programmatic

Recommendation 7: A tailored and segmented training package and toolkit on how to build on the work supporting adolescent girls' voice, agency and leadership to lead to gender transformative change across the socio ecological model should be developed.

The toolkit should explore 'what is gender transformative programming and how to do it' for different sectors and in different contexts, building on existing materials and providing promising, practical, programme examples.

Linked to conclusion: 1, 4, 5

This evaluation identified a lack of understanding among UNICEF staff and partners on how to programme comprehensively across the socio-ecological model to ensure gender transformative results. A number of different approaches that have shown promise across the socio-ecological model, based on existing programmes and other good practice, have been identified in this evaluation and in other documentation produced by UNICEF. The training package should include a focus on exploring the organisation culture, underlying values and attitudes that exist among individuals and teams in a safe space, and ensure a process is in place to consider power dynamics.

Recommendation 8: Engaging men and boys on gender transformative action should be included across all programmes to promote concepts of positive masculinities and support greater gender equality, but this needs to be done in the context of addressing the root causes, patriarchal systems and structural inequalities that lead to gender inequality.

Linked to conclusion: 1, 4, 5, 8

While the evaluation found examples of good practice working with boys and men this was not always seen in the context of supporting gender equality programming or in terms of challenging patriarchal and inequitable gender norms, which is critical for understanding and achieving gender transformative outcomes.

Potential actions for UNICEF Country Offices

- There is an increasing backlash around girl-intentioned programming across contexts and in different settings that needs to be addressed head on, through critical reflection at all levels of organisations and communities on the patriarchal structures that are influencing this discourse.
- Where programmes are engaging with community structures (including religious leaders, teachers, parents as well as shifting policy), interventions need to be designed to go beyond awareness raising sessions to explore more intensive work that seek to transform unequal gender norms by engaging with communities in processes of critical reflection.
- Work with boys on exploring gender norms, roles, stereotypes and ideas of masculinity should begin at a much earlier age before some of these more inequitable attitudes and beliefs are set.
- More data is needed to understand how old the adolescent girls and boys are who are involved in the programmes and whether young adolescents 10 – 14, are engaging to the same extent.

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