

Final Inception Report

**Evaluation of the “Strategy
for Exercising the Rights of
the Child 2019-2023” in
Montenegro**

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Acronyms

CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
IO	International Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSSD	National Strategy for Sustainable Development
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Co-operation Directorate
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children' Fund

1. Background and Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Worldwide, UNICEF focuses on transformational systemic changes that are key to fulfilling children's rights in all areas, as enshrined by international human rights law, and primarily by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC, 1989). "UNICEF's Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, reflects UNICEF's unreserved commitment to promoting the rights of all children, everywhere, as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child." (UNICEF, 2022: 6).

Montenegro is no exception to child rights commitments. Since UNICEF Country Office in Montenegro (hereinafter referred to as: 'UNICEF Montenegro') was established in the existing format in 2006¹, the Organization has provided Governmental and other institutions with extensive support for reforms in various child rights-related sectors, and to the development of a child rights monitoring mechanisms in Montenegro. (UNICEF, 2023: 1).

Under the guidance and coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Montenegro, UNICEF supported the preparation of the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019-2023 (hereinafter referred to as 'Strategy'), published in May 2019. (UNICEF, 2019: 9). ([Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019-2023 | UNICEF](#)).

As envisaged in the Strategy, and in line with UNICEF's commitment to support governments in monitoring over the implementation of the UN CRC and the realization of children's rights (UNICEF, no date), an external final evaluation was to be carried out in the last year of the Strategy implementation. (UNICEF, 2019: 72).

The final Evaluation has been commissioned to Lattanzio KIBS, a consultancy company providing high-quality monitoring and evaluation services in different sectors and countries worldwide. The Evaluation will aim at providing Montenegro, primarily the Government of Montenegro but also other relevant national and local stakeholders and UNICEF Montenegro – described further in this Report (para. 1.2 and 1.3) with an independent assessment of the results achieved through the Strategy.

The Evaluation will be carried out by the team of experts from Lattanzio KIBS as follows: two independent consultants: an international expert and a local expert. The two above-experts will be supervised and supported by Lattanzio KIBS Monitoring & Evaluation Head of Business Unit and Junior Consultant. All these individuals are collectively referred to as the "Evaluation Team". The Evaluation is planned to be carried out between November 2023 and April 2024. The Evaluation Team's main counterpart at UNICEF Montenegro will be the Child Rights Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist. The Government of Montenegro is in the process of setting up a Reference Group for the Evaluation, composed by the key stakeholders in the process, including primarily representatives of the Government, NGOs and CSOs, and other key stakeholders.

The present Inception Report aims at aligning expectations among all Evaluation parties about the evaluation purpose, scope, objectives and process. In particular, it will describe:

- the Purpose, Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation (section 2);
- the Evaluation Criteria and Key-Questions (section 3);
- the Evaluation Methodology (section 4);
- the Evaluation Work Plan and Timeline (Section 5).

¹ UNICEF's commitment in Montenegro is long-standing. The Organization first opened an office in Podgorica in 1993, and over time its support has shifted from that of an emergency response to most recently supporting Montenegro in the dual process of nation building and EU accession. With Montenegro's independence in 2006, UNICEF opened the first Country Office in Montenegro. Today, UNICEF's emphasis is on supporting capacity building of national institutions to develop appropriate policies and implement them in order to bring positive, lasting and sustainable changes for all children. (<https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/en/unicef-montenegro>).

Throughout the different sections above, the Inception Report also describes some issues that have arisen during the inception phase of the Evaluation and proposes solutions to those.

The Inception Report is based on the following activities and steps:

- Inception Meetings with UNICEF Montenegro and Government counterparts (held between the end of October and the first half of November 2023), during which the overall purpose and main expectations of the different parties involved in the Evaluation were discussed;
- Desk review of key documents, in order to set out the context in which the Strategy was implemented, and to assess the evaluability of the different Strategy's components.

1.2 Background and Context

Montenegro is an upper-middle-income country in the Western Balkans with a population of 622,028: 307,634 (49%) men and 314,394 (51%) women. Children and adolescents aged 0-17 are 135,533 (21.8% of the total population).² Out of the total children and adolescents aged 0-17, approximately 51.9% are boys and 48.1% are girls (around 70,340 boys and 65,190 girls). The country faces demographic challenges such as an aging population and a relatively low fertility rate - for example, in 2021, there was a historic minimum of livebirths in the country (7,033) while deaths exceeded births by almost 2,100³. With the Human Development Index value of 0.832, Montenegro ranks 49th out of 189 countries. The 2023 Gender Equality Index stood at 59.3, below the EU average of 68.6⁴.

Montenegro, as a signatory to various international conventions and treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has made significant strides in recognizing and prioritizing the rights of children⁵. Since regaining independence in mid-2006, Montenegro has been on a dynamic journey, actively pursuing international integration and steadily committing to upholding fundamental human rights. Another important moment in the political path of the country was becoming the 192nd member of the United Nations in the same year, symbolizing the nation's dedication to global cooperation and shared values. Subsequently, Montenegro hardened its international standing by joining the Council of Europe in 2007 and NATO in 2017.

In 2010, Montenegro became an accession country to the European Union, marking a crucial juncture in its commitment to aligning with European standards. Montenegro accepted the revised enlargement methodology focusing on fundamental reforms, stronger political steer, increased dynamism and predictability of the process. UNICEF places a strong focus on ensuring that Montenegro's children play a central role in the EU accession process, emphasizing that this is vital, as the children of Montenegro today will become the European Union citizens of tomorrow.

During the same period, Montenegro initiated a comprehensive reform of its social and child protection system, education, health, justice and others, as part of the pre-accession process to the EU. This reform aimed at adopting European standards in the area of fundamental human rights and aligning national laws with contemporary trends and developments in child protection.

In the realm of children's rights, Montenegro has demonstrated a solid dedication by signing and ratifying thirteen international conventions, covering a broad spectrum of issues related to children. The UN CRC stands out as a cornerstone document guiding Montenegro in safeguarding the well-being of its children.

² National Statistical Office MONSTAT 2019. Data provided by UNICEF Montenegro.

³ National Statistical Office MONSTAT 2019. Data provided by UNICEF Montenegro.

⁴ Data provided by UNICEF Montenegro,

⁵ The situation in Montenegro involves two different laws that define the ages for children and young people:

- In relation to legal framework and definitions, as per Montenegro's **Law on Social and Child Protection⁵**, a child is defined as an individual up to the age of 18, while young people are considered up to the age of 26.
- In alignment with the **Law on Youth** ("Official Gazette of Montenegro," No. 025/19 dated 30.04.2019, 027/19 dated 17.05.2019), which governs the establishment and execution of youth policy, as well as the measures and activities aimed at enhancing the social standing of young individuals and facilitating the fulfillment of their needs across various areas of interest, according to Article 2, **young people are defined as individuals ranging from the age of 15 to the age of 30**. While having different age definitions provides flexibility, it also brings challenges in being consistent, and create confusions among some implementers.

Being a UN member, Montenegro fulfils reporting obligations, submitting detailed reports on convention implementation to relevant UN committees.

A commendable progress has been made in its legal and strategic frameworks, laying the base for reforms aligned with the CRC and the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights. Notably, in 2013, Montenegro ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Communication Procedure, reinforcing its commitment to ensuring children's rights are respected and protected. As Montenegro advances on its path towards EU accession, it recognizes the importance of enhancing alignment and has prioritized the goal of aligning with the EU Child Rights Strategy. This will in the future involve further integrating child rights into the country political agenda, policies, actions, and investments with a comprehensive, and rights-based approach.

At the national level, Montenegro established its first strategic framework for children in 2004, setting in motion a trajectory of continuous improvement. The National Plan of Action for Children ('NPA') for the period 2004-2010 has played a focal role in outlining specific goals and actions to promote children's rights. The Government, recognizing the importance of coordination, established the Council for the Rights of the Child in 2009. Initially an inter-sector coordination body, the Council was reappointed in 2013, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity by involving representatives from civil society organizations and, notably, children themselves.

Responding to evolving needs and perspectives, the Council for the Rights of the Child underwent a significant transformation, first in November 2018. This involved increasing the representation of children, including adolescents, in the working group responsible for preparing the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child. This transformation underscores Montenegro's dedication to ensuring that the voices of its youngest citizens actively shape the strategies that directly impact their lives. Despite the clear mandate of the Council for the Rights of the Child and elevating it to the Prime Minister level, inter-sectoral coordination among child rights monitoring mechanisms is allegedly still limited. Latest EU Report on Montenegro states that Montenegro must step up its efforts to monitor the implementation of the national strategy on exercise of child rights (2019-2023), evaluate its impact.⁶

While considerable progress has been made in fulfilling children's rights in Montenegro, challenges still persist.

The proper functioning of institutions was affected by political volatility and government instability, with the collapse of two fractious governments after no-confidence votes in 2022 and a new government elected only in October 2023, thus stalling at times decision-making processes and long-term reform implementation.

During the last quarter of 2023, UNICEF's high-level and public advocacy contributed to securing the commitment and budget allocation for the universal child allowance in Montenegro. UNICEF provided technical support to the Government of Montenegro in the reform of the strategic and legislative framework for the social and child protection (SCP), education sector, early childhood development, etc. The ongoing reform of the strategic and legislative framework is aligned with Montenegro EU accession priorities and EC Montenegro 2023 Report recommendations. The new Government included the reform of SCP system and development of sustainable SCP services in its Economic Reform Program (ERP) for 2024 – 2026. Montenegro is to implement the European Child Guarantee (CG), with a focus on Roma and Egyptian children, children with disabilities and children in precarious situations.

Still, challenges remain over the effective implementation of the CRC, primarily due to a weak accountability framework, lack of systematic monitoring of existing laws and strategies, insufficient administrative capacities, and adequate public funding to ensure enforcement of children's rights. Child poverty is a significant concern, with a 28.4 percent of children and adolescents aged 0-18 are at risk of poverty (2022).ⁱ 37.6% of households with 3 or more children and 47.9% of the population in single-parent households with at least one child are at risk of poverty (2022). 96% of children in Roma and Egyptian communities experience deprivation in at least one domain of wellbeing. The rate of severe material deprivation among those living in Roma and Egyptian communities is 78%. Housing deprivation affects 66% of population in Roma and

⁶ UNCT submission for the fourth Universal Periodic Review of Montenegro,

Egyptian communities. Economic disparities between urban and rural areas contribute to varying child poverty rates. Poverty risk considerably varies by region (2022): 14.8% of the overall population are at risk of income poverty in the central region, compared to 9.8% in the south, and 37.6% in the north. Poverty risk is lower in urban areas (16.4%) compared to rural areas (27.3%)⁷.

According to a recent UNICEF/The World Bank Report, “Montenegro has strengthened its social protection system in the last decade, but recent policy reforms raise concerns regarding their sustainability and effectiveness. Social assistance spending reaches only a limited share of the poor population.” According to the above-report, while access to social assistance has recently been expanded further in the country, “the poverty-targeted material support has been shrinking in size, despite its ability to accurately reach the poorest.” Further problems affecting children and their families relate to low financing of social and child protection services; as a consequence, a minimum level of services cannot be guaranteed. (UNICEF, The World Bank, 2023: 1).

The Early Childhood Development with a Nurturing Child Care framework is in the initial phase of development in Montenegro with a Government having adopted the first ever Early Childhood Development Strategy in 2023. Although children and mothers have a right to free universal health care, there is inequity in the quality, effectiveness and use of health, nutrition and early childhood development services. Equitable access is also an issue for children who: live in rural areas; are poor; have developmental difficulties or disabilities; are from ethnic minorities; or have no parental care. There is a worrying downward trend in immunization rates, with marked regional disparities. Measles, mumps and rubella vaccine coverage during the second year of life fell to just 24 per cent in 2020 from 55 per cent in 2017; the rate was 89 per cent in 2008⁸.

Efforts towards improving access to preschool education resulted in an increase of 7% for primary school and 3% respectively for secondary school for overall population in comparison to the 2021/2022 school year. Also, Montenegro has made significant steps in integrating digital technologies in the education system through establishing a national Digital School Platform for teaching, learning, and collaboration. In addition to the long-standing issues related to inadequate and insufficient school infrastructure, quality, access and inclusion, the education system is also faced with the challenge of ensuring adequate providing adequate support to the increasing number of migrant and refugee students who make about 10% of the total student population, with this figure reaching almost 30% in schools in some municipalities. All mentioned issues should be addressed through systemic and long-term solutions that will be developed through a new, comprehensive, and costed education reform strategy⁹.

Still, there are persistent gaps in access to education and health which disadvantage vulnerable groups in the Northern and rural areas. In the North there is inferior access to infrastructure and social services¹⁰. Health services are less available in the North due to the sparser populations and people must travel further to get the healthcare that they need. The North had the highest completion rates and only 20 percent of children did not reach their expected level of early development when compared to the other regions. However, children living in the north (as well as the south) had more functional difficulties¹² (11 percent and 14 percent, respectively) than their peers from the central region (3 percent).¹³ While the percentage of children attending preschool education in the North was around 16 percentage points lower than the national average – just over one-third of children in the North (37 percent) attend kindergartens, while every second child (53 percent) does so at the national level.

The alarming fall in students’ achievements at PISA 2022 assessment marked the end of 2023, confirming that the COVID-19 pandemic led to further deepening of the already severe learning crisis. Students in Montenegro scored less than the OECD average, with a concerning percentage of students not achieving at least Level 2 proficiency in mathematics (60%), reading (53%) and science (55%). Students affected by

⁷ Data provided by UNICEF Montenegro.

⁸ Data Provided by UNICEF Montenegro.

⁹ Data provided by UNICEF Montenegro.

¹⁰ MONTENEGRO Social Protection Situational Analysis, 2022, UNICEF and the World Bank

poverty lag behind their OECD peers by almost three academic years. Data from the International Labour Organization showed that 21.1% of young people were not working, studying or in training¹¹.

Allegedly, discrimination in accessing rights and services still affects some groups of children in Montenegro. In particular, differences in treatment with regard to access to education and to healthcare persist for refugee and children with disability, as well as for those from minority groups. For example, in 2022, the Ombudsperson in Montenegro received 225 complaints related to the rights of the child, with a significant portion specifically addressing the challenges faced by children with disabilities. These issues encompassed education, social and child protection, healthcare, and discrimination against children with disabilities. EC report on Montenegro stress the persistent difficulties faced by this vulnerable group, noting the absence of progress in safeguarding their rights. Furthermore, concerns are raised regarding the dismantling of the Directorate for the Protection and Equality of persons with disabilities, leaving a void in oversight and support for adults but also for children with disabilities. The absence of a functional National Council for the rights of persons with disabilities further highlight the ongoing challenges in ensuring the well-being and rights of children with disabilities in Montenegro. The country does not possess database for collecting information about conditions of persons/children with disabilities and their families.

Montenegro, as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, has committed itself to ensuring that every child with developmental disabilities can realize their rights and potential without facing discrimination. According to the 2011 census data, Roma were 6,251 persons (1.01% of the total population). Egyptian population is estimated to be just over 2,000. There are 1,541 Roma and Egyptian households (approx. 1% of all households). Although the country has implemented a strategy to improve the situation for Roma communities, Montenegro recognizes that a significant number of these children are not enrolled in compulsory primary education, one of the main reasons being the absence of regular transportation, lack of community Roma mediators and school lessons in their native language, and low level of attendance of pre-school education. The unclear legal status of certain number of Roma, and Egyptian families constitutes a barrier to access to health insurance. Access to health services is also limited and inequitable outside of the capital. As such, Roma, refugee and disabled children are the worst affected.

Even though, childcare system reform focusing on deinstitutionalization of children without parental care from residential institutions has been underway for almost two decades and number of children in residential care has decreased for more than 50% in the period 2010-2019, still 99 children (2023) are accommodated in large scale residential institutions, out of which number around 40% of children are with disabilities. There is an evident gap in availability of preventive, family and community-based support services and challenges in fostering children with disabilities.

Several consecutive EU Reports for Montenegro emphasized that gender-based violence and violence against children are issues of concern, with an overall weak institutional response and availability of services. In 2022, the Police Directorate registered 23 criminal acts of child sexual abuse. Montenegro has not yet acted on recommendations by UN monitoring bodies to raise the minimum age for marriage. The practice of arranged child marriages in Roma communities remains a concern (32.5% of girls aged 15–19 and 15.8% of boys are currently married or in union). . While there are no statistics on the prevalence of begging, it is observed in public spaces. Systems to address begging are inefficient. Multisectoral cooperation protocols are in place, but need revision and operationalization¹² Peer violence at school and outside of school appears from reports to be a growing trend.² Children's increased reliance on digital solutions highlighted the need for strengthened online protection.

Violence against children is still a concern in Montenegro MICS research from 2018¹³ found that two thirds of Montenegro's children aged 1 to 14 years had experienced some form of physical punishment and/or psychological aggression from adult household members during the previous month. (UNICEF, 2023b). The substantial number of children that have been abused or sexually exploited and the fact that few of people

¹¹ Data provided by UNICEF Montenegro.

¹² ILO, Rapid Assessment of Child Begging, 2022.

¹³ MICS, Montenegro 2018, Child Discipline <https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/en/media/8411/file>

who engage in violence against children have been prosecuted for their actions also constitutes cause for concern. (Humanium, no date). Child access to justice, especially for vulnerable groups, remains insufficient, and child-friendly proceedings for all children involved with the law are not yet guaranteed. This includes children in criminal proceedings (offenders, victims, and witnesses) and those in civil, family, and misdemeanor proceedings. The protection of children from perpetrators of sexual offenses is inadequate, and there is a lack of systematically collected, disaggregated data on child sexual abuse and exploitation. The strategy for the prevention and protection of children against violence and its action plan expired in 2021 and the process of development of the new five-year strategic document has been initiated. The current Criminal Code envisages tightening the penal policy regarding crimes of child sexual abuse (in line with the recommendations of the Lanzarote Convention), drawing up a register of offenders and surveillance measures against perpetrators after their time in prison. However, these new rules are not implemented due to the lack of implementing legislation.¹⁴ The trend of increase in the number of femicides with insufficient follow-up by the authorities and cases of publicly expressed misogyny, gender-based violence and violence against children remains an issue of serious concern. Programmes that prevent peer-to-peer violence and increase children's resilience are not systematically implemented in all schools and there is a lack of strategic planning in this area. (European Commission, Montenegro 2023 Report) CoE-GRETA reported that Montenegro was a country of origin, destination and transit of trafficked persons, and recommended, among other things, that Montenegro improve the prosecution of trafficking cases for child, early and forced marriage and ensure child-sensitive procedures.

In terms of juvenile justice, the Act on Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings guarantees protection for children in conflict with the law and those victims and witnesses of crime and improves their position in criminal proceedings, inter alia by introducing specialization of professionals working with children, establishment of Professional Support Services in judiciary (in two higher courts and in the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office) and wide range of alternative/diversion measures for children in conflict with the law. Another area of concern is the fact that the country is not exempt from the problem of children living and working on the streets, the majority of whom are of Roma origin. These children are therefore vulnerable and easy prey for those involved in trafficking and exploitation.

Finally, it is deemed vital that Montenegro establishes mechanisms for the collection and analysis of data in order to monitor and evaluate the impact of policies adopted in the interest of children. (Humanium, no date). In particular, it is regarded as of paramount importance for Montenegro to develop indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the quality of health, education, social welfare and child protection services for children and families (UNICEF, The World Bank, 2023: 3-4) and all other sectors. While Montenegro's legislative and institutional framework aligns with international human rights standards, challenges persist in implementation. Deficiencies in the accountability framework, inadequate capacity, lack of systematic monitoring, insufficient funding, and a lack of quality assurance for existing laws, strategies, and action plans hinder effective execution. Social norms and practices detrimental to child wellbeing prevent progress on children's rights, better understanding of challenges and addressing gaps. CoE-LC-2 recommended that Montenegro, as a Party to the Lanzarote Convention on the Protection of Children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse extend mandatory screening to the recruitment of all professionals in regular contact with children. There is no comprehensive information on public spending on children in Montenegro. There is no regular and consistent monitoring, and budget classifications and reporting systems are not yet geared to regularly produce information on different age groups and services.¹⁵

1.3 Object of the Evaluation

The Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019-2023 was designed by a Working Group set up at the Council for the Rights of the Child – an inter-sector coordination body, at that time operating under the authority of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. The Council is due to monitor the fulfillment of the State's commitments arising from the UN CRC and other international legal instruments concerning the rights of children in Montenegro. (UNICEF, 2019: 11).

¹⁴ European Commission, Montenegro 2023 Report

¹⁵ UNCT submission for the fourth Universal Periodic Review of Montenegro

The Strategy is meant to build upon – and to be in continuity with - the work previously undertaken in the framework of sectoral strategies related to the realization of the rights of children in Montenegro. These include, primarily:

- the Strategy for the Development of Social and Child Protection Systems 2013-2017;
- the Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System 2018-2022;
- the Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence 2017-2021;
- the Montenegro Inclusive Education Strategy 2014-2018;
- the Montenegro Inclusive Education Strategy 2019-2025;
- the Strategy for the Social Inclusions of Roma and Egyptians 2016-2020;
- the Strategy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities from Discrimination and the Promotion of Equality 2017-2021; and
- the Judicial Reform Strategy 2014-2018.

(UNICEF, 2019: 8. References to the above documents are provided therein).

The Strategy is a “comprehensive and inter-departmental document that deals with the improvement of conditions for exercising the rights of the child in all areas covered by the **United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child** and its optional protocols.” (UNICEF, 2019: 7). In terms of thematic scope, therefore, the Strategy addresses the whole range of fundamental rights that individuals aged 0 to 18 are entitled to.

The Strategy allegedly attains – primarily, but not exclusively - the relevant priority themes of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (‘NSSD’) by 2030 – which relies on sustainable development goals as defined by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 25, 2015.

Links between SDGs and relevant targets and indicators for the Strategy will be explored in greater depth by the Evaluation, and accounted for in the Evaluation Report.

In terms of geographical coverage, the Strategy is a national document (UNICEF, 2019: 8), which is expected to achieve its goals on the entire territory of Montenegro.

The implementation of the Strategy is the responsibility of all “line ministries and other institutions” who were represented at the Strategy Working Group. These are in charge of the following thematic sectors:

- Labour and Social Welfare;
- Education;
- Culture;
- Health;
- Justice;
- Internal Affairs,
- Defense;
- Human and Minority Rights;
- Trafficking in Human Beings;
- Finance;
- Sport;
- Culture;
- Youth;
- Public Administration.

And include:

- National Statistical Office;
- Overarching bodies such as the Council on the Rights of the Child and the National Council for Sustainable Development.

(UNICEF, 2019: 72).

The Strategy's main goals were:

- “Enhance inter-departmental and inter-sector cooperation and other key conditions for exercising the rights of the child” (Strategic goal I);
- “Improve access and quality of social and health protection and education for all children” (Strategic goal II);
- “Prevent all forms of violence against children and improve the implementation of special child protection measures” (Strategic goal III).

(UNICEF, 2019: 62-71).

The total budget estimated for the implementation of the Strategy was of 4.000.000 Euros for the entire five-year period. According to the Strategy document, the financial resources for its implementation were to be provided “from the budget (around 70%) and from donations (around 30%)”. (UNICEF, 2019: 72). Additional information concerning budget allocation, and on how resources were to be mobilized during the implementation phase were not provided in the Strategy-related documents. These will be sought as part of the data collection phase, and any information made available will be analyzed and reflected in the Evaluation report.

1.3.1 The Strategy's Theory of Change

The Strategy's underlying Theory of Change ('ToC') is not presented explicitly in the Strategy-related document. Nevertheless, some of the constituting elements of a ToC are described in the Strategy, namely:

- Strategic goals: three strategic goals are identified and included in the Strategy document (above);
- Long-term outcomes: named “operational objectives”, these are included in the Strategy document under the different strategic goals (above), and numbered from one to 10;
- Activities that are expected to “have an effect on the implementation of operative objective[s]” are included in the Action Plan accompanying the Strategy.

Furthermore, a series of “performance indicators” at the objectives level are enclosed in the Strategy (44 in total); for each indicator, the Action Plan accompanying the Strategy includes: baseline value; half-way target value; and final target value.

Elements of the ToC not explicitly envisaged in the Strategy include:

- Intermediate outcomes (preconditions) that are expected to lead to the long-term outcomes and strategic goals;
- A list of (key) outputs, and how these are linked to the expected results - for example, with arrows pointing to (multiple) causal links;
- linking of activities to expected outputs;
- assumptions;
- justifications.

The Evaluation Team will reconstruct the Strategy's ToC retrospectively, in order to fully explain the intervention's logic and rationale, and to highlight the key strategies and outcomes that were identified in order to contribute to achieving the Strategy's goal. The ToC reconstruction will also serve the purpose to evaluate progress towards the stated goals (impact), and to assess the effectiveness of the intervention in producing outputs and outcomes.

The diagrams below represent an overview of the logical model of the Strategy, as reconstructed by the Evaluation Team during the inception phase, on the basis of the available documentation. The Strategy's ToC will be revised during the Evaluation - as more data will become available and following confrontation with UNICEF and key stakeholders - and enclosed in the Evaluation Report.

Aware that a ToC can be visually represented through different types of diagrams, the Evaluation Team chose to use:

- a) An overview outcomes hierarchy diagram, in order to:

- show the sequence of intended results, from short-term to long-term (activities are not included in this diagram);
 - illustrate the causal pathways in terms of intermediate outcomes.
- b) Three triple row diagrams for each strategic goal, in order to:
- illustrate the causal pathways in terms of intermediate outcomes, as well as main outputs;
 - show the influence of other factors and interventions, which may help or hinder the expected changes.

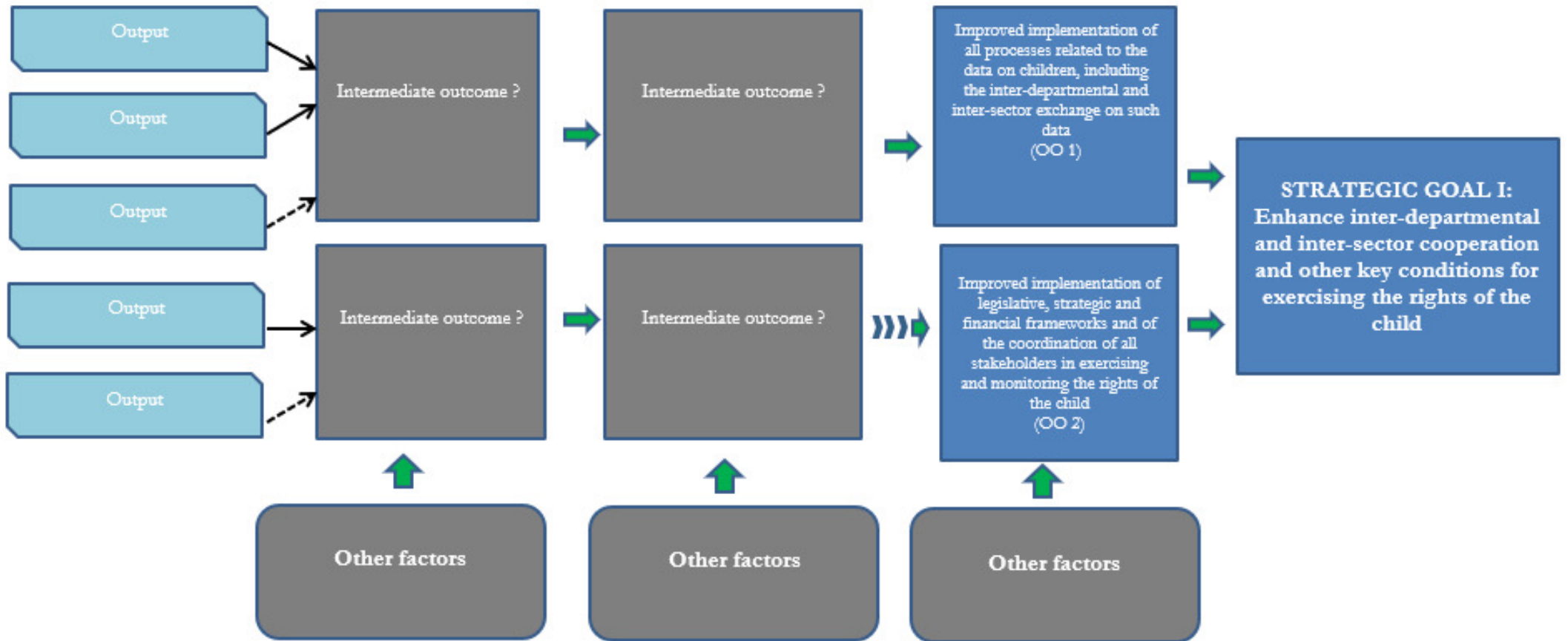
These various schemes are complementary and need to be read in conjunction ¹⁶ .

¹⁶ The diagram that will be applied to each Strategic Goal is here exemplified only in relation to Strategic Goal I. Diagrams representing the logic behind each Strategic Goal will be developed and included in the Evaluation Report.

Figure 1. Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019-2023. Reconstructed Theory of Change - Overview.



Figure 2. Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019-2023. Reconstructed Theory of Change. Strategic Goal I.



In the above diagrams, pathways are depicted by chains of outcomes connected to one another by arrows representing casual connections, proceeding from early outcomes on the left to longer-term outcomes. Arrows specify that a precondition leads to the following outcome or outcomes, supports its realization, and informs the way it happens. When some causal connections are open to doubt, the diagrams will indicate that with brief annotations and/or dotted line-arrows.

Outputs will be identified, clustered according to the group they belong together conceptually – where appropriate – and related to the outcomes they are meant to contribute to.

An accompanying narrative will be produced as well, complementing the diagram(s), through which – among others – more detailed information about the activities envisaged in the Plans of Action will be provided. The final reconstruction of the Strategy's ToC will be enclosed in the Evaluation Report, and developed on the basis of the review of additional Strategy-related documents collected during the field phase, and – most importantly – individual interviews with stakeholders, for the process to be adequately inclusive of relevant perspectives and evidence.

In particular, the Evaluation Team will try and identify the key implicit change theories and related action theories that – in the view of the Strategy designers and implementers – were to bring about the intended changes as part of the Strategy, towards a process of “backwards mapping”. Evaluators will consult different stakeholders about what preconditions in their views must have existed for the Strategy's goals to be reached, trying to work back towards the earliest changes that needed to occur. (Taplin, D.H., 2012: 3). It is likely that various stakeholders have altered their view of the Strategy's (implicit) ToC during the time period covered by the Evaluation (2019-2023). (Davies, 2018: 16). The Evaluation exercise will not possibly capture those variations, but will rather reconstruct the ToC as key respondents presently regard it. Moreover – also in light of available resources – the Evaluation Team will try and reconstruct the Strategy ToC by analyzing information and insights collected from different data sources (Strategy documents; individual interviews and FGDs) independently from one another, with no actual possibility for the different stakeholders to share their views with each other as part of a ToC development process. This poses a risk that conflicting assumptions will not be reconciled in reconstructing the ToC. (See also paragraph 4.4.)

By highlighting the implicit causal pathways needed to achieve the ultimate intended impacts, the Evaluation will also seek to gather evidence about whether or not these have occurred in practice. Efforts will be focused on the most relevant causal links, since especially in policy work, multiple theories of change are usually contributing to bring about the intended changes at different levels. The Evaluation will assess whether the Strategy's goals were identified as a result of a sensible combination of the stakeholders' vision for change with a realistic assessment of the situation and available resources.

The Evaluation will also aim to assess the relevance of the overall Strategy design in light of the identified problems and needs it set out to address. It will also scrutinize how valid were the implicit assumptions, and relevant to the context and whether the way changes should occur have been monitored during implementation, to ensure that they were still valid in the changing circumstances (relevance). Where gaps in data remain, these will be highlighted in the Evaluation Report.

2. Purpose, Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The Evaluation will aim at providing the Council for the Rights of the Child, the other national counterparts, as well as UNICEF Montenegro, with an independent assessment of the results achieved through the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child in Montenegro 2019-2023.

As stated in the ToR, the Evaluation “will identify best practices, draw lessons from significant and promising interventions, and provide forward-looking recommendations to guide the setting of priorities for the next five years.” Further, the Evaluation “will also identify the existing gaps and bottlenecks, in particular for those left behind in developmental and humanitarian processes, and draw lessons learned from innovative interventions for accelerating and scaling up results.” (UNICEF, 2023: 3).

In line with the Evaluation ToR, the Evaluation will attain the following objectives:

- To assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child, by paying particular attention to the differential results across vulnerable groups, and in terms of promoting gender equality.
- To identify factors that contributed to or hindered successful implementation of action plans, including factors such as: stakeholders’ engagement, resource allocation, leadership, management, data collection, monitoring mechanisms, public engagement, as well as relevant external factors (for example: the COVID-19 pandemic, and how this affected implementation).
- To assess the extent to which the Strategy implementation and monitoring have been inclusive of children and young people, their families and communities – especially those belonging to marginalized groups – as well as of other relevant stakeholders.
- To provide recommendations for future planning, that will inform the evidence-based development of the next five years high-level, cross-sectoral strategic policy document in the area of child rights.

The intended primary users of the Evaluation are: the Government of Montenegro, in particular the Prime Minister’s Cabinet, the Council of the Rights of the Child, line ministries, all the other government and local-level institutions (as per thematic sectors listed above, paragraph 1.3), and UNICEF Montenegro. The Evaluation is undertaken at the end of the Strategy implementation period. Therefore, the recommendations stemming from the analysis will come at a point in time when the Government of Montenegro – in cooperation with other relevant stakeholders – is expected to design a new child rights strategy, and/or other sectoral policies related to children’s rights. Moreover, the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations can be streamlined in other policy documents developed by the Government, even if not directly related to children’s rights.

The secondary audience of the Evaluation include other national and local stakeholders (public institutions, Ombudsperson’s Institution, Parliament, judiciary, NGOs, CSOs, international agencies) involved in the implementation of the Strategy or otherwise dealing with children’s rights in Montenegro, children and young people, their families and communities, and the media. The Evaluation is intended to provide to these stakeholders the opportunity to make summative judgements about the overall effectiveness of the Strategy. The Evaluation will support Government’s accountability on the fulfilment of the rights of children towards other stakeholders working in this area in Montenegro and beyond. The temporal scope of the Evaluation will encompass the full Strategy timeline, from inception of activities in 2019, through to its end in December 2023. In assessing the intervention against the relevance criterion, the Evaluation will also consider the Strategy design phase.

The geographical scope of the Evaluation will be Montenegro. While the Evaluation desk review will cover the whole national territory, the in-country data collection will only take place in a sample of three selected municipalities, including the capital city of Podgorica, one Southern municipality and one Northern municipality, so as to obtain an adequate geographical representation. In these locations, it will be possible

to observe the implementation of the relevant interventions, and to interact with relevant stakeholders and collect their feedbacks.

In terms of thematic scope, due to the complexity of the Evaluation object against the available resources, and especially in light of a lack of data highlighted here below, it is anticipated that it will not be possible to evaluate every aspect of the Strategy against the Evaluation criteria that were set out.

As explained in greater depth in this report when discussing risks and limitations of the Evaluation (section 4.4. below), due to the presumable lack of monitoring data regarding progress and outcomes achieved and related financial inputs and expenditures (apparently, narrative and financial reports are available only in relation to the first year of implementation), the evaluability of the Strategy will be hindered, especially concerning the criteria of effectiveness and efficiency, as well as impact.

In the final Evaluation Report, all choices related to the areas of research on which attention has been focused, and of the areas that – conversely – have been given less attention or dropped, will be duly justified, in light of the available data, as well as other potentially limitations encountered (see also below, para. 4.4.)

Drawing upon the Evaluation ToR, an Evaluation Report outline is proposed by the Evaluation Team, presenting the structure and contents of the Report. This is enclosed in Annex V. The proposed draft-report outline will be revised if this serves to better illustrating the Evaluation findings.

The requirement specified in the Evaluation ToR that the Evaluation Report should be of the minimum length of 50 pages (plus annexes), will be adhered to. In addition and according to the Evaluation ToR, a 5-10 pages' self-standing Evaluation Summary will be produced, in order to effectively present and illustrate the Evaluation findings and recommendations to a broader audience.

3. Evaluation Framework

3.1 Evaluation Criteria and Key Questions

As detailed in the ToR, the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria will guide the Evaluation: this is a set of complementary criteria that shall be considered in combination, in order to ensure that the Evaluation covers all areas of the intervention considered. (OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2019). Emphasis on some criteria and limited application of other ones will be determined in order to match the evaluation ToR, objectives, priorities, as well as available data and resources (below).

In compliance with the ToR and the UNEG guidelines and standards on Evaluation, the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria will also be integrated with the cross-cutting themes of human rights, equity and gender equality (UNEG, 2014; UNEG, 2017). These themes and values will be respected, addressed and promoted throughout all stages of the Evaluation.

In particular:

- The Evaluation will strive to understand to which extent the Strategy followed gender equality principles. The Evaluation will aim to assess whether the specific needs of girls and boys were appropriately identified at the Strategy design stage and proactively addressed across implementation (gender mainstreaming). Data collected and findings will be disaggregated by gender, where possible, and will be unpacked and interpreted through gender lenses.
- Whilst the subject of the Evaluation is a strategy on children's rights, the Evaluation will also consider whether the principles of children's rights and a rights-based approach have been used to plan and to implement the Strategy, and to monitor its results. Specific attention will be paid to assess the scope, level and quality of child participation, against recognized good practice standards.
- In compliance with the non-discrimination principle (art.2 CRC), the Evaluation will try and ascertain whether the most marginalized and socially excluded children and young people (children with disabilities; children belonging to ethnic minorities; children on the move; children living in economically depressed areas; etc.), their families and communities, have been reached by the Strategy, and whether specific measures to proactively involve them were envisaged and undertaken at the different stages of the intervention's life-cycle.

Lessons learnt, i.e. contributions to general knowledge that could be applied also to other contexts or sectors, will be presented in the Evaluation Report. Data collected will be disaggregated – where possible - by sex (above), gender, age, geographic location, and any other relevant variable (ethnicity, ability, income, education etc.)

As mentioned above, some criteria will be prioritized over other ones. In particular, the Evaluation results will be limited in terms of assessment of impact, because it is likely too early in order to identify the lasting changes produced by the Strategy. Nevertheless, to the extent possible, the Evaluation will strive to highlight contributions to impact, as well as early signs of impact, and evidence of perceptions of future impact shared by relevant stakeholders.

Furthermore, in light of the dearth of monitoring data relating to progress, impact, and financial aspects of the implementation phase, the evaluability of the Strategy will be confined to the (largely primary) data that will be retrieved during the data collection phase through individual interviews. This circumstance will most likely restraint the application of the criteria and key questions elaborated under the criteria of effectiveness and efficiency, which will only be possible for the strategic goals and operational objectives in relation to which the Evaluation Team will find relevant data.

A set of key questions structure the Evaluation and will be applied to compare findings against the criteria. These questions will also guide the interviews and discussions with selected stakeholders during the data

collection phase, as well as the desk review of Strategy-related documents and relevant literature (see section 4). A set of detailed sub-questions have been developed to further break down and specify the information needs related to each key Evaluation question. These are enclosed in the Evaluation Matrix (para. 3.2.)

Relevance

The Evaluation will assess the extent to which the Strategy was in line with the needs and priorities of the local context, as captured in situation analysis on which the Strategy design was based, as well as on other key-documents (namely: UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's Concluding Observations reports; Universal Periodic Review reports; Regular Reports of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro; Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; EU Progress Reports for Montenegro, etc.)

Information about the planning process and its consistency with a rights-based approach, equity and gender equality principles will be elicited. In particular, the Evaluation Team will assess whether the Strategy design has identified key gender inequalities to be addressed and devised strategic approaches to that purpose. The Evaluation will also assess whether the people who are supposed to benefit from the intervention - i.e. children and young people, including those belonging to marginalized groups, as well as their families and communities – have been involved in its identification and design, and how (child participation).

Under the relevance criterion, the Evaluation will assess the consistency of the overall Strategy design with the identified problems and needs it set out to address. The Evaluation will also look at the plausibility of the implicit ToC, and at whether it provided an effective framework for monitoring progress and impact. It will make statements about the actual evaluability of the TOC, and will aim at re-constructing its missing elements and components.

Part of the TOC reconstruction will focus on ascertaining whether, and to which extent, the Strategy implementing organizations shared understanding about how changes would happen and their own roles in bringing about such changes¹⁷.

Key-questions:

1. To what extent did the Strategy goals and objectives respond to the beneficiaries' needs and priorities in terms of fulfilling children's rights?
2. To what extent was the Strategy adjusted throughout the implementation phase, in light of changing circumstances faced by children in Montenegro (COVID-19 outbreak; political instability; socio-economic challenges; feedback from beneficiaries; collective reflections of stakeholders; etc.)?

Coherence

Coherence is generally seeking to assess and evaluate the compatibility of the Strategy with other relevant interventions. It is viewed in two main dimensions: internal coherence, which is the Strategy's alignment with the Montenegrin Government's priorities, commitments, and other interventions; and external coherence, which refers to the consistency of the Strategy with other actors' interventions in the child rights and related fields in the given context.

In line with the interpretation of the Evaluation ToR, and in light of the comprehensive focus of the Strategy (a nationwide document addressing the whole range of children's rights), the Evaluation Team suggests to frame the analysis related to external coherence in terms of the Strategy's potential and success in providing a framework for effective coordination and synergies among stakeholders working on children's rights in the country.

¹⁷ For additional information about the Evaluation's focus on the Strategy's TOC, see above: paragraph 1.3.

In terms of internal coherence, the Evaluation will also assess the extent to which the fundamental child rights principles (in particular: right to life, survival and development; right to participation; right to protection; non-discrimination) have underpinned the Strategy's design and its implementation and monitoring practices.

Adherence to international norms and standards will also be assessed under relevance, in terms of responsiveness to global priorities and to recommendations issued by international human rights monitoring bodies. This will form a complementary angle for the Evaluation. Recommendations contained in the Evaluation Report will be shaped also considering current international commitments of the country, in particular in light of Montenegro's path towards accession to the European Union ('EU'), and the need for national policies to align with EU legal and strategic documents dealing with children's rights – primarily, the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. (European Commission, 2021).

Key-questions:

3. To what extent is the Strategy building synergies and interlinkages with national strategies and policies implemented by the Government of Montenegro and with relevant international norms and standards to which Montenegro adheres?

4. To what extent is the Strategy enabling and fostering complementarity, harmonization and coordination of efforts to fulfil children's rights in Montenegro?

Effectiveness

The Evaluation will measure the extent to which the Strategy achieved its objectives and results, as per relative importance. This will encompass any differential results across the target groups, with particular reference to the most marginalized children, families and communities (in line with the equity and non-discrimination principles). Unlike impact, which concerns higher-order effects and broader changes to which the Strategy may have contributed (below), effectiveness will focus on more closely attributable results. (OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2019: 9).

The timeliness of outputs production will also be assessed. The ways in which results were achieved, and the key factors contributing to their achievement (or non-achievement), will be analyzed.

The above will apply to areas of the Strategy in relation to which, during the data collection phase, relevant data will be obtained, and compared against the performance indicators contained in the Strategy document.

Key-questions:

5. To what extent did the Strategy achieve, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and results, including any differential results across groups of beneficiaries, especially the most vulnerable ones?

6. To what extent did internal or external factors influence the achievement or non-achievement of the Strategy's objectives and expected results?

Efficiency

This criterion is normally used to measure the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – achieved as a result of inputs. It assesses whether the most efficient approach has been used, in light of feasible alternatives in the given context.

The Evaluation will try and ascertain whether the resources allocated for the realization of the Strategy were overall proportionate, and how financial aspects may affect the sustainability of the intervention. In line with the ToR, a specific focus will be placed on assessing whether inefficiencies – if any – occurred due to a lack of coordinated stakeholders engagement (at the national and local level).

Furthermore, as previously mentioned (para. 1.3. and section 2.), the Strategy document mentions the overall budget estimate for its implementation over the entire period 2019-2023. In addition, estimated funds for the implementation of the activities related to the first year are provided in the above-document. All figures are given as lump sums, with no breakdown per items. Therefore, the budget appears not sufficiently

detailed for the Evaluation to properly assess the overall cost-efficiency of the Strategy. The Evaluation Team will not be able to assess whether resources have been used in the most efficient manner to reach the planned objectives.

The Evaluation Report will provide full account of efficiency aspects that were not covered by the Evaluation, and reasons why.

Key-questions:

7. To what extent the resources allocated for the Strategy were adequate?
8. Which factors (political instability; COVID-19 pandemic; lack of coordination among institutions in charge; etc.) have affected resource allocation to the Strategy, and to which extent?

Impact

Impact generally refers to the positive and negative changes produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. As impact refers to the broader or long-term change that happens as a result of an intervention or interventions, it is usually not relevant for evaluations carried out before or immediately after an intervention has ended. To the extent possible, the Evaluation will however strive to highlight contributions to impact, early signs of impact, and evidence of perceptions of future impact shared by relevant stakeholders.

Key-questions:

9. To what extent the Strategy generated significant positive and/or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects in the lives of children and young people in Montenegro?

Sustainability

The Evaluation will look at whether the benefits of the Strategy will continue, or are likely to continue. In particular, it will assess political commitment by relevant stakeholders to build on the Strategy's provisions and achievements, and the partnerships build up or mobilized around the implementation of the Strategy.

The Evaluation will also try and ascertain whether financial capacity of institutions in charge are likely to affect sustainability of the efforts undertaken in the framework of the Strategy, and the extent to which obstacles and bottlenecks identified in regard to implementation have impacted the sustainability of the intervention.

Key-questions:

10. Are the benefits brought about by the Strategy likely to continue in future?

3.2 Evaluation Matrix

The proposed evaluation matrix covers the following contents:

- Evaluation criteria. Evaluation questions are grouped and organized by evaluation criteria. These include cross-cutting themes.
- Key Evaluation questions. These are derived from the ToR and have been refined based on initial discussions with UNICEF Montenegro during the inception phase, and on an assessment of the data sets available. It is anticipated that findings in the Evaluation Report will be largely organized around the key Evaluation questions. A total of 10 Key Evaluation questions is included in the Evaluation Matrix.
- Sub-questions. Sub-questions further specify and break down the information needs related to each Key Evaluation question. These tend to inform specific questions in the data collection instruments. Since they are rather detailed, sub-questions also serve as benchmarks that will be used in making the assessment for each Evaluation question and criterion.
- Data sources. These indicate how the Evaluation questions will be informed. Rather than just listing items such as "Situation analysis reports" or similarly, to the extent possible, more specific information is provided in this column.

- Data collection methods. This column indicates the relevant data collection methods that will be used to look for the data and information needed to answer each of the questions.
- Means of triangulation. This column aims to explain how data acquired will be triangulated, in order to identify any inconsistencies in information. Triangulation will be used to ensure the accuracy of the Evaluation findings, analysis and interpretation, and to assist the Evaluation Team in overcoming any biases or weaknesses associated with a particular tool. Where additional sources are not easily available (e.g. lack of reliable monitoring data in a particular sector or area; no studies to provide background situation on specific themes; etc.), means of mitigation will be sought, and limitations will be clearly explained in the Evaluation Report.

Table 1. Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Means of Triangulation
Relevance	1. To what extent did the Strategy goals and objectives respond to the beneficiaries' needs and priorities in terms of fulfilling children's rights?	<p>1.1. Was there a clear child rights situation analysis carried out systematically and analytically with the participation of all key-stakeholders (including children) to ensure a firm basis for the Strategy design?</p> <p>1.2. Did the Strategy design process also draw upon recognized good or promising practices from other countries or sectors?</p> <p>1.3. Did the Strategy design clearly show what was expected to change for children?</p> <p>1.4. Did the Strategy reflect the target population's priority needs?</p>	Existence of child rights situation analysis and needs assessment document(s), and/or country context analysis (at the stage of the Strategy design), having child rights lenses (identifying the specifics for different groups of beneficiaries – including gender and age), which	<p>Stakeholders involved in the Strategy design; Strategy document.</p> <p>Stakeholders involved in the Strategy design.</p> <p>Strategy document.</p>	<p>Desk review; individual interviews.</p> <p>Individual interviews.</p> <p>Desk review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from documents will be compared against views and perceptions shared by interviewed stakeholders. • Views and perceptions shared by interviewees will be compared. • Review of documents against existing standards for best practice in project management. • Information from documents will be compared against views

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Means of Triangulation
		<p>1.5. Was the Strategy design (i.e. approach, delivery methods) sensitive to the beneficiaries' varying needs based on their age, gender, belonging to marginalized communities, and any other diversity aspects?</p> <p>1.6. Were objectives 'SMART'? Were they formulated in a way that allowed stakeholders to track if the Strategy was being successful?</p>	<p>appears to take into account good or promising practices.</p> <p>Strategy document presents SMART objectives, which key stakeholders regarded as a reference to track changes and</p>	<p>Strategy document; Reports from human rights monitoring bodies addressing the situation of the rights of the child in Montenegro; stakeholders (Ministries and other institutions; local authorities; NGOs and CSOs; UNICEF).</p> <p>Strategy document.</p> <p>Strategy document.</p>	<p>Desk review; individual interviews.</p> <p>Desk review.</p> <p>Desk review.</p>	<p>and perceptions shared by interviewed stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of documents against existing standards for best practice in child rights programming. • Review of documents against existing standards for best practice in project management. • Information from documents will be compared against views

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Means of Triangulation
		1.7. Was the Strategy (implicit or explicit) ToC plausible and feasible? Does the logic of the identified causal pathway among problems, goals, objectives, activities and outcomes make sense?	<p>achievements.</p> <p>The Strategy or related document outlines a ToC clearly explaining the intervention logic and causal pathways among its different components and levels.</p> <p>Degree to which the ToC has guided implementation and monitoring of the Strategy.</p>	Stakeholders involved in the Strategy design; Strategy document.	Individual interviews; desk review.	<p>and perceptions shared by interviewed stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views and perceptions shared by interviewees will be compared.
	2. To what extent was the Strategy adjusted throughout the implementation phase, in light of changing circumstances faced by children in Montenegro (COVID-19 outbreak; socio-economic	<p>2.1. To what extent and through what means were the (changing) needs of beneficiaries, especially the most vulnerable ones, as well as gender-differentiated needs, assessed throughout the Strategy implementation?</p> <p>2.2. To what extent were the</p>	Degree to which the Strategy implementers took into account at all stages of implementation (onset and adjustment milestones) the diversity of beneficiaries' needs - with a special focus on	Stakeholders in charge of implementing the Strategy (Ministries and other institutions).	Individual interviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information from documents will be compared against views and perceptions shared by interviewed stakeholders. Extent to which stakeholders closest to the issues feel that

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Means of Triangulation
	challenges; feedback from beneficiaries; collective reflections of stakeholders; etc.)?	Strategy's approaches and interventions adjusted throughout the implementation?	gender dimension, country context, and the COVID-19 pandemic.	Stakeholders in charge of implementing the Strategy (Ministries and other institutions).		progress has been made.
Coherence	3. To what extent is the Strategy building synergies and interlinkages with national strategies and policies implemented by the Government of Montenegro and with relevant international norms and standards to which Montenegro adheres (particularly the UN CRC and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child)?	3.1. To what extent are the Strategy's goals and objective interlinked and consistent with other relevant interventions carried out by the Montenegrin Government? 3.2. Were the most marginalized and socially	Degree to which there are clear linkages indicating that the Strategy objectives are aligned with, and supportive of the Montenegrin Government's priority commitments on children's rights – especially as prioritized by relevant human rights monitoring bodies – and international development . Evidence of meaningful inclusion of children	Strategy document; Reports from human rights monitoring bodies addressing the situation of the rights of the child in Montenegro; stakeholders (Council on the Rights of the Child; UNICEF). Local authorities;	Desk review; individual interviews. Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information from documents will be compared against views and perceptions shared by interviewed stakeholders. Views and perceptions shared by

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Means of Triangulation
		<p>excluded groups of children and young persons reached by the Strategy?</p> <p>3.3. Were activities implemented gender-sensitive, i.e. did they take into account the different needs and wishes of women and man, boys and girls? How?</p> <p>3.4. Did children participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and/or evaluation of the Strategy? What was the level of their participation in each of these phases (consultative; collaborative; child-led; none)?</p>	<p>and young people from marginalized groups at the different stages of the Strategy life cycle (design; implementation; and monitoring).</p> <p>Evidence that implementation was planned with the different needs of boys and girls in mind.</p> <p>Compliance of child participation practices in the framework of the Strategy (design, implementation and monitoring) with child participation good practice standards.</p>	<p>NGOs and CSOs.</p> <p>Stakeholders (Ministries and other institutions; local authorities; NGOs and CSOs; UNICEF); children and young people.</p> <p>Stakeholders (Ministries and other institutions)</p>	<p>interviews.</p> <p>Individual interviews.</p>	<p>interviewees will be compared.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigators triangulation. • Views and perceptions shared by interviewees/survey respondents will be compared. • Investigators triangulation. • be compared.

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Means of Triangulation
	4. To what extent is the Strategy enabling and fostering complementarity, harmonization and coordination of efforts to fulfil children's rights in Montenegro?	4.1. To which extent did national and international stakeholders leverage their comparative advantages in relation to the committed actions for the Strategy implementation? 4.2. Did the Strategy set up (an) effective mechanism(s) to coordinate actions for realizing children's rights in Montenegro?	Degree to which the Montenegrin Government and other stakeholders have taken steps to create synergies and align with respective policies and programmes on children's rights, during the Strategy life cycle. Degree to which this can be attributed to the existence of the Strategy.	Stakeholders (Ministries and other institutions; UNICEF and other international agencies; NGOs and CSOs).	interviews. Individual interviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views and perceptions shared by interviewees will be compared.
Effectiveness	5. To what extent did the Strategy achieve, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and results, including any differential results across groups of	5.1. To what extent did the Strategy deliver on its objectives? What is the progress in achieving the planned (quantitative and qualitative) results? 5.2. Have activities been carried out according to the	Degree to which the Strategy has or is expected to deliver on its objectives and (quantitative and qualitative) results. Degree to which	Stakeholders (Ministries and other institutions; UNICEF); Strategy year one report. Stakeholders (Ministries and	Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views and perceptions shared by interviewees/survey respondents will be

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Means of Triangulation
	beneficiaries, especially the most vulnerable ones?	<p>Action Plans?</p> <p>5.3. Which activities have been changed and for what purpose? Has this helped in achieving the Strategy's objectives and intended results?</p> <p>5.4. Did changes work out differently for different groups of girls and boys? In what way and why?</p>	<p>the Strategy activities have been carried out according to the work plan(s).</p> <p>Degree to which and reasons for activities to have been changed. Extent to which changes helped in achieving the Strategy's objectives and intended results – including any differential results across various groups of beneficiaries.</p>	<p>other institutions; UNICEF); children and young people; Strategy year one report.</p> <p>Stakeholders (Ministries and other institutions; UNICEF and other international agencies; NGOs and CSOs); Strategy year one report.</p>	<p>interviews; Desk review; survey.</p>	<p>compared.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To some extent (most likely only concerning year 1 of implementation), information from documents will be compared against views and perceptions shared by interviewed stakeholders.
	6. To what extent did internal or external factors influence the achievement or non-achievement of the Strategy's objectives and expected results?	<p>6.1. What were the main internal and external factors that contributed or hindered the achievement of the Strategy objectives and intended results?</p> <p>6.2. To which extent and how have the facilitating</p>	<p>Degree to which and reasons why the achievement or non-achievement of</p>	<p>Stakeholders</p>	<p>Individual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views and

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Means of Triangulation
		<p>factors been utilized in advantage of reaching the Strategy's results?</p> <p>6.3. What measures have been taken to cope with the challenges, and how did they help to overcome the situation?</p>	<p>the Strategy objectives and intended results can be attributed to other reasons or external factors.</p>	<p>(Ministries and other institutions; UNICEF).</p>	<p>interviews.</p>	<p>perceptions shared by interviewees will be compared.</p>
<p>Efficiency</p>	<p>7. To what extent the resources allocated for the Strategy were adequate?</p>	<p>7.1. To what extent the financial and human resources available to implement the Strategy appear to be adequate and proportionate to the goals and objectives it set out to achieve?</p> <p>7.2. Are costs affecting the sustainability of the Strategy?</p>	<p>Degree to which a rationale has been applied to allocation of resources, relating costs to needs in achieving the Strategy objectives.</p> <p>Implications of applying (or lack of) the rationale and degree to which it has influenced sustainability.</p>	<p>Strategy document; Stakeholders (Ministries and other institutions; UNICEF).</p>	<p>Desk review; individual interviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information from documents will be compared against views and perceptions shared by interviewed stakeholders.
	<p>8. Which factors (political instability; COVID-19 pandemic; lack of coordination among institutions</p>	<p>8.1. Was the implementation of the Strategy (including monitoring and evaluation) accurately reflected in the budget? If not, which factors prevented that from</p>	<p>Degree to which the allocation of available resources took into account the Strategy's different</p>	<p>Strategy document; Stakeholders (Ministries and other institutions; UNICEF).</p>	<p>Desk review; individual interviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information from documents will be compared against and integrated with the views and

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Means of Triangulation
	in charge; etc.) have affected resource allocation to the Strategy, and to which extent?	<p>happening?</p> <p>8.2. To what extent did lack of coordination among stakeholders create inefficiencies in the realization of the Strategy? Which other factors create inefficiencies?</p>	<p>components and lines of intervention.</p> <p>Reasons that supported or, conversely, hindered an efficient implementation and monitoring of the Strategy. Degree to which each factor influenced efficiency.</p>	<p>Strategy document; Stakeholders (Ministries and other institutions; UNICEF; local authorities; NGOs and CSOs).</p>	<p>Desk review; individual interviews.</p>	<p>perceptions shared by interviewed stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigators triangulation.
Impact	<p>9. To what extent the Strategy generated significant positive and/or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects in the lives of children and young people in Montenegro?</p>	<p>9.1. Has appropriate attention been given to developing robust evidence and involving reliable impact monitoring, and reporting procedures based on a solid impact monitoring system and plan? If not, what prevented this from happening?</p> <p>9.2. Do institutions in charge of implementing the Strategy, as well as other</p>	<p>Existence of an impact monitoring system (including: indicators, means of verification, protocols for measuring indicators) and plan.</p> <p>Impact monitoring reports availability.</p> <p>Evidence of</p>	<p>Strategy document; other available documentation (impact monitoring system); stakeholders (Ministries and other institution; UNICEF; NGOs and CSOs).</p> <p>Stakeholders (Ministries and other institution;</p>	<p>Desk review; individual interviews.</p> <p>Individual interviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information from documents will be compared against views and perceptions shared by interviewed stakeholders. Extent to which stakeholders closest to the

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Means of Triangulation
		<p>stakeholders, perceive that (positive or negative) changes were achieved as a result of the Strategy, in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • realization of children's rights in Montenegro? • Recognized good practices and models that could be replicated or transferred? <p>What do they base the above-perception on?</p>	<p>positive, negative or unintended impact achieved as a result of the Strategy, and/or of perception of future impact by relevant stakeholders.</p>	<p>UNICEF; local institutions, NGOs and CSOs).</p>		<p>issues feel that progress has been made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigators triangulation.
Sustainability	<p>10. Are the benefits brought about by the Strategy likely to continue in future?</p>	<p>10.1. Are the institutions in charge to realize children's rights in Montenegro planning to develop and undertake further policy measures to build on the benefits achieved by the Strategy? Which ones?</p> <p>10.2. What is required by the different stakeholders to ensure that the progress achieved by the Strategy in the fulfilment of children's rights will continue?</p>	<p>Evidence that the practices brought about by the Strategy are likely to continue beyond its end, and to which degree.</p> <p>Evidence that different stakeholders have taken ownership of the Strategy concept and approaches.</p>	<p>Stakeholders (Ministries and other institutions; reports on policy measures recently being undertaken in Montenegro.</p> <p>Stakeholders (Ministries and other institution; UNICEF; NGOs and CSOs; local authorities; other international</p>	<p>Individual interviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views and perceptions shared by interviewees will be compared.

Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Means of Triangulation
		10.3. What are the main factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the Strategy?	<p>Degree to which there are measures linked to policy areas relevant to the Strategy that are under development.</p> <p>Degree to which potential risks and opportunities in sustaining the results beyond the current Strategy have been identified are being – respectively – mitigated or exploited.</p>	<p>agencies).</p> <p>Stakeholders (Ministries and other institution; UNICEF; local authorities).</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigators triangulation.

4. Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The Evaluation is intended to be a **summative** evaluation, as it aims to determine the worth of the Strategy at the end of its implementation phase. The Evaluation is intended to understand to what extent the Strategy has been actually implemented, how it has been implemented, highlighting what worked and what did not. In other words, the Evaluation will make judgements about the results of the Strategy at the conclusion of its implementation phase.

In addition, the Evaluation will also adopt a **formative** approach, focusing on lessons learnt and good practices, in order to allow the Government of Montenegro, UNICEF, as well as other stakeholders, to capitalize on the recommendations that will be issued, in view of the drafting of future policies and laws on children's rights in the country.

In line with the Evaluation ToR, the methodology for the Evaluation envisages a **non-experimental** evaluation design, and a **mixed-method design**, combining **qualitative** analysis with some **quantitative** analysis elements.

Quantitative data will be largely provided by the documents examined as part of the desk review, and will aim to assess the breadth of the Strategy implementation and scope, with the aim to both complement the qualitative data, and to situate these in the specific context in which the Strategy has been undertaken. In addition, a survey among a selected sample of children and young people will be administered, generating largely quantitative data.

Qualitative data will be initially collected as part of the desk review, and gathered in greater depth during the data collection through interviews. Qualitative data analysis will involve the identification of themes, coding, clustering similar data and drawing the most important points.

The Evaluation will be based on **iterative feedback** and a **continuous learning and exchange process**. The Evaluation Team will share preliminary findings along the data collection and analysis, and maintain open and constant communication flows between the Evaluators and UNICEF Montenegro, as well as other key stakeholders.

The Evaluation data collection and analysis will encompass both primary and secondary data sources.

Primary sources of data for the Evaluation include:

- Transcripts and notes from individual interviews and FGDs conducted during the field data collection phase;
- Data collected during interviews with key-informants (e.g. unpublished monitoring data);
- Data collected as part of the survey with children and young people;
- Legal or policy documents;
- Other primary data sources identified during the field data collection phase.

Secondary sources of data for the Evaluation include:

- Reports and other documents related to the Strategy design, implementation and monitoring;
- Research reports, published or unpublished, produced by IOs, NGOs, and other stakeholders;
- Statistical data published by international, national and local institutions and organizations;
- Newspaper articles, news websites;
- Other secondary data sources identified during the field data collection phase.

The evaluation methodology is articulated around **three main phases**: inception phase; data collection; and analysis and report writing.

Inception phase

During the inception phase, a series of inception meetings with UNICEF Montenegro was planned and is being carried out, with the aim to share all required documents, contact details, and other relevant information for the Evaluation process. A meeting with two representatives from the Government was planned for and facilitated by UNICEF Montenegro, with the main aim to align expectations concerning the Evaluation's key-aspects, and to set out the basis for exchange and cooperation between the Evaluation Team and governmental institutions during the process.

During the inception phase, a desk research has been commenced, with the purpose to review existing Strategy documents, as well as relevant reports, studies, news articles, policy and legal documents, and other available data regarding the realization of children's rights in Montenegro. The main aim of the desk-review is to set out the internal and external context in which the Strategy was implemented.

Important aspects related to the Evaluation will be clarified during this phase. These include, in particular: the limitations to the evaluability of the intervention; the number and typologies of stakeholders to be consulted during the field data collection phase; and the selection of the two municipalities to be visited by the Evaluation Team. The evaluation criteria, key-questions and tools have also been elaborated.

Activities and outputs of this phase include:

- **Desk-review** of documents provided by UNICEF Montenegro and of other relevant documents selected by the Evaluators;
- Finalization of the Evaluation **methodology** and related aspects;
- Refining of Evaluation **criteria, key-questions**, and elaboration of **sub-questions**;
- Elaboration of **data collection tools**;
- Identification of **key-respondents** (with the support of UNICEF Montenegro) and **establishing contact** with them in order to schedule individual interviews;
- **Inception briefings** with UNICEF Montenegro;
- **Introductory meetings** with relevant stakeholders from the Government of Montenegro;
- Production of an **Inception Report**.

During the inception phase, the Evaluation Team will also carry out scoping interviews with UNICEF Montenegro Staff who are knowledgeable about the Strategy, in order to obtain clarifications on facts and on the documents reviewed, and/or to ask for additional documents to be covered by the desk review. The scoping interviews will also serve the important purpose of finalizing the selection of the stakeholders to be interviewed during the data collection phase, at both the national and local level, and of the municipalities to be visited (see below).

Data collection

The Evaluation exercise aims to actively involve key stakeholders for the Strategy at the national and local level.

Individual interviews with key informants will be central to the data collection phase. These will be selected in close consultation with UNICEF Montenegro, based on a mapping of stakeholders that will be shared by the Evaluation Team during the inception phase. In total, it is estimated that around 10-15 stakeholders from the national level, and around 20-25 stakeholders from the municipal level, will be involved in individual interviews. Some respondents may be interviewed in pairs or small groups, mostly upon their preferences, as collectively they might be in the position to answer all questions to be covered by the Evaluators. Interviews will be conducted mostly in-person and in some cases online. Further details about sampling of stakeholders are provided below (para. 4.1.) The full list of respondents will be included among the annexes to the Evaluation Report¹⁸.

Activities and outputs of the data collection phase include:

¹⁸ Such list will be anonymized, in case some respondents prefer not to be quoted with full attribution (name, surname etc.)

- Performing **field visits and individual interviews** with selected respondents at the national and local level;
- Collating inputs from interviews, and producing **detailed transcripts in English**;
- Collating inputs from survey questionnaires and arrange them through frequency tables.

Analysis and report writing

Data gathered through desk-review, individual interviews and FGDs will be analyzed and presented in an Evaluation Report. The Strategy performance will be assessed against the criteria previously identified.

Activities and outputs of this phase include:

- **Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data** collected, identifying themes, coding and clustering data;
- Producing an **Evaluation Report**;
- Producing **Summary Report** highlighting major findings and evaluations;
- Highlighting and describing evaluation **findings**, identifying **good practices** and **achievements**, as well as **questionable practices** where margin of improvement exists;
- Providing **recommendations** for future policy initiatives, by the Government of Montenegro, their partners and other stakeholders, including UNICEF Montenegro;
- Preparing a **Power Point presentation** summarizing the Evaluation key-findings and priority-recommendations;
- **Debriefing meeting** with UNICEF Montenegro and other key stakeholders.

4.1 Sampling

In principle, stakeholders to be involved in the Evaluation would include any individual who has the responsibility, capacity or opportunity to work on children's rights in Montenegro. Indeed, the object of the Evaluation concerns a wide range of institutions, organizations and individuals that might have different affiliations, stakes, and perspectives on the implementation of the Strategy – and that may represent different roles and capacities, including: government and local authorities officials; policy and advocacy experts; lawyers; psychologists; teachers and other school personnel; practitioners; community-based organizations; parliamentarians; ombudspersons etc.

While recognizing that others may likely have a stake in the Strategy, the Evaluation Team will have to prioritize among stakeholders and restrict interviews to a reasonable number in light of available resources.

Based on information collected during the inception phase, stakeholders involved in the Evaluation will include:

- Ministries and other national institutions bearing direct responsibility for implementing the Strategy;
- Local authorities working in the child rights area;
- NGOs and CSOs working on children's rights in Montenegro, both at the national and local level;
- UNICEF Staff dealing with the implementation of the Strategy and whose activities was most closely related to the Strategy goals and objectives;
- External experts who contributed to the Strategy identification and design;
- Other international agencies operating in Montenegro, whose areas of work are more closely related to the Strategy goals and objectives.

The Evaluation Team obviously regards children and young people, as well as their families and communities, as key stakeholders in relation to the Strategy. Since this is a nation-wide document, encompassing a whole range of children's rights and concerning virtually all children in Montenegro, ideally,

a diverse range of children - representing all age groups and different backgrounds – should be involved in consultation. In order to properly identify, reach out to, and properly prepare for consultation a large number of children, more resources should have been available. Indeed, unlike adult stakeholders working on children's rights, children and young people would have needed much more preparation (on the actual object of the evaluation) for the consultation to be meaningful and relevant to their daily lives.

Nevertheless, in order to try and hear from child and youth population in Montenegro, a group of child and youth respondents will be selected with the support of NGO sector, disability rights organizations, Ombudsperson Institution, education sector and other organizations/institutions having already developed channels for child/adolescent/youth participation and partnering with UNICEF Montenegro.

During the inception phase, the Evaluation Team has undertaken a stakeholders' mapping (enclosed in Annex X). The above-mapping is regarded as a paramount instrument, in that it provides a list of potential sources of data on the Evaluation key questions, which may not rely upon other (secondary) data sources to be answered. At the outset of the data collection phase, the stakeholders mapping will be discussed with UNICEF Montenegro, in order to prioritize among identified stakeholders and invite the selected ones to participate to the Evaluation exercise.

A non-probability sampling technique will be adopted, with a combination of purposive and quota sampling methods. Purposive sampling will ensure the involvement of stakeholders who could offer a unique or specific perspective on the Strategy, due to their knowledge and/or responsibility on the subject matter. Quota sampling will ensure a balanced representation of stakeholders to be selected among different affiliations, in order to avoid that any of the groups identified above is considerably under- or over-represented.

Concerning children and young people to be involved in the survey, these will be largely identified and selected through a combined convenience and purposive sampling method, which will be applied in order to recruit participants who are easily accessible to UNICEF Montenegro or partner organizations, and those among them who could offer a unique or specific perspective on the situation of children's rights in the country. Specifically, child and young respondents will be selected among the ones who are already actively involved in local- or national-level activities regarding children's rights. While aware that the Strategy affects all children in Montenegro, child and youth respondents will be selected from the age group 13-18. (See also below, 4.4.). Based on discussions with UNICEF, the number of children and young people to whom the questionnaire will be submitted will be comprised between 50 and 100.

Whilst the Evaluation's geographic scope is Montenegro, and the desk review will cover the national level, the data collection in the field will only take place in a sample of two selected municipalities, in addition to the capital city of Podgorica.

Based on initial discussion within the Evaluation Team and with UNICEF Montenegro, the following set of criteria have been prioritized for the selection of the above municipalities, which are:

- **High-performing and under-performing municipalities**, in order to balance among locations with good track record of implementation capacity in the area of children's rights, and locations where capacity is more challenging. Due to the dearth of data relating to the implementation of the Strategy, the identification of municipalities in which a high or, conversely, low number and diversity of interventions that can be related to the Strategy took place during the period 2019-2023 (temporal scope of the Evaluation) will have to be guided by consultation with UNICEF Montenegro, as part of the scoping interviews planned to take place during the inception phase;
- **Location/geographic level**, in order to provide contrasting examples of how the Strategy was implemented in different geographic areas and contexts, such as: urban vs rural; more homogeneous locations vs locations with higher presence of ethnic minorities; and significant differences in terms of socio-economic conditions of the population;
- **Logistics considerations**: the final selection has to take into account practical considerations, including accessibility of stakeholders, and possibility to complete the data collection with the available resources, in light of geographical distance and other practical considerations, including time constraints.

The selection of the municipalities for data collection will be finalized during the inception phase. Potential municipalities to be selected include: Bjelo Polje; Pljevlja; Niksic; Herceg Novi; Uncinj, Tuzi and Plav.

4.2 Data Collection Instruments

The Evaluation will use mixed data collection methods involving:

- A desk review of existing relevant documentation;
- Key informant interviews with selected stakeholders at national and local level; and
- A survey with selected children and young persons in different geographic locations.

This paragraph presents the proposed data collection instruments and provides clarifications on how each instrument will be prepared for and applied. The information contained below is in adherence with UNICEF's Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection And Analysis (UNICEF, 2015a). In addition, the planning, carrying out and transcription of individual interviews will be guided by existing best practice standards on ethics and on participation in research.

4.2.1 Desk Review

At the national level, Evaluators will carry out a desk review of existing secondary sources of data during the inception phase, continuing during the period immediately prior to the field-data collection. The desk review should however be regarded as an ongoing process, which continues throughout the field-phase and the analysis and writing up of the Evaluation Report.

The main aim of the desk-review is to set out the internal and external context in which the Strategy was implemented. In particular, the review will identify and critically assess the available Strategy documents, as well as relevant reports, studies, news articles, policy and legal documents, and other available data regarding the realization of children's rights in Montenegro.

The desk review has informed or will inform the following:

- The assessment of the evaluability of different Strategy aspects and components, based on available monitoring data concerning the implementation phase;
- The selection of the key-stakeholders to be involved in individual interviews;
- An initial analysis of the Strategy logic and of its relevance to the priority needs of the target population.

4.2.2 Individual Interviews

The data collection phase will entail individual interviews with key informants selected among adult stakeholders working on the implementation of the Strategy or on children's rights more generally. Interviews will be carried out in person and – when not possible – remotely.

Individual interviews will be semi-structured, open-ended and based on a set of questions drawn upon the Evaluation key questions and sub-questions presented in the Evaluation Matrix, with the possibility for new relevant questions and issues to be explored during the interview.

Each individual interview will be fully transcribed in English. Depending on the choice of the Evaluator conducting the interview, the conversation could be audio-recorded whenever participants explicitly agree. It is important for the interviewing Evaluator to make sure that audio-recording is performed only if it does not create tension and discomfort to the respondent.

Guidance on how to conduct individual interviews is enclosed in Annex IV.

A set of questions has been prepared for each group of respondents, according to their role within/in relation to the Strategy. Questions have been selected based on the respondent's responsibility and position in relation to the Strategy, and will be prioritized in light of the amount of data and information previously collected at that point of the data collection phase, in order to cover all Evaluation key questions and sub-questions.

Guiding questions for individual interviews are enclosed in Annex IV – divided on the basis of respondents' groups to be interviewed. It is important to bear in mind that the interview questions annexed to this Report are only a draft at this stage, as the questions will be further refined as the desk review continues and also based on the initial feedback obtained from UNICEF Montenegro during scoping interviews, and from the stakeholders who will be interviewed earliest during the data collection phase.

4.2.3 Survey

The data collection phase will envisage a survey, carried out through the administration of a questionnaire to a selected group of children and young people aged 13 to 18. The questionnaire will focus on the following three components:

- Knowledge of, and involvement in, the Strategy on children's rights;
- Assessment of the child rights situation in Montenegro;
- Assessment of institutional response to the realization of children's rights in the country.

Questions included in the questionnaire will be structured, closed-ended and administered through UNICEF's partners to different groups of children and young people across Montenegro. The cooperation of the national and local governments, CSOs, DPOs, Ombudsperson and other UNICEF's partners will be essential for the feasibility of this exercise. Otherwise, the implementation of the survey will not be possible.

The survey results will be analyzed through Excel or SPSS and will be included in the Evaluation Report. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize and illustrate the data collected, including measures of average and variability.

The Questionnaire for children and young people is enclosed in Annex IV.

In order to ensure that the participation of children in the data collection process is relevant to their experiences, the Evaluation Team will share a written document with UNICEF's partners administering the questionnaires to children - after being cleared with UNICEF Montenegro. This document is intended to serve as an introduction to the consultation, in order to support UNICEF's partners in explaining the aims and scope of the consultation to child and youth respondents. It is enclosed in Annex VIII.

4.2.4. Data Triangulation

In principle, the validity and reliability of the information collected will be verified through the following actions:

- Data triangulation: review and corroboration of the findings identified through the desk review and interviews;
- Cross-examination: in case of diverging or conflicting findings from different sources, the Evaluation Team will question once again the data and consult with UNICEF Montenegro or relevant stakeholders to help clarify any specific aspect;
- Investigators triangulation: comparing and contrasting the different perspectives emerging within the Evaluation Team.

4.3 Ethical Considerations and Evaluation Principles

According to the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation,

“Evaluation must be conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment; for human rights and gender equality; and for the 'do no harm' principle for humanitarian assistance. Evaluators must respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence, must ensure that sensitive data is protected and that it cannot be traced to its source and must validate statements made in the report with those who provided the relevant information.

Evaluators should obtain informed consent for the use of private information from those who provide it. When evidence of wrongdoing is uncovered, it must be reported discretely to a competent body (such as the relevant office of audit or investigation).” (UNEG, 2017:11-12).

Ethical issues will be proactively and systematically considered throughout the whole Evaluation cycle, through ongoing reflection and dialogue within the Evaluation Team and with UNICEF Montenegro, in order to ensure that the Evaluators’ conduct is at all times guided by and aligned with ethical principles and professional standards. Building on the Evaluation ToR, the following documents will be the basis for the Evaluation Team’s work regarding ethics:

- UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis;
- UNICEF Procedure for Quality Assurance in Research;
- UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System;
- UNEG guide on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations;
- UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation;
- UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.¹⁹

The Evaluation Team pledges to abide by the following core principles:

- **Integrity:** the active adherence to moral values and professional standards, which are essential for responsible evaluation practice;
- **Accountability:** the obligation to be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken; to be responsible for honoring commitments, without qualification or exception; and to report potential or actual harms observed through the appropriate channels;
- **Respect:** engaging with all stakeholders of the Evaluation in a way that honors their dignity, well-being and personal agency while being responsive to their sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQIA+ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability and to cultural, economic and physical environments;
- **Beneficence:** striving to do good for people and planet while minimizing harms arising from the Evaluation as an intervention.

(UNEG, 2020:7-10).

In light of the nature and context of the Strategy, and of the methodology that will be applied to the Evaluation, the ethical aspects that the Evaluation Team will especially consider are the following:

Confidentiality and data management. According to the Evaluation methodology, data collection instruments will entail individual interviews with adult key.

All respondents’ right to provide information in confidence shall be highly respected, and they will be made aware of the scope and limits of confidentiality. Evaluators will make sure that – if disclosed - sensitive information cannot be traced back to its source so that relevant individuals are protected from any harm. Besides key informants, any other individual who may be indirectly affected by the disclosing of information (for example, children or other individuals from vulnerable communities, who have come into contact with the Strategy activities and/or with the interviewed stakeholders) shall be also kept safe.

The identity of individuals involved in the data collection phase will be kept anonymous. Concerning the way in which information and quotes from the interview can be attributed to them, respondents will be quoted based on the broader group they belong to (e.g. national authority; NGO; children and young people; etc.), followed by a number - based on a numbering system linking the two that will be retained only by the

¹⁹ Full reference to the above-documents is provided in the Bibliography. In addition, the Evaluators have undertaken UNICEF’s training on ethics in the framework of previous assignments with the Organization.

Evaluation Team. Any identifiable information concerning (name and surname, position, organization or institution, geographical location etc.) will be omitted in the Evaluation report and any other document produced as part of the evaluation process.

Only data that are actually needed and create value will be collected during the data collection phase. Data collected during interviews will be safely stored, and destroyed after the finalization of the Evaluation report and the completion of the Evaluation process. Only the Evaluation Team members will have access to primary data collected during the data collection phase, and they will transfer these data to each other, when required, using reliable online data transfer services.

Informed consent. Closely linked to confidentiality and data management (above), personal, informed consent needs to be gained from all participants to the data collection phase.

Each participant's participation is voluntary. They always have a choice as to whether to participate or not and to what extent. Consent should therefore be an outcome of a genuine pondered choice. Respondents should be given time to consider their involvement and to think about the implications of their participation.

Albeit some respondents may be already familiar with the Evaluation ToR, the Evaluation Team will always clearly explain who they are, why they are gathering this information (purpose), what will happen to the information gathered (how it will be used), who will have access to it and in what form, and how the Evaluation findings will be disseminated. Ideally, the above-information should also be already shared before the interview with the respondent.

Evaluators will clearly explain to the interviewee that s/he should feel free to stop the interview at any point in time without any negative consequences; and to refuse answering some questions, without needing to explain the reason why. Before starting the interview, Evaluators will strongly encourage the respondent to ask for any clarifications, and to feel free to express any doubt or concern.

At the outset of each interview, Evaluators will address consent and confidentiality issues. The consent form provided in Annex III to this Report should be signed by each respondent before proceeding with questions on the Strategy. Since some interviews will take place online, verbal consent declarations will be collected by Evaluators, who will certify that the respondents fully understood the interview purpose and contents, the intended use of information collected, the scope and limit of confidentiality, and consented to participating in this interview.

In the case of children and young people below the age of 18, written, informed consent should be sought by their parents (or other legal caregiver) as well. However, mainly children and young people will be selected among the ones already actively involved in activities organized by various partner organizations of UNICEF from CSOs, DPOs, Ombudsperson, etc. Therefore, in most cases children's parents/caregivers will already have agreed to their children being involved in consultative processes (such consent being periodically re-negotiated). Furthermore, due to the nature and contents of the consultation (for which the risk is no more than discomfort), the Evaluation Team considers that children who are mature enough to fully understand the purpose and implication of the consultation could provide consent for themselves.

Meaningful engagement and fair treatment. The Methodology aims to ensure equitable participation of all relevant stakeholders in the Evaluation exercise. Under the circumstances and with the available time and resources, the Evaluation will strive to ensure an appropriate and inclusive representation of various stakeholders, with different background, stakes, and perspectives, including the less powerful.

Children and young people will be directly involved in the Evaluation to a certain extent.. Indeed, this is primarily due to the extent of resources available to the Evaluation, which would not allow for the design and implementation of a meaningful participation framework for larger sample of children and young persons of different age-groups. The Evaluation Team's capacity will only allow the involvement of a limited sample of children and young persons, fact which may limit the representation of a diverse range of perspectives. However, to the extent possible, the Evaluators will reach out to children from vulnerable backgrounds,

through the consultation channels that will be enacted and supported by UNICEF Montenegro and their partner organizations in the country.

Child safeguarding. Children will be directly involved as part of this Evaluation. The Evaluation Team acknowledges that there are risks that individuals working with any organization can pose to children, young people, as well as adults that they work with and for.

Minded preventing and address those risks as a matter of absolute priority, the Evaluators reiterate their commitment to safeguarding children and youth, their families and communities, as well as any other individual concerned, by fully abiding to UNICEF's child safeguarding policy, as well as other relevant documents.

In case of any safeguarding concerns that they come across, the Evaluation Team will report it timely by following UNICEF's existing procedures to file complaints and raise concerns about child safeguarding and harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse.

Impartiality. Some Evaluation Team members have been working in the past, or are currently working in the Montenegrin context, on child rights issues and related subjects. In order to remain impartial and not biased in relation to the Evaluation, and also to avoid conflict of interests, Evaluators will avoid – to the extent possible – interviewing directly organizations or institutions that they have worked with, or had responsibilities for in the recent past, or to which they are presently applying of there is a significant possibility of being hired by in the near future. Field work tasks will be divided bearing also this criterion in mind.

Further, in order to mitigate the risk of impartiality, the Evaluation Team will try and stay focused on their role as evaluators. The Evaluation Team will be very clear with all respondents and stakeholders about their role and mandate. They will also ensure that prospective participants in the Evaluation know at any point in time what they are being consulted on and why; what the intended outputs are; and have sufficient and adequate information for informed consent (above).

Independence. According to the Evaluation ToR, this is a country-led Evaluation. Indeed, the Government of Montenegro, particularly through its Council for the Rights of the Child, bears primary responsibility for the Strategy implementation and hence evaluation. Different members of Governmental institutions will be represented at the Evaluation Reference Group currently being set up by the Government of Montenegro.

While minded to keep an open and transparent communication throughout the evaluation process to ensure that all stakeholders are fully informed about its different stages and advancement, the Evaluation Team will consider UNICEF Montenegro as their primary counterpart of the Evaluation. The Evaluation Team will work in abidance by the Evaluation Terms of Reference, the ethical principles and the norms and standards for Evaluation referred to therein and illustrated in the present Report.

In accordance with UNICEF's ethical guidelines referred to at the outset of this section, an ethical review of the present report was required. This was undertaken by an external ethics review board ("HML Institutional Review Board - IRB") between 26th December 2023 and 12th January 2024. A letter of approval of the human subject protection protocol was issued on 12th January 2024, along with a series of recommendations. The letter is enclosed in Annex IX to the present report.

4.4 Risks and Limitations

During the Evaluation process, a number of risks will be faced, which the Evaluators will try to prevent and/or mitigate.

A risk anticipated in relation to the data collection phase concerns the **availability and engagement of respondents** in the Evaluation process. This risk not only concerns stakeholders' busy schedules or lack of appreciation of the Evaluation, but also (and mostly) to the fact that a new Government in Montenegro has

recently been appointed²⁰. This circumstance entails the possibility that the individuals in charge of policies and activities encompassed the Strategy may not be very knowledgeable of past efforts and achievements related to its implementation, and/not have received (yet) a sufficient hand-over in this regard.

The Evaluation Team will be continuously conversant with UNICEF Montenegro prior to and during the data collection phase, in order to not only prioritize among stakeholders, but also to target the specific departments and individuals who are supposed to have the largest amount of information and views to contribute to the Evaluation.

An additional risk anticipated relates to the **Evaluation timeline**. This relates to the possible slippage in the schedule due to delays in delivering outputs and/or receiving comments. To mitigate this risk, the Evaluation Team will ensure a constant monitoring of the evaluation process and provide timely and effective responses to any unexpected event. At the same time, whilst respecting the rights of the different stakeholders involved in the Evaluation process to provide their inputs, there is a need to properly enforce the timeliness of comments rounds. The Evaluation Team relies upon UNICEF Montenegro to play a strategic role in that regard, in light of their consolidated relationships with the different institutions as well as non-governmental actors who will be part of the Evaluation process.

The Evaluation is anticipated to bring a number of limitations.

Children and young people will be directly involved in the Evaluation to a limited extent, as mentioned above. This is primarily due to the resources available to the Evaluation, which would not allow for the design and implementation of a meaningful participation framework for a broader and sufficiently representative number of children and young persons of different backgrounds and age-groups. The Evaluation Team's capacity only allows the involvement of a limited sample of children and young persons, who will be selected through a non-probability sampling technique, and a combined convenience and purposive sampling method. While this approach will cast some light about children and young people's assessment of the realization of children's rights in Montenegro, it will presumably not allow the Evaluation Team to make statistical inferences beyond the sample, and to generalize findings in relation to the wider child and youth population.

In order to augment the sample size, child and youth respondents will be consulted through written questionnaires. Resulting data will be analyzed through a quantitative approach. Whilst quantitative analysis would be more effectively complemented by a qualitative approach in order to generate more in-depth insights into children and young people's views, this will not be possible due to the above-mentioned limitations.

The Evaluation will also strive to ascertain whether children, young people, as well as other intended beneficiaries participated in the situation analysis, and in the design, implementation and monitoring of the Strategy, as well as the scope and quality of child participation. Moreover – to the extent possible, interviews to local-level stakeholders will include: association of high school students; parents associations, including associations of parents of children with disabilities, etc. Finally, it is anticipated that recommendations for future strategies on the rights of the child will also include the active and adequate engagement of children and young people throughout all intervention's life-cycle.

An anticipated limitation concerns the **overall Strategy's evaluability, particularly in relation to assessing its effectiveness and efficiency**.

The Strategy bears an action plan with performance indicators and related mid-term and final targets for the successful accomplishment of the operational objectives in relation to the overall implementation phase. The Strategy monitoring plan was sketched out in the Strategy document, which provided indications according to which reporting on the implementation of the Strategy was to be "based on monitoring the performance indicators from the Action Plan and on evidence that the Action Plan has implemented its operational

²⁰ As of 31st October, 2023. (Euronews, 2023).

objectives". According to the above-provisions, data on the implementation of activities would be collected continuously. At the end of each year, an annual review of the implementation would be carried out, and serve as the basis for the preparation of an annual report for the related time period, with the aim to answer "the following question: What has been done and how much has that contributed to achieving the operational objectives under the Strategy?" Finally, the Strategy envisaged that each implementation report would cover the period of one year. (UNICEF, 2019: 14).

Nevertheless, it appears that a proper data collection mechanism and process and impact monitoring system - in order to regularly provide data about implementation, outputs and outcomes - were not set up, or they did not function for most of the time period covered by the Strategy²¹. During the inception phase, upon request of the Evaluation Team, one report related to the implementation of the Strategy was provided by UNICEF Montenegro. Apparently, this is the only one of this type of reports available²².

Further, operational objectives are described in rather broad terms²³. Activities envisaged in the overall Strategy's Action Plan apparently refer only to the first year of implementation. These are also described in broad and general manner²⁴. While all aspects related to the Strategy's logic will be assessed as part of the Evaluation, and accounted for in the Evaluation report (relevance), at this stage it is important to highlight the limitations that the Strategy design poses to the evaluability of its different components. Indeed, the breadth of the objectives and activities (the latter anyways relating only to the first year of implementation) makes it difficult to assess progress achieved during the implementation phase, and to relate such activities and progress to specific social outcomes.

As part of the data collection phase, the Evaluation Team will try and find out whether monitoring data directly related to the implementation of the Strategy have been collected by the different institutions in charge of its implementation, but for some reasons these have not been shared earlier with UNICEF and/or other stakeholders, nor have these been made publicly available. In any case, it is expected that the main source of information concerning progress and outcomes in attaining the Strategy's objectives will be interviews with stakeholders.

The above-circumstances are expected to **hinder the evaluability of the Strategy, especially under the effectiveness criterion**, against which only a partial evaluation will be possible. Moreover, and concerning the methodological approach, in many instances, the only means of verifying the validity of findings available to the Evaluation Team will be comparing views and perceptions shared by interviewees, and investigators triangulation. This circumstance will to some extent restrain the solidity and depth of data collected, on which the Evaluation findings will have to be based.

As mentioned previously (para. 1.3. – Object of the evaluation), the Strategy document mentions the overall budget estimate for its implementation over the entire period 2019-2023. In addition, estimated funds for the implementation of the activities related to the first year are provided in the above-document. All figures are given as lump sums, with no breakdown per items. Therefore, **the budget appears not sufficiently detailed for the Evaluation to properly assess whether the Strategy was cost-effective (efficiency)**.

The Evaluation Team will tackle budget-related aspects with the concerned stakeholders as part of the interview questions. Whilst it will not be possible to offer a full reconstruction of the Strategy budget and expenditures, the Evaluation will try and ascertain whether the budget for the realization of the Strategy was proportionate, and how financial aspects may affect the sustainability of the intervention.

²¹ Inception meeting with Nela Krnic, Child Rights Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF Montenegro, 7.11.2023.

²² The translation of this document, available in Serbo-Croatian, has been commissioned by UNICEF Montenegro upon kind request of the Evaluation Team, and is being undertaken during the preparation of the Inception Report. The English version will be available at later stage.

²³ For instance, operational objective 2: "Improved application of the legislative, strategic and financial framework and the coordination of all stakeholders in exercising and monitoring the rights of the child". (UNICEF, 2019: 79).

²⁴ (for example, Activity 2.2: "Implementation of activities on the prevention of discrimination against children (full implementation of all laws prohibiting discrimination; campaigns on the tolerance of diversity and on equal value for both sexes, punishing perpetrators)". (UNICEF, 2019: 79).

In order to partly overcome the limitation described above, the Evaluation Team will try and find out whether the institutions in charge of implementing the Strategy have been collecting these data, but for some reasons these have not been shared earlier with UNICEF and/or other stakeholders, nor have they been made publicly available. Furthermore, the Evaluation Team will review to a reasonably feasible extent the available external documentation such as research, studies, evaluations, surveys, and extrapolate and use existing data therein, which are to the extent possible comparable to the baseline values presented in the Strategy action plan at the beginning of the implementation phase.

As a general consideration that will be further articulated in the Evaluation Report, the **lack of a comprehensive ToC for the Strategy, and of missing explicit connections among events, poses a challenge to the Evaluation exercise**. As the articulation of the details of the logic model behind the Strategy is not explicit, it is difficult to take informed decisions about where it would be best to focus Evaluation resources. As the comprehensive intended progression from inputs to outcomes could not be elucidated based on the available information, the development of the Evaluation questions could not be informed by the Strategy ToC

5. Team, Organization and Work Plan

The Evaluation will be carried out between November 2023 and April 2024. The work will be performed by two independent consultants:

- Maria Antonia Di Maio – Team Leader; and
- Aleksandra Gligorovic – National Expert.

The Team Leader be mainly responsible for refining the Evaluation methodology, for analyzing data and for drafting the Evaluation Report. During the data collection phase, the Team Leader will pay a visit to Podgorica, when she will hold interviews with UNICEF Staff and national-level stakeholders. She will supervise the work of the National Expert in the field from remote.

The National Expert will be primarily responsible for data collection at the local level. The National Expert will contribute to the Inception Report and to the Evaluation Report, by providing feedback and comments, and will be in charge of drafting some parts of both reports.

The table below provides an indicative allocation of the working days of the two consultants during each phase of the Evaluation. This is an estimation that can be revised as the Evaluation process unfolds.

Table 2. Allocation of working days

Evaluation Phase	Team Leader	National Expert
Inception phase	10	4
Data collection phase	5	10
Analysis and report writing phase	15	3
TOTAL	30	17

Lattanzio KIBS will provide quality assurance through the whole Evaluation process, and will assist the Evaluators with a range of tasks, including: administrative support; peer review of intermediate, draft- and final deliverables; setting up the meetings; note-taking; and other similar tasks. They will communicate with UNICEF Montenegro concerning any contractual and financial aspect related to the Evaluation.

5.1 Quality Assurance

The **Quality Assurance System (QAS)** will intervene step-by-step providing the most appropriate type of quality support according to the phase of the process and the activity taking place. Our quality assurance will directly ensure that the team follows the OECD/DAC, the UNEG Norms and Standards and Ethical Guidelines, UNICEF’s Evaluation Policy, the GEROS Quality Standards, the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, the UN SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator, UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, and Data Collection and Analysis, and UNICEF’s Evaluation Reporting Standards.

Our QAS is based on the following considerations: (i) The complexity of the evaluation to be carried out requires dedicated quality assurance inputs of a high standard at each stage of the evaluation; (ii) Quality assurance must be visible to the Client and offer an additional channel of communication on specific issues; (iii) Our quality assurance systems and results have improved through considerable practice; (iv) We recognise that “Quality” has several dimensions and all are important to obtain a good final product; disregarding just one dimension of quality may affect the overall product and the final result. These dimensions include Quality of the evaluation design; Quality of the evaluation process; Quality of the evaluation outputs; Quality of the evaluation team and processes. Therefore, the quality of our work is essentially assessed through these three criteria:

- Utility** ⇒ *The evaluation should be designed and implemented in order to be useful to the sponsoring organisation and the stakeholders of the evaluation in general.*
- Feasibility** ⇒ *The evaluation should be designed and implemented in order to answer properly to the evaluation questions within the time-period and resources allocated.*
- Reliability** ⇒ *The evaluation should be conducted in order to formulate a credible response to the evaluation questions.*

Our quality control is an ongoing process throughout the entire process of the evaluation and will be run **in full coordination with UNICEF**. Solid and reliable quality assurance of the main deliverable of the evaluation – the Final Evaluation Report, is imperative. However, quality control goes far beyond the various reports: our quality assurance approach considers that ensuring quality is an incremental process. If required, corrective measures will be taken by the Quality Advisor at the earliest possible stage to avoid the accumulation of quality deficiencies that may be hard to remedy at a later stage.

As an entire whole, our quality control covers therefore various inter-related **dimensions**, including the:

- **Adherence** to UNEG norms and standards and with UNICEF Evaluation Policy for development evaluation, including Geros;
- **Process** organisation within the evaluation team and applied methodologies according to best professional standards;
- **Timeliness** and reliability of service delivery;
- Stakeholder and client **relationship** management;
- Ongoing assessment of (potential) quality defects and timely execution of **mitigation measures** in coordination with the Client;
- **Independent and impartial process**;
- **Robustness** of the methodological process illustrated in the inception report and then implemented during the field and reporting phase, and, thus, robustness of the analysis and relevant findings;
- **Completeness** of the study in response to the needs of the client.

Our quality assurance is applied along all the different **phases** of an evaluation:

- We put strong emphasis on the **inception phase**, in particular on the construction of a shared and reliable evaluation framework (questions, criteria, indicators), that then constitutes our guideline throughout the entire evaluation.
- We develop detailed protocols for each of our **data collection tools**, in order to ensure that implementation will bring the needed pieces of evidence in answer to the questions and criteria of the evaluation framework. We identify risks and propose strategies to mitigate them. Pieces of evidence drawn from the data collection are systematically crossed for the purpose of weighing the pros and the cons of each assumption about the evaluation intervention, until it is confirmed or invalidated.
- The **drafting process** is based on an evidence grid. For each criterion of the evaluation framework, we gather all the relevant pieces of evidence to make sure that none is left aside. The report is written in a way that emphasises the most crucial pieces of evidence supporting our findings. We also ensure that the relation between the findings, the conclusions, and the recommendations is traceable.

We pledge to formulate useful **recommendations**, by making a clear distinction between strategic recommendations and suggestions regarding their implementation. We give special importance to the “co-development” of recommendations, which implies a process of dialogue and joint reflection with UNICEF and the main stakeholders while drafting the recommendations themselves.

For each **conclusion in its final version**, the following elements are subject to ex post verification: it is based on the findings of the evaluation and based on sufficient evidence; it expresses a judgement on the assessed intervention; it is expressed in a balanced and fair way.

For each **recommendation**, the following elements are verified: it is linked to at least one conclusion; it relates to the challenges identified during the inception phase of the evaluation; it seems realistic; the recommendations are not too many and are prioritised.

More generally, the reports are reviewed according to the following main components:

- **Style:** the document is easy to read;
- **Exhaustiveness:** all the dimensions necessary to the good understanding of the evaluation are mentioned and detailed; the questions raised are treated.
- **Uniformity:** in the case of the final report, the argumentation is consistent throughout the report.
- **Credibility:** the limits are mentioned; the results are based on pieces of evidence; the report includes enough pieces of evidence so that the reader can assess the credibility of the results;
- **Confidentiality:** information and data collected are anonymous.

The QAS will be specifically performed at three levels: Team Leader level, Evaluation Manager level, and Advisory level:

- The **Team Leader** (TL), Mrs. Maria Antonia di Maio, as main officer responsible for the quality of the deliverables, will act as the main focal point between the team members and will ensure that each team member is completely aware of the tasks to be performed, and able to provide high standard inputs on the basis of his guidance. The extensive experience of the TL in complex assignments will support the process for the quality check of each output;
- The **Evaluation Manager** (EM), Lara Moreschi, will be the supervisor figure and will act in the capacity of “certification of the quality process” following the pattern of an ISO system, ensuring that all agreed steps of the quality process are enforced and all building blocks have to be put in place. The EM will carry out a frequent monitoring of the team of experts, facilitated by her direct participation in the team (as described above in the proposal), ensuring that they deliver the outputs on time and of the agreed quality.
- The **Quality Advisor** (QA), Elena Buonomini, is a LKIBS senior staff (Head of the International Evaluation Unit) that will review the quality of the final outputs as well as supervise the quality of the whole process. Her advice could also be required at the sensitive junctures (e.g. definition of the evaluation framework; field phase planning; debriefings and workshops; key deliverable preparation) of this challenging assignment.



Specifically, on the **quality of the evaluation deliverables**, the key steps of the quality assurance will include: (i) Document consolidation by Team Leader; (ii) Coordination by the Evaluation Manager; (iii) Quality Assurance control by the Quality Advisor; (iv) Final proof reading, translation and editing. At key stages, the reports will be reviewed by the evaluation team according to the quality assurance feedback. In addition to the above-described quality system, the evaluation team will be continuously supported by LKIBS staff for all administrative and organisational issues (i.e. contracts and finance, organization of travel, security, translation of documents, and so on).

The key **steps** put in place for the quality assurance of all evaluation deliverables are:

- ✓ Document consolidation by Team Leader;
- ✓ Coordination by the Evaluation Manager;
- ✓ Quality Assurance control by the Quality Advisor;

- ✓ Final proof reading and editing. The reports will always be reviewed and consolidated by the evaluation team according to the quality assurance feedback.

In addition to the above-described quality system, each evaluation team is continuously supported by **backstopping staff**, providing efficient and comprehensive support for all administrative and organisational issues, including contractual matters, travels and accommodation, visa needs, insurance and security arrangements, translation of documents, timely payment of invoices, and so on. We are indeed well aware of the paramount importance that all these elements can have on the experts' professional performance and thus on the smooth implementation of the overall evaluation exercise.

Ongoing contact and monitoring: In addition to the above-described quality system, the evaluation team will be continuously supported by Lattanzio staff for all administrative and organisational issues (i.e. any problem related to security, any visa needs, translation of documents, accommodation, contractual matters, and so on).

A detailed timeline of the Evaluation is enclosed below.

As mentioned above (4.1.), the Evaluation Team is relying upon UNICEF's support in identifying relevant sources of information, as well as accessing and collecting documents and data for the desk review. UNICEF's inputs are deemed to be crucial also in supporting the Evaluation Team in the identification of stakeholders, and in prioritizing the ones who should be included among respondents for individual interviews.

At the outset of the data collection phase, the Evaluation Team will start defining the organizational aspect of the interviews. During this phase, the Team will put together a detailed work plan for the data collection and a precise itinerary for the field work travel and meeting schedules. During this period, the Evaluation Team will gather at some online meetings, conducted by the Team Leader, in order to go through the data collection tools and reach a shared understanding of the work to be conducted during this phase.

The Evaluation Team will kindly expect some logistics and practical support from UNICEF Montenegro.

Phases and main activities	Tentative Date(s)
INCEPTION PHASE	
Award and contract signature	31/10
Kick off meeting (remote)	07/11
Initial Desk review and inception interviews	07/11-21/11
Data collection tools elaboration	07/11-21/11
Development of the EVA matrix and revised EQs	13/11-21/11
Drafting of Inception Report (IR)	07/11-01/12
Submission of 1st Draft IR	December 1st
<i>UNICEF Comments</i>	01/12-12/12
<i>Ethics Review</i>	12/12-03/01
<i>UNICEF External Quality Review</i>	03/01-18/01
Revision of draft IR	18/01-26/01
Finalisation and submission of final IR	January 26th
DATA COLLECTION PHASE	
Fieldwork preparation and in-depth desk review	29/01-16/02
Remote data collection	05/02-16/02
TL in-country presence for data collection	28/02-01/03
In-country data collection	26/02-01/03
Debriefing (remote)	06/03
REPORTING PHASE	
Data analysis and triangulation	01/03-15/03
Drafting of the draft evaluation report + PPT	04/03-25/03
Submission of 1° Draft of the evaluation report	March 25th
<i>UNICEF comments</i>	25/03-08/04
<i>UNICEF External Quality Review</i>	08/04-15/04
Revision of the 1° draft	15/04-26/04
Submission of 2° Draft Evaluation Report	April 26th
Presentation of conclusions and recommendations (remote)	02/05
<i>UNICEF and stakeholders feedback</i>	02/05-10/05
<i>UNICEF External Quality Review</i>	10/05-20/05
Revision of the 2nd draft	20/05-31/05
Finalisation and submission of the Final Evaluation Report	May 31st

Specifically, the Evaluation Team is expecting UNICEF's support in being introduced to the different stakeholders who will be identified for individual interviews, and in engaging stakeholders who may initially not be very responsive.

Annexes

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Annex II – Evaluation ToR



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pdf

Annex III – Individual Interview Consent Form

The template below is designed for the individual interviews with adult stakeholders involved in the Evaluation. Each respondent will be required to sign it at the outset of the interview²⁵.

The consent form is not only about respondent to give permission to be involved in the data collection phase. It is an agreement between the evaluators and the participants outlining the roles and responsibilities that they are taking towards each other concerning their involvement in the Evaluation.

Both the evaluators and the participant should retain a copy of the consent form, signed by both parties.

²⁵ Or to provide verbal consent, in case of online interviews.

Individual Interview Consent Form

I agree to participate in an individual interview in the context of the Evaluation of the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019-2023.

The purpose and nature of the Evaluation have been clearly explained to me. I understand that the Evaluation aims to assess the results of the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019-2023, and that as part of the Evaluation process, individual interviews with key informants – selected among governmental institutions and other organizations – are envisaged. I understand that UNICEF's role in the Evaluation is to select and manage the external evaluation team, liaising with the Government of Montenegro.

I understand that the information shared by me during the interview will be used only for the purposes of the above-mentioned Evaluation. I understand that all information I provide for the Evaluation will be treated confidentially, related files will be stored in a safe location, and destroyed after the completion of the Evaluation.

I understand that the interview will take about 60-90 minutes.

I am aware that my participation in this study may not benefit myself directly, but it may benefit others. I understand my responses will improve Government of Montenegro and UNICEF's work and understanding about ways to provide better services.

I am aware that my participation in this study is voluntary. I am aware that I am entitled to end my participation to the discussion at any point in time, or ask for a break. I am also aware that do not need to answer all questions if I am not comfortable doing so for any reasons, and that in any case, I do not need to provide explanations about my choices, and that there will be no whatsoever consequences for my choices.

We do not see any risks in your participation. However, if you have any concerns regarding the way the interview was conducted, or any other concern regarding your participation in this study, please contact Nela Krnic at nkrnic@unicef.org.

I agree that the materials shared by me as part of the meeting will be retained by Evaluators and used solely for the purposes of the Evaluation, stored in a safe location, and destroyed after the completion of the Evaluation.

I am also aware that I shall feel free to contact Ms. Aleksandra Gligorovič at the following e-mail address: aleksandragligorovic.mne@gmail.com or phone number: +382 67 223 562 or Ms. Nela Krnic at the following email address: nkrnic@unicef.org if I have any further questions, issues or concern regarding my participation or the Evaluation process.

Respondent's name and surname:

Respondent's signature:

.....

Evaluator's name and surname:

Evaluator's signature:

.....

Place, Date

.....

Annex IV – Informed Consent Form for children taking part in the evaluation’s survey

The template below is designed for the survey with children and young persons involved in the Evaluation. The points listed on the template below may be altered in order to suit the specific context in which the survey will be administered.

The consent form is not only about respondent(s) to give permission to be involved in the data collection phase. It is an agreement between the evaluators and the participants outlining the roles and responsibilities that they are taking towards each other concerning their involvement in the Evaluation.

Both the evaluators and the participants should retain a copy of the consent form, signed by both parties.

Survey Consent Form

I agree to participate to a survey in the context of the Evaluation of the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019-2023.

The purpose and nature of the Evaluation have been clearly explained to me. I understand that the Evaluation aims to assess the results of the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019-2023, and that as part of the Evaluation process, a survey with children and young people is foreseen. I understand that UNICEF is supervising the evaluation process, together with the Government of Montenegro.

I understand that the information shared by me through the survey will be used only for the purposes of the above-mentioned Evaluation. I understand that all information I provide for the Evaluation will be treated confidentially, related files will be stored in a safe location, and destroyed after the completion of the Evaluation.

I understand that filling in the questionnaire will take about 10-15 minutes.

I am aware that my participation in this study may not benefit myself directly, but it may benefit others. I understand that my responses will improve Government of Montenegro and UNICEF's work and understanding about ways to provide better services.

I am aware that my participation in this study is voluntary. I am aware that I am entitled to end my participation to the survey at any point in time, or not to answer certain questions, that I do not need to provide explanations as for why I do so, and that there will be no whatsoever consequences for my choices.

We do not see any risks in your participation. However, if you have any concerns regarding the way the survey was conducted, or any other concern regarding your participation in this study, please contact Nela Krnic at nkrnic@unicef.org.

I agree that the materials shared by me as part of the survey will be retained by Evaluators and used solely for the purposes of the Evaluation, stored in a safe location, and destroyed after the completion of the Evaluation.

I am also aware that I shall feel free to contact Ms. Aleksandra Gligorovič at the following e-mail address: aleksandragligorovic.mne@gmail.com or phone number: +382 67 223 562 or Ms. Nela Krnic at the following email address: nkrnic@unicef.org if I have any further questions, issues or concern regarding my participation or the Evaluation process.

Respondent's name and surname:

Respondent's signature:

.....

Evaluator's name and surname:

Evaluator's signature:

.....

Place, Date

.....

Annex V – Interview Protocol and Guiding Questions

This sub-section provides:

- An introduction scheme for the individual interviews, to be tailored on the different stakeholders interviewed;
- An individual interview cover sheet template, that will be used to record and file interview transcripts;
- A scheme for closing the individual interview.
- A list of guiding questions for each group of interviewees;

Introduction

At the outset of the interview, the Evaluator will clearly introduce herself (and other members of the Evaluation Team if any attending), the purpose and scope of the Evaluation, and the format and contents of the interview.

Standard introduction scheme includes:

- Good morning/afternoon, my name is [Evaluator's name and surname] and I am working as independent consultant hired by UNICEF Montenegro Country Office through the company Lattanzio KIBS;
- I am conducting this interview in the context of the external end-of-programme Evaluation of the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019-2023;
- The aims of the Evaluation are:
 1. To assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child.
 2. To identify factors that contributed to or hindered successful implementation (for example: the COVID-19 pandemic, and how this affected implementation).
 3. To assess the extent to which the Strategy implementation and monitoring have been inclusive of children and young people, their families and communities.
 4. To provide recommendations for future planning in the area of child rights.
- The Evaluation will analyze Strategy-related documents and interview a list of selected key informants at the national and local level in Montenegro. The main output of this exercise will be an Evaluation Report, summarizing main findings;
- The interview is estimated to take about an hour to an hour and a half;
- You do not need to answer all questions if you are not comfortable doing so, for any reason;
- You can stop the interview at any time, or ask for a break;
- Our conversation is confidential: no information will be shared with anyone outside the Evaluation Team. We would like to present quotes and examples in the Evaluation Report, but these will be anonymized: our respondents will be solely referred to according to the broad group they belong to - national authorities; local authorities; NGOs or CSOs; children and youth; followed by a number, whose corresponding names and other details are known only to the Evaluation Team. Do you have any concerns or questions regarding the interview that we have not addressed yet?

- Do you still agree with the interview? I would like to remind you that if, for any reason that you do not need to explain, you want to leave the discussion, you can do so at any point in time.

Table 3. Interview cover sheet template

<p>Number of interview: [For example: No.1]</p> <p><i>(Confidential)</i></p> <p>Name and surname of the interviewee:</p> <p>Organization:</p> <p>Position:</p> <p>Date of the interview:</p> <p>Duration:</p> <p>Preferences regarding attribution of quotes:</p> <p>Other information:</p>

Closing

At the end of the individual interview, the following points will be covered:

- Thank you very much for taking your time, and for sharing your opinion with me/us. This is very valuable for us and for UNICEF Montenegro, and will bring significant value to the Evaluation efforts;
- For any further questions or doubts, you may contact me at: [share Evaluator's contact details];
- The Evaluation will result in a written report. This will be shared with you:
 - 1) For members of the Evaluation Reference Group: in draft form, for you to provide inputs and comments, and as final Evaluation Report;
 - 2) For all other interviewees: as final Evaluation Report.

Guiding questions for National Authorities

(Relevance)

- Who designed/contributed to the design of the Strategy? In the Strategy document (p.8-9) it is written that a Working Group was set up, supported by UNICEF Consultant who provided technical assistance. Could you tell us a bit more about this process?

- According to the Strategy document, there was a representative of a Municipality at the above-Working Group: was there only one? Was there a mechanism in place to collect inputs from local authorities across the country?
- According to the Strategy document, there was a representative of the NGO sector as well: was there only one? Was there a mechanism to collect inputs from the NGO sector? (If yes, which one? How did it work?)
- About 100 children were allegedly consulted during the identification and design stage (p.98 Strategy) – Who were they? How were they selected and involved, at which point and to which extent? What were the age-ranges represented? Was gender diversity achieved? Were children from marginalized groups involved in the consultation process? Thus, children were involved in consultations, but then one (two) child representative(s) was (were) also member of the drafting Working Group? How were they selected?
- Were children involved in consultations informed about the outcomes of their inputs (the Strategy document)? If yes, how (e.g. child friendly version of the Strategy; feedback workshops; etc.)?
- How was the Strategy designed? Would you please take a moment to focus and go back to the identification and design phase, and walk us through the steps that you and the other stakeholders involved in the design undertook – from start through to the Strategy finalization and publication?
 - Did you have a real opportunity to brainstorm, to explore in-depth, to look at the bigger picture, to share and challenge assumptions about how change takes place etc.? How did you do that (one or several formal meetings? drawing together? other?)
 - Situation analysis: What did this cover? (E.g.: a) stakeholders' analysis; b) power analysis; c) gender analysis?)
 - It is true that the Strategy is comprehensive, in that it addresses the whole range of fundamental rights for all children in Montenegro. However, you could not fix all the problems, nor achieve all desired changes, in a given period of time (five years), with a given amount of resources. Therefore, how did you identify what were the priority issues and domains on which the Strategy should focus?
 - Was the Strategy ever formally revised? (Why yes/not?)
 - Did you look at child rights strategies (on children rights, or for instance on combating violence against children and so on) from other countries for inspiration? If yes, which ones?
 - There is not a (visually represented) Theory of Change as such in the Strategy document. May I ask you whether you thought at some point to develop a Strategy TOC, and what prevented you from doing so in case?
 - What were the assumptions you made about the context, actors and factors at play? What are the assumptions you made related to the pathways of change?
 - In the Strategy document, there are: a) Three Strategic Goals; b) 10 Operational Objectives; c) 44 Performance Indicators for the different operational objectives (with baseline value, half-way target, and final target – very articulate!); and then d) a series of Activities under each objective. How about intermediate outcomes?

(Coherence – internal)

- Did the Strategy reach out to the most marginalized children in Montenegro? How?
- What results did the Strategy achieve in relation to marginalized groups of children?
- How did the Strategy account for the different needs of boys and girls?

- How did the Strategy challenge existing gender stereotypes, gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence?
- Did children participate in the implementation phase? How?
- Did children participate in monitoring progress and outcomes achieved by the Strategy? How?

(Coherence – external)

- Prior to the 2019-2023 Child Rights Strategy, you had several sectoral strategies – including: on inclusive education; on early and pre-school education; on child protection; etc. What did change by having one whole Strategy addressing children’s rights in Montenegro?
- How did the implementation of the Strategy function? Did national authorities and other stakeholders cooperate? If yes, how?
- Did the implementation of the Strategy have a coordination mechanism? If yes, how often did the Group meet? How would you assess the coordination of the different actions envisaged by the Strategy?
- Monitoring and reporting: how was this performed? How often? What could be improved in future?

(Effectiveness)

- Are there other monitoring data/reports relating to progress and outcomes achieved by the Strategy, besides the report referring to year 1 (2019-2020)? If not, why?
- Was an impact monitoring system and plan established? If not, why?
- What are, in your view, the Strategy’s key achievements?
- Did these achievements work out differently for girls and boys and for different groups of the population?
- [Further, specific questions, depending on the institution’s main responsibility in relation to the Strategy implementation]
- What were, in your view, the main factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the Strategy’s objectives?

(Efficiency)

- How did the Strategy resource allocation work?
- The budget is not detailed; are there more detailed budgets for implementation?
- Would you be able to provide an account of the resources that, overall, were allocated to implement the Strategy? Did you report on the expenditures related to the Strategy implementation? (How/to whom?)
- Do you believe that the resources (human; financial) allocated to implement the Strategy were adequate? Too low/high?
- Were there inefficiencies in the implementation phase, related – in particular – to lack of coordination? Other factors?

(Impact)

- (How) do you think that the Strategy has advanced the realization of children's rights in Montenegro? What makes you believe that?
- Are there any interventions delivered as part of the Strategy that you would recognize as good or promising practices, and that could be in your view replicated or transferred? If yes, why (based on which criteria do you recognize such good or promising practices)?

(Sustainability)

- What is your institution planning to do in order to further attain children's rights in Montenegro?
- What should the different actors in charge to fulfil children's rights in Montenegro do in order to ensure that the progress achieved by the Strategy will be maintained in future, and that further advancements will be built on the Strategy's results?
- What are the main factors affecting the Strategy's sustainability, and how?

Guiding questions for UNICEF Staff

(Relevance)

- Who designed/contributed to the design of the Strategy? In the Strategy document (p.8-9) it is written that a Working Group was set up, supported by UNICEF Consultant who provided technical assistance. Could you tell us a bit more about this process?
- According to the Strategy document, there was a representative of a Municipality at the above-Working Group: was there only one? Was there a mechanism in place to collect inputs from local authorities across the country?
- According to the Strategy document, there was a representative of the NGO sector as well: was there only one? Was there a mechanism to collect inputs from the NGO sector? (If yes, which one? How did it work?)
- About 100 children were allegedly consulted during the identification and design stage (p.98 Strategy) – Who were they? How were they selected and involved, at which point and to which extent? What were the age-ranges represented? Was gender diversity achieved? Were children from marginalized groups involved in the consultation process? Thus, children were involved in consultations, but then one (two) child representative(s) was (were) also member of the drafting Working Group? How were they selected?
- Were children involved in consultations informed about the outcomes of their inputs (the Strategy document)? If yes, how (e.g. child friendly version of the Strategy; feedback workshops; etc.)?
- How was the Strategy designed? Would you please take a moment to focus and go back to the identification and design phase, and walk us through the steps that you and the other stakeholders involved in the design undertook – from start through to the Strategy finalization and publication?
 - Did you have a real opportunity to brainstorm, to explore in-depth, to look at the bigger picture, to share and challenge assumptions about how change takes place etc.? How did you do that (one or several formal meetings? drawing together? other?)
 - Situation analysis: What did this cover? (E.g.: a) stakeholders' analysis; b) power analysis; c) gender analysis?)
 - It is true that the Strategy is comprehensive, in that it addresses the whole range of fundamental rights for all children in Montenegro. However, you could not fix all the problems, nor achieve all

desired changes, in a given period of time (five years), with a given amount of resources. Therefore, how did you identify what were the priority issues and domains on which the Strategy should focus?

- Was the Strategy ever formally revised? (Why yes/not?)
- Did you look at child rights strategies (on children rights, or for instance on combating violence against children and so on) from other countries for inspiration? If yes, which ones?
- There is not a (visually represented) Theory of Change as such in the Strategy document. May I ask you whether you thought at some point to develop a Strategy TOC, and what prevented you from doing so in case?
- What were the assumptions you made about the context, actors and factors at play? What are the assumptions you made related to the pathways of change?
- In the Strategy document, there are: a) Three Strategic Goals; b) 10 Operational Objectives; c) 44 Performance Indicators for the different operational objectives (with baseline value, half-way target, and final target – very articulate!); and then d) a series of Activities under each objective. How about intermediate outcomes?

(Coherence – internal)

- Did the Strategy reach out to the most marginalized children in Montenegro? How?
- What results did the Strategy achieve in relation to marginalized groups of children?
- How did the Strategy account for the different needs of boys and girls?
- How did the Strategy challenge existing gender stereotypes, gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence?
- Did children participate in the implementation phase? How?
- Did children participate in monitoring progress and outcomes achieved by the Strategy? How?

(Coherence – external)

- How did the implementation of the Strategy function? Did national authorities and other stakeholders cooperate? If yes, how?
- Did the implementation of the Strategy have a coordination mechanism? If yes, how often did the Group meet? How would you assess the coordination of the different actions envisaged by the Strategy?
- Monitoring and reporting: how was this performed? How often? What could be improved in future?

(Effectiveness)

- Are there other monitoring data/reports relating to progress and outcomes achieved by the Strategy, besides the report referring to year 1 (2019-2020)? If not, why?
- Was an impact monitoring system and plan established? If not, why?
- What were, in your view, the Strategy's key achievements?
- Did these achievements work out differently for girls and boys and for different groups of the population?
- What was UNICEF's role in relation to the Strategy, across all its phases?

- What are, in your view, the main factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the Strategy's objectives?

(Efficiency)

- How did the Strategy resource allocation work?
- The budget is not detailed, are there more detailed budgets for implementation? If not, why wasn't the implementation phase more accurately reflected in the budget?
- Do you believe that the resources (human; financial) allocated to implement the Strategy were adequate? Too low/high?
- Were there inefficiencies in the implementation phase, related – in particular – to lack of coordination? Other factors?

(Impact)

- (How) do you think that the Strategy has advanced the realization of children's rights in Montenegro? What makes you believe that?
- What are the main priority issues in the area of children's rights that have not been addressed by the Strategy, that require most attention in the near future?
- Are there any interventions delivered as part of the Strategy that you would recognize as good or promising practices, and that could be in your view replicated or transferred? If yes, why (based on which criteria do you recognize such good or promising practices)?

(Sustainability)

- What should the different actors in charge to fulfil children's rights in Montenegro do in order to ensure that the progress achieved by the Strategy will be maintained in future, and that further advancements will be built on the Strategy's results?
- What are the main factors affecting the Strategy's sustainability, and how?

Guiding questions for Local Authorities

(Relevance)

- In your view, does the Strategy design reflect the priority needs in terms of realization of children's rights in Montenegro – at the time when it was designed, and throughout the five years of implementation?
- Did you and other local authorities have a say in the design of the Strategy? If yes, how? Are you satisfied with the degree of participation of local authorities to the design stage?

(Coherence – internal)

- Did the Strategy reach out to the most marginalized children in Montenegro? How?
- Are there groups of children that have not benefited from the Strategy?

- What results did the Strategy achieve in relation to marginalized groups of children?
- How did the Strategy account for the different needs of boys and girls?
- How did the Strategy challenge existing gender stereotypes, gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence?

(Coherence – external)

- Prior to the 2019-2023 Child Rights Strategy, you had several sectoral strategies – including: on inclusive education; on early and pre-school education; on child protection; etc. What did change by having one whole Strategy addressing children’s rights in Montenegro?
- How did the implementation of the Strategy function? Did national authorities and local authorities cooperate? If yes, how?
- Did the implementation of the Strategy have a coordination mechanism? If yes, how often did the Group meet? How would you assess the coordination of the different actions envisaged by the Strategy?

(Efficiency)

- Do you believe that the resources (human; financial) allocated to implement the Strategy were adequate? Too low/high?
- In your views, were there inefficiencies in the Strategy implementation phase? If yes, what factors created such inefficiencies?

(Impact)

- (How) do you think that the Strategy has advanced the realization of children’s rights in Montenegro? What makes you believe that?
- Are there any interventions delivered as part of the Strategy that you would recognize as good or promising practices, and that could be in your view replicated or transferred? If yes, why (based on which criteria do you recognize such good or promising practices)?

(Sustainability)

- What should the different actors in charge to fulfil children’s rights in Montenegro do in order to ensure that the progress achieved by the Strategy will be maintained in future, and that further advancements will be built on the Strategy’s results?
- What are the main factors affecting the Strategy’s sustainability, and how?

Guiding questions for NGOs and CSOs

(Relevance)

- In your view, does the Strategy design reflect the priority needs in terms of realization of children’s rights in Montenegro – at the time when it was designed, and throughout the five years of implementation?

- Did you and other NGOs/CSOs have a say in the design of the Strategy? If yes, how? Are you satisfied with the degree of participation of local authorities to the design stage?

(Coherence – internal)

- Did the Strategy reach out to the most marginalized children in Montenegro? How?
- Are there groups of children that have not benefited from the Strategy?
- What results did the Strategy achieve in relation to marginalized groups of children?
- How did the Strategy account for the different needs of boys and girls?
- How did the Strategy challenge existing gender stereotypes, gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence?

(Coherence – external)

- Prior to the 2019-2023 Child Rights Strategy, you had several sectoral strategies – including: on inclusive education; on early and pre-school education; on child protection; etc. What did change by having one whole Strategy addressing children's rights in Montenegro?
- How did the implementation of the Strategy function? Did national authorities, other stakeholders and NGOs/CSOs cooperate? If yes, how?
- Did the implementation of the Strategy have a coordination mechanism? If yes, how often did the Group meet? How would you assess the coordination of the different actions envisaged by the Strategy?

(Efficiency)

- Do you believe that the resources (human; financial) allocated to implement the Strategy were adequate? Too low/high?
- In your views, were there inefficiencies in the Strategy implementation phase? If yes, what factors created such inefficiencies?

(Impact)

- (How) do you think that the Strategy has advanced the realization of children's rights in Montenegro? What makes you believe that?
- Are there any interventions delivered as part of the Strategy that you would recognize as good or promising practices, and that could be in your view replicated or transferred? If yes, why (based on which criteria do you recognize such good or promising practices)?

(Sustainability)

- What should the different actors in charge to fulfil children's rights in Montenegro do in order to ensure that the progress achieved by the Strategy will be maintained in future, and that further advancements will be built on the Strategy's results?

Questionnaire for children and young people

Hello!

We invite you to fill in this Questionnaire because the **Government of Montenegro** together with UNICEF want to find out about your opinion on the situation of children's rights in Montenegro. In 2019, the Government of Montenegro adopted a **Strategy for exercising the rights of the child** in the country. The Strategy is coming to an end, and an Evaluation Team (that is, a team of four independent evaluators) has been asked to find out **what worked and what did not work** about it.

Therefore, **we kindly invite you to answer to the questions below**. Answering the whole questionnaire should take **about 10-15 minutes**.

With the data gathered from you and all the other child and youth respondents, we will produce a report, named **"Evaluation Report"** of the child rights strategy, that should be used by all decision-makers to follow up on what you recommend us today.

All data collected will be treated confidentially: this means that no identifying information (that is, information about your age, place where you live etc.) will be included in any document, nor will it be disclosed with anyone outside the members of the Evaluation Team.

Your views and perspectives will be extremely useful for the successful accomplishment of our Evaluation. We **thank you very much** in advance for your time and dedication! We will make sure that we share with you what we found out!

1. Involvement in the Strategy on children's rights in Montenegro

1. As far as you know, have you ever been involved in activities to implement the Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child in Montenegro (2019-2023)?

Yes

No

Don't know/remember

Prefer not to answer

2. If yes, where did that occur?

School

Association

Other (please, describe)

Don't know/remember

Prefer not to answer

3. If yes, how often were you involved in the above activities?

Only once

Sometimes

Often

Very often

Don't know/remember

Prefer not to answer

4. How much do you think you know about children's rights – in general, and in Montenegro?

- Almost nothing
- A little bit
- Quite a bit
- A lot

- Don't know/remember
- Prefer not to answer

2. Assessment of the situation of children's rights in Montenegro

5. Do you think that children of different age-groups and living in different situations are protected from violence in Montenegro (occurring in the society, community, family or at home)?

- Not at all
- A little bit
- Sufficiently
- A lot

- Don't know/remember
- Prefer not to answer

6. Do you believe that children and young people have access to education opportunities that meet their capacities, skills and desires in Montenegro?

- Never or almost never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Always or almost always

- Don't know/remember
- Prefer not to answer

7. Do you believe that children and young people in Montenegro have access to physical and mental health care according to good quality standards?

- Never or almost never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Always or almost always

- Don't know/remember
- Prefer not to answer

8. Do you think that you and your peers are involved, by relevant institutions and organizations, in decisions affecting you?

- Never or almost never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Always or almost always

- Don't know/remember
- Prefer not to answer

3. Assessment of the response by decision-makers

5. How much do you think you know about the institutions in charge of fulfilling children's rights in

Montenegro, and what they concretely do?

Almost nothing

A little bit

Quite a bit

A lot

Don't know/remember

Prefer not to answer

6. What are in your view – if any – the obstacles in fulfilling children's rights in Montenegro?

Lack of financial resources

Limited capacity and knowledge among decision-makers

Lack of political will by decision-makers

A combination of the above

Other (please, specify):

Don't know/remember

Prefer not to answer

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Annex II - List of participants in individual interviews and FGDs

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Annex V – Main Evaluation Tools (e.g.: Questionnaires; Forms; etc.)

Annex VII – Key Terms and Definitions

For the purpose of this Evaluation, the following definitions are adopted. For easier reading, definitions of criteria applied to the Evaluation have been included in the section on ‘Evaluation Framework’ (paragraph 3.1).

Activities are all the specific actions that make up an intervention. (Taplin, D.H., 2012: 6).

Adolescents is defined as the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. (WHO, no date).

Assumptions are hypotheses about factors or risks which could affect the progress or success of a development intervention. (OECD, 2002:16)²⁶. Unlike a precondition, an assumption is a condition or resource that is already in place and does not need to be brought about. (Center for Theory of Change, no date).

Baseline-study is an analysis describing the situation prior to a development intervention, against which progress can be assessed or comparisons made. (OECD, 2002:18).

Beneficiaries are defined as the individuals, groups, or organizations, whether targeted or not, that benefit directly or indirectly, from the development intervention. (OECD/DAC Evaluation Network, 2019:7).

A **child** is any person under the age of 18 years²⁷.

Child protection refers to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children, including sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labor and harmful traditional practices. (UNICEF, 2006).

Confidentiality is the process of protecting an individual’s privacy. It pertains to the treatment of information that an individual has disclosed in a relationship of trust, with the expectation that this information will not be divulged to others without permission. (UNICEF, 2015a:2).

Ethics is defined as the right or agreed principles and values that govern the behavior of an individual within the specific, culturally defined context within which an evaluation is commissioned or undertaken. (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2020:4).

An **evaluation** is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria [...]. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders. (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2017:10).

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them. (UN WOMEN, 2014:46).

Gender equality entails the concept that all human beings, both women and men, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. (UN WOMEN, 2014:46).

²⁶ Assumptions are in turn based in belief systems: notions and ideas that are so familiar or internalized that we take them for granted. These can be personal, but can also be collective convictions of a specific organization or group. (Hivos, 2015: 22).

²⁷ Art.1, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

A **human rights-based approach** is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress. (UN OHCHR, 2006:15).

Impact refers to the positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effect produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. (OECD, 2002:24).

An **indicator** is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor. (OECD, 2002:25).

Intervention refers to the subject of the Evaluation. (OECD/DAC Evaluation Network, 2019:5).

Justifications are statements about why it is expected that one set of outcomes will lead to another. Justifications are often based on research, but may also come from past experience, common sense, or knowledge of the specific context. (Center for Theory of Change, no date).

Monitoring is a continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds. (OECD, 2002:27-28).

Outcomes are the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs. (OECD, 2002:28).

Outputs are the products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes. (OECD, 2002:28).

A **pathway** is the sequence in which outcomes must occur to reach the intervention's long-term goal. They represent a causal logic, since each level along the pathway depicts the chain of outcomes that must come into being for the next outcome up the chain to be achieved. (Taplin, D.H. et al., 2012: 3).

Preconditions refer to all [outcomes](#), except the [long-term outcome](#). These are called preconditions because they are conditions that must exist in order for the next outcome in the pathway to be achieved. (Center for Theory of Change, no date).

Primary data are new data created via first-hand collection. (UNICEF, 2015a:4). A source of primary data can be a document written, or an interview/focus group discussion recorded during the field work; or a document obtained as raw data (i.e. which has not been analyzed, assessed or published) directly from the individual or organization that produced it (such as: statistics on victims of trafficking; eye-witness testimonies; legislative drafts: etc.)

Rationales in a theory of change explain the logical connections behind each causal relationship on the pathway between the outcomes and why one outcome is needed to achieve another. (Taplin, D.H. et al., 2012: 1, 5).

Secondary data is information gathered from pre-existing sources or databases. (UNICEF, 2015a:4).

A **stakeholder** is considered as anyone who has the responsibility, capacity or opportunity to work on children's rights in Montenegro. While it is indeed acknowledged that children, adolescents and young persons – as well as their families and communities – do have a stake in child rights policies and practices,

the term “stakeholder” (also referred to as “informant” or “respondent” in the context of data collection) here indicates adult representatives of institutions or organizations, as well as independent experts²⁸.

Theories of change are the ideas and hypotheses (‘theories’) people and organisations have about how change happens. These theories can be conscious or unconscious and are based on personal beliefs, assumptions and a necessarily limited, personal perception of reality. (Hivos, 2015: 12). In other words, a theory of change explains how activities are understood to produce a series of results that contribute to achieving the final intended impact. (UNICEF, 2014: 1). A theory of change as an approach is *a guiding framework for all stages of thinking, action and sense-making* when we intervene intentionally in social change processes. (Hivos, 2015: 12). In terms of product, a theory of change is intended as a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context (UNFPA, 2017:2).

Trafficking in persons is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (IOM, 2019:217).²⁹

Youth/young persons are those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. While recognizing that the definition of youth is more fluid than other definitions (as it essentially refers to the period of transition from the childhood to adulthood) and may change with circumstances - especially with the changes in demographic, financial, economic and socio-cultural settings - for the purpose of this Report, the definition that uses 15- 24 age cohort as youth is maintained. (UNESCO, no date; UNDESA, no date).

²⁸ For the purpose of this Report, the term “stakeholder” refers to a person or entity that has a concern in the initiative being evaluated or the change process and an interest in its success. Instead, the term “actor” is more generally used to refer to a person or entity that has an influence on the initiative and related change process, but may be indifferent to its success, or even ignorant of the change initiative or process. (Hivos, 2015: 11).

²⁹ The definition is based on Article 3 of the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*.

Annex VIII – Informative note to UNICEF’s partner organizations



Lattanzio
KIBS_UNICEF Monten

Annex IX – Ethics Review Approval Letter

unicef  | for every child

Research Ethics Approval

12 January 2024

Maria Antonia Di Maio, Team Leader
Lattanzio KIBS
Via Domenico Cimarosa, 4 (20144)
Milan, Italy

RE: Ethics Review Board findings for: *Evaluation of the "Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019-2023" in Montenegro* (HML IRB Review #830MONT23)

Dear Maria Antonia Di Maio,

Protocols for the protection of human subjects in the above study were assessed through a research ethics review by HML Institutional Review Board (IRB) on 26 December 2023 – 12 January 2024. This study's human subjects' protection protocols, as stated in the materials submitted, received ethics review approval.

You and your project staff remain responsible for ensuring compliance with HML IRB's determinations. Those responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- ensuring prompt reporting to HML IRB of proposed changes in this study's design, risks, consent, or other human protection protocols and providing copies of any revised materials;
- conducting the research activity in accordance with the terms of the IRB approval until any proposed changes have been reviewed and approved by the IRB, except when necessary to mitigate hazards to subjects;
- promptly reporting any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others in the course of this study;
- notifying HML IRB when your study is completed.

HML IRB is authorized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Research Protections (IRB #1211, IORG #850, FWA #1102).

Sincerely,



D. Michael Anderson, Ph.D., MPH
Chair & Human Subjects Protections Director, HML IRB

cc: Zeljka Popovic; Nela Krnic; Jadranka Vucinic; Penelope Lantz, JD

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ⁱ EU SILC, 2023