



## Evaluation of the UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Programme 2018 – 2023: Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu

UNICEF Pacific  
December 2024

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United Nations Children’s Fund  
Three United Nations Plaza  
New York, New York 10017

December 2024

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ensuring that children grow up in protective environments is a fundamental duty of families, communities and societies. Safety and security of children is also a key priority for all governments, and an area of focused attention for sustainable development that is elemental to survival, thriving, mental wellbeing, learning and to the ability of children to attain their full potential.

The protection of children is firmly enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): protecting children from abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and violence (SDG 16.2); addressing violence against children, including child marriage, child labour, and child trafficking (SDG 13); and, ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages (SDG3). It is also an important consideration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other key international human rights instruments outlined in States' responsibilities to protect children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

UNICEF Pacific has a robust Child Protection programme that has benefitted from evaluative evidence. For that reason, the office commissioned an evaluation of the Child Protection programme that was implemented from 2018 to 2023. The evaluation set out to understand whether the programme was aligned with needs of beneficiaries and stakeholders, whether the interventions, activities and strategies that UNICEF and its partners have implemented or supported were achieving the intended objectives, whether resources were being used efficiently, and whether progress towards enhancing the protection of children would be sustained beyond UNICEF inputs and support. The evaluation focussed on Child protection programmes in four Pacific Island countries – Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

The evaluation found, *inter alia*, that the programme made considerable positive progress in enhancing the protection of children in Samoa, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Kiribati, protecting them from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. There is broad consensus that the programme introduced innovative strategies in addressing child protection needs, and that the support rendered by UNICEF Pacific cultivated more demand for child protection services, and extended capacities and efforts of the aforementioned governments to meet that demand.

To enhance its effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, the evaluation recommended that more efforts should be directed at refining programme strategies, with particular attention given to the effective implementation of initiatives and to strengthen the approach to identifying and managing partnerships. UNICEF was also challenged to deepen the knowledge and understanding of local traditions and customs that are protective of children, and to integrate those into child protection programme strategies, practices and messaging, as well as to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation activities to better leverage data and inform the success of the programme. Many of the proposed programmatic shifts are already being implemented.

The evaluation was executed by a team of evaluators from PS Services, comprising of Ingrid van Aalst, Iain Matheson, and Chris Daly, and national evaluators from each of the four countries as follows: Janet Saeni-Oeta (Solomon Islands), Lisa Faerua (Vanuatu), Margaret Sapolu Lamositele-Sio (Samoa) and Tokintekai Bakineti (Kiribati). On behalf of the UNICEF Pacific Office, I would like to thank the PS team for their interest in UNICEF work and for executing the evaluation to its conclusion, and for challenging UNICEF Pacific embrace new ways of thinking about the protection of children.

The evaluation also received invaluable inputs and support from government counterparts, partners, and stakeholders in Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Contributors included senior managers/officials with mandates for Child Protection in government ministries, chairpersons of national

coordinating committees with a focus on national CP systems and processes, independent bodies that monitor performance in protecting the rights of children for their respective governments, networks of implementing partners, and communities that participated in or benefitted from programme interventions. The evaluation also received input from UNICEF programme development partners and CP stakeholders including the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), UNFPA, UN Women, Save the Children Fund, ChildFund Alliance members, and Pacific Council of Churches, among others. We value the contribution of every of the individual, office, and organization.

I would also like to extend our gratitude to my colleagues in the UNICEF Pacific Office. Michael Copland (Chief, Child Protection), the UNICEF Pacific Child Protection team in Fiji, and in Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, the Chiefs of Field Offices – all engaged productively with the evaluation team and provided logistical support where required. Ali Safarnejad, the Evaluation Specialist, conceptualized the evaluation approach, managed the evaluation and provided extensive inputs and oversight for the process and in final reporting.

I commend the efforts of everyone that contributed to this evaluation and believe that our partners and stakeholders in the Pacific Region will find the findings, insights and recommendations useful and timely.



Jonathan Veitch  
UNICEF Representative  
Pacific Island Countries

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asia Nations
CP	Child Protection
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EMT	Evaluation Management Team
EVAWC	Ending Violence Against Women and Children
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEHRDI	Gender Equality Human Rights Disability Inclusion
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Non-Government Organisations
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
KDP	Kiribati Development Plans
MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning practices and processes
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
NGO	Non-Government Organisations
PCC	Pacific Conference of Churches
PICT	Pacific Island Countries and Territories
RAM	Results Assessment Module
STC	Save The Children
SW	Social Worker
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund (formerly the United Nations Fund for Population Activities)
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
VAC	Violence Against Children
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

The UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Programme supports 14 Pacific Island countries and territories. Its overall purpose is to “enhance the protection of children against all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation”, with the outcome that “Children in the Pacific are better protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, harmful practices, and psychological distress, including in emergencies”. The programme aims to deliver the following three stated outputs, particularly in target countries:

- Governments have strengthened child protection institutional frameworks.
- Government and other service providers (non-governmental agencies) have enhanced capacities to provide child protection services that prevent and respond to violence and abuse.
- Parents, caregivers and teachers have increased knowledge and skills to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from violence and abuse.

The activities and/or interventions undertaken by the Programme in pursuit of these outputs have varied across the two programme cycles covered, and across respective country work plans.

### Evaluation purpose and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality and human rights-based approach, impact and sustainability of the UNICEF Pacific Child Protection (CP) programme; and to draw lessons and recommendations that improve and enhance the design and implementation for the next phase of the Programme in addressing critical child protection issues, including reducing intergenerational violence cycles. The primary audiences for this evaluation are UNICEF Pacific, particularly the Child Protection Section, and the Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The scope of the evaluation reflects the operation of the programme from 2018 to until data collection started in March 2024. As such the evaluation crosses two UNICEF five-year programme cycles i.e. 2018-2022 and 2023-2027 and three different DFAT funding periods. It is focused on the implementation of the programme in **Kiribati**, **Samoa**, the **Solomon Islands** and **Vanuatu**.

The methodology and data collection featured the following:

- A **documentation review and analysis** covering a range of documentation sources and administrative, monitoring and evaluative data (where available).
- A total of **61 interviews**, involving 79 key informants from government agencies, in-country NGOs, CSOs, CP UNICEF team, and regional development partners and international NGOs.
- **Twelve focus group discussions (FGDs)**, involving 73 participants in the four countries. These groups encompassed front-line practitioners, community leaders; and community members who were involved in a CP programme activity or intervention.

The selection of key informants for the qualitative data collection was purposive and non-random, based on those who play a role in the implementation of the programme and in child rights in the Pacific more broadly. FGD participants were selected from participants in relevant programme interventions.

### Key findings

**Relevance:** The examined the alignment of the UNICEF-supported interventions with Government child protection strategies and priorities; whether UNICEF-supported interventions addressed the needs of beneficiaries; and whether the programme was reflective of the Pacific Region context, including being accommodative of customary practices. Key findings are as follows:

- The CP programme was found to be well-aligned with the child protection strategies and priorities of the four Pacific countries. The overall approaches adopted by the programme - its focus on strengthening the enabling environment, enhancing the capabilities of child protection service providers, and promoting behavioural changes among parents, caregivers and teachers - were found to be relevant for the Pacific programming context, particularly having regard for the relative strengths of the respective Pacific countries' child protection systems.
- While stakeholders were of the general view that the needs of a broad range beneficiary groups are being addressed by the programme the evaluation was not able to make a direct association between programme interventions and strategies for addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups of children, such as children with disabilities. Also, greater coverage of target beneficiary groups is required, as well as determining strategies to adapt to emerging demands, challenges and changing priorities for governments.
- The evaluation also found that programme approaches were relevant for the Pacific programming context, relevant, appropriate and adaptable to the needs, circumstances, and challenges of respective countries. On customary practices, the evaluation concluded that UNICEF made a good faith effort to respond with cultural sensitivity, but from a deficits-based approach, rather than from a more balanced strengths-based orientation, and that the programme could do more to understand and incorporate positive and supportive customary and traditional practices, particularly when engaging with local communities.

**Effectiveness:** On effectiveness, the evaluation set out to determine if UNICEF-supported interventions and activities contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes that are necessary for children to be protected from violence and abuse. An enquiry on effectiveness also examined the results relating to each of the three programme outputs (i.e., strengthening of government child protection institutional frameworks; increasing capacities to provide services that prevent child abuse and neglect; and, increasing awareness, knowledge of caregivers, families and communities and to equip them with skills to enable them to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from violence and abuse).

- The programme made progress in creating positive conditions in the four Pacific countries, and that children were increasingly receiving better protections from violence and abuse. Progress was achieved in all three intended programme outputs in that the legal and policy frameworks are demonstrably more comprehensive, capacities and capabilities of government and other service providers across the four Pacific countries have improved in several key areas, and increased awareness on the rights of children and positive interactions between children and their parents/caregivers and teachers.
- On the other hand, a lack of robust monitoring and evaluation data also limited the ability to confidently determine the degree to which positive change was achieved, and/or whether it will be sustainable.

**Efficiency:** The evaluation examined the efficiency of the CP programme through two questions: whether the programme utilised the best partnership modalities that were available, and the extent to which the choice of partnerships improved coordination necessary to achieve the planned results for child protection.

- Overall, the UNICEF Pacific was regarded as highly credible and as having a significant and often leading role in fostering collaborations, highlighting its leadership in child protection activities, its expertise, the resources that the organization is able to mobilize, and its leadership in establishing clear roles and relationships among stakeholder groups. As a result, the partnership modalities and mechanisms utilised to implement the programme were appropriate for addressing the diverse and complex challenges and helped improve coordination across different stakeholders to achieve progress on improving child protection in the Pacific and brought about the desired efficiencies.



- The evaluation also found that the more effort should be directed towards facilitating greater collaboration, coordination, and alignment across government departments, international, regional and local NGOs, and community-based civil society organisations (including faith-based) was identified. Also, innovative and strategic partnerships and collaborations are required to extend the reach of the programme to more communities and achieve long-term gains for the protection of children, while to not undermining the sovereignty responsibilities and leadership roles of governments.

**Gender Equality and Human Rights-Based Approach:** The evaluation also investigated the extent to which the Child Protection programme integrated gender equality and human-rights and disability inclusion principles and practices, and the benefits accruing to children from marginalised communities, children with disabilities, girls and other disadvantaged groups, if any.

- The evaluation concluded that the necessary commitments to gender equality relatively well throughout the programme cycle, and policies guidelines, referral pathways and child protection legislation which were developed with UNICEF support were designed to be inclusive, required fair treatment and equal access to services for all children, and required that children with disabilities and those from marginalised communities be targeted for inclusion.
- In practice, the extent to which the programme targeted and reached children in marginalised communities was limited, partly due to a lack of reporting on either disability inclusion or evidence of any provision exclusively for children with disabilities or specific data around girls (including adolescent girls) and other disadvantaged groups.

**Impact:** The impact of the programme, negative and positive, as well as intended and unintended impacts was interrogated from the perspective of children, their families and communities.

- Perception of beneficiaries were that the programme brought about heightened awareness on the rights of children; changes in mindsets and behaviours of parents and teachers; stronger collective community responsibility towards the protection of children; increased reporting of child abuse and violence cases; and reduction in physical violence against children. Also, strengthened legal and institutional frameworks and policies, and enhanced capacity of service providers (government officials, NGOs and CSOs) provided better protection for children.
- Beneficiaries also identified resistance to change as a possible factor that may undermine the positive impacts of intervention, and limited capacity to bring services to communities who live in remote areas. Continued capacity and capability building initiatives for service providers and the community, and better coordination across government departments will also be required to enhance the impact of child protection initiatives.

**Sustainability:** The evaluation also examined the extent to which positive results and/or effects could be sustainable and implemented at scale, and the extent to which there were successes in linking formal systems with customary practices.

- The programme succeeded in creating a strong enabling environment, building capacity and capability of service providers, and strengthening community protection efforts, thus laying out strong building blocks for scalability and sustainable provision of child protection services.
- On the other hand, the evaluation found that the potential for sustainability and scalability, could be undermined by deep-rooted customary norms and cultural resistance to change, unless the programme sought a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of customary practices in order to accentuate the positive practices and institutionalize them into formal CP systems. Sustainability will also be served well Involving young people, community leaders and other trusted members of the community and by efficient utilisation of local NGOs and CSOs and expanding their capacity and capability to reach and engagement with more communities, and a more robust monitoring and evaluation to identify what is working or not working to inform

decision-making on how best to replicate and/or expand interventions and services to the required scale activities.

## Overall conclusions

Overall, the UNICEF Pacific CP programme made considerable positive progress in enhancing the protection of children in Samoa, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Kiribati, protecting them from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. There is broad consensus that the programme introduced innovative strategies in addressing child protection needs, and that the support that was rendered by UNICEF Pacific cultivated more demand for child protection services, and extended capacities of respective government effort to meet those demand. To enhance its effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, more efforts should be directed at refining programme strategies, with particular attention given to the effective implementation of initiatives; attracting more funding and resources; strengthening partnerships at all levels; ensuring key marginalised groups and communities are included in the programme; and improving monitoring and evaluation activities to better leverage data and inform the success of the programme. Many of the proposed programmatic shifts, such as the partnerships with civil society and faith-based organizations, were already underway, in line with recommendations.

## Recommendations

To improve and enhance UNICEF support to Pacific governments under the current Child Protection component of the Country programme (2023-2027) and in any future programmes to address critical child protection issues and reduce cycles of intergenerational violence, the final recommendations advance by the evaluation are summarized in the table below, as well as the persons responsible for implementing the recommended action.

<b>Recommendation 1: High Priority</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
Commission exploratory research on helpful and harmful social norms in the region, and/or other comprehensive assessments of the child protection needs (i.e., gap analyses, stakeholder analyses, etc.) to ensure that future Programme activities are informed by quality evidence.	Child Protection Team, with inputs from relevant Governments departments
<b>Recommendation 2: High Priority</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
Review and finalize the overarching Theory of Change for the Child Protection programme and adaptations for each country/territory covered by the programme where it is necessary, feasible, and practicable to do so.	Child Protection Team, with inputs from relevant Government departments
<b>Recommendation 3: High Priority</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
Facilitate the development of a regional resource mobilization strategy to be used to advocate the increase investment in the Child Protection sector within UNICEF and in respective Pacific countries and territories	Child Protection Chief, CFOs, in collaboration with relevant Government departments
<b>Recommendation 4: Medium Priority</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
Develop (or update) the partnerships approach and action plan for the Child Protection programme	Child Protection Team and Partnerships Specialist
<b>Recommendation 5: High Priority</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
Develop a knowledge repository on local traditions and customs, most relevant to key child protection issues, both protective and potentially harmful and strengthen integration of reflections and	Child Protection Team, with inputs from relevant Government departments,

analysis into child protection programme strategies, practices and messaging	civil society and cultural and faith-based leaders
<b>Recommendation 6: High Priority</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
In conjunction with Government and universities, facilitate the development of a child protection professional workforce capacity and capability framework.	Child Protection Chief and CFOs, with inputs from relevant Government departments
<b>Recommendation 7: High Priority</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
Strengthen the focus on fidelity of implementation of planned child protection interventions	Child Protection Team, with inputs from relevant Government departments
<b>Recommendation 8: Medium Priority</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
Facilitate technical assistance to respective governments to strengthen the information management, monitoring, and evaluation systems that support evidence-based decision-making for the child protection sector and also appraise the utility and effectiveness of existing monitoring and evaluation processes and protocols for the Child protection programme in respective Pacific offices.	Child Protection Chief, CFOs, PMR, and Evaluation teams, in collaboration with relevant Government departments

Evidence and recommendations generated by the evaluation were further considered by UNICEF Pacific in the programme design workshop in Q3 of 2024, with adjustments expected in the implementation of the remaining part of the multi-country programme and contribute towards creating a more evidence-based advocacy and development of the child protection system in the countries within the scope of the programme. Relatedly, UNICEF Pacific is expected to issue management response to the evaluation recommendations, indicating the actions that the office will undertake in the remainder of the 2023-2027 programme cycle to improve the Child Protection programme outcomes.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Programme supports 14 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). The purpose of the programme was to “enhance the protection of children against all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation,” with the outcome that “Children in the Pacific are better protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, harmful practices, and psychological distress, including in emergencies”. The programme has three stated outputs:<sup>1</sup>

- Governments have strengthened child protection institutional frameworks, particularly in target countries.

Government and other service providers (non-governmental agencies) have enhanced capacities to provide child protection services that prevent and respond to violence and abuse, particularly in target countries.

Parents, caregivers and teachers have increased knowledge and skills to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from violence and abuse, particularly in target countries.

**The Pacific Multi-Country Office (hereto referred to as UNICEF Pacific) commissioned an evaluation of the CP programme covering the period 2018 – 2023.** The main purpose of the evaluation was to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality and human rights-based approach, impact and sustainability of the programme. This evaluation aimed to contribute to improved programme implementation, learning, and to enhance accountability to donors.

The scope of the evaluation reflects the operation of the programme from 2018 to until data collection started in 2024. As such the evaluation crosses two UNICEF five-year programme cycles i.e. 2018-2022 and 2023-2027 and three different DFAT funding periods. Presented in Annex D, the types of activities and/or interventions that were undertaken in pursuit of these outcomes not only varied across two programme cycles, but also across respective country work plans, and focused on the implementation of the programme in Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These vary slightly, from the 2018-2022 to the 2023-2027 Programme cycles. The stated outputs listed have been supplied and confirmed for use by Ali Safarnejad, Multi-country Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF, by email dated 15 February 2024. They correspond to the outputs indicated in the 2018-2022 Pacific MCPD.

<sup>2</sup> Background details regarding the Programme (the evaluand) are provided in Annex A.

## 2. THE PACIFIC CONTEXT

### Background

The 14 Pacific Island countries and Territories (PICTs), spanning a vast region of approximately 17 million square kilometres of ocean, with 660 islands and atolls. To better understand the scale of the Pacific, Kiribati is one of the most remote and geographically dispersed countries in the world, with 33 coral atolls spread over 3.5 million square kilometres of ocean – an area larger than India. Eight (8) of the PICTs are independent sovereign states, and others, for historical reasons, are self-governing countries in free association with either New Zealand or the United States. There is extraordinary cultural diversity, across the Pacific Island nations, and within each of the countries.

The total population of these Pacific countries is approximately 2.7 million people, around one million of which are children under the age of 18. The three Melanesian, six Polynesian and five Micronesian countries also vary widely in population (from 1,500 in Tokelau to 896,000 in Fiji). While this evaluation focuses on four countries only (Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and excludes the largest country of Fiji, it still covers approximately half of this total population.

According to UNICEF Pacific (2022) reports, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target for maternal mortality was achieved in nine of the 14 PICTs, and the target for neonatal mortality was reached in ten. On the other hand, the under-five year-old child mortality has slightly declined and is not on track in five countries. Amongst the four target countries for this evaluation, mortality rates are highest in Kiribati, and lowest in Samoa. There is a high prevalence of stunting in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Marshall Islands, affecting one-third of children, while more than half of children aged 5-19 in 10 PICTs are overweight.

Primary school enrolment is nearly universal across the 14 PICTs. However, an average of 65.6 percent complete primary education across the PICTs. As such, many children do not meet minimum literacy standards. Early childhood education (ECE) access ranges from 55 percent to over 90 percent but lacks a coordinated development approach. Secondary school enrolment has continued to decline, especially for boys, with average completion rates of 29.2 percent and 10.2 percent for lower secondary and upper secondary, respectively. Children in rural and remote areas, and those with disabilities, face significant challenges in educational access and achievement.

Pacific Island countries are the most vulnerable to the ravages of climate change and natural disasters. The [World Risk Index](#) 2019 ranks five Pacific Island countries among the top 20 most at-risk countries in the world, including Vanuatu and Tonga, which are ranked first and third, respectively. Two of the four target countries (Kiribati and the Solomon Islands) are amongst the World Bank's 18 countries currently (FY2025) classified as having Institutional and Social Fragility status.

### Contextual analysis of the UNICEF Pacific Child Programme

The UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Programme operates within several international, regional and national contexts. At the international level, the programme mainly supports SDG 5, *achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls* and associated targets (i.e., *Target 5.2 – eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation*, and *Target 5.3 – eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation*).

The CP programme also supports efforts to achieve SDG 16, in particular targets for protecting children (16.2 on violence against children; and 16.9 on legal identity for all, including birth registration), as well as others where child rights are implicated, such as 16.3 on the rule of law and equal access to justice, 16.6 on strong institutions, and 16.7 on inclusive societies.

The CP programme also operates within the context of the Convention of the Right of the Child (CRC) as a legally binding UN treaty that establishes rights for children and associated reporting arrangements, as well as associated guidelines which were adopted by the UN General Assembly.<sup>3</sup> Other relevant UN human rights treaties that have implications for the rights of children include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

There are three optional protocols that specifically relate to the CRC: the involvement of children in armed conflict; the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and a communications procedure. Another relevant human rights instrument in relation to children in detention, in countries where it was adopted and entered into force, is the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The programme operates within the context of the UNICEF 2021-2030 Child Protection Strategy, which offers a vision of “*a world where all children are free from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices.*” Also drawing on specified UN SDG targets as child protection strategy goals, this strategic framework articulates three global objectives, three programming strategies, five programming approaches, and seven thematic priorities.<sup>4</sup> For UNICEF, Goal Area 3 of the Strategic Plan (UNICEF, 2022-2025) aims that “*every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices* (p. 14). The four associated ‘results areas’ are identified as:

- Protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect
- Promotion of care, mental health and psychosocial well-being and justice
- Prevention of harmful practices
- Children on the move.

The CP programme operates within the framework of the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country programme Documents (MCPD) (2017, and its successor 2022), as approved by the UNICEF Executive Board. Within this framework, UNICEF prioritises its efforts to support protection for children (Outcome 3 of the MCPD) across the 14 PICTs, with these reflected in the programme outputs (see **Error! Reference source not found.**, at p **Error! Bookmark not defined.**).

The programme also operates within a regional context which includes various pan-Pacific organisations such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and the Pacific Islands Law Officers’ Network Sexual & Gender Based Violence Working Group. Examples of specific initiatives of relevance to child protection include the Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (Pacific Islands Forum, 2023).

Child protection is also addressed regionally through the Pacific Development Goals. These are a targeted subset of 132 indicators derived from the SDGs, specifically selected to address the unique challenges of the Pacific Island countries. These indicators focus on areas such as climate resilience, sustainable resource

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<sup>3</sup> There are 44 child rights-related indicators that are also integrated across the 17 SDGs. These indicators are arranged into five dimensions of children’s rights: the rights to survive and thrive; to learn; to be protected from violence; to live in a safe and clean environment; and to have an equal opportunity to succeed.

<sup>4</sup> See UNICEF Child Protection Strategy 2021-2030 strategic framework in Annex A, Figure 1.

management, and social equity, guiding tailored development policies for Pacific communities. However, while more than half of the child protection-related SDG indicators are included, those on children aged 1-14 experiencing any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers (16.2.1) and child labour (8.7.1), are not amongst the Pacific SDG subsets.

### Disparity analysis for Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu

The following provides a brief conventional disparity analysis in relation to the four target countries, highlighting a range of social, political, economic, demographic, and institutional factors that have a direct bearing on the programme.

Geographical isolation and governance models contribute significantly to structural marginalisation across Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. These countries face formidable obstacles in delivering universal services such as healthcare and education provision, particularly in remote and rural areas, let alone child welfare and protection services. Also, economic vulnerabilities hinder infrastructure development and service provision, disproportionately affecting marginalised groups, especially on outer islands.

However, it is important to recognise the heterogeneity of these countries and the diversity of their landscape, culture, language, ethnicity, socio-economic conditions, and political structures. For example, the dispersed nature of atolls in Kiribati poses unique logistical challenges for service delivery, exacerbating disparities in access to healthcare and education between the main island of Tarawa and the outer islands. Similarly, Vanuatu has a rugged terrain and scattered population across numerous islands, which present barriers to accessing essential services, affecting marginalised groups differently based on their geographical location. In contrast, centralised governance structure in Samoa facilitates more coordinated service delivery, yet disparities persist between urban and rural areas, impacting access to quality healthcare and education.

Traditional practices and social norms play crucial roles in shaping societal dynamics across these nations. Hierarchical structures based on age, gender, and customary roles influence community cohesion and resource distribution. These structures may marginalise vulnerable groups such as women, children from single-parent households, and those with disabilities.

Cultural beliefs and customary practices may perpetuate inequalities, affecting access to education, healthcare, and socio-economic opportunities, particularly in remote communities. In Samoa, for instance, traditional chiefly systems influence governance and community dynamics, impacting resource allocation and decision-making processes differently compared to the more decentralised governance structures observed in Solomon Islands. Despite these differences, cultural norms across all countries often limit access and participation of women in decision-making roles and educational opportunities.

Gender disparities intersect with power dynamics and human rights issues, exacerbating inequalities. Women and girls face barriers in accessing education, healthcare, and decision-making roles due to cultural norms and practices that prioritise male authority and restrict female autonomy. Political and community hierarchies reinforce these disparities, limiting the agency of marginalised groups and compromising their human rights. Efforts to promote gender equality may be challenged by established traditional norms that influence social expectations and gender roles, hindering progress towards more inclusive and equitable societies.

The above notwithstanding, there is also a growing recognition in the Pacific and internationally, of the limitations of Western-centric approaches to equity analysis (e.g. Fforde et al., 2009, Morgan, 2007, UNESCO, 2021). Critics suggest that there is a need for methodologies that recognise the strengths of

Pacific cultures, and prioritise local perspectives and incorporate traditional wisdom, in assessing fairness and social justice.

**Primary and secondary duty bearers:** The key stakeholders of the Child Protection Programme are the primary duty holders in each country including government bodies, policymakers, and agencies directly responsible for aspects of child protection and welfare. However, while the programme may have a wide range of Ministries, or parts of Ministries, as implementation partners within each country, the main stakeholders are those Ministries with the primary statutory (or de facto) responsibility for child welfare. In the context of this evaluation these are:

- Kiribati Ministry of Women, Youth, and Social Affairs
- Samoa Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development.
- Solomon Islands Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs – mandated for CP policy development.
- Solomon Islands Ministry of Health – mandated for CP service provision.
- Vanuatu Ministry of Justice and Community Services

The CP programme also engaged significantly with faith-based organisations, such as the Pacific Conference of Churches, the Catholic Church and the South Seas Evangelical Church in the Solomon Islands. However, with some exceptions (e.g. local governments in Kiribati and the Samoa Victim Support Group), the programme does not have a strong focus on other secondary duty bearers, or the identification of specific rights holders. Similarly in terms of specific resource contributions and roles, the identification of secondary was limited, as indicated by stakeholder mapping in Annex F.

**Rights Holders:** Children in the Pacific have a right to protection. Across the 14 PICTs covered by the programme, there are approximately 1 million children under the age of 18, approximately 56 percent of which are resident in the four countries targeted by the evaluation (i.e., 62,000 in Kiribati, 80,000 in Samoa, 280,000 in the Solomon Islands, and 142,000 in Vanuatu). These ‘rights holders’ include child victims of physical and sexual violence; trafficked and exploited children; children in contact with the law, including those in detention; children affected by alcohol and drugs; children with disabilities; unaccompanied and separated children; children in institutions; children at risk of child marriage; children without birth registration; children in need of online protection; and children affected by climate migration.<sup>5</sup>

To the extent that they were targeted for some of the services, parents, caregivers, and families can also be defined as rights holders. However, professionals such as teachers and health workers can be regarded as duty bearers, with a duty of care for the protection of children.

## Child protection context

Child protection in the Pacific region encompasses a broad range of issues and challenges, and is heavily influenced by cultural, economic, and geographical factors. In many Pacific Island countries, traditional community structures play a significant role in child rearing and protection, with extended families and village communities often involved in the upbringing and safeguarding of children.

However, the available research, be it limited, identified high levels of violence against children at home and at school across most Pacific countries. Violence against children is usually framed as ‘physical discipline’ or ‘corporal punishment’. For example, the 2019-2020 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)

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<sup>5</sup> The information that the Programme collects on numbers of children reached is limited. It does not collect information or report on, the specific rights holders characteristics that Programme activities are targeting.



for Samoa revealed that over 90 percent of children of ages 1 to 14 years face some form of violent discipline, with 82 percent subjected to physical punishment and 20 percent experiencing severe physical punishment (Coram International, 2022). In Kiribati, support for physical punishment of children is lower in urban areas compared to rural areas, 74.8 percent and 90.2 percent, respectively, with relatively stable support for physical punishment across different wealth quintiles. While based on older studies, the report provides a clearer comparison across the four countries (and for context as compared to Australia, New Zealand and the United States).

**Table 1: Comparative key indicators of inter-personal violence in childhood 2015<sup>6</sup>**

KEY INDICATOR (in percentages)	KIR	SAM	SI	VAN	AUS	NZ	US
Corporal punishment at home (1-14 years) in past month	81.0	70.7	72.0	83.5	62.8	62.2	53.6
Bullying at school once or more in past couple of months	37.0	74.0	67.0	67.0	39.6	23.3	26.0
Physical fights at school once or more in past 12 months	35.0	68.0	53.0	51.0	48.8	34.8	35.0
Physical violence against girls (15-19 years) since age 15	30.0	19.5	21.2	35.8	12.3	5.9	4.3
Sexual violence against girls (15-19 years) ever experienced	15.1	5.1	11.4	14.0	3.3	1.2	1.4
Child (0 to 19 years) homicide rate (per 100,000) (range 0.4-27)	3.1	4.1	3.0	3.4	1.0	1.0	4.0
Percent violence against women 15 years + in previous 12 months	36.1	22.0	25.4	44.0	2.0	4.9	9.5

Violence against women, in particular intimate partner violence, is equally widespread throughout the region, with physical or sexual violence among women aged 15 to 49 ranging from 20 percent to 64 percent in 12 countries (Cook Islands; Fiji; the Federated States of Micronesia; Kiribati; the Marshall Islands; Nauru; Palau; Samoa; the Solomon Islands; Tonga; Tuvalu; and Vanuatu),<sup>7</sup> with over 50 percent in Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Among adolescent girls (15-19 years) in the four target countries,

Table 1 shows that 19.5 percent to 35.8 percent had experienced physical violence since the age 15, with 5.1 percent to 15.1 percent had experienced sexual violence (at any age).

While the research on prevalence might be limited, no empirical research was identified to explain the high levels of violence against children in Pacific countries. However, from the academic and grey literature, two theoretical explanations emerge. In what may be called the **customary practices explanation**, violence towards children is seen as being rooted in entrenched cultural practices and particularly rigid gender norms that influence child-rearing methods. Gender-specific expectations often dictate the acceptance and methods of discipline, with boys frequently subjected to physical discipline under cultural expectations of masculinity. Typically, male authority figures reinforce these gender norms, perpetuating a cycle that embeds these practices deeply within the social fabric. With the widespread acceptance of violence against women, violence against girls is potentially under-reported.

On the other hand, the **modern pressures** explanation sees violence towards children as being related to exposure to changing contexts and risks. These include urbanisation, economic hardship, overseas parental employment, alcohol and drugs, the internet, and the breakdown of traditional community networks. The speed of climate change and its impacts on Pacific countries, including increases in weather-related emergencies, can also be seen as a modern pressure. These arguments are not mutually exclusive, and it is likely that both contribute towards higher rates of violence against women and children.

<sup>6</sup> [Know Violence in Childhood. 2017. Ending Violence in Childhood. Global Report 2017. Know Violence in Childhood. New Delhi, India](#)

<sup>7</sup> MICS Kiribati 2018-19, Samoa 2019-20, Tonga 2019, Tuvalu 2019-20; FHSS Solomons 2009, FSM 2014 (15-64 years of age), MHL 2014 (15-64 years of age), Nauru 2014 (15-64 years of age), Palau 2014 (15-64 years of age), Cooks 2014 (15-64 years of age); Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships 2011; Fiji National Research on Women's Health and Life Experiences 2010/2011 (18-64 years of age).

Other key child protection issues in the Pacific include child marriage, child labour, online sexual abuse and exploitation child trafficking and birth registration.<sup>8</sup> To emphasize the severity of some of these protection issues, the *Ending violence in childhood global report* which largely draws on UNICEF datasets for 168 countries (see Footnote on Table 1) cited 3 of the 4 countries covered in this evaluation among the top 12 countries that reported the highest incidents of bullying in school (i.e., 74 percent in Samoa, and 67 percent in the Solomon Islands and 67 percent in Vanuatu).

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<sup>8</sup> For children, a lack of legal registration leaves them at risk of being made stateless, and prohibits them from accessing key public services, such as healthcare and education. It also puts children at higher risk of certain types of violence and exploitation, such as child labour and child marriage.

### 3. EVALUATION PURPOSE, APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation of UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Programme to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality and human rights-based approach, impact and sustainability of the programme. It is intended to draw some insights that will contribute to improved programme implementation, learning, and enhanced accountability to development partners, and in that sense addresses both formative and summative aspects.

The primary audiences for this report are UNICEF Pacific, particularly the Child Protection Section, and the Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Evidence and recommendations generated by the evaluation were considered by UNICEF Pacific in the programme design workshop in Q3 of 2024, with adjustments expected in the implementation of the remaining part of the multi-country programme and contribute towards creating a more evidence-based advocacy and development of the child protection system in the countries within the scope of the programme.

Secondary audiences are UNICEF Pacific development partners in child protection, including UN Women, UNFPA, line ministries in countries where the evaluation took place, and other UNICEF offices and UNICEF Pacific teams. It is expected the evaluation will inform future investments and prioritisation, as well as partnerships, and will contribute to sectoral knowledge and learning.

#### 3.2 Objectives of the evaluation

Based on the overall purpose, the specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

- assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality and human rights-based approach, impact and sustainability of the UNICEF Pacific CP programme
- draw lessons and recommendations that improve and enhance UNICEF Pacific support to Governments in the PICTs under the current Country Programme (2023-2027) in addressing critical child protection issues, including reducing intergenerational violence cycles.

#### 3.3 Evaluation approach and scope

The evaluation primarily relied upon qualitative data collection and analysis utilising a range of primary and secondary data sources. This was due to existing data on measures of effectiveness and impact not being readily available, consistent, reliable or current. Presented in Annex B, the theory of change (ToC) that was proposed for the programme was revised several times throughout the course of the CP programme, **hence the ToC will not be used as an evaluation tool.**

The scope of the evaluation reflects the operation of the programme from 2018 to 2023, focusing on the implementation of the programme in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

#### 3.4 Evaluation questions

This evaluation addresses ten key evaluation questions (KEQs) posed in the Terms of Reference for the evaluation, across **five evaluation criteria** of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Two of the evaluation questions addressed the overarching principles of gender equality and human rights-based approach.

#### Relevance:

1. How relevant and consistent are the programme interventions to Government child protection strategies and priorities?
2. How do the programme interventions and strategies link to the beneficiary needs?
3. How relevant are approaches for the Pacific programming context, including civil society partnership and links to customary practices?

#### Effectiveness:

4. To what degree has UNICEF Pacific CP programme contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes for children in the Pacific to be increasingly protected from violence and abuse? What were the results relating to each of the three programme outputs, namely,
  - a. strengthened targeted government child protection institutional frameworks?
  - b. government and other service providers' increased capacities to provide child protection services that prevent child abuse and neglect?
  - c. caregivers, families and communities' increased knowledge and skills to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from violence and abuse?

#### Efficiency

5. Are the utilised partnership modalities the best ones for implementing the CP programme?
6. To what extent and how has UNICEF improved coordination to achieve the planned results for child protection?

#### Gender equality and human rights-based approach

7. How successfully has the CP programme integrated UNICEF commitment to gender equality and human-rights and disability inclusion throughout the programme cycle?
8. To what extent did children from marginalised communities, children with disabilities, girls and other disadvantaged groups benefit from the child protection programme?

#### Impact:

9. What were the main impacts (positive/negative, intended/unintended) as perceived by the children, their families and communities, i.e., What has happened as a result of improving CP in the Pacific?

#### Sustainability:

10. To what extent do sustainability and scalability have the potential to be achieved? To what extent did the programme foster links between formal systems and customs and/or community-based practices?

## 3.5 Methodology

As set out in more detail in Annex E and documented in the Inception Report. The evaluation methodology included:

- **Documentation review and analysis**, which covered a range of sources of documentation and administrative, monitoring and evaluative data, the latter to the extent available<sup>9</sup>. The UNICEF CP

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<sup>9</sup> The evaluation Team notes that an evaluability assessment of the UNICEF Pacific CP Programme conducted in 2023 (Manitou, 2023) found that there are limited, reliable information sources from which to draw for monitoring and evaluation for Outputs 2 and 3, and proposed tools for the CP Section to use to gather evidence about the Programme's outcomes.

programme documents reviewed can be found in Annex J, and Annex K provides a Bibliography, which contains other key documents reviewed.

- **Key informant semi-structured interviews (KIIs)**, with 61 individual or small group interviews. These were conducted remotely or in-person, covering 79 informants from government agencies, in-country NGOs, Civil Society Organisations, UNICEF teams, and regional development partners and international NGOs. A list of organisations represented is provided in Annex F.
- **Focus group discussions (FGDs)** encompassed front-line practitioners (such as social workers or child protection officers, or other roles dealing directly with child protection matters, such as legal officers), community leaders (churches, community elders, mayors, youth, facilitators); and community members who were previously involved in an activity or intervention. Twelve FGDs were held, covering 73 participants in the four countries.

Due to time limitations to assure quality, safeguards and ethical clearances, surveys of specific target groups were not conducted; children or young people who were impacted by abuse or violence were not interviewed; and specific case reviews were not conducted. Data collection tools used in this evaluation are presented in Annex H.

### 3.6 Limitations, constraints and mitigation

The table below presents the limitations and constraints impacting on this evaluation, and how these were managed and/or mitigated.

Limitations and constraints	Mitigation and management
<p><b>Absence of robust programme monitoring and administration data</b><sup>10</sup></p>	<p>In the absence of robust administrative data and with the decision that surveys would not be undertaken, the opportunities for triangulation from different data sources were limited. This meant the evaluation findings were more reliant on qualitative data sources, and in particular key informant interviews and focus group discussions. To help ensure a strong evidence base in relation to the primary data collection was achieved, the evaluation design used a purposive and non-random sampling strategy. This included identifying those key stakeholders at the regional, national, and sub-national levels who were/are involved in the implementation of the programme or participated in interventions, and in children’s protection and rights more broadly. Key informants were selected based on the relevance of their roles and responsibilities to the evaluation questions, and whose information was likely to be of value to the evaluation.</p>
<p><b>Validity and generalizability of findings:</b> As the programme operates differently in each country, findings will not be equally relevant to all four target countries, and some may not at all be relevant to the other ten countries covered by the programme.</p>	<p>This was a programme evaluation, looking broadly at the range of activities delivered by the programme across a number of countries. Not all activities were delivered in every country. Consequently, key findings, conclusions and recommendations are pitched at the programme level. If findings are not applicable to some countries, this indicates a potential gap that the UNICEF CP programme team should consider and address, when reflecting on and/or actioning recommendations.</p> <p>To provide more confidence in the validity of findings, key themes emerging were corroborated across multiple key informants, and across countries where possible. Consideration was also given to the role of the key informant and whether they had the relevant degree of primary responsibility for and understanding of child protection issues in country and the role of the programme. Where possible, the comprehensive documentation review and analysis that was undertaken was also used to support the analysis and triangulate results.</p>

<sup>10</sup> Including Programme documentation, monitoring data and reports on evaluative activities.

Limitations and constraints	Mitigation and management
<p><b>Response bias:</b> Some participants may have responded in ways they believe to be socially desirable, rather than providing honest or accurate responses</p>	<p>At the start of the KIIs and the FGDs the purpose and value of the evaluation was explained, and participants were asked if they had any questions or concerns regarding it. It was also explained that the participant would not be identified in any way in the report - safeguarding their identity. They could also choose not to answer any question if for any reason they chose not to. The skill and experience of the evaluation team interviewers was a factor in prompting an open and honest dialogue.</p>
<p><b>Remote v. In-person interviews</b></p> <p>Some of the KIIs were conducted online rather than in-person, which may have impacted on the quality of the data collected, i.e. engagement and trust, non-verbal cues, depth of responses and internet connection quality</p>	<p>A lead evaluator visited two target countries (the budget and timeframe could not accommodate visits to all four countries) and conducted as many interviews in person as key informants could attend. Some key interviews were conducted by both the lead evaluator and the local evaluation team member, who was able to speak the local language, understand the context and culture. This helped build trust and understand non-verbal cues. Local members of the evaluation team, all of whom are experienced and skilled evaluators, also conducted some local interviews by themselves, and facilitated the FGDs. Otherwise, key informants were given the choice of participating in the KII face-to-face and/or on-line, what-ever suited them the best.</p>
<p><b>Loss of institutional memory:</b> Most of the current programme staff are relatively new to the UNICEF Pacific Child Protection team, and many of the staff in key agencies have not been in their positions for long. As such, institutional knowledge of the programme for the period 2018 to 2021 was limited.</p>	<p>Gaps in knowledge among UNICEF staff were mitigated to an extent through the documentation review, where documents were available. However, for key agencies, it also meant that interviews could only focus on those aspects of the programme that key informants knew about. Having multiple, diverse sources represented across agencies and countries helped provide the bigger picture of the programme and how it was functioning.</p>

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1 Relevance

#### Relevance to government child protection strategies and priorities

**Key Evaluation Question 1: How relevant and consistent are the Programme interventions to government child protection strategies and priorities?**

##### Summary of findings

- 1.1. The UNICEF Pacific Child Protection programme aligned well with the overarching child protection strategies and priorities set by the four target governments. This broad alignment underscored the relevance of the CP programme to governmental objectives. Programme documentation, including consolidated work plans agreed with each country, confirmed general alignment, and this was corroborated by respondents.
- 1.2. Some relevance-related concerns about the implementation of programme interventions were found, as well as concerns on how the Programme adapted to emerging demands, challenges and changing priorities for governments, particularly in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, and the impact of shifts in UNICEF funding and support strategies.

Overall, the documentation on the Child Protection programme indicated a broad alignment with the published five- or ten-year policies on the protection of children in the respective governments of Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Alignment with other unpublished government material, such as agreed consolidated work plans was also strong.

Government child protection strategies and priorities were identified in the following publications:

- Samoa National Child Protection Policy 2020-2030 (Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, ca. 2020)
- Solomon Islands National Children Policy 2023-2028 (Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, ca. 2023)
- Vanuatu National Child Protection Policy 2016-2026 (Ministry of Justice and Community Services, ca. 2016)<sup>11</sup>

Kiribati previously developed a Children, Young People and Family Welfare Policy (Coram International, 2017). Also, Kiribati had several policies that address child protection, such as National Disability Policy, National Youth Policy, National Policy for Gender Equality. However, the evaluation was not able to access or assess them.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, published government policy documents placed more emphasis on traditional structures and community caring practices. For example:

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<sup>11</sup> Vanuatu also has the *Vanuatu Child Online Protection National Strategy Framework for the Republic of Vanuatu 2014 – 2021*.

<sup>12</sup> The Kiribati Government 20-Year Vision 2016-2036 (ca 2016) also identifies and addresses a cross-cutting issue as “Gender, Youth, Vulnerable Groups, Equity”, with young women, orphans and children at risk, persons with disabilities and under-age mothers specifically referenced as being included among vulnerable groups (p. 55). However, this document is not sufficiently detailed to be able to relate the Programme’s alignment to it.

- In Samoa, along with churches and other faith-based organisations, village councils, and women’s councils were explicitly identified as part of the child protection system (Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, ca. 2020).
- In Vanuatu, one of the eight guiding principles was recognition of the influencing and positive role of (religious and) *Kastom* practices and systems (Ministry of Justice and Community Services, ca. 2016).

To a lesser extent but linked to this, there was more emphasis in government documents on the needs of children living in rural and remote areas. For example,

- In the Solomon Islands, objective 3.13 of the policy emphasized “*more awareness in rural areas/communities on positive parenting and child protection issues*” (Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, ca. 2023, p. 42).
- In Vanuatu, the policy highlighted the need for a range of structures and modalities required for the protection of children given that 75 percent of their children live in rural or remote areas (Ministry of Justice and Community Services, ca. 2016).

Broad alignment of the programme with respective government child protection priorities, policies, and strategies was reflected in the views of respondents in the four Pacific countries. Respondents provided several examples of how the programme was aligned, relevant, and consistent with, government child protection policies, strategies and priorities in respective countries. The following themes and illustrative comments emerged.

**Support for community interventions:** Respondents from Vanuatu highlighted UNICEF support for community interventions. Local initiatives, such as training community members (including young people) in child protection and creating community-based mechanisms addressed child protection at the grassroots level. This approach is consistent with the policy statement made by the Government of Vanuatu which refers to the development of CP systems including at the community level, to build on positive traditional community-based systems and practices (Vanuatu National Child Protection Policy, 2016-2026).

Practitioners from Samoa also emphasised the relevance of UNICEF-supported community-based approaches, with community engagement and the implementation of action plans developed during training sessions cited as effective strategies. These efforts contributed to the strengthening of the Childcare and Protection system in Samoa, which is anchored on the community and family structure to care for and protect their own children (Samoa National Child Care and Protection Policy, 2020-2030).

**Awareness raising:** UNICEF efforts in raising awareness on child protection were identified by several respondents across countries as being aligned with government priorities of increasing public awareness and understanding of child protection issues. For example, in Samoa the promotion of awareness activities is identified several times in its Samoa National Child Care and Protection Policy, identifying key desired results, activities and roles responsible. The Vanuatu National Child Protection Policy identifies building awareness through strengthening the knowledge and understanding of child protection in the general population as its number one Strategic Area. The Solomon Islands National Children Policy 2023-2028 has explicit objectives around raising awareness of child protection issues.

**Government agency collaborations:** Some examples of UNICEF Pacific collaboration with a range of government agencies in the four countries which indicates alignment with respective government strategies and priorities include the following:

- **Solomon Islands:** collaboration with the Ministry of Education to implement child protection policies in schools (an NGO respondent); collaboration with the Civil Registration Office to increase



registration coverage for children under five years of age, and support the Civil Registration programme through legislative review, supplies provision, and funding for the database system (a government official); collaboration with the Social Welfare Division to develop and contextualise a child protection community facilitation manual, and coordinate prevention programmes (a government official).

- **Vanuatu:** A collaborative relationship where UNICEF supported the Ministry of Youth and Sport in implementing child protection initiatives, specifically through the Community Facilitation Package, which is part of the broader national strategy and is coordinated with the Ministry of Justice (a government official).
- **Samoa:** By aligning its activities with other projects like the UNDP Acclab, UNICEF ensured a cohesive approach to child protection and further reinforced and support for child protection strategies implemented by government.

Respondents from UNICEF, DFAT and various regional and international agencies<sup>13</sup> also endorsed the view of positive alignment of UNICEF programme activities with government child protection policies and strategies positively. They reported that the programme has successfully addressed and supported the issues and needs identified as priorities by respective governments through collaborative efforts, inclusive consultations, and strategic resource allocation.

### Gaps or misalignment with priorities of respective governments

To a large extent, the evaluation found that UNICEF CP programme interventions and support were relevant to, and consistent with the child protection strategies and priorities of the respective governments. However, various respondents across different countries expressed concerns about the degree of alignment, particularly relating to instances where government priorities changed over time. These included:

- The expectation that the programme should be doing more for their communities, or differently, to enhance child protection within in the respective country, or to address the needs of a particular beneficiary group;
- Lack of awareness of activities the UNICEF programme was mandated to deliver within a country, and how and why particular target groups were chosen; and
- Expectation of support that UNICEF did not have the resources, or mandate to provide through its negotiated work plans.

The aforementioned concerns may have been signals of a lack of communication among and/or within key stakeholders, by UNICEF and/or its partners. Also, countries are at different stages of development of child protections systems, hence activities supported under the programme in one country may not be necessary in another country. For instance, an informant from Kiribati commented about *“a tendency for UNICEF to look all children and programmes across the Pacific in the same way, rather than develop programmes that are more specific and relevant to Kiribati. Children in for example Fiji are very different from children in Kiribati”*.

While government priorities have remained largely the same across the programme cycle according to Kiribati and Samoa government officials, those from Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands identified changes in priorities due to increased demands and emerging challenges:

- In Vanuatu there was increased demand for child protection services over the period of the evaluation, leading to more cases and a greater need for effective case management. Other changes

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<sup>13</sup> Regional roles include respondents from the UN Population Fund, UN Women, Save the Children, ChildFund Alliance (Australia), ChildFund Alliance (New Zealand) and Pacific Conference of Churches.

were made in staffing, including moving from a policy oversight approach to more direct support and case management. Also, ongoing financial constraints, affected the ability of the government to effectively manage and respond to child protection cases, while shifts in the support and funding strategies from international partners like UNICEF that have also influenced the government priorities, as the government has had to adapt its strategies to ensure continued support for its child protection efforts.

- In the Solomon Islands, informants noted that child protection priorities have changed over the last five years, with a need to address identified gaps in emergency response services; a need for strengthening access to funds for implementing services to children in need; the passing of the Children and Family Welfare Act and the implementation of related policies and procedures within the courts; and the implementation of the joint child protection work plan across various implementing agencies.

While UNICEF-supported interventions were found to be relevant, respondents from both Vanuatu and Solomon Islands noted that UNICEF support could be more agile in responding to changing needs. For example, in both countries, funding to support the implementation of these changes was a challenge, including for recruiting and training welfare officers, funding positions, and technical assistance to support implementation and training.

### Linking programme interventions to beneficiary needs

#### **Key Evaluation Question 2: How do the Programme interventions and strategies link to the beneficiary needs?**

##### **Summary of findings**

- 2.1. The specific identification, and detailed assessment, of the needs of beneficiaries across Programme documentation, is limited.
- 2.2. The absence of comprehensive needs and strategic stakeholder analyses, hampers the ability to determine whether and how Programme interventions corresponded to actual beneficiary needs. Such gaps risk undermining confidence in the Programme's ability to effectively target and best address the most pressing issues facing beneficiaries generally, and children and families in particular.
- 2.3. Programme interventions and strategies were linked to the various beneficiaries' needs, although without being specific about what these needs are, and generally describe how these groups are benefiting from the Programme.
- 2.4. However, there was some variation in feedback from respondents across different countries around how *well* the Programme linked to the needs of different beneficiary groups. This also supports the requirement for a more comprehensive situation and needs analysis to ensure that the interventions are relevant to the unique needs of communities, and of specific target groups of beneficiaries.

UNICEF (2007) has broadly frames 'beneficiary needs' as collectively referring to the needs of government bodies, policymakers, and agencies directly responsible for child protection and welfare (primary duty bearers); the needs of local governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community leaders, and other stakeholders who provide additional support, resources, or services (secondary duty bearers); and the needs of children, young people and their families (rights holders).

The CP programme was informed by country-specific situation analysis reports, each with a chapter on child protection, and a related Pacific-wide overview report (Coram International, 2017), to inform the

development of each of their five-year programmes.<sup>14</sup> However, these situation analysis reports utilized secondary data (i.e., international and national datasets, administrative data, organisational documents, and research reports and articles) rather than primary data.

The two regional situation analysis reports (Coram International, 2017, 2022) included recommendations for UNICEF to identify new legislative provisions, highlight the impact of climate change, and explore bottlenecks and enablers. These provided some identification and assessment of primary duty bearer needs. However, beyond updating or augmenting child protection prevalence data<sup>15</sup> from new research studies, there was little specific focus on assessing the needs of children and families as rights holders, and even less on the assessed needs of secondary duty bearers.

Similarly, there was little identification and assessment of specific ‘beneficiary needs’ in two successive programme strategy notes (UNICEF Pacific, 2017; UNICEF Pacific, 2020) or in the programme rationale document (UNICEF Pacific, 2022). Also, while there was some coverage in the individual country workplans in relation to the needs of primary duty bearers in particular, these documents were limited to agreed activities. Furthermore, while the programme aimed to be inclusive of children from marginalised communities, children with disabilities, girls and other disadvantaged groups, their needs were not identified specifically in the situation analysis, or in other CP programme documentation. As beneficiary needs are not sufficiently identified, it is therefore not possible to determine the extent to which, and how, programme interventions and strategies directly link to beneficiaries from the documentation, resulting in limited triangulation of evidence from primary data collection (KIIs and FGD respondents).

That notwithstanding, KII and FGD respondents collectively identified a wide range of beneficiaries of the UNICEF-supported interventions and strategies across the various countries. Respondents described how these beneficiaries benefited from the programme, without explicitly identifying respective needs. From this, it may be inferred that some needs were addressed.

**Children and adolescents:** Respondents identified children and adolescents (several mentioned age-ranges up to 18 years old) who received direct protection or who are at risk from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation as the primary beneficiaries of the programme. These groups benefited from a focus on safeguarding children through improved legal frameworks, better access to health and education services, and specific initiatives like birth registration, as well as providing psychosocial support, particularly following emergencies like cyclones.

A small number of respondents distinguished “vulnerable children”: those whose parents engage in “inappropriate activities”; those required to act as “child vendors”; those in remote, “vulnerable communities” in which particular support was provided; those who are at risk or were affected by emergencies such as cyclones; and in the context of gender-based violence against women and children (an NGO). Reference to children with disabilities was rare, while “girls” were seldom mentioned as a distinct beneficiary group, except in reference to being victims of sexual abuse (identified by a community leader) and CSOs who deals directly in these services.

The evaluation identified a gap in the discourse around the needs of adolescent girls. As a population that often falls in the gap between Violence against Children and Violence against Women, adolescent girls demand specific attention. Participants at the UNICEF sense-making workshop indicated that the

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<sup>14</sup> Ahead of the 2023-27 cycle, an updated Pacific-wide report (Coram International, 2022) was also published as a regional overview of updated, but unpublished, individual country reports.

<sup>15</sup> Prevalence data that relates to violence against women, violence against children, child sexual abuse and exploitation, child marriage, child labour, children’s access to justice, family separation, birth registration, and online safety.

programme has received requests from police and requests from shelters providing services for adult women on appropriate course of action to take for younger girls coming for support, and for mothers accompanying their children, indicating that some of the needs were met.

**Families and caregivers:** Several respondents across three countries identified families as beneficiaries through increased knowledge and skills to protect children and eliminate harmful practices. Parenting programmes and community-based initiatives aimed to empower parents and caregivers to create safer and supportive environments for children; address social and economic challenges; and strengthen family structures and support systems. Some respondents considered families (and communities) as the beneficiary, and that children could not be separated from these, and a few made specific reference to mothers, wives, or women that experience violence or abuse.

**Community members and leaders:** Several respondents in the four countries and in a range of roles identified community members and leaders, or “communities” in general, as beneficiaries of training and empowerment initiatives that enabled them to engage and support their communities effectively. This helps in fostering a protective environment for children within the community. In some of the communities, young people were trained to be leaders and facilitators within their communities, enabling them to play significant roles in protecting younger members of their communities and empowering them to take on responsibilities traditionally held by adults (some of whom lived away from their homes, in pursuit of employment opportunities).

**Child protection officers and social workers:** In the four countries, child protection officers and social workers received training and capacity building to improve their skills and effectiveness in implementing child protection policies and interventions, and handling cases sensitively and efficiently. Training included handling child abuse cases, family support strategies, and legal procedures related to child welfare.

**Government agencies and policymakers:** Government workers in the health, education, justice, youth and social welfare ministries benefited from technical and financial support, capacity building, and strategic planning assistance provided through the programme. This support equipped them with skills and tools to plan and implement legislation and policy frameworks, child protection systems and processes, and training packages for staff, service providers and communities.

**Government and non-government service providers:** Service providers, including local NGOs and civil society organisations received support to enhance their capabilities and capacities to deliver quality child protection services. This included training and development to improve service delivery and coordination, and in some cases funding to support specific activities such as advocacy and awareness programmes. Those who received support included healthcare providers and educators who benefit from specific training and initiatives that integrate child protection measures into health and education services. Local organisations and volunteers received support through training and funding to implement child protection activities at the grassroots level, which helped in building local capacity and ownership of child protection initiatives.

Individuals working within the legal and judicial system benefit also from strengthening legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms for child protection, receiving training on new laws and policies, workshops on best practices in juvenile justice, and support for implementing child-friendly procedures within the judicial process.

Overall, therefore, respondents viewed the programme as taking a holistic approach, with interventions and strategies designed to be inclusive and comprehensive, and aiming to support not only children directly but also those who care for and work with children. The *effectiveness* and *impact* of these approaches are discussed later in this report.

However, some respondents identified groups whose needs are not being met well, or where more could be done. For example:

- **Children with disabilities:** Some respondents in the Solomon Islands considered that the programme did not sufficiently focus on including children with disabilities in its interventions. This would better align with government policy that *all* children are safeguarded (emphasis added), and its recognition that children with special needs are under-served in the Solomon Islands. Other respondents also mentioned a need for an improved focus on including children with disabilities (UNICEF team member); providing more technical support and information about their rights and improving access to services, especially in rural settings (government officials); and training for staff on how better to work with this group (NGO respondent).
- **Communities:** Some NGOs expressed the need for UNICEF to maintain a better focus on “the grassroots people or the community”, and the need to provide more support to NGOs and service providers that do work directly with communities. Several respondents also variously identified a need to improve implementation of programmes at community levels; a need to scale up programmes in communities to build better awareness and understanding of CP issues; and to extend the reach to more marginalised communities.
- **Rural and remote communities:** There was recognition at the evaluation sense-making workshop, reaffirming observations from respondents from the Solomon Islands CSO, that child protection activities and programmes may not reach rural areas and remote communities effectively. In view of existing challenges posed by the logistics of their remoteness, exacerbated by climate-related emergencies, provision of child protection services to these communities requires a careful consideration of constrained programme funds and local capacities of service providers.

## Relevance of approaches for the Pacific programming context

### **Key Evaluation Question 3: How relevant are approaches for the Pacific programming context, including civil society partnership and links to customary practices?**

#### **Summary of findings**

- 3.1. The overall approaches adopted by the CP Programme were considered to be relevant for the Pacific programming context. Key stakeholders were supportive of the high-level approaches adopted and found that the Programme approaches are relevant and appropriate to the respective country contexts and aligned with local needs, circumstances and challenges.
- 3.2. However, the following concerns were identified; focus of UNICEF efforts; the need for UNICEF to support the implementation of initiatives more effectively; whether Pacific countries and service providers have the resources and/or capacity to implement initiatives across countries; and, the need for a more coherent approach to building community awareness and changing behaviours.
- 3.3. Recognition of the importance of the role, and engagement with **civil society partnerships** including faith-based organisations is emerging. Other civil society organisations (formal and informal) and local NGO service providers were also widely regarded as key actors in promoting change in communities. However, a lack of strategic and operational focus on the development of relationships with these organisations undermined their relevance.
- 3.4. The **integration of customary practices with formal child protection strategies** was regarded as essential by key stakeholders. While there was an appreciation of efforts to respond with cultural sensitivity and some examples of how customary practices were incorporated in UNICEF programmes, UNICEF Pacific took a deficits-based approach, rather than a more balanced strengths-based orientation. Positive and supportive customary and traditional practices need to be better understood, and better harnessed, in programming approaches, particularly when engaging with local communities.

The UNICEF Pacific Child Protection programmes specified three output areas:<sup>16</sup>

- the strengthening of child protection institutional frameworks
- enhancing the capacities of government and non-governmental CP service providers
- increasing the knowledge and skills of parents, caregivers and teachers.

Overall, a broad range of stakeholders considered the CP programme approaches to be generally relevant and appropriate to their respective country contexts. Many respondents assessed UNICEF-supported approaches as being aligned with local needs, circumstances and challenges, and credited the programme for targeting areas where support was most needed. Some of the comments went beyond the Pacific context and addressed the appropriateness of UNICEF approaches generally.

UNICEF staff were judged as having awareness and some understanding of the cultural practices and values and way of life in the Pacific (Kiribati and Solomon Islands government officials), but the value of recruiting local indigenous staff who understand the context in which they operate and speak the local languages (Samoa and Solomon Islands government officials) was also highlighted.

Government officials from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu highlighted UNICEF support for improved emergency response services, which aligns with the challenges faced in the Pacific in terms of the frequency of climate events and disasters. They also made specific reference to the support for increased child/birth registration coverage, the relatively low incidence of which is an issue in Pacific countries generally.<sup>17 18</sup>

Government officials in Vanuatu noted that the community engagement and empowerment approach which consisted of training local youth and community leaders to take active roles in child protection, was particularly suitable for diverse and dispersed island communities in Vanuatu, where centralised services may be hard to access. Also, an informant in Vanuatu reported that programme methods and approaches were tailored to meet the specific needs and challenges and reflected an understanding of the local context, including cultural sensitivities, geographical challenges, and the socio-political landscape. (Government official in Vanuatu). These examples demonstrated that UNICEF adapted its programming approaches for the local Pacific contexts, at least to some extent.

However, respondents expressed concerns regarding how the programme was implemented and the approaches adopted and were of the view that more effort was required ensure the programme approaches are relevant to their respective country contexts. Examples include the following:

- In one of the countries, government officials expressed the sentiment that UNICEF “*can get quite pushy sometimes, pushing their own agendas*” and that “*they need to remember we have the skills, knowledge and expertise too.*” Somewhat related to this were comments that UNICEF actions can overshadow the government efforts, rather than allow the government to take a more prominent leadership role in initiatives and demonstrate support and collaboration. Also, respondents provided feedback that UNICEF could strengthen its approach by doing more to identify strategies that may not be working well and opportunities to strengthen the programme; involving partners and implementing agencies in reviewing and re-looking at priorities; focusing on practical short-term improvements, as well as looking towards medium and long-term strategies;

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<sup>16</sup> As noted previously, the outputs vary slightly across the 2018-2022 to the 2023-2027 Programme cycles.

<sup>17</sup> While increasing child/birth registration is a big part of the UNICEF CP programme in the Pacific, it has not been funded by DFAT.

<sup>18</sup> [UNICEF, A Statistical Profile of Birth Registration in Asia and the Pacific, 2021.](#)

and drawing on insights from other countries involved in the programme – and by implication, sharing these with respective partners and government agencies.

- There was acknowledgement that UNICEF support is crucial but “not yet fully optimised for specific needs and different country contexts”. Respondents identified that the effectiveness and cultural appropriateness of strategies and interventions could be improved by aligning more closely with local realities, and focusing on sustainable, direct support mechanisms that address the immediate needs of children and the professionals working to protect them.
- A respondent from a regional NGO implored UNICEF Pacific to do more to publicly recognise and promote the child-rearing and child protection strengths in Pacific countries, rather than (apparently) continuously focusing on deficiencies. It could also take a more careful and nuanced approach towards the presentation of the limited CP data available and its interpretation. This links to concerns identified regarding a deficit-based vs strength-based focus in the programme documentation.

**Civil Society Partnerships:** Partnerships with both community-based and local non-governmental organisations are viewed as highly relevant and important for the successful implementation of the CP programme in the Pacific by respondents in all four countries. However, in its Investment Design 2019-2023 (UNICEF, 2019) UNICEF recognises community-based organisations such as “*traditional leaders, faith-based or sports-based organisations, youth groups, women’s groups, etc., as channels for community-based activities*” (p.10), but makes no reference to local NGOs.

The UNICEF programme rationale document (UNICEF, 2022) explicitly recognises the importance of churches in the Pacific and how the Pacific cultural context is intertwined with Christianity. The regional partnership with the Pacific Conference of Churches is an example of an approach that is relatively specific to the Pacific context and highly relevant. UNICEF also acknowledges the role of other CSOs in implementing a comprehensive social and behaviour change strategy (Output 3) “*in cooperation with ... CSOs and key partners to effect social and behaviour change*” (p.18), and that “*existing community structures, such as traditional, faith-based or other, will be used to set up or strengthen child protection community mechanisms*” (p.19). These statements, however, fall short of the notion of “partnerships.”

Also, the 2022 programme rationale document indicated that support for local NGOs providing services to children in need of care and protection was necessary, “*primarily as a result of providing services to women survivors of gender-based violence, and by default to children directly or indirectly affected by GBV and other child protection issues*” (p.7). UNICEF recognised a need to enhance these groups’ skills and capacities, and advanced strategies to develop accreditation standards, provide specialised training to those social workers that are in government-accredited NGOs, and support capacity building for working with referral pathways.

Respondents identified several reasons why civil society partnerships are appropriate for the Pacific context, although arguably these are relevant for any context. These include:

- **Local knowledge and trust:** CSOs typically possess in-depth knowledge of local issues and are often more trusted by the communities. This trust facilitates more effective engagement and implementation of child protection initiatives.
- **Community reach:** CSOs have extensive networks within communities, allowing them to reach and engage with a broader audience, as well as having direct access to vulnerable populations. Their presence at the grassroots level is important for addressing child protection issues comprehensively.
- **Flexibility and responsiveness:** CSOs can be more flexible and responsive compared to larger, more bureaucratic organisations. This adaptability is important in addressing the dynamic and varied needs of different Pacific Island communities.

- **Capacity building and support:** Partnerships with CSOs often include capacity-building components, which help strengthen the overall child protection framework in a region. CSOs can benefit from training and support provided by UNICEF, enhancing their effectiveness in providing child protection services to those in need.
- **Cultural sensitivity and customary practices:** Some respondents highlighted that CSOs are better equipped to understand, advise on and navigate customary practices and cultural sensitivities. This makes their involvement critical for the success of programmes that aim to change harmful practices, particularly those associated with customs and traditions, and promote child protection, including by way of building upon cultural and customary strengths.
- **Leveraging strengths:** By leveraging the strengths of CSOs, UNICEF can ensure that its child protection initiatives are contextually appropriate and effective. This collaboration enhances the reach, relevance, and impact of their programmes across the Pacific.

There was some evidence of UNICEF engagement with CSOs and local NGOs across the four target countries, i.e., providing funding for some aspects of their programmes, support with materials or other resources, training and/or sharing information. However, respondents assessed the partnership strategy *vis-a-vis* local CSOs as not being coherent. Several respondents identified concerns or gaps regarding UNICEF support for CSOs and local NGOs, suggesting some inconsistencies in approaches. These concerns and gaps included:

- **Coordination and communication:** respondents advocated for more coordination and communication between UNICEF and CSOs, and inclusive collaboration with clearer guidelines and more regular updates on activities and objectives of the programme. Respondents from different countries also expressed concern about the potential for duplication of effort to occur if there is not better coordination and communication or sharing and exchange of resources and best practice.
- **Engagement with local organisations:** Some respondents observed that UNICEF engagement with local organisations could be improved to enhance understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities within different Pacific Island communities and enable proper tailoring of UNICEF support. Limited engagement between UNICEF and local NGOs was identified as a factor which compromises understanding of the strength of child protections systems in respective countries, and better realisation of the CP potential of NGOs and civil society.
- **Capacity building:** Respondents noted that UNICEF deployed some resources towards capacity building, and observed that training and resources were not always sufficiently tailored to the needs of CSOs. Also, enhancing the governance and overall capacity of networks such as youth councils and women councils would enhance the implementation of CP initiatives.

### Linking UNICEF strategies to customary practices

Almost all documents developed by UNICEF Pacific referenced the diverse cultural contexts of the PICTs. This suggests some acknowledgement and understanding of the importance of language, as well as traditional values, beliefs, customs, social norms and community structures. There was specific reference, albeit limited, to engaging with traditional community governance structures, such as tribal chiefs and village representatives. The integration of customary practices with formal child protection strategies was also regarded as essential by key informants, although this was often couched in terms of recognising “cultural contexts and challenges”, “cultural sensitivity” and “cultural practices”.

However, discussion of any potential customary practice strengths is brief and general. Instead, the focus is almost exclusively on harmful practices, usually framed as customary adoptions, corporal punishment, child labour and child marriage. In that sense, the programme was found to be deficit-focused, rather than strengths-based, or taking a more balanced view. For instance, programme documentation did not demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of Pacific family structures and associated concepts. Pacific



concepts of family are markedly different and broader than those in western countries (Forrest et al., 2021). The evaluation sense-making workshop also recognized that the UNICEF documentation views customary adoption practices as undesirable, although in Pacific, there are examples of it being in the best interest of the child. In the past, the standard model of the nuclear family was promoted universally by the programme, over an extended family model, and this was recognized during the workshop.

Differences across the four countries were reported, that are commensurate with rapid changes in the family structures and the functioning of the family unit (Sheehan, 2021), in particularly the extent to which (extended) families are framed as households or clans. Similarly, UNICEF Pacific documents generally do not identify or particularly recognise differences in traditional customs, practices, and social norms between and within countries.

That notwithstanding, UNICEF Pacific made some efforts to adapt to local cultural contexts, including understanding and incorporating customary practices, which have generally been positively received and appreciated across all countries. One example is the acknowledgement of the traditional family living arrangements<sup>19</sup> in the training on positive parenting, which aimed to foster improved capacity for the young parents to be able to actively take responsibility to manage their lives. By not limiting parenting programmes to parents only, the programme acknowledges that some households are multi-generational, and the role of older family members have in the care of children.

In other examples, various informants noted that:

- integration of local customs and practices in the programme, particularly in training and intervention methodologies, ensured that the initiatives are culturally sensitive and more likely to be accepted and sustained by local communities; and
- UNICEF support for the implementation of the Solomon Islands Children and Family Welfare Act, and coordination of the child protection community facilitation manual, helped ensure that the programme was relevant to and aligned with cultural and traditional practices in communities.
- wearing of *lavalava* as a mark of respect by UNICEF Pacific local staff and staff from the Fiji office and engagement with the Pidgin language (an important part of the culture of the Solomon Islands) were all noted as positive attempts to be sensitive to the cultures of the PICTs.

Despite an overall appreciation of efforts to accommodate customary practices, a number of respondents indicated that UNICEF could do more in terms of recognition, understanding and respect for the diversity of cultural practices and traditions among Polynesians, Melanesians, and Micronesians, and cultural diversity within each country such as the Solomon Islands. They suggested that engaging with local communities to learn about their traditions and to implement programmes that support and empower women and girls within the Solomon Islands context can help address gaps in relation to the varying treatment of women and children within different regions. Also, some informants cautioned that the shift by UNICEF towards using consultants and more remote support might not fully consider the unique geographic and cultural challenges of implementing child protection initiatives in Vanuatu.

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<sup>19</sup> It is common for young newly-wed couples to continue to live with their parents, or to receive support in terms of money for food and/or housing subsidies, etc.

## 4.2 Effectiveness

### Contribution to creation of positive conditions and changes for children

**Key Evaluation Question 4: To what degree has UNICEF Pacific's CP Programme contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes for children in the Pacific to be increasingly protected from violence and abuse?**

#### Summary of findings

- 4.1. The Programme created positive conditions and changes that continue to enhance the protection of children from violence and abuse in the Pacific. However, the degree of positive change cannot be determined.
- 4.2. Understanding of programme objectives and priorities was uneven, leading to inefficiencies in management and monitoring. There is a notable deficiency in the systematic collection and reporting of regional, country, and intervention-level monitoring data, which also impedes the ability to identify and attribute the Programme's contribution.
- 4.3. The CP Programme made a significant contribution in creating protective environments for children across the Pacific by supporting the development of a more structured and effective child protection system. There was strong support for the view that the progress made in improving child protection would not have been possible, or would have been significantly less, without the support of the CP Programme, highlighting the critical role of the programme in catalysing positive changes within child protection systems.
- 4.4. However, the degree to which positive conditions and changes were established varied from country to country, and there were several persistent challenges that underscored the complexities of advancing child protection in resource-constrained and diverse environments. These challenges included the need to continually enhance the capacity and capability to meet the growing demand for services.

The evaluation found that programme objectives and priorities were not sufficiently clear for management and monitoring purposes. Therefore, the degree to which the CP programme contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes for children or the extent to which UNICEF Pacific achieved its desired results cannot be confidently determined.

For instance, the results for the CP programme were reported against three different, although similar, sets of programme outcomes over six years.<sup>20</sup> Having different sets of broadly similar outcomes for the 2018-2022 cycle presented challenges, in relation to reporting and monitoring activities, and for demonstrating progress from year-to-year (and for this evaluation). It also caused confusion among partner organisations, funders, and even some UNICEF staff, on the purpose of the Child Protection programme, what it is trying to achieve, and its priorities. It is noted that for the 2023-2027 cycle, the format and language is slightly different again.

Second, programme priorities changed over time, from a tight focus on protecting children “...*against physical and sexual violence and abuse...*” (UNICEF Pacific, 2017, p. 7) in 2018 - 2022, to prioritizing the prevention of, and response to, violence against children at home, at school, online, and in the community (UNICEF, 2022). Reference is also made to violent discipline, including corporal punishment and psychological aggression at home and school; witnessing violence against women including intimate partner violence; sexual abuse; neglect; separation from family including customary adoption; child labour; child marriage; and child commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. Other commitments were made

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<sup>20</sup> UNICEF Reporting and Monitoring country programme full approval reports 2018-2022 (UNICEF, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023) and another which had three outcomes e.g. DRAFT annual report (UNICEF, 2021). See also Annex C.

in relation to emergencies, child safeguarding, birth registration. This “catch-all” approach limited the usefulness of priority-setting.

Third, while the strategic note is supported by a theory of change to guide the programme, it was revised and changed multiple times over the course of the programme (see Annex B).<sup>21</sup> Also, limited monitoring data was collected and/or reported at the intervention, country or regional levels, despite various stated commitments and organisational requirements. This compromised both the programme development and accountability.

Since its inception in 2005, UNICEF Pacific conducted child protection baseline reviews in ten countries, through large-scale studies that used a variety of data collection methods, including measuring child outcomes. However, some of these studies were 15 years or older at the time of the evaluation, and none of them ever advanced to an endline study. Also, a broad range of internationally comparable data on children and women were collected through Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) in 11 countries in the Pacific, beginning in the mid-2010s. With the MICS now in the seventh round of surveys, only three of the MICS were repeated.

While other research was available, it is difficult to make an association between the decrease of prevalence rates and the programme in the absence of credible comparable data on the prevalence of harm to children. However, the evaluation noted that changes relating to societal attitudes and behaviours towards violence against children are rooted in social norms, which take time to shift. Even if prevalence data were more frequently updated, one would not expect to see any significant changes from year-to-year. However, one might expect to see changes over an entire programme cycle or two, if the (right) data was being collected, based on a well-grounded theory of change.

In a new research development, UNICEF has recently partnered with the Samoa Bureau of Statistics, to bring MICS PLUS surveys to the Pacific. This programme supports countries in conducting longitudinal household surveys using computer-assisted telephone interviewing. As with MICS, it will allow for the collection of representative data about children, families and households, but on a regular basis and with near-real-time reporting.

Three MICS PLUS reports on Samoa have already been published (Samoa Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF, 2022, 2023, 2024). Each of these short ‘snapshot’ reports has covered a small range of different topics, with some child protection and well-being-related questions included. For example, the latest report found that 43 percent of Samoan children under the age of four were inadequately supervised, by either being left alone or under the supervision of another child under the age of 10, for more than an hour at least once in the past week (Samoa Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF, 2024). However, questions about violence towards children have not been included to date.

With particular reference to violence against children, data on referrals and case management that was captured in annual reports, albeit in a limited way (e.g., DFAT report, UNICEF, 2024). However, as no CP programme information was identified on what services are provided, the quality of such provision, how they are viewed by children and families, and whether these children are safer as a result and are benefitting, the utility of this data is limited.

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<sup>21</sup> These are differing views on whether changes to the ToC constitutes the lack of clarity on the UNICEF Programme’s purpose and objectives, or if it is an effect of review of the programme theory in the course of the programme cycle as assumptions and pathways of change are revisited and revised.

The general consensus among key stakeholders suggests that the UNICEF Pacific CP programme has indeed made progress in creating protective environments for children across the Pacific and has contributed to the development of a more structured and effective child protection system.

- **Financial and technical support:** Many respondents mentioned financial support from the CP programme provided essential technical support and resources which enabled them to cover a greater scale of activity and achieve progress. The programme was also credited for success in the passing and implementation child protection legislation and policy frameworks initiatives.

*Example Response: "It would have been impossible to do all that we did without UNICEF support. We would still carry out activities but not as much coverage and at a much smaller scale." (Informant from Samoa)*

*Example Response: "UNICEF has provided crucial financial and technical support that has enabled the implementation of comprehensive child protection programs across Vanuatu. This support has been essential in areas with limited local resources." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

- **Support for community engagement and awareness activities:** The programme was instrumental in facilitating community awareness and engagement programmes were considered crucial in the development of context-specific training materials and modules was instrumental in making these programmes effective and culturally relevant.

*Example Response: "UNICEF has greatly supported our activities. For example, ... the support for delivering the community prevention awareness programme." (Informant from Samoa)*

*Example Response: "UNICEF has helped design and implement tailored programs like the Community Facilitation Package, which has been central to the strides made in child protection. Their experience in handling similar issues globally has enriched the local approach." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

- **Support for coordination and collaboration:** UNICEF has played a key role in facilitating and fostering collaborations between different organisations and government bodies. Improved relationships and coordination among stakeholders were crucial for achieving the observed progress, with more coordinated responses to child protection issues, and enhanced knowledge sharing, expertise, and resource mobilisation for child protection efforts.

*Example Response: "The UNICEF Child Protection programme has played a significant role in creating positive conditions and changes for child protection. The support rendered by the programme in ... fostering collaboration between organisations ... has been crucial." (Informant from the Solomon Islands)*

However, there continues to be several common key challenges in creating protective environments for children, which highlight the complexities and multifaceted nature of implementing child protection initiatives in diverse and resource-constrained environments, such as those in the Pacific. On the other hand, the UNICEF Pacific team highlighted the normative guidance and sensitization work on laws and rights, while also recognizing its limitations in diversion, comprehensive care and family referral to services due to insufficient services for families to be referred to. Also, the need for ongoing development of the capacity for child protection services to enable effective response to (increasing) child protection needs was a common theme of the evaluation.

**Key Evaluation Question 4 (continued): What are the results of the CP Programme in relation to the three Programme outputs?**

**Summary of findings**

4.5. Legal and policy frameworks were demonstrably more comprehensive, with a wide range of initiatives collectively contributing to strengthening the overall child protection system and the ability of service providers to safeguard children's rights and well-being. There were challenges also, and mixed views about how effectively results were achieved, due partly to the lack of robust monitoring and evaluation data, which significantly limited the extent to which positive results reported by key informants in relation to the three Programme output areas could be regarded as significant.

*Output 1: Strengthened targeted government child protection institutional frameworks.*

4.6. Key stakeholders noted that government child protection frameworks had become more robust. Legal and policy frameworks (although with limited actual legislative changes), and improved coordination mechanisms (including inter-agency child protection working groups and task forces, greater collaborative efforts and the establishment of referral pathways or interagency guidelines) were put in place, which provided a more structured and systematic approach to child protection.

*Output 2: Government and other service providers' increased capacities to provide child protection services that prevent child abuse and neglect.*

4.7. The capacities and capabilities of government and other service providers across the four Pacific countries were enhanced in several ways: through professional training and development; community-based training and engagement; data collection and management; funding and resources for local NGOs; collaboration and knowledge sharing among local partner agencies. However, these some activities not sufficiently systematic and integrated in pursuit of common goals.

*Output 3: Caregivers, families and communities' increased knowledge and skills to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from violence and abuse.*

The evaluation found improvements in awareness, knowledge, and behaviours and attitudes towards harmful practices among caregivers, families, and communities. These changes were reportedly driven by community awareness campaigns, educational workshops for caregivers, youth and community engagement programmes, use of mass media, and the integration of child protection education in schools. These efforts collectively enhanced the abilities of those communities targeted with interventions to protect and support children, which is leading to better outcomes in child protection.

*Output 1: Strengthening child protection institutional frameworks*

Respondents in all four countries noted that government child protection frameworks have become more robust. Enhanced legal and policy frameworks, and improved coordination mechanisms that include inter-agency child protection working groups and task forces, greater collaborative efforts and the establishment of referral pathways or interagency guidelines, have led to a more structured and systematic approach to child protection.

The evaluability assessment (Manitou, 2023) and the RAM and DFAT annual reports also indicated that considerable focus was placed on strengthening child protection institutional frameworks, and in particular the development of new primary legislation, as well as amendments to existing Acts. According to the individual country RAM reports for the four target countries, over the last six years, UNICEF Pacific led or supported the development or progression of multiple Bills and legislative amendments across the four

focus countries.<sup>22</sup> However, while some relevant legislation like the Cybercrime Act 2021 in Vanuatu was successfully enacted, none of the major Bills were enacted to date.

Additionally, the programme has contributed to the formulation of policies, guidelines and operating procedures across the four Pacific countries. These efforts include Childcare and Protection Guidelines in Kiribati, Inter-Agency Guidelines in the Solomon Islands, and Multi-Sectoral Coordination and Referral Pathways in Vanuatu. In Samoa, a chapter on child protection was included in the Gender-based Violence Inter-Agency Essential Services Guide. Respondents identified areas where institutional frameworks for child protection have improved with the support of the programme across the four Pacific countries as indicated in the responses below.

### Child protection legislative reforms

- The programme contributed to the development of several child protection-related Bills, as well as the 2022 launch of the Child and Family Welfare Act of 2017 in the Solomon Islands. These reforms will/have formalised child protection measures and create a legal basis for enhancing the protection of children.

*Example Response: "The introduction and advocacy for crucial legislation has been a focal point. Notable legislative efforts include the Child Protection Bill, the Juvenile Justice Bill, and the Adoption Bill. These legislative measures aim to provide a stronger legal foundation for protecting the rights of children and ensuring their welfare." (Vanuatu, UNICEF informants)*

### National child protection policy development and implementation

- The development and implementation of comprehensive national policies enabled a structured approach to child protection.

*Example Response: "The programme has facilitated the development of joint child protection work plans across implementing agencies, including the Ministries of Women, Home Affairs, Health and Social Welfare Division, Education, and Finance and other service providers. These changes have contributed to a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to child protection across the country." (Informant from the Solomon Islands)*

### Coordination and collaboration mechanisms

- **Child protection working groups:** Support towards the establishment and regular meetings of child protection working groups, taskforces and/or committees in each of the four countries helped improve coordination between various stakeholders in some countries, including government agencies like police, welfare, and health departments; NGOs; and civil society community organisations. Shared understanding of respective roles and responsibilities in the child protection systems helps strengthen those respective institutional frameworks.

*Example Response: "The establishment and function of the National Child Protection Working Group, which meets quarterly, has been instrumental in improving the coordination among different officers and agencies involved in child protection. This group plays a vital role in updating and implementing child protection strategies and activities." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

- **More collaboration occurring:** UNICEF-fostered collaboration among government departments, international organisations, and community groups increased the capacity of these entities to work together effectively, leveraging the strengths of each partner for a more comprehensive approach to child protection.

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<sup>22</sup> These include the Youth Justice Bill in Kiribati, the Child Care and Protection Bill in Samoa, the (Child and) Youth Justice Bill(s) in the Solomon Islands and the Child Protection Bill in Vanuatu. The Solomon Islands Child and Family Welfare Act was 'launched' in 2022, but this was passed into law during the previous Programme cycle in 2017.

*Example Response: "The increased collaboration between different governmental bodies, such as the Ministry of Youth and Sport, Ministry of Justice, and other relevant ministries, has strengthened the institutional approach to child protection. This collaboration helps in creating a cohesive strategy that leverages the strengths of various departments." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

*Example Response: "Good coordination between government and NGOs in the Solomon Islands has contributed to positive changes in the institutional frameworks." (Informant from the Solomon Islands)*

- **Referral pathways and interagency guidelines:** Referral pathways and inter-agency guidelines enabled a more coordinated and efficient child protection system. The programme provided a clear framework for how different agencies and stakeholders should collaborate and respond to child protection issues, leading to a more systematic approach with clarity of roles and responsibilities; improved response times through streamlining processes and more efficient resource allocation; fostered collaboration; and improved accountability.

*Example Response: " The collaboration between UNICEF and the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs has led to the establishment of a child protection referral pathway, enhancing the system for addressing child protection issues. This partnership has significantly improved the institutional framework for child protection in Solomon Islands." (Informant from the Solomon Islands)*

These changes have collectively strengthened child protection and support systems, which is expected to contribute to better outcomes in safeguarding their rights and well-being.

However, the evaluation sense-making workshop recognized that there is still a gap in the information management systems across sectors related to child protection along referral pathways (e.g. police, health, social services), which manifests in cases getting dropped or taking too long to follow-up and resolve. Workshop participants also observed that the strengthening of information management systems had the potential to improve coordination, collaboration and coherence between sectors and services.

#### *Output 2: Increased capacities to provide child protection services*

Evidence from RAM and DFAT reports indicated that the programme developed, delivered or facilitated a wide range of child protection-related training over the six-year period of the evaluation. In addition to those directly involved in protecting children, a range of other professionals received training - legal and judicial workers, health workers, educators and Birth, Marriages and Death Registrars. Some of the training was offered one-off basis in response to a particular need, rather than being fully institutionalized into implementing partner mechanisms (e.g., training police on child protection in lieu of embarking on a much more complex process of integrating the training materials into Police Academy).

Respondents reported that the capacities and capabilities of government and other service providers across various Pacific countries improved in key areas that strengthened the overall child protection framework and enhanced the ability of service providers to safeguard the rights and well-being of children. Examples from across the four Pacific countries were provided as follows:

#### **Training and professional development**

- Ongoing training and capacity-building programmes for social workers, healthcare professionals, and law enforcement officers improved the ability to handle child protection cases for frontline workers.

*Example Response: "UNICEF has been effective in enhancing the skills and capacities of child protection officers and community workers. This includes training and capacity-building initiatives*

*that have improved the ability of these professionals to manage and respond to child protection cases more effectively." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

### **Community-based training and engagement**

- Community-based child protection training, with a focus on equipping community leaders, parents, and local organisations with the knowledge and skills to protect children within their communities, led to increased community involvement and capacity to prevent and respond to child protection issues.

*Example Response: "Our community prevention programme has reached about 200 parents and 200 adolescents who have participated in the training modules." (Informant from Samoa)*

### **Data collection and use**

- Support for the implementation of data collection systems, such as the MICS, and data systems to track and manage child protection cases more effectively, enhanced capacity for data collection. It also enabled better tracking of child protection issues and informed policy development.

*Example Response: "The work being done with Stats also contributes to increased protection because Government now has statistics; for example, the recent Demographic and Health – Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019 – 2020 that will contribute not only to tracking progress but improved policy and programmes that ensure children are protected." (Informant from Samoa)*

### **Resource allocation and funding**

- The provision of direct funding and other resources through the CP programme enhanced the capacity of local organisation to deliver child protection programmes and services.

*Example Response: "The funding from UNICEF [provides] financial support for volunteer services, intensive programmes, and staff training. This has helped address challenges related to funding and support for [our] organisation. ... The organisation has been able to provide better accommodation, food, clothes, and other needs for children." (Informant from the Solomon Islands)*

### **Partnerships and collaborations**

- Where it was implemented, UNICEF collaboration with local branches of international NGOs such as Oxfam and Save the Children, and other local NGOs, enhanced knowledge-sharing, expertise, and resource mobilisation for child protection efforts.

*Example Response: "Increased awareness, knowledge, and skills among caregivers, families, and communities have improved through the collaboration with the Child Protection programme. ... the approach by UNICEF of working through partners has provided valuable insights for NGOs like Oxfam to align their direct implementation activities effectively. Additionally, there has been a focus on building the capacity of partners at the provincial level to better connect national policies to communities, addressing gaps in sustainability and institutional strengthening within child protection programmes." (Informant from the Solomon Islands).*

### **Output 3: Increased Knowledge and Skills to Eliminate Harmful Practices**

Key priority under this output was in the form of support for the development and roll-out of the Child Protection Community Facilitation Package Manual in Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, and establishing the partnership with the Pacific Conference of Churches.

The Child Protection Community Facilitation Package was originally developed for Fiji and adapted for local use in these other countries. A UNICEF-funded pre-and-post knowledge, attitudes and practices survey (n=452) was conducted in one province of the Solomon Islands. While there are some methodological and presentational issues, and some unintended negative findings (see section on Impact), the report



concludes that “families and communities seem to benefit from the Manual and the trainings. Level of their knowledge increased about parenting roles. Indicators of positive gradual changes have been noted in parenting attitudes and behavioural practices” (Ministry of Women, Youth, Children & Family Affairs, 2020, p. i).

Other than that, evidence from the RAM reports indicates challenges in implementing the roll-out of the package. Despite a RAM report reference to the establishment of monitoring and evaluation arrangements back in 2018 (UNICEF, 2019), and apart from the one evaluative activity described below, no monitoring information or evaluations were identified on any of the three Child Protection Community Facilitation Package Manual interventions, or in relation to any of the programme activities that have aimed to increase caregivers, families and communities’ knowledge and skills over the last six years. The mid-term review for the 2018-2022 CPD documented that “child protection community facilitation packages were initially developed and implemented in four countries without [an] implementation strategy, training modules or supervision and monitoring system” (p. 2). UNICEF (2020).

The limited evidence on results relating to Programme Output 3 notwithstanding, feedback from respondents from the four Pacific countries indicated positive results associated with various educational initiatives, community engagements, and empowerment programmes supported through the programme, as follows:

#### **Increased awareness through community programmes**

- UNICEF-supported awareness campaigns and community engagement programmes resulted in increased public awareness on child protection issues in targeted areas. Respondents reported an increase in the numbers of cases of child abuse being reported, and greater community involvement in child protection efforts.

*Example Response: "A strong awareness programme has been implemented to raise community awareness of child protection. The outcome of this programme has resulted in an increased number of reported child cases." (Informants from an FGD in Kiribati)*

*Example Response: "There is obviously an increased community awareness which evident from how communities deal with and report child cases." (Informant from Kiribati)*

#### **Educational workshops and training for caregivers**

- Positive parenting, discipline, and life skills equipped parents with the knowledge and tools to better protect and support the children, leading to a reduction in harmful practices such as corporal punishment.

*Example Response: "Before [the workshop], I whipped my children; now after the workshop, I stop whipping and speaking strongly to my children, it changed me [for how I] take care of them. " (Informants from an FGD in Vanuatu)*

#### **Empowerment of adolescents and youth**

- Some activities were aimed to empower adolescents and youth to encourage them to take a proactive approach to protecting and nurturing younger members of their communities. This led to increased involvement of young people in advocating for child protection and challenging harmful practices.

*Example Response: "By empowering young people and community leaders with knowledge and skills related to child protection, the programmes have fostered a sense of responsibility and capability within the community. This empowerment has enabled more proactive approaches to child safety and well-being." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

#### **Community engagement to promote collective responsibility**

- UNICEF facilitated community dialogues to discuss child protection issues openly, educate and inform community members about the importance of protecting children and the roles they can play in this process, and engage them in finding solutions. Respondents reported greater community ownership of child protection initiatives, and more effective responses to local challenges.

*Example Response: "Communities are now more vigilant and better equipped to identify and report incidents, which is crucial for timely intervention and support. ... The strategies have fostered broader community engagement in child protection efforts, creating a collective responsibility and a supportive environment for children." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

#### **Use of mass media communication tools**

- UNICEF supported activities to use radio and other local media to disseminate child protection messages and raise awareness, which resulted in a wider reach and greater public awareness of child protection issues and available support services.

*Example Response: "The programme has also raised awareness through radio programmes and text message alerts, leading to increased reporting of abuse and better access to support services for children in need." (Informants from an FGD in the Solomon Islands)*

Another example was given by a FGD participant, referred to as 'M': "UNICEF sponsored a Samoan language radio programme from January 2023 and provided funding for prize vouchers. Key messages from the programme addressed different roles in preventing violence against children; what children can do and where they can go if they are abused; how children can protect themselves; what assault is and how to identify it. It is an educating session and gave children the opportunity to interact and win prizes by demonstrating that they have learned and understood the messages.

*M, a teacher/parent invited students to come to school on Saturday mornings to listen and join the programme. One time, a student had signs of being abused at home, turning up with bruises on his body and was clearly an unhappy boy. M spoke to his mother about the issue. Then his father turned up one day upset that M had talked to the mother. This happened to be a day that the children were at school listening to the programme, so he was able to listen in.*

*He sat there and cried and apologised. Within a week after that M noticed the student no longer had bruises and was happier, and the mother was bringing him to school. So, M knows that the programme had a positive impact on this father – it changed his mind-set and behaviour." (Informant from Samoa)*

#### **Integration of child protection in schools through school-based programmes**

- UNICEF support for integration of child protection education into school curricula and extracurricular activities was credited for increased knowledge and awareness among students and teachers, leading to safer school environments.

*Example Response: "Children are aware of their rights. ... They come to us to explain more for their academic papers, which is proof that it is being taught and talked about in schools." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

Other activities included the establishment of 24 child protection village committees (Kiribati); life skills education for at risk adolescents (Samoa); formation of partnerships between UNICEF and different church groups (Solomon Islands); online safety training (Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). Also, UNICEF was involved in campaigns on depression awareness and suicide prevention (Kiribati); gender-based violence (Samoa); and activities relating to cyclone emergency responses (Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). However, these activities were generally small-scale and/or one-off in nature.

These results are applicable among those communities that were targeted by interventions, with variations among in the four countries covered by the evaluation. A common challenge that was mentioned by respondents from all four countries was extending the coverage of initiatives to reach more communities.

## 4.3 Efficiency

### Partnership modalities

**Key Evaluation Question 5: Are the utilised partnership modalities the best ones for implementing the CP Programme?**

**Summary of findings**

- 5.1. Overall, the range of partnership modalities and mechanisms utilised to implement the Programme were appropriate for addressing the diverse and complex challenges of child protection in the Pacific, although they were not applied across all target countries.
- 5.2. The Programme adopted a variety of approaches and mechanisms to deliver services and support the implementation of the Programme, across different countries. While these approaches required adaptation to local contexts, the strategic intent behind these differences was not clear.
- 5.3. The key weaknesses relate to the capacity of resource-constrained agencies (both governmental and non-governmental), and of UNICEF Pacific to implement and scale solutions, including how to support and extend partnerships with the range of key stakeholders in the child protection sector, to enhance capacities and capabilities to support CP goals and initiatives in respective countries.

#### *Partnership modalities and methods*

The Child Protection programme has utilised several partnership modalities to implement its initiatives across the Pacific countries, with a variety of approaches and mechanisms to deliver services and support the implementation of its programme. The range of partnership modalities included government agencies and departments, NGOs, CBOs, and regional networks.

**Government partnerships:** The Child Protection programme works with national governments across the PICTs, and directly with the various government agencies that have a role in child protection services, across each of the three key output areas. The programme provides technical assistance and support; funding for staffing, equipment, materials and other resources; and helps to facilitate consultative workshops, meetings and processes on a wide range of topics and activity areas.

Programmes of Cooperation (2018-2022, 2023-2027) and Rolling Work Plans agreed between UNICEF and respective governments set out the activities that UNICEF is supporting with funding, across the wider range of UNICEF Pacific programmes (one of which is the CP programme). For the first time in the period covered by this evaluation, the 2023-2024 Consolidated Work Plans identify respective roles and responsibilities. These statements reference the legal basis for relationships as being in Basic Cooperation Agreements that were established in 1994 (Vanuatu), 1997 (Samoa) and 2008 (the Solomon Islands and Kiribati). These are said to provide the legal basis for all UNICEF activities in the respective countries.

The 2023-2024 Consolidated Work Plans also set out a new form of Planning Assumptions for the Consolidated Workplan, where UNICEF committed to “... support [Governments] to address issues that constrain social services, and ensure children enjoy their full rights and potential, aligned with regional strategies, UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and Gender Action Plan, as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027.” UNICEF also committed to “... promote both facility and community-based equity-focused and gender responsive service delivery approaches, both in humanitarian and non-humanitarian situations, in partnerships with I/NGOs, faith-based organisations, institutions, professional associations, and the private sector.” Notably, these commitments do not

mention partnerships with CSOs other than faith-based organisations, although UNICEF Pacific may regard this as being included in “community-based” approaches or in the reference to NGOs.

**Non-Governmental organizations (National and International):** The programme worked directly with national NGOs, and to a lesser extent with international NGOs. Collaborations with, and support for, national NGOs was important for enhancing their capacities as service providers through the following:

- improving the ability to deliver direct child protection services or interventions, such as direct counselling, safe-guarding children, or in emergency response scenarios; or
- improving capacity to develop and/or provide training and support to other direct service providers, in such areas as social and justice workforce development, and/or community-based civil society organisations, such as youth and women networks, community child protection committees, and facilitating community engagement and dialogues.

Collaborations and “partnerships” with international and Pacific region NGOs, including other UN agencies whose interests overlap with child protections issues were limited but are emerging, which is generally welcomed by respondents in these roles.

Initiated in 2018, the partnership with the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) continues to develop (UNICEF, 2019). PCC is a regional ecumenical organisation with 35 member churches and 11 national councils of churches from 19 countries and territories across the Pacific (including Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii). Its membership includes priests, ministers, pastors and lay people, all with the potential for more universal ‘reach’ in terms of delivering key messages to constituents in Pacific societies in which faith plays such a core and central role. However, PCC is a fellowship, rather than a governance body.

UNICEF and PCC co-designed a collaboration process which positions the church as an equal partner with its own methodological and delivery expertise, rather than an intervention target or audience. UNICEF supported PCC in the cultural adaption of curricular and training modules and provided funding support for a PCC child protection team based in Fiji.

The programme rationale document (UNICEF, 2022) also signalled a potentially major and long-term partnership with the University of the South Pacific to review and update training and education standards, and to develop a Social Work Diploma; this suggests a new or developing focus on incorporating Pacific-based knowledge and institutions in the programme.

Even though there is an overlap in the goals and activities of the CP programme and some international NGOs, some NGO respondents observed that better alignment and coordination between UNICEF and their organizations was necessary to help reduce the burden that all NGOs and UN agencies place on government departments and agencies in the respective countries:

*“We should be going to the government with one joined up approach and plan, a united team with different expertise. [We] need to undertake a clear mapping exercise to identify opportunities we can work on collectively together. It feels like competition, but it should not.” (Regional role).*

**Community based-organizations:** The CP programme has established partnerships or relationships with a range of CSOs across the four Pacific countries, from local trusts or groups providing direct services to those women and children in need of protection, faith-based organizations, village or island councils, and community-based groups such as child protection committees (e.g., in Kiribati) and other associations (such as youth). UNICEF support to CBOs included:

- engaging as implementing partners CSOs to deliver activities under the CP programme;
- providing one-time direct funding for victim support groups for advocacy and awareness-raising activities, providing training and training materials and resources to enhance capabilities, or to

support the CSOs delivering their own training and educational activities (e.g., to marginalised communities, specific target groups such as children with disabilities);

- establishing cooperative working arrangements during large-scale events (e.g., the Pacific Games), such as mounting emergency response to natural disasters;
- providing technical advice and knowledge and information-sharing through common membership of coordinating bodies or taskforces.

CBO respondents generally appreciated the ways in which the CP programme was working with them, and the support provided, although some observed more could be done. Examples cited for what more could be done included entering into a more formal or structured partnership arrangements; more regular and direct information-sharing; assistance to explore alternative funding sources to enhance the capacity and capabilities of CSOs, including the capability to access more resources themselves; more support for strengthening networks such as youth and women councils from national to local levels; and support for child-safe facilities/shelters.

While some arrangements are formalised by way of a partnership or funding agreement, many were ad hoc, incidental or opportunistic. However, the CBO partnership modality was deemed to be instrumental for extending the reach of the programme, particularly to more remote communities in outer islands and provinces away from the main centres. Faith-based organisations, in particular, are extremely influential in Pacific societies. These and other types of CBOs have maintained a visible, long-term and trusted presence in communities, and have relationships which are less likely to be achieved by resource-constrained government agencies, UNICEF Pacific, and/or other development partners.

**Engagement with local communities:** The work of changing social norms and practices at the family and individual levels required engaging with local communities. The programme facilitated community dialogue and training programmes to improve awareness and eliminate harmful practices towards children, (e.g., parenting skills, community facilitator package). This work was implemented by UNICEF Pacific and/or implementing partners (including government agencies, NGOs and CSOs) working directly with caregivers, communities, community leaders, volunteers, youth, adolescents, and children.

The programme has supported the establishment and strengthening of community-based mechanisms, such as child protection focal points, and the training of community facilitators, to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, and exploitation. These mechanisms were designed to be sustainable and scalable, link formal systems with community-based and customary practices and foster local ownership and support.

*Example Response: "Community-based approaches focus on empowering local communities through training and resource provision, which helps build local capacity and ensures that child protection measures are culturally relevant and tailored to specific community needs. This community-based approach fosters local ownership and sustained impact." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

In a typical call for more funding, from either government or UNICEF sources, respondents identified the need to expand the reach of community-based initiatives, especially to more remote and rural communities, and to ensure they are or become more sustainable.

The programme has also worked to improve coordination among various agencies and stakeholders to improve resource allocation, address child protection issues in a systemic manner, and maximise the impact of child protection interventions. Other opportunities for networking and creating partnerships includes the following;

- **Regional Child Protection Conference:** In 2019, UNICEF convened a conference on Child Protection for the Social Welfare Sector in the Pacific Region. The five-day event brought together 42 senior government officials and technical staff from 12 social welfare ministries. Participants

recommended the inclusion of sessions on child protection at annual meetings of Pacific heads of state, ministers of finance, education and health (UNICEF, 2020).

- **International volunteers programme:** In 2019, UNICEF Pacific partnered with the Australian Volunteers for International Development organisation in the deployment of social work specialists with professional experience working with child protection statutory services in social welfare ministries, with two in Kiribati, and others planned for the other three target countries (UNICEF, 2020, p.3). The CP programme has continued to deliver the five-week child protection case management training programme that was developed with this support across several PICTs.
- **Spotlight Initiative:** In 2020 Vanuatu was included in a global collaboration between the United Nations and the European Union, to implement a new ‘whole-of-society’ and ‘whole-of-UN’ approach to sustainably ending violence against women and girls.<sup>23</sup> UNICEF was one of the lead agencies under the Prevention Outcome/Pillar, with the focus of its activities being Child Online Protection and the Child Protection Community Facilitation Package (Dalberg, 2023, p21).

### *Mechanisms for delivering services and support*

UNICEF Pacific has CP programme staff in six of the 14 Pacific countries and territories; in the four countries covered in this evaluation (Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu), in Fiji, and in the Federated States of Micronesia. CP programme staff were responsible for planning, coordination, monitoring of child rights, and programme oversight, while government counterparts, NGOs and CSOs, were responsible for implementation. UNICEF staff also sourced technical assistance and support to build local capacities and facilitated support for networking and information-sharing among various child protection stakeholders.

UNICEF Pacific also utilised a variety of mechanisms to deliver services and support the implementation of its programme in the Pacific through its partnership modalities. These mechanisms included placement of UNICEF staff in various ministries, direct funding of activities by implementing partners, funding specific positions, se of international consultants and technical expertise:

**Funding established positions:** The programme funded specific positions within government ministries and local organisations to strengthen child protection capacities. These included supporting child protection technical roles in policy advice and development, child protection officers, and social workers who were essential for implementing child protection activities and policies at the local levels. However, the capacity to provide direct funding for salaries was limited. Instead, the programme provided in-country technical support roles, focusing on supporting specific activities and centralising technical assistance. This shift had an impact on how child protection initiatives are supported and prioritised within countries and how stakeholders viewed the relevance of the support from the CP programme in each respective country.

**Use of international consultants and technical expertise:** In 2021, long-term Child Protection Technical Specialists were placed within social welfare ministries in nine Pacific countries (UNICEF, 2020). These specialists provided a focus on training, mentoring and coaching. Crucially, however, the Child Protection Technical Specialists were to ensure that “*the normative framework, newly acquired knowledge and skills and other resources developed by the short-term consultants are contextualised, internalised, endorsed, and implemented in each country*” (p. 2). They conducted training sessions for local staff and facilitated the design and implementation of child protection programmes, guidelines and systems.

However, UNICEF respondents noted the high turnover among consultants and the difficulty in retaining consultants, especially in remote and challenging locations where highly skilled professionals are hesitant

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<sup>23</sup> Dalberg, *The Spotlight Initiative in Vanuatu: Opportunities to strengthen ending violence against women and children efforts through integrated programming*, December 2023.

to commit long-term. This curtailed the capacity to implement child protection reforms and hampered the effectiveness of UNICEF contribution. Also, some respondents preferred the involvement of local staff, e.g., who speak the same language, or better understand the local cultural context(s), over the use of international consultants.

### *Variations in approaches*

The programme approach to partnerships was also influenced by contextual differences in the four countries. For instance, Kiribati tended to focus more on integrating child protection within existing governmental frameworks due to a smaller population and more centralised government structures. The Solomon Islands required more community-based interventions due to geographical dispersion and diverse cultural contexts. Vanuatu emphasised capacity building within local NGOs and community groups due to the high reliance on non-governmental service delivery. Samoa highlighted challenges related to financial sustainability and ensuring continuous funding for child protection initiatives.

Overall, while respondents in all four countries found the partnership modalities, methods and mechanisms for implementing the UNICEF Pacific CP programme to be effective. The evaluation also found that these were more opportunistic and/or implemented in reaction to specific demands, and not based on a coherent, strategic intent. For example, community child protection committees were established in Kiribati, but not in other countries. Also, some CSOs are treated/regarded as “formal” partners (e.g., in Samoa) but are “stakeholders” or “participants” in other settings. This raises a question about the coherence of UNICEF partnership across the Pacific, and whether there is a clear partnership strategy that has considered the strengths of the different actors and organizations, and their comparative advantages.

### Improvements in coordination

**Key Evaluation Question 6:** To what extent and how has UNICEF improved coordination to achieve the planned results for child protection?

#### Summary of findings

- 6.1. The evaluation found that programme activities helped improve coordination across different stakeholders to achieve progress, if not planned results, for child protection in the Pacific.
- 6.2. A need for greater collaboration, coordination and alignment among stakeholders across the child protection sector was identified by stakeholders (government agencies, international, regional and local NGOs, and community-based organisations (both faith-based and civil society), in order to achieve more efficient use of limited resources, in pursuit of a common goal to better protect children from harm.
- 6.3. Many stakeholders regarded UNICEF Pacific as having a significant and often leading role in fostering collaborations, highlighting its leadership in child protection activities, its expertise and resources, and how UNICEF was instrumental in establishing clear roles and relationships among stakeholder groups.

Although documentation of planned results was limited, respondents generally reported that the programme improved coordination across different stakeholders, and that tangible progress in child protection and child rights in the Pacific was made. Examples of enhanced coordination include the following:

**Country-level mechanisms for coordination:** An important focus for the programme over the last six years was strengthening of government and national agencies, such as national child protection working groups or taskforces. Presented in Table 2, some of the groups have monitoring and reporting responsibilities for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). These groups played a important role in the development of new bills and policies, training of personnel on the new policies, and their implementation.

In the Solomon Islands, the National Action and Advisory Committee for Children monitors and gets updates from child focused agencies toward implementing the CRC. It is a working coordination mechanism in the country with regional members such as the Pacific Community (SPC) among other Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP). Even though they are only observer members, the inclusion of UNICEF staff ensured that the organization can leverage strategic relationships that are critical to providing child protection in a coordinated manner.

**Table 2: National Child Protection and CRC Monitoring and Reporting Groups**

	National Working Groups	CRC Monitoring & Reporting
<b>Kiribati</b>	Inter-agency Child Protection Working Group	Kiribati National Human Rights Taskforce <sup>1</sup>
<b>Samoa</b>	National Child Protection Taskforce <sup>2</sup>	National Human Rights Institution
<b>Solomon Islands</b>	Child Protection Taskforce <sup>3</sup>	National Action and Advisory Committee for Children (NAACC)
<b>Vanuatu</b>	National Child Protection Working Group	Child Desk Unit within the Ministry of Justice and Community Services

*Notes to Table:*

- 1 *The Kiribati National Advisory Committee on Children (KNACC) has recently been disbanded, and its CRC monitoring and reporting responsibilities were subsumed into the Kiribati National Human Rights Taskforce.*
- 2 *Samoa also has a Child Labour Taskforce.*
- 3 *The Solomon Islands also has a National Protection Committee on emergency preparedness & response coordination which includes a focus on child protection.*

Various UN Committee on the Rights of the Child reports indicate that all four of the CRC Monitoring and Reporting Committees have been in existence for over a decade, two of which functioned effectively and convened meetings regularly (e.g., in Kiribati, Vanuatu). On the other hand, the Child Protection taskforce in the Solomon Islands did not hold any meetings for over a year. That said, there was recognition at the evaluation sense-making workshop that the transaction cost of coordination across all 14 PICTs is high, and that strategic choices were made about level of effort to dedicate to mechanisms resulted in some countries receiving less attention from the programme.

**UN inter-agency coordination mechanisms:** Inter-agency coordination of sector working groups, multi-sector agency work plans, referral pathways and inter-agency guidelines have helped ensure that various stakeholders (i.e., government departments, NGOs, and community groups), work together more effectively. These mechanisms help bring together different sectors and stakeholder groups to focus on specific child protection issues, and to streamline the responses, and promote sharing of knowledge, communication of plans and updates.

For example, UNICEF Pacific facilitated the activation of the Child Protection in Emergencies Sub-Cluster under the Gender and Protection Cluster in Vanuatu, as reflected in ToRs for both the Vanuatu National Children Protection Working Group and the Sub-Cluster. The CP programme has played a key role in supporting these mechanisms to ensure their efficiency and effectiveness. Respondents consider that the CP programme has played a key role in supporting these initiatives.

*Example Response: “Coordination has been improved by UNICEF through creating a space for local organisations to share knowledge and expertise within child protection. This has allowed for alignment of activities with government policies.... UNICEF facilitation of collaboration and knowledge-sharing among local organisations has played a key role in enhancing coordination and achieving positive outcomes in child protection efforts.” (Informant from the Solomon Island, NGO)*

However, some respondents (from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in particular) noted a gap between programme intent and actual delivery and impact on the ground, suggesting better coordination and implementation strategies is required. Suggested improvements include:



- the need for more structure around coordinating mechanisms, with clearer guidelines and expectations for collaborations (particularly with local and international NGOs);
- more communications, regular reporting and sharing of progress among stakeholders; and
- the facilitation of national planning or consultation meetings involving stakeholders from different agencies.

**Strengthening institutional frameworks:** By working closely with government institutions, the CP programme has helped develop and strengthen legal and policy frameworks, thus providing a common frame of reference among different government departments and between government and all the external organisations involved in child protection. This in turn promotes understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities, and how these complement each other to provide a more unified approach in delivering services to better protect children.

**Community engagement and ownership:** The support rendered by the CP programme for the establishment and strengthening of community-based mechanisms to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, and exploitation, has helped ensure these mechanisms increase local ownership and involvement in child protection efforts. Fostering local ownership of child protection efforts ensures that coordination mechanisms are not only top-down, but also involve local participation. This approach led to better alignment of community-based interventions with broader child protection strategies and promoted a more integrated and sustainable response to child protection issues.

**Collaboration UN agencies and other international organizations:** UNICEF Pacific collaborated with UN agencies and international organizations to enhance the reach and effectiveness of child protection activities, as follows:

- UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development programme (UNDP) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) on the Spotlight Initiative focused on Vanuatu (reported above);
- ChildFund Australia in 2018, which involved assessing case management practices and educational backgrounds of government social workers in Kiribati and the Solomon Islands (and Nauru); and
- Oxfam in 2021, on the U-Report social messaging youth consultative tool in the Solomon Islands.

Also, the Spotlight Vanuatu initiative (see *International Collaboration* under *Mechanisms for delivering services and support*) provides an example of a “joined up” approach, although UNICEF had a relatively small role in this initiative, focusing instead on its own programme of activities that extended beyond the scope of that initiative. That said, this may be a model that can be extended, with a focus on the rights and protection of children in a broad range of contexts.

However, there have also been examples where collaboration was lacking, resulting in potential duplication of efforts. For example, UNICEF (UNICEF, 2021) and Save the Children (2022) each commissioned situation analysis exercises to better understand the nature and prevalence of violence against children in the Pacific region. Respondent echoed these concerns in relation to efficiency and effectiveness across UN agencies. Despite the “One UN”<sup>24</sup> policy there is overlap and duplication across the Pacific countries and territories, resulting in a breakdown in communication.

At a ‘sense-making’ workshop participants indicated that in many instances coordination became difficult when agencies were project-based, depended on unique source of funding with specific deliverables tied

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<sup>24</sup> Formally known as “Delivering as One”, this policy guides UN agencies to work together in a more coordinated and integrated manner at the country level),

to that funding, and were being asked to attribute outcomes to specific funds as a condition of continuing to receive funding from their donors.

However, a mapping exercise was commissioned, through a collaboration between UNICEF Pacific team in the Suva office and Save the Children, to map out their respective work towards improved on child protection outcomes in countries where they are both working, and to identify potential areas of duplication, and opportunities to work more collaboratively together, based on respective strengths and where each can add most value. Also, a significant overlap was identified between the humanitarian and the development response in the Pacific, both in the communities affected as well as the partners and individuals working on the respective responses. Also, the UNICEF Pacific team highlighted its child protection expertise and role in emergency response situations, and funding from humanitarian response and/or climate change resilience pools as providing opportunities to leverage and coordinate services and support across both emergency and development phases.

#### *UNICEF has the credibility to provide leadership*

Multiple respondents from different roles (government officials, regional roles, NGOs, etc.) expressed confidence in the ability of UNICEF Pacific to assume the leadership role in coordinating efforts, and in ensuring there is effective collaboration among stakeholders, to improve child protection systems in Pacific countries. The reasons for this perception include:

- Extensive experience and proven track record of UNICEF in child protection gives it a high level of credibility;
- the comprehensive approach UNICEF takes in addressing both policy-level and community-level issues is seen as effective; and
- the longstanding presence and commitment of UNICEF Pacific to child protection in the region has built significant trust among stakeholders.

Examples of UNICEF Pacific leadership in fostering interagency collaborations, leveraging its expertise and resources to define clear roles and responsibilities, facilitate joint initiatives, share resources, and coordinate responses. For example, in the aftermath of the twin cyclones in Vanuatu in 2023, UNICEF Pacific facilitated the activation of the Child Protection in Emergencies Sub-cluster under the Gender and Protection Cluster, to focus action on gaps and deliver results for affected populations, including psychosocial support training for teachers, and creating child friendly spaces.

However, there are areas for improvement:

- enhanced collaboration with local agencies and more proactive leadership could strengthen the role of UNICEF; and
- addressing challenges related to resource distribution and sustainability is crucial for maintaining credibility and effectiveness.

UNICEF Pacific would need to balance any leadership role it takes against the sovereign responsibilities that respective governments have for child protection policies and their implementation. Government officials in some countries provided feedback that UNICEF has sometimes overshadowed government efforts to take a lead on initiatives, and that the organization has taken credit for delivering initiatives that the government agency is responsible for delivering, albeit with advice and support from UNICEF. This suggests for a carefully thought-through, potentially incremental approach to fostering collaborations, with clarity of the role and responsibilities of UNICEF, and clear communication and buy-in by relevant government agencies.

## **4.4 Gender Equality and Human Rights-Based Approach**

**Key Evaluation Question 7: How successfully has the CP Programme integrated UNICEF commitment to gender equality and human rights and disability inclusion throughout the Programme cycle?**

**Summary of findings**

- 7.1. Programme documentation made clear reference to UNICEF commitment to gender equality, including its longstanding commitment to end child marriages and its initiatives to address gender-based violence and violence against children, and the programme integrated UNICEF commitment to gender equality well. However, more attention is required to integrate and implement human rights (including child rights) and disability inclusion.
- 7.2. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a cornerstone for UNICEF work in the Pacific. However, there was little coverage of the rights of children under other UN instruments (such as the CRPD and the UNDRIP).
- 7.3. Child protection legal and policy frameworks, and services were designed for all children, regardless of age, gender, and background. However, there was limited evidence in the documentation relating to protecting children with disabilities.
- 7.4. Training of service providers and community-based interventions integrated gender equality and human rights and disability inclusion principles. This enabled service providers and communities to be better informed and equipped to address the needs of the more vulnerable children.

There was a shared acknowledgement and understanding among respondents from different stakeholder groups in all four countries that the programme takes a gender-equality and human rights approach, and that all children, including those from marginalised communities and those with disabilities, are expected to be included in CP programme supported activities:

*Example response: "The CP programme leaves no one behind and all children no matter what kind of background they come from, receives fair treatment and receives the same service." (Informant from Kiribati)*

*Example response: "Our approach is an inclusive approach and includes all children of Samoa and UNICEF funded activities helps us do this. This is covered in our programme of activities." (Samoa, NGO)*

While the all-inclusive approach demonstrates progress over exclusion of certain groups, respondents shared the sentiment that the language of "...leaving no one behind..." deflects and diverts attention from needs and issues faced by women, girls, children with disabilities, and/or from children exposed to other vulnerabilities, and ignores the disproportionate impact and level of violence on certain children more than others.

**Government policies:** Government policies guidelines, referral pathways and child protection legislation in each country, were designed to be inclusive, requiring fair treatment and equal access to services for all children, and requiring that children with disabilities and those from marginalised communities be considered for targeted for inclusion. Also, government processes followed Standard Operational Procedures to ensure provision of necessary and appropriate services to all children and young people. Furthermore, the CP programme also supported sectoral plans that address gender equality, human rights, and disability inclusion.

**Training and capacity building:** The programme supported training and capacity building activities for service providers (government agencies, NGOs and CSOs) to equip them with skills to address the needs of children with disabilities and promote gender equality and human rights in their work.

*Example Response: “The UNICEF Child Protection programme integrates GEHRDI principles by training government officials on the importance of inclusivity and providing guidelines on how to address the needs of all children, including those with disabilities and from marginalised communities.” (Informant from the Solomon Islands)*

**Community engagement:** The programme also actively engaged with communities on child protection principles, gender equality and the rights of children. It was reported that some community-managed child protection centres cater to children with disabilities as well as girls. These centres are seen as vital in providing localised support and ensuring that the needs of these groups are met.

Also, the programme engaged communities in child protection activities through more community-driven initiatives, such as the Community Facilitation Package. Respondents from Vanuatu (government officials, community members and leaders) voiced appreciation for programming approaches which actively involved community members as a pathway to the development of more inclusive and holistic approaches to child protection to further enhance the benefits and impact of the GEHRDI principles.

**Gender equality:** Several key programme documents refer explicitly to gender equality. For example, the 2022 DFAT annual report (UNICEF, 2022) stated that *“gender roles and relations are...being included in all social behaviour change interventions supported by the programme”* (p. 35). This assertion, as well as modelling proper gender roles was also included in competency-based training – were all supported by observations from respondents. Also, RAM reports provided gender breakdowns that showed that programme interventions were reaching similar numbers of male and female ‘rights holders’ and ‘secondary duty bearers’ across all four target countries.

Gender equality initiatives also included the work on ending child marriage, where there was evidence of on-going collaboration and campaigns on gender-based violence. This included the following:

- ongoing communication and cooperation with other UN agencies and others on gender-based violence and the interface with child protection (UNICEF, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023);
- supporting both the Samoa Malu I Fale multi-media campaign to address gender-based violence and violence against children, and the Samoa Gender-Equitable Campaign the same year (UNICEF, 2023); and
- the Spotlight Initiative in Vanuatu (Dalberg, 2023) on opportunities for the better integration of VAWG and VAC ‘programming’, including the strengthening of ‘One UN’ approaches.

**Human rights:** CP programme documents provided detailed evidence that positions CRC is a cornerstone for UNICEF work both regionally in the Pacific, and within the PICTs. Across all three outputs, the commitment of the programme is most apparent in relation to seeking to address the rights and protections of children under the CRC, and in particular those relating to Article 19, which relates to the protection of children from *“all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment, or exploitation, including sexual abuse”*. Other protections for rights of children and youth are found in Article 8 (identity), Article 16 (child marriage), Article 32 (child labour) and Article 37 (youth detention). These too, extend to the rights of children.

Notwithstanding the primary importance of CRC and its coverage of some of the themes in other instruments, no specific references were identified in programme documentation in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); and specifically in relation to youth justice, the United Nations standards on youth justice administration (the Beijing Rules, 1985), guidelines on the prevention of offending behaviour (the Riyadh Guidelines, 1990), and standards for incarcerated youth (the Havana

Rules, 1990). All these human rights instruments are equally relevant to the wellbeing and protection of children.

## Benefits of the programme

**Key Evaluation Question 8:** To what extent did children from marginalised communities, children with disabilities, girls, and other disadvantaged groups benefit from the child protection programme?

### Summary of findings

- 8.1. Knowledge gained from community-based interventions about inclusivity in child protection led to more inclusive and supportive attitudes and practices in their communities, and better utilisation of available child protection services. Service providers also noted they were more aware and responsive to the needs of marginalised children because of the inclusive child protection policies and training they received.
- 8.2. Qualitative feedback from key informants and FGD participants provided examples of where children from marginalised communities, children with disabilities, girls, and other disadvantaged groups benefiting from the CP Programme. However, the extent to which the Programme reached, and therefore benefitted, marginalised communities and disadvantaged groups of children whether through targeting or inclusive practices, was not clear. For instance, there was little to no reporting on disability inclusion or evidence of any provision exclusively for children with disabilities, or data specifically around adolescent girls and other disadvantaged groups, or on whether the need of specific groups of children are being prioritised.
- 8.3. Ensuring that there are sufficient resources and support available to effectively implement the inclusive policies and services to consistently reach all children was a constant and significant challenge in the four countries. Broader systemic issues, such as entrenched social norms and limited capacity of local institutions, also hindered the effectiveness of the Programme in reaching all children, especially those from marginalised groups and communities.

Respondents from different stakeholder groups in the four Pacific countries reported an increased awareness of GEHRDI principles, which led to changes in approaches and behaviour amongst community members, local NGOs, CSOs and government officials. A shift towards more inclusive and community-driven practices showed a potential to actively address the needs of children from marginalised communities, those children with disabilities, and children from other disadvantaged groups, as illustrated in the following examples:

- **Solomon Islands:** NGOs and CSOs reported that the focus on inclusivity has led to more community members participating in child protection activities, which fostered a more supportive and protective environment for all children in these communities. They also reported training they have received has resulted in increased awareness and responsiveness to the needs of marginalised children.

*Example Response: "Community members have gained knowledge about the inclusivity of the Child Protection programme, which covers marginalised children, children with disabilities, and girls. This has resulted in more comprehensive and inclusive child protection practices within the community." (Informant from the Solomon Islands)*

*Example Response: "Children from marginalised communities, children with disabilities, girls, and other disadvantaged groups are now more actively supported through targeted NGO initiatives. Service providers ensure these groups receive appropriate care and attention." (Informant from the Solomon Islands)*

- **Kiribati:** Government officials and community members noted that child protection policies now include provisions for children with disabilities and other marginalised groups. They believe this has led to a more inclusive approach in practice, with more informed and proactive support for vulnerable

children in the community. Learning about the inclusivity of the programme has reportedly prompted discussions and efforts in communities to ensure all children, regardless of their specific needs are considered in protection initiatives.

- **Vanuatu:** Visible and practical benefits for marginalised children from the programme were shared (see reference to the Community Facilitation Package above). These included increased access to support services and education; access to services specifically designed to address the unique needs and challenges of these disadvantaged groups of children (including during emergencies); and improved awareness and support for gender equity, human rights and child protection principles overall at the community level.

Respondents reported that community members also have a better understanding of referral pathways, child protection laws, and the support services provided by NGOs, CSOs and government. They were also better educated about the specific needs of these children with disabilities and how to address these needs more effectively, which included changing their practices to be more inclusive and supportive.

*Example Response: "There is a broader awareness that the programme benefits all children, regardless of their background. This has led to behavioural changes where community members are more proactive in supporting and protecting all children." (Solomon Islands NGO)*

*Example Response: "Before the awareness [workshop], we call the people with disability, the name of the disability they have; for example, "one leg" or "one eye". With the child protection awareness, we learned that this is not right." (Informants from Vanuatu)*

### *Gaps and challenges*

RAM reports indicated that programme staff and training activities were found in urban areas than in rural and remote areas. The same was the case with behaviour-change programmes and initiatives. For example, in Vanuatu, a programme for young children under 6 years, with disabilities (and their caregivers) was only offered in the capital Port Vila, and the surrounding areas (UNICEF, 2019). Other the other hand, respondents identified several challenges that hindered progress in implementing GEHRDI principle.

- **Inclusion of children with disabilities and/or mental health challenges:** Respondents raised questions on whether children with disabilities and/or those with mental health issues are adequately supported in practice by the programme. This was largely because respondents (including government officials, NGOs, CSOs, and others) did not necessarily know. This led to them believing that the integration of disability and those children with mental health issues requires more focused resources and effort to address any existing gaps.
- **Insufficient focus on children with disabilities:** The evaluation encountered only a few examples of programming for children with disabilities. These included provision of psychosocial support activities to 518 children, 9 of which were children with disabilities, in response to the Ambae Island volcanic eruption in Vanuatu; support to the Kiribati National Disability Policy and Action Plan 2022-2025); participation of approximately 30 children with disabilities and their caregivers in an early intervention programme delivered by the Vanuatu Society for People with Disability (UNICEF, 2019), and home visits to the families of 108 children with disabilities. Other than that, children with disabilities were not an expressed focus of the programme. Beyond general statements around the importance of disability inclusion, reporting on disability inclusion was sparse. Neither was there evidence of provision of services specifically targeting children with disabilities.

This seemingly passive effort regarding children with disabilities may be because the programme considers that having national NGOs and government functions responsible for disability inclusion as members of the inter-agency child protection working groups meets the needs. This is reflected in the 2022 and 2023 UNICEF annual reports to DFAT, which state (commonly to both reports):

*“National NGOs of people with disabilities and government units responsible for disability inclusion are members of CPWGs. As such, they ensure that the specific needs of children with disabilities are considered in CP programmes and services, in emergency and development contexts. At the regional level, UNICEF engages with the Pacific Disability Forum.”* (UNICEF, 2023, p. 21)

- **Resources for effective implementation:** While there was wide acknowledgement by multiple respondents that child protection legislation, policies, frameworks, and services were designed to be inclusive, the resources and support to effectively implement the inclusive policies and services to consistently reach all children was a constant and significant challenge in the four countries. Respondents identified a need to collaborate with local experts and organisations that specialise in special needs education and care, to include developing specific training and resources focused on understanding and supporting children with special needs, and contextualising these for respective countries.
- **Other crosscutting themes:** Respondents identified other issues and challenges that hinder the effectiveness of the programme in reaching children from marginalised groups and communities as follows:
  - greater coordination, collaborations and sharing of information among service providers;
  - addressing the limited capacity and capability of local providers to deliver specialised services to support marginalised children;
  - addressing cultural beliefs and entrenched social norms, which can be barriers to the full inclusion and support of marginalised children, and better recognising diverse cultural practices among communities;
  - better understanding the specific needs and challenges faced by these groups, including specific protection needs of adolescent girls, who are a population that often falls in the gap between VAC and VAWG;
  - a greater consideration of the different forms of violence to which different populations are at risk, or linkages between those forms of violence; and
  - strengthening the collection of data, including GEHRDI data, and investing in the development of child protection data management system(s) that would enable countries to manage data from across multiple agencies to ensure better monitoring, decision-making and policy development around these key population groups.

The evaluation sense-making workshop observed that while many services were targeted to women and girls, services for men and boys were also needed. For instance, engagement with men and boys was identified as a critical component of EVAWC to combat negative gender norms that perpetuate violence against women and children in the Spotlight Initiative in Vanuatu (Dalberg, p.29).

Also, the extent to which the programme reached and therefore benefitted marginalised communities and disadvantaged groups<sup>25</sup> of children, whether through targeting or inclusive practices, or whether these

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<sup>25</sup> The concepts of marginalised communities and disadvantaged groups may overlap. Generally, marginalised communities may refer to those that are geographically isolated from services and resources, and particularly those on remote islands;

children's needs are being prioritised, or the rationale for, or the strategy supporting, such decisions was not clear from programme documents.

## 4.5 Impact

### Impact of the programme from perceptions of beneficiaries

**Key Evaluation Question 9:** What were the main impacts (positive/negative, intended/unintended) as perceived by the children, their families and communities, i.e., What has happened as a result of improving CP in the Pacific?

#### Summary findings

- 9.1. There is little documented evidence regarding the impacts that the Programme has made as perceived by the children, their families and communities. However, key stakeholders and FGD participants (including community and front-line practitioners) shared stories about the impact the Programme has made/is making. These stories indicate that the Programme had a positive impact on protecting children where it has reached.
- 9.2. Positive impacts included an increase in awareness of the rights of children; positive changes in parents and teachers' mindsets and behaviours; stronger collective community responsibility towards the protection of children; increased reporting of child abuse and violence cases; and a reported reduction in physical violence against children. Systemically, strengthened legal and institutional frameworks and policies, and enhanced capacity of service providers (government officials, NGOs and CSOs) provide better protection for children.
- 9.3. The programme has limited capacity and/or capability to deal with complex and/or specialised cases of abuse and violence against children, pointing to a need for continued capacity and capability building initiatives for service providers and the community, and better coordination, data collection and data-sharing among government agencies.

A KAP survey carried out in the Guadalcanal Province, Solomon Islands In 2019 during the piloting of the Child Protection Community Facilitation Package Manual found that families and communities benefitted from the Manual and the trainings. For instance, increased knowledge about parenting roles was recorded. Also, there were indications of positive change in parenting attitudes and behavioural practices which were expected to impact favourably on the protection of children (Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, 2020).

Also, various of respondents who were either participants in the child protection system or had knowledge about it (i.e., government officials, local NGOs, CSOs, community members and leaders, and regional stakeholders) reported that the CP programme impacted on children, families, and communities. Positive impacts highlighted by respondents from the four Pacific countries included the following:

- **Increased awareness and knowledge:** Respondents noted that children are more aware of their rights and are more likely to report issues related to abuse and neglect, demonstrating more confidence and a higher level of empowerment. This awareness was fostered through educational programmes and media campaigns.

*Example response: "Children are not only aware of their rights but are also actively advocating for them, demonstrating a higher level of empowerment." (Informants from Kiribati)*

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those who are culturally isolated from the dominant social group, whereby accessing culturally appropriate services may be limited or non-existent; and/or those facing social stigma, such as those with or affected by a disability, mental health issues, or a disease such as HIV/Aids. However, disadvantaged groups generally refer to those who experience economic or resource-based inequalities, which in the child protection context may limit their access to protection and welfare services.



- Relatedly, respondents in the four Pacific countries (Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu), reported an increase in reporting of child abuse and violence cases, indicating a growing awareness, knowledge and trust in the system.

*Example responses: "There is obviously an improvement in the protection of children from violence and child abuse. There are cases where children themselves honestly report to authorities their own issues. At school, teachers play an active role in reporting cases to police. The networking between children, parents and teachers has been significantly resulting in an increased number of reported child cases." (Informant from Kiribati)*

*"The training has made a significant difference in breaking the culture of silence among parents and children, enabling them to discuss sensitive issues and empowering children to speak up about their challenges." (Informant from the Solomon Islands)*

- **Behavioural change (reduction in physical violence):** Respondents observed shifts from physical punishment to non-violent methods of discipline among parents and teachers. Also, teachers adopted practices which were indicative of more supportive and protective behaviours towards children, enhancing the school environment.

*Example response: "Teachers' behaviours have changed. They are more aware of their roles and responsibilities, and compliant with associated requirements. The Education Act clearly states that teachers are prohibited from applying corporal punishment and this is leading to some behavioural change." (Informant from Kiribati)*

- Positive changes in behaviour and practices of parents and/or caregivers, and was corroborated in several training and workshops and focus group discussions:

*Example responses: "Yes. There has been changes in how I interact with my children since attending this programme. I no longer yell or smack my children but use my words to discipline them. I hug them more often and tell them they are good children. All this I learned from the programme, and I went home and put it into practice." (Informants from Samoa, FGD Community)*

*"[As] this community who has gone to this training, it is our responsibly to tell other mothers that whip their children, to inform/advise them to treat the children well such as you do not hit children as she/he has rights, then they know that they should not hit their children". (Informants from Vanuatu)*

- **Youth Child Protection Committees:** Initiatives such as a Child Protection Roadshow and the formation of Community Child Protection Committees have engaged communities, raising awareness and fostering a collective responsibility towards child protection

*Example response: "We have a team that was formed up to play a key role in handling child abuse cases. This team is comprised of a mayor, a social worker, clerk, medical officer, island education coordinator and police. Our community awareness raising programme involves a visit to the villages where the team inform people of the committee's function and the roles and the individual committee members role." (Informants from Kiribati)*

Community leaders in Kiribati, including mayors, were actively involved in child protection activities - *"There was one training workshop that I attended which provided me with good guidance to play my role as a mayor to support this programme." (Informants from Kiribati)*

- In Vanuatu, Samoa and the Solomon Islands, the support rendered by the programme has enabled outreach to occur in communities, which enhanced community involvement and led to positive shifts in attitudes and behaviour at the community level:

*Example responses: "UNICEF support for NGOs working in the community, has led to increased awareness, knowledge, and skills among caregivers, families, and communities." (Solomon Islands, NGO)*

*"The Community Facilitation Package trains community facilitators who then implement outreach programmes focused on child protection. This approach helps build capacity at the community level, making the communities more resilient and better able to handle child protection issues independently." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

- Involving young people in the community and the church in Vanuatu was also seen as having a positive effect and empowering them:

*Example response: "After the awareness [workshop], as parents, we understand the rights of children, so we work hard with the youths to understand good and bad behaviours, and we have seen the youth behaviours have changed. The church has helped and engaging our youths in the church activities has helped a lot. When the message is passed at church and youth activities in the church, the youths listen well and then they change their bad attitudes to positive attitudes." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

**Strengthened systems and policies:** Progress was also achieved in instituting a stronger legal framework and policies for protecting children. Mechanisms, such as referral pathways and guidelines, to support child protection programmes, and report violence and abuse, have also been established and are functioning, helping to ensure sustained efforts in protecting children.

*Example responses: "There has been an improvement in the mechanisms for reporting violence and abuse. Communities now have better access to reporting tools and are more knowledgeable about how to use these systems. This increase in reporting is crucial for addressing issues promptly and effectively." (Informant from Vanuatu)*

*"There are effective mechanisms that have already been established through which I can say yes, children have been increasingly protected. [These include] a centre which is operating 24/7; an on-call service with the police which operating 24/7 as well; there are centres in village communities established to protect women and girls which are managed by local communities; FBOs were tasked to conduct sermons on Saturdays and Sundays to preach divine words against domestic violence;; and there are group of men who are champions in the advocacy against domestic violence. These men used to be abusers but have changed and are now used to advocate behavioural change against domestic violence." (Informant from Kiribati)*

Improvements were also noted the impact of the programme around birth registrations:

*Example response: "The increase in [birth] registration coverage for children under 5 ... [contributes] to better protection for children from violence and abuse by enabling children to prove their age and have a legal identity, thus reducing the risk of being forced into labour, early marriage, trafficking, and other forms of exploitation." (Informant from the Solomon Islands)*

Also, public awareness about child protection issues was raised through media campaigns and community workshops, contributing to a more informed and vigilant community.

**Strengthened capabilities of service providers:** Government officials (including social workers and/or child protection officers) reported that they participated in training that enabled them to better identify, respond to and manage cases of child abuse and violence. This also extended to the training received by police<sup>26</sup>, magistrates and teachers, as well as local authorities in Vanuatu. They also identified they were

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<sup>26</sup> The UNICEF Pacific team noted that in 2024 the Programme has started training police in child friendly procedures in Kiribati, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands.

better equipped to implement child protection policies, guidelines, frameworks and services as a result of the training received.

*Example response: "One significant impact was how our Magistrates deal with the CP cases in their courts. The training increases their confidence and knowledge in ensuring that these cases are dealt with using proper processes and laws." (Informant from Kiribati)*

The impact of having more skilled and capable service providers is less likely to be directly perceived by children, their families and communities. However, those needing to use these services are likely to experience a higher standard of care and response than they might otherwise have received if those capabilities had not been strengthened.

**Unintended impacts:** Unintended impacts arising from the programme, both positive and negative, were identified by government officials, NGOs, CSOs and community members from the Solomon Islands and Kiribati, in particular.

- An unintended positive impact was derived from networking, where passing information to friends led to a quicker, formal response in addressing a child protection case. *"For example, there was a case where a child was being abused. She shared it with her friend and their parents, when informed by their child, straight away reported the case to police. From there, the case was opened and investigated."* (Informants from Kiribati)
- The role of a community child protection committee was expanded to cover areas related to child absenteeism from classes. *"There are many parents who have been approached in regard to this issue and have requested the Committee to give them another chance."* (Informant from Kiribati)
- In the Solomon Islands involving other organisations and entities like youth programmes, women organisations within churches showed a great potential for creating a more comprehensive support system within the community. Also, children as young as four years old were referred to CP services due to rape, highlighting the severity of sexual child abuse cases. The unintended impact was expanding specialised care and support to include very young survivors.
- Due to heavier than expected increased demand of children protection services, monitoring was insufficient, which led to delays and gaps in support for legal cases from the Social Welfare Ministry, leading to the need for the CSO to take on the responsibility of finding solutions for children. Also, an increase in the number of women seeking help and reporting cases of domestic violence has expose the need for capacity building to accommodate the rising demand for services.

#### *Challenges that may undermine the impact of the intervention*

Respondents from the four Pacific countries identified by a range of challenges, a few of which are summarized hereunder:

- **Resistance to changing negative cultural norms:** Deep-rooted cultural practices and traditional methods of discipline have posed significant challenges for changing behaviours, with some community members being resistant to adopting different practices promoted by the CP programme (Kiribati, FGD Practitioners; Vanuatu FGD Practitioners). Changing these norms will require careful, nuanced, constructive, and contextually and culturally appropriate approaches.
- **Effective management the behaviours of children to bring a balance between their newly found rights with certain obligations and/or responsibilities:** Parents expressed difficulties in managing the behaviours of their children after their awareness about their rights is raised.

*Example responses:*

*"Children feel they can do whatever they want given they are protected. This is noticeable and obvious from the behaviour and habits of the younger generations. Some kids show some disrespectful behaviours to their parents." (Kiribati, FGD Practitioners).*

*“Parents feel that child protection regulations take away the role of parent in managing and controlling their children. It was obvious that children who are aware of their rights are capable [of talking] back to their parents; they even argue with their teachers and quote their right to challenge what they think are unlawful behaviours against them.” (Kiribati, FGD Practitioners).*

- **Impacts of climate change:** Climate related natural disasters complicate the implementation and sustainability of child protection initiatives. In a number of implementation sites increasing frequency of interrupted CP activities, resulting in diverting resources and attention from CP initiatives to emergency responses and recovery activities. This was particularly the case and occurred frequently in Vanuatu.

## 4.6 Sustainability

### Potential for scalability and sustainability

**Key Evaluation Question 10:** To what extent do sustainability and scalability have the potential to be achieved? To what extent did the programme foster links between formal systems and customs and/or community-based practices?

#### Summary of findings

- 10.1. The programme demonstrated the potential to be both sustainable and scalable, as many of the building blocks to achieve this were put in place. However, to realise this potential, considerable challenges requiring new and innovative approaches should be addressed by UNICEF Pacific.
- 10.2. The programme focused on creating a strong enabling environment that included child protection legislation (although several key bills have yet to be enacted) and policy frameworks, referral pathways, and interagency guidelines to support child protection measures). While many components were in place, there were gaps that require ongoing support for implementation.
- 10.3. The focus on building the skills and capacities of government and non-governmental service providers (including NGOs, CSOs, social workers and affiliated professions) enhanced capabilities to deliver more effective child protection services (Output Two). However, funding for positions, ongoing development, and the recruitment and retention of skilled workers remain critical challenges.
- 10.4. UNICEF involvement in creating, implementing and supporting community engagement and awareness programmes has had some success (i.e., increased knowledge and skills among caregivers, families, and communities to eliminate harmful practices and protect children are key drivers of positive change, and there are some positive results). However, resources for extending these initiatives to more communities were limited. Also, better recognition and constructive integration of child protection measures with traditional cultural and customary practices in needed to overcome

Overall, respondents across the four Pacific countries reported that UNICEF support towards building child protection systems, frameworks and processes had a potential to be sustainable and scalable. Programme actions that enhance sustainability are summarized below.

- **Government inter-agency collaboration and systems:** The efforts to work closely with government agencies to establish robust child protection legislative frameworks, policies and systems, and to integrate these across government sectors (such as health, education and justice enhance their longevity and effectiveness.
- **Capacity building:** The capability and capacity building initiatives for social workers/child protection officers, and local service providers (including community leaders also contributed to the sustainability of programme outcomes. Respondents highlighted that building Pacific capacity and capability in relation to child protection requires on-going investment.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> However, it is questionable how “on-going investment” in capacity building with no endpoint can be sustainable.

- **Community engagement:** The engagement with local communities and building local ownership of child protection initiatives through local community-based structures and organisations (including CSOs) resulted in culturally contextualised interventions, which enhanced their relevance, acceptance and sustainability.
- **Implementation processes:** Having well-defined processes for implementing child protection initiatives, and a structured approach to delivering services and interventions was highlighted as a key element for replicating the programme in other regions, and for its scalability.

However, key respondents also provided feedback on the some of the challenges that need to be addressed to enhance the potential for sustainable and scalable impact is to be fully realised.

- **Develop a diversified funding strategy:** Suggestions were made (primarily from regional key informants) that UNICEF should engage more with multiple donors and explore the establishment of new partnerships (including with the private sector) to help diversify funding sources and reduce dependence on a single and primary donor. Corporate social responsibility initiatives were also noted as a potentially valuable source of support. These types of funding initiatives would help ensure more stable and sustainable funding.
- **Develop child protection workforce:** Respondents (government officials, NGOs, and regional key informants) commented that high staff turn-over in government agencies, NGOs and CSOs that provide child protection services, can disrupt continuity, and affect the long-term sustainability of the programme. Together with a need to continue to build capacity and capabilities, the Pacific needs more depth in the roles available to deliver CP services, which may include semi-professional and para-social workers.
- **Enhance stakeholder coordination:** Improving coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies and local NGOs, is critical for scaling up successful interventions. This can ensure respective roles are understood and complement each other, duplication is avoided, services are delivered by the appropriate (skilled) providers, and scarce resources are allocated efficiently.
- **Joint programming:** Regional respondents and some government officials suggested international agencies needed to coordinate and better integrate their planning, i.e., identify common goal/s to protect children, and discuss resource needs, allocation and utilisation. This would help ensure that all actors working in the child protection space are aligned and working towards a common goal. It may include developing resource-sharing agreements to (again) maximise the use of available resources and avoid potential duplication of efforts.
- **Strengthen monitoring and evaluation:** Different stakeholder groups identified a need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation to provide on-going feedback to inform decision-making and to demonstrate the effectiveness and impacts of programme interventions. This will in isolating areas where efforts are having the most significant impact and reallocating resources from less effective initiatives and identifying areas where adjustments are required.

## Links to community-based customary practice

**Key Evaluation Question 10:** To what extent do sustainability and scalability have the potential to be achieved? To what extent did the programme foster links between formal systems and customs and/or community-based practices?

### Key evaluation findings

- 10.6. Efforts to link formal systems with customary practices were being made with some degree of success. However, these efforts were not consistently applied or widespread.
- 10.7. Within Programme documents, discussion of any potential customary practice strengths tends to be brief and general, and the focus is overwhelmingly on what are regarded as harmful practices. References to engagement with traditional community governance structures was limited, despite the centrality of these structures across much of the Pacific.
- 10.8. Involving young people, chiefs, local leaders, local NGOs and CSOs in interventions, and providing training for community members helped create linkages between formal systems and customary practices, making it more likely for the initiatives to be acceptable, successful and sustainable.
- 10.9. Challenges pertaining to strong and deep-rooted customary norms and cultural resistance; a diversity of cultural norms and practices across and within Pacific countries; limited capacity, capability and resources dedicated to achieving integration; and issues around coordination and collaboration between relevant stakeholders persisted.
- 10.10. Ensuring the sustainability and scalability of child protection initiatives across more communities will require ongoing investment and support, backed by a good understanding of the strengths/positives and the harmful/weaknesses of customary practices.

There was evidence that some customary practices can serve as protective factors for children in programme documents. For example, a situation analysis report acknowledgement the role of customary kinship and the family support systems as important sources of care and protection for children. (Coram International, 2022). Respondents provided varied feedback on how formal systems are linking with community-based and customary practices within the CP programme. This includes a range of positive examples that illustrate efforts to make these linkages:

### Community-based engagement

- In the Solomon Islands, there was community engagement during the design phase of child protection activities. This ensured that local cultural contexts were better understood, respected, and community practices (without specifics offered) were more effectively integrated with formal child protection measures.
- One regional agency noted that the establishment of community-based child protection committees that included both formal and local customary leaders served as a bridge between formal child protection systems and community and customary practices.
- In Kiribati, community awareness and community engagement efforts leveraged local gatherings and traditional leaders to spread awareness about child protection.

### Collaboration with local organizations

- In the Solomon Islands, a collaboration between the CP programme and local NGOs and CSOs has reportedly worked well. These local organisations, being well-versed in local customs and traditions, helped bridge the gap between formal child protection frameworks and community practices to enhance child protection efforts.

### Training and capacity building

- In Vanuatu, training community members (including community leaders and young people) to take active roles in child protection and be trainers themselves, creates a more sustainable model for knowledge transfer and empowerment within communities. This approach ensures that child protection measures are better understood at the grassroots level and in the context of local customs and practices.
- In Kiribati, the implementation of positive parenting programmes, which included health, nutrition, and child protection, were well-received as they respected and built upon local parenting practices while introducing new protective measures.
- In Samoa, government officials highlighted the effective collaboration with the CP programme in supporting community-based initiatives. Programmes such as positive parenting workshops, which covered various protective and nurturing practices that were deeply rooted in the cultural context received strong community support. The evaluation sense-making workshop concluded that parenting programmes were an entry point to the interlinked VAC and VAWG response.
- In the Solomon Islands, respondents reported that the programme has facilitated training sessions for community leaders to educate them about child protection laws and the importance of safeguarding children. This has helped align formal child protection efforts with local customs and practices.

### Cultural sensitivity and customary practices

- In Vanuatu, the CP programme has collaborated with local chiefs and customary leaders to integrate child protection measures into traditional dispute resolution processes. This helps ensure that child protection is a priority in both formal and customary systems.

The above-mentioned examples from respondents indicate positive efforts to link formal child protection systems, community systems and local cultural and customary practices. In particular, they illustrate the processes by which formal child protection systems can be aligned or integrated with local cultural and customary practices, without identifying what those customary practices might be. This point was discussed and acknowledged during the sense-making workshop, with the recognition that whilst the evaluation findings are based on data collected until March 2024, many programmatic shifts, such as the partnerships with civil society and faith-based organizations were underway and progressed.

On the other hand, the evaluation found that discussions of any potential customary practice strengths in UNICEF documents tends to be brief and general, and focused overwhelmingly on harmful practices, such as customary adoptions, corporal punishment, child labour and child marriage. Where traditional justice systems and conflict resolution mechanisms were mentioned, they were couched as *“not always act[ing] in the best interest of the child”*<sup>28</sup> (UNICEF Pacific, 2022, p. 5) or *“family violence and sexual abuse are often not addressed or quietly settled informally as family and community harmony prevail over individuals’ well-being and rights”* (The challenge, para. 4).

While these statements were undoubtedly true, RAM reports indicated that any engagement with traditional community governance structures’ actors was limited, despite the centrality of these structures across much of the Pacific. For example, there was no engagement with Councils of Chiefs, or similar groups or mechanisms, identified. Also there was mention of a ‘hybrid child protection model which addressed the issues of linking formal and informal systems, developed by UNICEF Pacific and Save the Children and others in Vanuatu (Vanuatu Ministry of Justice and Community Services, 2016). However, was no subsequent reporting on that initiative was indicated. Irrespective of whether individual cultural

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<sup>28</sup> UNICEF Pacific, 2022, *Strategic plan 2022-2025: Renewed ambition towards 2030*, p. 5.

practices were assessed as protective of the status quo or as risks, the almost exclusive focus on State actors to date, was a gap in the UNICEF Pacific CP programming. Therefore, some new thinking and ways of working may be required.

For instance, the Federal Court of Australia (Armytage, 2020) *Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative* identifies three categories of justice actors in the Pacific: State justice actors (judicial officers), customary justice actors (traditional elders/chiefs), and hybrid justice actors who operate at the intersection of both domains. In exploring the interface between State justice and customary justice, it is argued that both customary and hybrid justice actors need to be trained:

*“The selection process and training needs of customary and lay actors responsible for dispute resolution, peace and harmony varies in each PIC. That said, these actors are usually nominated by local communities because of their seniority and social standing. They may be chiefly or traditional elders; they may also be retired civil servants, teachers or former police officers.”* (p. 6)

If addressed well, working more with informal actors to harness strengths and to moderate or minimise harmful practices and beliefs would also serve to strengthen sustainability of the programme and its child protection initiatives. Also, such an approach would potentially be more in line with the new and broader global definition of child protection systems (UNICEF, 2021),<sup>29</sup> and the inclusion of “informal” (p. 9), as well as formal structures (Carter & Halvey, 2024).

The evaluation sense-making workshop noted that often community-based and customary practices focused on community cohesiveness instead of justice for - and wellbeing of - the survivor. And sometimes, in the traditional system, led by the chiefs, the traditional practice is moulded by the individual who practices. Also, the workshop identified the need to link traditional child protection customs and/or community-based practices with formal government systems, such as churches, and community based or customary practice approach to behaviour change, authorized persons, and legal systems.

While some stakeholders highlighted a gap linking between formal systems with customs and/or community-based practices, other stakeholders thought that the distinction was immaterial since communities did not view it as two systems, and instead sought services that were most accessible to them. Nevertheless, a nuanced approach that balances respect for cultural customs and traditions with the imperative to protect the rights and well-being of children is generally considered essential for ensuring that interventions are widely accepted, which in turn supports the sustainability and scalability of interventions. This should be possible with a continuous dialogue, adaptation, and collaboration between all stakeholders involved in the child protection, to identify those practices that are positive and strengths, and accentuate and build on these; and identify those negative or harmful practices in each context and work to eliminate these.

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<sup>29</sup> UNICEF Pacific, 2022, Child protection systems strengthening: Approach, benchmarks, Interventions.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the Child Protection programme in the UNICEF Pacific Office contributed to considerable positive progress in enhancing the protection of children in Samoa, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. This chapter offers a summary of findings, and the lessons from the evaluation. It also offers conclusions on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programme, and the extent to which gender and human rights principles were observed in during implementation.

### 5.1 Summary of findings

#### Programme strengths

Based on these evaluation findings, the key strengths of the UNICEF Pacific CP Programme can be seen to be the following.

**Systematic, holistic and long-term approach:** The focus on creating and strengthening child protection systems rather than isolated interventions promotes sustainability and systemic change. This approach ensures that child protection becomes embedded within national systems, leading to long-term improvements. Furthermore, the development of legislation and policy, whether leading, facilitating or supporting it, is a key programme focus and strength. By advocating for and assisting in the development of child protection legislation, policies and institutional frameworks, the programme helps establish a legal and policy environment which also flows through to procedures, practice guidance, planning, staffing, supervision, professional practice, workforce professional development, and community interventions, thus creating a foundational environment for the protection of children. The comprehensive approach that the programme adopts towards child protection, by supporting not only children but also those who care for and work with them such as families, community leaders, and service providers, is also ensuring that all aspects of child protection are addressed.

**Trust credibility and leadership:** The programme has been operational in the Pacific for at least 20 years. While UNICEF has a unique role and position internationally, in the Pacific this is more so. Over that time, across multiple countries, it has built a strong reputation. The programme is a trusted partner to governments. Its support is valued, and from in-country programme staff. Despite being a UN organisation and having an internationally agreed mandate, the programme can only achieve its goals through others. As such, maintaining this high level of trust in the programme and its people is essential. It also gives UNICEF a high degree of credibility for it to take on a leadership role in addressing the challenges faced regarding the future of the programme and its support for extending child protection throughout the Pacific.

**Alignment with government goals:** The programme was successful in aligning well with government child protection strategies and priorities, ensuring its relevance and appropriateness. This is likely to enhance legitimacy and support for the programme and UNICEF Pacific, as it can be seen to be contributing towards national goals. By demonstrating success in areas of government interest, and particularly so where evidence can be provided, it may also increase policy influence that UNICEF Pacific has.

**Capacity and capability enhancement:** The multi-tier capacity-building efforts, extending from government agencies and officials to grassroots community workers, is comprehensive and ensures that all stakeholders involved in child protection at all levels are better-equipped to perform their roles effectively (although these need to be extended).

The provision of training and resources tailored to the needs of different service providers helps improve the quality of child protection services and ensure that those child protection workers involved at all points in the child protection system have the knowledge and skills, and understand their complementary roles.

**Community engagement:** Engagement with communities is a core element of the programme. Recognition of the need for community engagement reflects an understanding of the importance of generating fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members. When communities are actively involved in protecting their children, interventions are more likely to be sustainable and effective.

### Programme weaknesses and challenges

There are, however, a number of key weaknesses in the UNICEF Pacific CP programme and areas for improvement, if the programme is to remain relevant, achieve sustainability and scalability, and continue to improve child protection outcomes in the Pacific.

#### Strategic and operational challenges

- **Uneven understanding of programme priorities:** Beyond the three outputs, stakeholder understanding of what the programme is and how it operates was found to be limited. Specific strategic objectives and priorities were presented differently in different programme documents. This is likely to compromised stakeholder engagement their understanding. Also, the identification of what success might look like, and both monitoring and evaluation activities was undermined by this lack of clarity. Despite various efforts over recent years the programme Theory of Change has not been finalized. Furthermore, despite, or because of, there being a phenomenal amount of documentation to support the programme, the ability to access concise, usable information the clearly describes the programme was limited.
- **Lack of comprehensive needs assessment:** Due partly to the weaknesses in monitoring, the programme was not able to keep up with the changing needs of beneficiaries, and to adjust accordingly. Insufficient comprehensive needs assessments and gaps in the understanding of local needs resulted in interventions not being as effective or relevant. It also risks resources being wasted on unnecessary or ineffective interventions.

#### Resource and capacity constraints

- **Limited resources and funding:** The programme, and its implementing partners, faced resource constraints, and limited capacity, which affected the implementation of programme activities. This can result in inadequate service delivery and support for child protection initiatives, or “broken links” in the child protection system, where those children who need support are unable to get it. This will also limit the ability to effectively scale-up successful interventions or maintain consistent support across all areas. These resource limitations will hinder the sustainability and scalability of interventions.
- **Staffing and professional development:** Shortages of skilled staff across Pacific countries continues to hinder effective service delivery and the implementation of child protection processes and systems. Ongoing training and professional development for service providers is also necessary to keep up with best practices and evolving child protection standards and complexities, to manage and sustain child protection efforts. Workforce capability and development strategies, including for the recruitment and retention of skilled staff to deliver professional child protection services, will be required.

### Inclusivity and reach

- **Limited focus on marginalised groups:** The programme did not address the needs of children with disabilities, marginalized children, or children living in remote areas, adequately. Ensuring inclusivity requires targeted interventions and dedicated resources.
- **Challenges in reaching remote areas:** Due to geographic isolation, some communities had limited access to child protection services and support. The programme was not to reach remote and rural areas, deliver interventions, and build understanding and support for addressing child protection needs in some of the communities where the need was greater (if not greatest), due to logistical challenges.

### Cultural and Community Engagement

- **Balancing cultural sensitivity and change:** While the programme respects cultural sensitivity, there can be a delicate balance between respecting local customs and promoting necessary changes to harmful practices. Navigating this balance requires careful and nuanced constructive approaches, involving local service providers, CSOs and key influencers in communities.
- **Limited linkages with customary practice and law:** Despite their importance in Pacific countries, the programme has paid little attention to customary practice and less to customary law, and yet these are critical parts of the countries' systems for protecting children (or not). When customary practice is mentioned in materials published by the programme, it is usually deficit focused. Programmes that do not identify, acknowledge and reflect cultural practice strengths risk being less culturally relevant, which compromises community acceptance and participation. They are also less likely to be able to engage around harmful cultural practices such as child marriage, etc. Despite the growth of legislative provision and associated government policies, customary law remains relevant and particular in rural and remote areas where the programme, and indeed the Government, currently has less reach.

### Scalability challenges

- **Challenges in scaling successful interventions:** For many of the afore-mentioned reasons (resource constraints, and capacity limitations in government, UNICEF Pacific, local NGOs and CSOs, etc.) scaling up successful interventions to achieve a broader reach was a challenge. Also need for tailored approaches that consider local variations in customs and practices added another layer of complexity increased the demand for resources and capacity.

Building on the strengths of the programme and tackling its several challenges will be important for ensuring the programme is and remains successful moving forward in protecting children in the Pacific from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

## 5.2 Lessons learned

The UNICEF Pacific CP programme has demonstrated several strengths in addressing child protection needs through its alignment with local strategies, community engagement, capacity building, and its holistic approach. Collectively this has enabled the programme to make positive progress towards achieving child protection outcomes, and there was consensus among stakeholders that this progress would not have been achieved without the support of the programme.

However, to further enhance its effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, the programme needs to also focus its efforts on refining its strategies, with particular attention given to the effective implementation of initiatives; attracting more funding and resources, and improving resource allocation efficiency; strengthening partnerships at all levels; ensuring key marginalised groups and communities are included in the programme; and improving monitoring and evaluation activities to better leverage data

and inform the success of the programme. Key lessons drawn from the evaluation findings that can be applied to other interventions include:

- 1. Strong collaborative relationships and partnerships:** Strong collaborative relationships and partnerships with government departments helps ensure interventions align and efforts are well-coordinated and complementary to existing child protection strategies. This includes working with local NGOs, civil society organisations, and international partners. This strengthens relevancy and builds local ownership.
- 2. Holistic approach:** The programme adopts a holistic approach, supporting not only children but also those who care for and work with children, including families, community leaders, and service providers. A comprehensive strategy will facilitate coverage of all aspects of child protection.
- 3. Continuous advocacy:** Once legislation and policy frameworks are in place, sustained advocacy for crucial for the implementation and success of child protection programmes, and continuous adjustments are necessary in referral pathways, and interagency guidelines to support child protection measures. All these actions strengthen the sustainability of the child protection system and have led to better reporting mechanisms and enhanced the capacity of service providers.
- 4. Sustainable capacity building:** The on-going focus on strengthening the capacity of government and non-governmental service providers (including NGOs, CSOs, social welfare and child protection officers) through training and support is critical for improving the delivery of child protection services.
- 5. Community-based engagement and awareness:** Engagement of local communities ensures that the interventions resonate with local stakeholders, and often drives up the demand for the intervention or service, hence on-going conversation with government counterparts to ensure that capacities are sufficiently in place, sufficiently sustainable, and/or of a sufficiently high standard, quality and safety.
- 6. Coordination and leadership:** In the Pacific, with the intensifying effects of climate change and other natural shocks, emergencies and their response are inseparable from development efforts. The linkages, reputation, and expertise provide UNICEF an opportunity to coordinate child protection in the Pacific. There are several tangential benefits to the coordination. First, better insights can be gained on different partner capacities and resources. Second, coordination extends to data and monitoring, which when improved, has a recursive effect of improving coordination when partners know what others are doing, what interventions are most effective, what results are targeted and what is being achieved. Moreover, improved evidence can convincingly demonstrate to Governments that child protection is a priority and advocate for increased investments thus strengthening sustainability.
- 7. Recognising and integrating customary and traditional practice:** A learning that came through the evaluation is the distinction between norms and services in the Pacific. There are formal system norms and customary practice norms, and there are services that customary practice provides and those that the formal system provides. Integration of formal systems with community-based systems and customary practices is critical for the sustainability and scalability of benefits of the interventions. As well as formal system norms, efforts to address cultural beliefs and diverse cultural practice norms among communities were recognised by the programme as being necessary but challenging. Ongoing community engagement, as well as government support, is critical for long-term sustainability and for increased cultural acceptance and effectiveness of child protection activities. It also helps ensure programme activities are better aligned with the needs, priorities and context of Pacific Island communities.

8. **Cultural and Gender Norms:** Despite the restrictive gender norms in the Pacific, the subject of the norms and their consequences did not naturally come up more often in the course of the evaluation data collection, particularly the interlinkages between VAWG and VAC. Addressing cultural and gender norms and practices that conflict with formal child protection standards is a complex task, that requires careful, nuanced, constructive, and contextually and culturally appropriate approaches, involving local service providers, CSOs and key influencers in communities. Also, gaining community understanding and buy-in but re a huge investment on time, but it is essential for success.
9. **Inclusive Approach:** There needs to be an active effort and continued focus on implementing the principles of gender equality, human rights, and disability inclusion in the design and implementation of interventions, in practical and meaningful ways. This means entails proper targeting of children from marginalised communities, children with disabilities, and other disadvantaged groups, and ensuring that they benefit from interventions accrue directly to them.
10. **Invest in monitoring and evaluation, data and research:** There is always a need for good monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to provide ongoing feedback and demonstrate the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of an intervention. This includes a focus on strengthening the timely collection of data and sharing of information to support evidence-based implementation decisions on whether to proceed, stop, adjust, scale up/down programme of activities. Considering these issues at the programme planning and design stage increases the likelihood of generating robust monitoring data.

## 5.3 Conclusions

### Relevance

Three evaluation questions addressed the relevance of the Child protection programme, namely: the alignment of the UNICEF-supported interventions with Government child protection strategies and priorities; whether UNICEF-supported interventions addressed the needs of beneficiaries; and whether the programme was reflective of the Pacific Region context, including being accommodative of customary practices.

The evaluation concluded that the CP programme was well-aligned with the child protection strategies and priorities of the four Pacific countries. The overall approaches adopted by the programme - its focus on strengthening the enabling environment, enhancing the capabilities of child protection service providers, and promoting behavioural changes among parents, caregivers and teachers - were found to be relevant for the Pacific programming context, particularly having regard for the relative strengths of the respective Pacific countries' child protection systems.

While stakeholders were of the general view that the needs of a broad range beneficiary groups are being addressed by the programme the evaluation was not able to make a direct association between programme interventions and strategies for addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups of children, such as children with disabilities. Also, greater coverage of target beneficiary groups is required, as well as determining strategies to adapt to emerging demands, challenges and changing priorities for governments.

The evaluation also concluded that programme approaches were relevant for the Pacific programming context, relevant, appropriate and adaptable to the needs, circumstances, and challenges of respective

countries. On customary practices, the evaluation concluded that UNICEF made a good faith effort to respond with cultural sensitivity, but from a deficits-based approach, rather than from a more balanced strengths-based orientation, and that the programme could do more to understand and incorporate positive and supportive customary and traditional practices, particularly when engaging with local communities.

### **Effectiveness**

On effectiveness, the evaluation set out to determine if UNICEF-supported interventions and activities contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes that are necessary for children to be protected from violence and abuse. An enquiry on effectiveness also examined the results relating to each of the three programme outputs (i.e., strengthening of government child protection institutional frameworks; increasing capacities to provide services that prevent child abuse and neglect; and, increasing awareness, knowledge of caregivers, families and communities and to equip them with skills to enable them to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from violence and abuse).

The evaluation concluded that the programme made progress in creating positive conditions in the four Pacific countries, and that children were increasingly receiving better protections from violence and abuse. Progress was achieved in all three intended programme outputs in that the legal and policy frameworks are demonstrably more comprehensive, capacities and capabilities of government and other service providers across the four Pacific countries have improved in several key areas, and increased awareness on the rights of children and positive interactions between children and their parents/caregivers and teachers. However, a lack of robust monitoring and evaluation data also limited the ability to confidently determine the degree to which positive change was achieved, and/or whether it will be sustainable.

### **Efficiency**

The evaluation examined the efficiency of the CP programme through two questions: whether the programme utilised the best partnership modalities that were available, and the extent to which the choice of partnerships improved coordination necessary to achieve the planned results for child protection.

Overall, the evaluation concluded that UNICEF Pacific was regarded as highly credible and as having a significant and often leading role in fostering collaborations, highlighting its leadership in child protection activities, its expertise, the resources that the organization is able to mobilize, and its leadership in establishing clear roles and relationships among stakeholder groups. As a result, the partnership modalities and mechanisms utilised to implement the programme were appropriate for addressing the diverse and complex challenges and helped improve coordination across different stakeholders to achieve progress on improving child protection in the Pacific and brought about the desired efficiencies.

However, the evaluation also concluded that the more effort should be directed towards facilitating greater collaboration, coordination, and alignment across government departments, international, regional and local NGOs, and community-based civil society organisations (including faith-based) was identified. Also, innovative and strategic partnerships and collaborations are required to extend the reach of the programme to more communities and achieve long-term gains for the protection of children, while to not undermining the sovereignty responsibilities and leadership roles of governments.

### **Gender Equality and Human Rights-Based Approach**

The evaluation also investigated the extent to which the Child Protection programme integrated gender equality and human-rights and disability inclusion principles and practices, and the benefits accruing to

children from marginalised communities, children with disabilities, girls and other disadvantaged groups, if any.

The evaluation concluded that the necessary commitments to gender equality relatively well throughout the programme cycle, and policies guidelines, referral pathways and child protection legislation which were developed with UNICEF support were designed to be inclusive, required fair treatment and equal access to services for all children, and required that children with disabilities and those from marginalised communities be targeted for inclusion. In practice, the extent to which the programme targeted and reached children in marginalised communities was limited, partly due to a lack of reporting on either disability inclusion or evidence of any provision exclusively for children with disabilities or specific data around girls (including adolescent girls) and other disadvantaged groups.

## **Impact**

On impact, the evaluation set out to identify the impact of the programme, negative and positive, as well as intended and unintended impacts from the perspective of children, their families and communities. While only limited, the evaluation concluded perceived positive intended impacts, namely: an increase in awareness of the rights of children; changes in mindsets and behaviours of parents and teachers; stronger collective community responsibility towards the protection of children; increased reporting of child abuse and violence cases; and reduction in physical violence against children. Also, strengthened legal and institutional frameworks and policies, and enhanced capacity of service providers (government officials, NGOs and CSOs) provided better protection for children.

Beneficiaries also identified resistance to change as a possible factor that may undermine the positive impacts of intervention, and limited capacity to bring services to communities who live in remote areas. Continued capacity and capability building initiatives for service providers and the community, and better coordination across government departments will also be required to enhance the impact of child protection initiatives.

## **Sustainability**

On sustainability, the evaluation also examined the extent to which positive results and/or effects could be sustainable and implemented at scale, and the extent to which there were successes in linking formal systems with customary practices. It concluded that in creating a strong enabling environment, building capacity and capability of service providers, and strengthening community protection efforts, the programme had laid strong building blocks to be sustainable and scalable.

However, the evaluation also concluded that the potential for sustainability and scalability, could be undermined by deep-rooted customary norms and cultural resistance to change, unless the programme sought a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of customary practices in order to accentuate the positive practices and institutionalize them into formal CP systems. Sustainability will also be served well Involving young people, community leaders and other trusted members of the community and by efficient utilisation of local NGOs and CSOs and expanding their capacity and capability to reach and engagement with more communities, and a more robust monitoring and evaluation to identify what is working or not working to inform decision-making on how best to replicate and/or expand interventions and services to the required scale activities.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations were proffered to improve and enhance the support that UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Section provides to Governments in the Pacific to address critical child protection issues and reduce cycles of intergenerational violence under the current Programme (2023-2027) and in any future programmes. As indicated in the methodology section, primary audience for this report is Child Protection Section in the UNICEF Pacific, and the Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and the relevant government departments in Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu (see Section 3.1). Secondary audiences are UNICEF Pacific development partners in child protection, including UN Women, UNFPA, line ministries in countries where the evaluation took place, and other sector teams in UNICEF Pacific, and UNICEF offices and. It is expected the evaluation will inform future investments and prioritisation, as well as partnerships, and will contribute to sectoral knowledge and learning.

The development of recommendations was a co-creation between the evaluation team and the UNICEF Child Protection programme team as follows:

1. The initial set of recommendations was developed by the evaluation team. These were based on an initial analysis that produced preliminary findings, conclusions and insights.
2. A sense-making and recommendation co-creation workshop was convened to provide feedback on the initial set of recommendations. Workshop attendees included the UNICEF CP Programme Team, UNICEF Multi-Country Evaluation Specialist, representatives from DFAT, and a CP consultant.
3. The evaluation team produced a revised set of recommendations which were subsequently reviewed by the evaluation manager to bring them into compliance with GEROS.

The evaluation recommends as follows:

Recommendation 1: High Priority	Responsible persons
Commission exploratory research on helpful and harmful social norms in the region, and/or other comprehensive assessments of the child protection needs (i.e., gap analyses, stakeholder analyses, etc.) to ensure that future Programme activities are informed by quality evidence.	Child Protection Team, with inputs from relevant Governments departments

UNICEF is advised to commission/undertake comprehensive assessments of the child protection needs of children and families as rights holders in PICTs that are covered by the Child protection programme. Research and assessments should have a particular focus on GEHRDI and the additional or different needs of target subgroups (especially adolescent girls, children with disabilities and/or with mental health challenges, (adolescent) boys). Each analysis should incorporate a strong country-specific cultural lens, and the views of children and families.

Relatedly, the office should consider conducting stakeholder analyses or similar exercises to identify primary and secondary stakeholders, and well as INGOs, local NGOs, and CSOs who are involved in the work of enhancing the protection of children (including particular target groups). To be updated regularly, this exercise should identify respective roles, priorities, strengths, competencies, resourcing, and potential collaborative opportunities,

Recommendation 2: High Priority	Responsible persons
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Review and finalize the overarching Theory of Change for the Child Protection programme and adaptations for each country/territory covered by the programme where it is necessary, feasible, and practicable to do so.	Child Protection Team, with inputs from relevant Government departments
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UNICEF is advised to re-examine the Programme with a view to strengthen its logic and strategic approach, and to revise the Theory of Change (December 2023 version) to articulate more clearly and comprehensively how the Programme is meant to work, and strengthen the linkages between activities and short, medium and long-term outcomes/impacts, the underlying assumptions, while being mindful not to expand the ToC horizontally by taking on more work given the stretched resources. The theory of change should take into consideration the strategic partnerships with INGOs, development partners and other UN agencies with overlapping interests in child protection, and building, relationships and/or partnerships with non-traditional actors with vested interest in the protection of children.

An associated task would be to identify the key indicators of success - short- and medium-term indicators that show how changes to cultural norms are progressing over time, based on the linkages between outcomes, how these will be measured/assessed. These should include. Regularly review these instruments is necessary to ensure the Programme is responsive and adapts to emerging and changing demands, challenges (intended/unintended) and shifts in government priorities.

<b>Recommendation 3: High Priority (6-12 months)</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
Facilitate the development of a regional resource mobilization strategy to be used to advocate the increase investment in the Child Protection sector within UNICEF and in respective Pacific countries and territories	Child Protection Chief, CFOs, in collaboration with relevant Government departments

Shortages of resources for the basic services was identified as a major problem, hence UNICEF should facilitate efforts to secure additional resources to enhance the sustainability and scale up the reach of child protection interventions, including to disadvantaged groups and to remote and/or marginalised communities, and to enhance the capacities and capabilities of service providers (both government and non-government providers). This should include exploring how to leverage the close inter-linkages between VAW and VAC funded programmes, humanitarian response programmes, and to highlight how climate is projected to impact the security and well-being of children in the Pacific region.

Also, the organization should continue to advocate for increasing the proportion of countries' GDP allocated to the protection of Pacific children. This may involve, for example, mechanisms or approaches that encourage notions of "whole of government investment" in and across the CP sector and/or the creation of a targeted percentage of sector budgets allocated to CP issues, based on sound evidence from investment cases, economic modelling, or such approaches as Value for Investment or Social Return on Investment.

<b>Recommendation 4: Medium Priority</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
Develop (or update) the partnerships approach and action plan for the Child Protection programme	Child Protection Team and Partnerships Specialist

Many groups of people in the Pacific region countries have a vested interest in the wellbeing of children, and indeed contribute meaningfully to it. However, it is necessary for the Child protection team to identify those with the mandate, authority and skills to engage in child protection activities. Given the high transaction costs in establishing and managing partnerships, strategic choices should be made in the selection of partners should be guided by assessments of the extent to which the respective organization,

groups, etc. align with the CP Programme overall goals, and assessment how the partners can contribute to the security and the protection of children.<sup>30</sup>

Once developed, the action plan will be used to foster systematic engagement of partners, which should include structured communications, regular updates and information-sharing, hosting pan-Pacific events and forums, media items and case studies of successful initiatives and collaborations, etc. UNICEF should also consider equipping governments with the relevant skills, knowledge, and evidence that will enable them to engage and advocate for CP issues in regional platforms and forums, such as the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Pacific Community (SPC). An action plan for partnerships that is implemented systematically will promote coherence and effectiveness and strengthen the Programme’s positioning and the reputation of UNICEF as a trusted authority on child protection in the region.

Recommendation 5: High Priority	Responsible persons
Develop a knowledge repository on local traditions and customs, most relevant to key child protection issues, both protective and potentially harmful and strengthen integration of reflections and analysis into child protection programme strategies, practices and messaging	Child Protection Team, with inputs from relevant Government departments, civil society and cultural and faith-based leaders

The evaluation identified a gap and missed opportunities to incorporate local traditions and customs systematically into CP programmes, and the associated benefits of enhancing local ownership of the programmes, and sustainability. Hence the organization is advised to adopt a more nuanced and proactive position on cultural practices that balances a recognition of cultural strengths as well as identifying opportunities to address cultural practices that are harmful to children, and to incorporate them in the programme design and messaging.

Developing an understanding of the relevant cultural practices and informal systems, how they can be linked with more formal child protection systems, how to harness the strength of positive practices, and identifying which harmful aspects that can be targeted for change, is all necessary. This process could involve community action research, establishing and engaging with cultural advisory groups of well-respected and connected individuals in each country, and/or establishing working groups with wide-ranging representation to explore the interface between customary law and child protection, and how the protection of children might be strengthened in their respective country contexts.

Within the organization, UNICEF Pacific should also consider sourcing training to deepen the understanding of cultural practices among its staff, to appreciate condition under which cultural practices positively impact child protection, as well as challenges associated with cultural practices. Such training should also be incorporated into induction and related training; all staff should (receive training to) be culturally competent in relation to the country context they are working in.

Recommendation 6: High Priority	Responsible persons
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<sup>30</sup> UNICEF previously identified four categories of partnerships and their contribution as follows: (i) *Programme implementation partnerships* contribute to the implementation of programmes thereby increasing particularly the reach and coverage of essential services; (ii) *Knowledge and innovation partnerships* contribute to the development and strengthening of technical expertise and innovative programming solutions; (iii) *Policy and advocacy partnerships* contribute to development and adoption of norms and standards, policies and legislation, and increased investment in child rights; and, (iv) *Mobilizing partnerships* help to mobilize financial and non-financial resources from donors and other partners in support of UNICEF-assisted programmes (UNICEF, 2012).

In conjunction with Government and universities, facilitate the development of a child protection professional workforce capacity and capability framework.	Child Protection Chief and CFOs, with inputs from relevant Government departments
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Based on the stakeholder needs analysis suggested in Recommendation 1, UNICEF is advised to develop a **regional capability development framework**, to support efforts to improve the capacity and capabilities of child protection professional and semi-professional workforce and appropriate options for expansion within and across government ministries, NGOs and/or civil society and faith-based organisations. The framework should articulate the core roles, skills and competencies that are required for an effective and sustainable CP system, across the range of professional, semi-professional, para-social worker and other government worker roles, with a Pacific social work theory lens; and identify opportunities and regional providers who can deliver education and training opportunities and qualifications to address those needs.

The framework should address: (1) initiative-specific professional development (e.g. delivery of training on new legislation and policy and practice guidelines); (2) the upskilling of existing and potential professional workers with recognised qualifications, accreditation and standards; (3) the incorporation of core child protection skills in the training for other government workers (such as police, health workers, teachers); (4) the upskilling of community-based para-social workers; (5) the modes of delivery; (6) ongoing professional development (e.g., supervision, peer support, more regular training, coaching and mentorship, and resource hubs); and (7) recruitment and retention strategies for skilled CP professionals.

<b>Recommendation 7: High Priority</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
Strengthen the focus on fidelity of implementation of planned child protection interventions	Child Protection Team, with inputs from relevant Government departments

The evaluation identified bottlenecks in implementation of activities, which naturally resulted in the programme not being as effective as it could have been. Programme teams in respective countries are advised to plan realistically, which warrants a discussion on *fidelity of implementation* or *implementation integrity*, and taking concrete steps to ensure that activities are implemented as planned.

The four elements of implementation integrity that would be key to the success of the Child Protection programme are: (i) **programme differentiation**, i.e., identifying a minimum set of core activities without which the programme will not have its intended effect); (ii) **exposure or dose**, i.e., whether participants received the intervention with the prescribed/sufficient frequency); (iii) **quality of delivery**, i.e., whether the programme is delivered competently (by competent experts, for instance); and, (iv) **participant responsiveness**, i.e., whether participants are actively engaged an intervention and respond to it, which is influenced by their perception of the relevance of the programme to them.<sup>31</sup>

Other aspects of implementation integrity include ensuring that implementing partners have adequately factored in and/or addressed capacity, resourcing and system constraints, and planning for and undertaking appropriate monitoring and evaluation activities to inform decision-makers of progress and facilitate learning and adaptation. UNICEF is also advised to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Child Protection Working Groups with key partners and stakeholders and support implementation of findings. Where needed, consider how the Programme can enhance the effectiveness of these groups including by providing additional support (e.g. facilitating a peer support process for chairpersons, training, mentoring or other support for chairpersons, and induction training for new members).

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<sup>31</sup> Carroll, C., Patterson, M., Wood, S. *et al.* A conceptual framework for implementation fidelity. *Implementation Sci* 2, 40 (2007)

<b>Recommendation 8: Medium Priority</b>	<b>Responsible persons</b>
Facilitate technical assistance to respective governments to strengthen the information management, monitoring, and evaluation systems that support evidence-based decision-making for the child protection sector and also appraise the utility and effectiveness of existing monitoring and evaluation processes and protocols for the Child protection programme in respective Pacific offices.	Child Protection Chief, CFOs, PMR, and Evaluation teams, in collaboration with relevant Government departments

Monitoring of programme activities by UNICEF team and respective government was identified as one of the main weaknesses of the Child Protection programme. Hence the Child Protection team is advised to review and simplify their monitoring processes and protocols to make them more user-friendly and incorporate regular feedback loops to key stakeholders. This effort should also identify the barriers experienced by the Programme to date in meeting UNICEF Pacific and donor monitoring and evaluation expectations and determine how such barriers will now be overcome.

With respect to governments, UNICEF should explore interest and viability of respective governments, to undertake reviews and assessments of information management systems (IMS) in relation to their respective child protection sectors. To be implemented with support from local partners including local companies who provide telephone and internet services, these assessments should emphasize fitness-for-purpose and identifying new and innovative approaches and opportunities for data collection, management and reporting (including for monitoring and evaluation activities). Seeking government commitment and developing action plans is likely to be a long-term effort, to be implemented beyond the current CPD cycle.

### **Next steps**

Evidence and recommendations generated by the evaluation were further considered by UNICEF Pacific in the programme design workshop in Q3 of 2024, with adjustments expected in the implementation of the remaining part of the multi-country programme and contribute towards creating a more evidence-based advocacy and development of the child protection system in the countries within the scope of the programme. Relatedly, UNICEF Pacific management will issue a response to the evaluation recommendations, indicating the actions that the office will undertake in the remainder of the 2023-2027 programme cycle to improve the Child Protection programme outcomes. Dictated mainly by the availability of resources, Child Protection team will indicate the timeline for closing management response actions, all to be finalized within a period of 24 months from the date of final approval.

## ANNEXES TO REPORT

### Annex A: Background to the UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Programme

UNICEF has worked in the Pacific for over 50 years and the programme can be traced back to at least 2005. The programme is based in the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Office in Suva, Fiji. In addition to the Suva, the Child Protection staff are based Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, as well as the North Pacific (covering the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Palau).

UNICEF Pacific is part of the UNICEF East Asia-and Pacific region, which is headquartered in Bangkok. UNICEF Pacific uses a matrix management model with CP programme Country Programme Officers reporting to both the Field Office Chief in their respective country, and the Child Protection Chief in Suva.

The programme budget for 2023-2027 is US\$27,405,000. This is made up of US\$8,500,000 from Regular Resources (RR) and US\$18,905,000 from Other Resources (OR). The corresponding budget for the 2018-2022 cycle was US\$19,000,000 comprising of US\$8,000,000 (RR) and US\$11,000,000 (OR). This represents a 6 percent decrease in RR and a 44 percent increase in planned OR. From the latest donor report to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), their funding for the period 10 April to 2019 to 31 December 2023 totalled A\$6,885,149. However, funding up to 10 April 2019 and since 1 January 2024 has not been identified. The Child Protection programme had a planned budget of US\$26,081,650 according to the 2023 RAM report, US\$7,376,010 allocation and US\$5,376,032 utilization. The three programme outputs (systems building, services and behaviour change) accounted for 18 percent, 44 percent, and 37 percent of the utilization respectively.

The programme covers 14 different countries as indicated in the table below. The programme workplan and budget is negotiated with each of the countries and with regional bodies. The number of intervention components or commitments is high, (estimated to be over 170 activities for the 2023-2024 work plan). There were major disruptions in the e period covered by the evaluation (e.g., COVID pandemic cyclones, etc.) that resulted in a high turn-over of programme staff and consultants, and inevitably the loss of some institutional knowledge and key relationships.

#### The 14 Child Protection Programme Countries

Country	Population	Grouping	UNICEF Field office	Tier <sup>2</sup>	Status
Kiribati <sup>1</sup>	120,000	Micronesia	Yes	1	Independent sovereign state
Solomon Islands <sup>1</sup>	686,000	Melanesia	Yes	1	Independent sovereign state
Vanuatu <sup>1</sup>	307,000	Melanesia	Yes	1	Independent sovereign state
Samoa <sup>1</sup>	200,000	Polynesia	Yes	2	Independent sovereign state
Fiji	896,000	Melanesia	Yes	1	Independent sovereign state
Federated States of Micronesia	15,000	Micronesia	Yes	2	Self-governing in free association with US
Republic of Marshall Islands	59,000	Micronesia	No	2	Self-governing in free association with US
Tonga	105,000	Polynesia	No	2	Independent sovereign state
Tuvalu	11,000	Polynesia	No	2	Independent sovereign state
Cook Islands	17,000	Polynesia	No	3	Self-governing in free association with NZ
Nauru	10,000	Micronesia	No	3	Independent sovereign state
Niue	16,000	Polynesia	No	3	Self-governing in free association with NZ
Palau	18,000	Micronesia	No	3	Self-governing in free association with US
Tokelau	1,500	Polynesia	No	3	Dependent territory of NZ

Notes to Table:

<sup>1</sup> Target countries for UNICEF Pacific Child Protection programme evaluation.

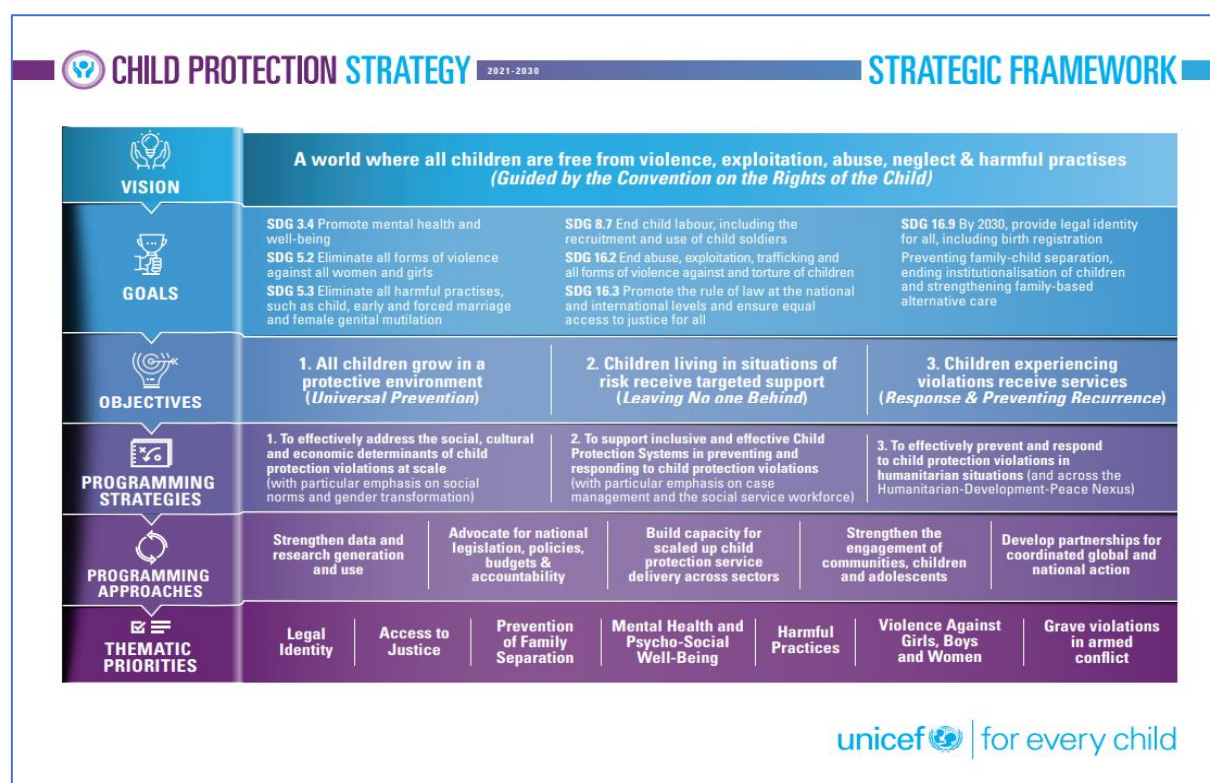
<sup>2</sup> Tiers 1-3 from 2023 evaluability assessment report (Manitou, 2023). This describes the “tiered” approach adopted by the CP programme as follows:

Country	Population	Grouping	UNICEF Field office	Tier <sup>2</sup>	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tier 1 countries include various forms of investment, such as (a) UNICEF CP staff, (b) existing and significant engagement to enhance system building across almost all areas of CP, (c) existing and significant cadre of social workers, and (d) a population over 100,000.</li> <li>- Tier 2 countries benefit from strategic support from UNICEF, but comparably less than Tier 1 countries given that CP is at very early phases of development. Support may include: (a) some engagement on important areas of CP that builds upon earlier investments, and (b) lower density populations.</li> <li>- Tier 3 countries have limited investments from UNICEF, which means that UNICEF has (a) no field presence, and (b) limited engagement. Almost all of the Tier 3 countries have existing resources and are middle/high income countries affiliated with New Zealand.</li> </ul>					

## Summary of the UNICEF 2021-2030 Child Protection Strategy

The programme operates within the context of the global UNICEF 2021-2030 Child Protection Strategy. This provides a vision of “a world where all children are free from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices.” This is presented in Figure 1:

Figure 1: The UNICEF 2021-2030 Child Protection Strategy



Source: UNICEF Child Protection Strategy 2021-2030: Summary (2021).

UNICEF Pacific reports annually through Reporting and Monitoring country programme full approval (RAM) reports. While the RAM reports do include a section titled ‘Outcome Analytical Statement of Progress’, in the absence of clear and detailed cycle-specific objectives, and perhaps the narrative report style. Also, while there are tables that report on Standard Indicators, the wide use of ‘999’ and ‘0’ in reporting cells, and their relation to “Ratings” was not analysed in this evaluation. 3 of 4 outcomes/outputs were rated as ‘on-track’ over 2018 and 2019, ‘constrained’ over 2020 and 2021, ‘partially met’ for 2022, and ‘on-track’ for 2023.

## Annex B: Theory of Change

For the current five-year cycle, the programme aims to contribute towards the outcome of ensuring that *“children and adolescents in the Pacific are better protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, harmful practices, and psychological distress, including in emergencies.”* The outcome in the 2018-2022 cycle was that *“children in the Pacific are increasingly protected from violence and abuse”*.

Three outputs are stipulated:

- Output 1: Child protection systems and structures have strengthened evidence, legal, policy and coordination frameworks to plan, coordinate, monitor and adequately resource the delivery and expansion of quality and resilient child protection services.
- Output 2: Government and other service providers have strengthened capacities to deliver quality, inclusive, and integrated child protection services.
- Output 3: Caregivers, communities, youth, adolescents, and children are better informed, equipped, and supported to generate transformative and protection-focused, gender-equal social norms, as well as prevent and respond to violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices.

The results framework includes five ‘standard indicators’, as well as three ‘suggested indicators.’ There are also annual self-assessments of programme performance which notably shows a significant improvement over 2023, presented as Annex C.

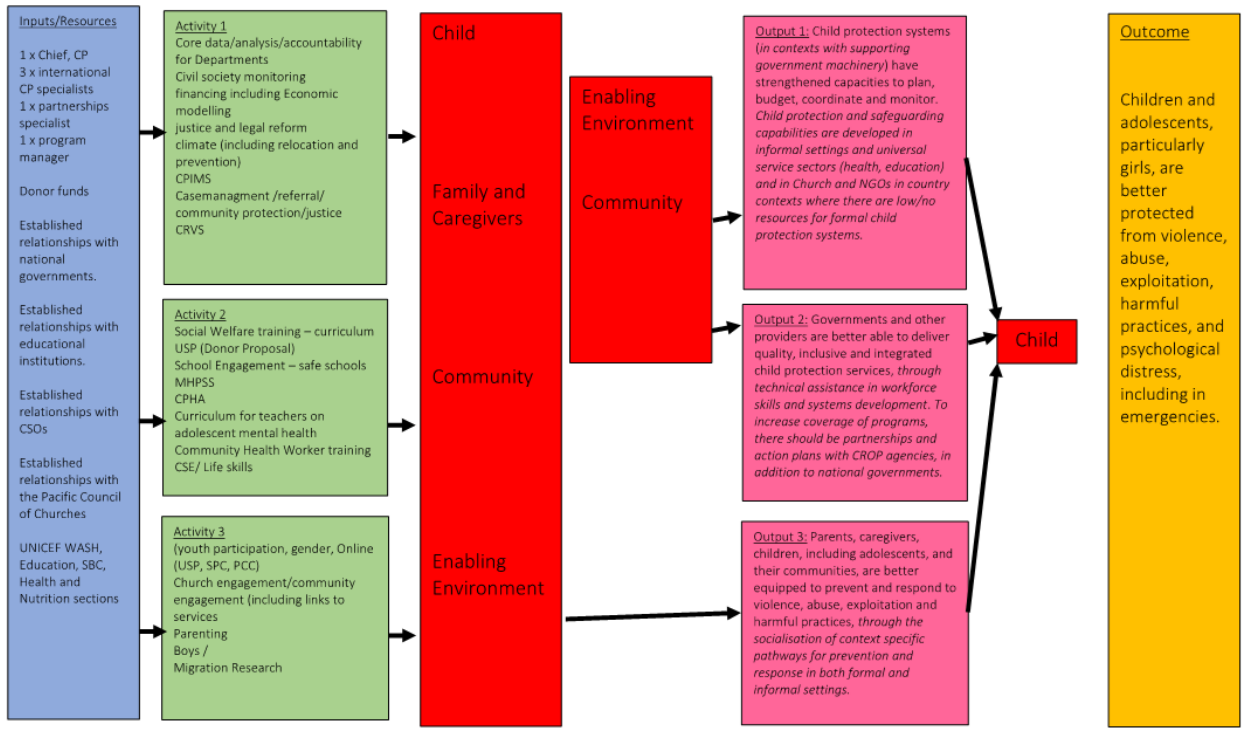
The programme has developed or employed several theories of change over 2018 to 2023. These include:

1. **Child Protection Theory of Change (UNICEF Pacific, 2017):** This simple diagram was structured around IF-THEN statements.
2. **Revised Child Protection Theory of Change (UNICEF Pacific, 2020):** Similar to the 2017 version but with minor wording changes and fewer assumptions.
3. **Annex II: Theory of Change (UNICEF Pacific, 2022):** Markedly different in format and content, more comprehensive but lacking clear categorisation and connections between components.
4. **Annex III: Proposed New Presentation (Manitou, 2023):** Recently recommended for development, featuring IF-THEN statements and a format similar to the 2017 version but with added complexity including concentric circles and over 40 new labels.
5. **Refined Theory of Change (Desi Consulting, 2023):** Takes a more conventional format. However, clearer on describing *what* the programme is than *how* it works, which limits its utility. The identified assumptions are, as previously, problematic.

Assumption 1: Governments understand the consequences of child neglect, abuse and exploitation and adopt a comprehensive approach to prevention and response to child protection concerns.

Assumption 2: All sectors develop, implement and embed in its existing systems CP procedures, skill-based training and monitoring tools.

Assumption 3: Caregivers abandon harmful practices and adopt or strengthen protective ones. Women and children will ultimately be valued and respected within society and equals. Perpetrators are held to account for their actions.





## Annex C: Planned Programme Outcomes and Outputs

For the previous 2013-2017 UNICEF cycle, support had mainly been focused on Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. While there were some activities in Fiji and Samoa, assistance to the other 11 countries was limited. The overall goal of the 2013-2017 CPP was to: “prevent violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children by improving Child Protection laws and regulations, and their enforcement; improve services; and address community practices and behaviour” (Szamier & Attenborough, 2017, p. 10). This overall goal was supported by two stated outcomes and six and three outputs, respectively.

In relation to the period covered by this evaluation (January 2018 to March 2024) there are three different sets of prescribed outcomes and outputs as shown in the table below. As the evaluation crosses two UNICEF cycles (2018-2022 and 2023-2027), there is a set in relation to each. However, while not radically different in substance, covering the period July 2019 to December 2023, the DFAT investment design planned outcomes and outputs straddle two UNICEF five-year cycles. They also have much more specificity with 15 additional planned outputs. From the reviewed documentation the relationship between the UNICEF planned outcomes and outputs for the 14 countries including Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and the DFAT ones specifically for Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, is not apparent.

### UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Programme Planned Outcomes and Outputs<sup>32</sup> 2018-2024

UNICEF PACIFIC CPP 2018-2022	DFAT CPP 2019-2023	UNICEF PACIFIC 2023-2027
<b>Outcome Statement 1:</b> By 2022, children in the Pacific are <i>increasingly protected</i> from violence and abuse	<b>Higher Level Development Outcome:</b> Children in Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are <i>increasingly protected</i> against all forms of violence, including neglect, abuse, exploitation, separation from parents and any form of harm to their well-being and development	<b>Outcome:</b> By 2027, children and adolescents in the Pacific are <i>better protected</i> from abuse, neglect, exploitation, harmful practices, and psychological distress, including in emergencies
<b>Outcome Statement 2:</b> Governments have <i>strengthened child protection institutional frameworks</i> , particularly in target countries	<b>Outcome 1:</b> The <i>normative framework</i> to ensure the protection of children <i>is in place</i>	<b>Output 1:</b> Child protection systems and structures have <i>strengthened evidence, legal, policy and coordination frameworks</i> to plan, coordinate, monitor and adequately resource the delivery and expansion of quality and resilient child protection services
<b>Outcome Statement 3:</b> Government and other service providers (non-governmental agencies) have <i>enhanced capacities</i> to provide child protection services which prevent and respond to violence and abuse, particularly in target countries	<b>Outcome 2:</b> Services have <i>enhanced their capacity</i> to prevent and respond to all forms of neglect, abuse and exploitation of children with adequate access, coverage and quality	<b>Output 2:</b> Government and other service providers have <i>strengthened capacities</i> to deliver quality, inclusive, and integrated child protection services
<b>Outcome Statement 4:</b> Caregivers, families and communities have <i>increased knowledge and skills</i> to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from violence and abuse, particularly in target countries	<b>Outcome 3:</b> Adults have <i>increased their knowledge and skills</i> to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation, and adolescents acquired life skills to protect themselves However, while the first documents also include 12 outputs, the second also includes 15 outputs (3 additional ones but otherwise the same). The third document instead has 15 indicators.	<b>Output 3:</b> Caregivers, communities, youth, adolescents, and children are <i>better informed, equipped, and supported</i> to generate transformative and protection-focused, gender-equal social norms, as well as prevent and respond to violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices

<sup>32</sup> As well as a single ‘higher level development outcomes’ and three ‘outcomes’ the DFAT CCP investment design document (ca., 2018) also includes 15 outputs which are listed on the following page.

UNICEF PACIFIC CPP 2018-2022	DFAT CPP 2019-2023	UNICEF PACIFIC 2023-2027
SOURCES: (1) Program Strategy Note (UNICEF Pacific, 2017) (2) CPP RAM reports 2018-2022; (3) Evaluability assessment <sup>33</sup> (Manitou, 2023); and (4) Evaluation RFP (UNICEF Pacific 2023)	SOURCES: (1) DFAT (ca., 2018) CPP investment design; and (2) Annual DFAT report (UNICEF, 2021).	SOURCES: (1) CPP rationale document (UNICEF Pacific, ca., 2022 <sup>34</sup> ); and (2) Evaluability assessment (Manitou, 2023).

With specific reference to Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, as well as the single ‘higher level development outcome’ and three ‘from the DFAT CCP investment design document (ca., 2018), the 15 agreed associated outputs are presented in the table below.

### *Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu DFAT Outputs*

No.	Output
1.1	Data on child protection issues and systems available for advocacy, planning and monitoring.
1.2	Legislation to protect children from neglect, abuse, exploitation, separation from family and any other form of harm developed and enacted.
1.3	A multi-sector child protection policy and related costed implementation plan developed, endorsed, resourced and implemented.
1.4	Multi-sector strategic and operational child protection coordination mechanisms in place and functioning at national and local level.
1.5	Child protection incorporated in national development plans, and health, education, social protection and justice sectoral policies and plans.
2.1	In the social welfare sector, guidelines for child protection case management, training packages, and planning, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and tools, developed, embedded in existing social welfare system, and implemented.
2.2	In the judiciary sector, court procedures for the handling of children in criminal and civil proceedings, training packages, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and tools, developed, embedded in existing justice systems, and implemented.
2.3	In the security sector, police standard operating procedures for the handling of children victims, witnesses and offenders, training packages, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and tools, developed, embedded in existing police systems, and implemented.
2.4	In the health sector, clinical protocols for diagnosis, treatment and reporting of child abuse, and guidelines for detection, early intervention and reporting of all forms of child abuse or neglect, training packages, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and tools, developed, embedded in existing health systems, and implemented.
2.5	In the education sector, comprehensive child protection in school policies and procedures, training packages, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and tools, developed, embedded in existing education systems and implemented.
3.1	Community-based child protection strategy, learning, facilitation, training and management materials and tools developed and implemented.
3.2	Adolescent empowerment programme strategy, learning, facilitation, training and management materials and tools developed and implemented
3.3	Communication campaign on child protection targeting society as a whole through various channels developed and implemented.
3.4	Communication strategy to engage opinion leaders (media, traditional, religious and political leaders, arts and sports celebrities, etc.), private sector, etc. in the elimination of harmful practices developed and implemented.
3.5	Advocacy campaign to raise awareness of decision-makers about the consequences of adverse childhoods and of the cost of not addressing it designed and implemented.

<sup>33</sup> The version reported by Manitou (2023) is slightly different in that it frames these as one outcome and three outputs rather than four outcome statements (otherwise same wording. It also makes no reference to ‘target countries’ or “including in emergencies”.

<sup>34</sup> This version (UNICEF Pacific, ca., 2022) from the CPP rationale documents omits “and adolescents”. More significantly, as it appears to change the meaning, the associated theory of change in the same document replaces “including in emergencies” with “in development and humanitarian contexts”.

## Annex D: Summary of 2017 DFAT Programme Review

Summarised conclusions of the DFAT review of the 2014-2017 programme (Szamier & Attenborough, 2017) with one each relating to relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, are as follows:

### **Summary of 2017 'relevance' conclusion**

The programme is aligned to Pacific countries, and it largely targets regional priorities, structures and gaps. Strengthening these systems is key to preventing child violence. Better data and analysis, especially on gender-based violence, are needed to influence policymakers. Tailoring approaches to local contexts with clear goals is essential. Investment in coordination and aligning support with stakeholders are crucial. Collaborating with national and regional actors enhances efforts. Harmonising efforts across justice, health, education, and gender-based violence systems benefits the programme. A national framework to track progress would improve coordination.

### **Summary of 2017 'effectiveness' conclusion**

The programme strengthened child protection laws in Pacific Island Countries but struggled with implementing reforms. More rigorous processes for country-specific strategies and multi-sectoral plans are needed. Investment in tailored programme theory and its link to broader protection efforts is essential. Birth registration improved in three countries, but overall system strengthening lagged. A strategic approach to capacity building, with robust monitoring, is necessary. Limited evidence shows the effectiveness of community mobilisation in child protection. Advocacy for child protection was less effective in raising awareness of violence against children. Better coordination with stakeholders is needed. Data collection and analysis were inconsistent, and monitoring was often absent.

### **Summary of 2017 'efficiency' conclusion**

Programme efficiency was impacted by overstretched capacity due to leadership gaps, regional disasters, responses to country requests, and weak capacity and coordination in countries. The lack of national child protection policies led to a fragmented, project-oriented approach. Mapping and assessing each context and identifying explicit causal pathways beyond Annual Work Plans are necessary to document changes, strategies, risks, assumptions, and measures. Better use of funds and expertise requires assessing partners' readiness and identifying realistic technical and institutional needs. Increased support for collaborative child protection mechanisms and improved tracking and measuring of results are also priorities.

### **Summary of 2017 'sustainability' conclusion**

The child protection systems approach supports sustainable outcomes but needs better institutional arrangements, planning, and budgeting. Mainstreaming child protection in national and community interventions and forming deeper alliances, such as those against violence towards women and girls, is crucial but was limited. Most countries rely heavily on UNICEF funding for child protection. Increased advocacy, including engaging leaders with evidence-based recommendations and collaborating with other development partners, is vital for sustainability but was found to be a weakness in the current programme cycle.

## Annex E: Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology was designed based on the purpose, objectives, approach and principles set out in the Inception Report Section 3. It considered the data that was available and supplied as part of the desk review and discussions with UNICEF Pacific CP programme managers. The evaluation is both formative and summative in nature, utilisation-focused and adopted a predominantly qualitative approach.

The methodology adheres to UNICEF Evaluation Policy (UNICEF, 2023); to UNICEF procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis; to the UNEG Ethical Guidelines; to the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation; and to UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards.

### Evaluation framework

The Terms of Reference (ToR) specified ten key evaluation questions (KEQs) that guided the evaluation, and on which the evaluation findings are reported. These KEQs are aligned with five out of the six evaluation criteria based on standards from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency impact and sustainability, plus an area of questioning around gender equality and human rights-based approach.

The framework presents the overall approach to the evaluation based on the KEQs. It indicates the key target stakeholder groups that were asked for their perspective on respective questions, and the method(s) by which that data was collected.

The sub-questions derived from the KEQ were framed differently according to the nature and role of the key informant/group. For example, UNICEF staff were asked how they ensured the programme activities were relevant to local government child protection strategies and priorities; implementing government departments would be asked the extent to which the programme activities were relevant; social worker practitioners and community leaders were asked to comment on relevance according to their observed needs.

Indicative interview guides based on this framework were developed and provided in the Inception Report at Annex B. These were further contextualised to the key informants, their roles and exposure to the CP programme, and their respective countries, as not all activities were delivered to all target beneficiaries.

Key evaluation themes, target groups and data sources

Evaluation Themes & KEQs	Target Stakeholder Groups & Sources/Methods of Data Collection						
	UNICEF CPS	Development Partners	Implementing Partners Government Agencies	NGO Service Providers	Front-line Practitioners	Community Leaders	Community Members
<b>Relevance: (Is the CP programme doing the right things?)</b>							
1. How relevant and consistent are the programme interventions to Government child protection strategies and priorities?	Doc Review, KIIs	KIIs	Doc Review, KIIs	KIIs			
2. How do the programme interventions and strategies link to the beneficiary needs?	Doc Review, KIIs	KIIs	Doc Review, KIIs	KIIs	FGDs	FGDs	FGDs <sup>1</sup>
3. How relevant are approaches for the Pacific programming context, including civil society partnership and links to customary practices?	Doc Review, KIIs	KIIs	KIIs	KIIs	FGDs	FGDs	
<b>Effectiveness: (Is the CP programme achieving its objectives and outcomes?)</b>							
4. To what degree has UNICEF Pacific's contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes for children in the Pacific to be increasingly protected from violence and abuse?	Doc Review, KIIs	KIIs	KIIs	KIIs	FGDs	FGDs	FGDs <sup>1</sup>
What have been the results relating to the three programme outputs:	Note: Data analysis where existing relevant and reliable data exists against the three outputs.						
a. strengthened targeted government child protection institutional frameworks	Doc Review, KIIs		Doc Review, KIIs	KIIs	FGDs		
b. government and other service providers' increased capacities to provide child protection services that prevent child abuse and neglect	Doc Review, KIIs		KIIs	KIIs	FGDs	FGDs	
c. caregivers, families and communities' increased knowledge and skills to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from violence and abuse.	Doc Review, KIIs		KIIs	KIIs	FGDs	FGDs	FGDs <sup>1</sup>
<b>Impact: (What difference is the CP programme making?)</b>							
5. What were the main impacts (positive/negative, intended/unintended) as perceived by the children, their families and communities, i.e., What has happened as a result of improving CP in the Pacific?	Doc Review, KIIs	KIIs	Doc Review, KIIs	KIIs	FGDs	FGDs	
<b>Efficiency: (How well are resources being used?)</b>							
6. Are the utilised partnership modalities the best ones for implementing the CP programme?	Doc Review, KIIs	DFAT KII	KIIs	KIIs			
7. To what extent and how has UNICEF improved coordination to achieve the planned results for child protection?	Doc Review, KIIs	KIIs	KIIs	KIIs	FGDs		
<b>Gender equality and human rights-based approach</b>							
8. How successfully has the CP programme integrated UNICEF commitment to gender equality and human-rights and disability inclusion throughout the programme cycle?	Doc Review, KIIs	KIIs	KIIs	KIIs	FGDs		

Evaluation Themes & KEQs	Target Stakeholder Groups & Sources/Methods of Data Collection						
	UNICEF CPS	Development Partners	Implementing Partners Government Agencies	NGO Service Providers	Front-line Practitioners	Community Leaders	Community Members
9. To what extent did children from marginalised communities, children with disabilities, girls and other disadvantaged groups benefit from the child protection programme?	Doc Review, KIIs		KIIs	KIIs	FGDs	FGDs	
<b>Sustainability: (Will the benefits last?)</b>							
10. To what extent do sustainability and scalability have the potential to be achieved? To what extent did the programme foster links between formal systems and customs and/or community-based practices?	KIIs	KIIs	KIIs	KIIs	FGDs	FGDs	
Definitions and abbreviations used: "Beneficiaries" refer to the individuals, groups, or organisations, whether targeted or not, that benefit directly or indirectly, from the UNICEF Pacific CP programme. FGDs = Focus group discussions KIIs = Key Informant Interviews				1 Vanuatu only.			

## Toli: Data collection

Data sources are summarised in the table below. In the inception phase, potential data sources were considered. This involved a review of the four country work plans from 2018 to 2023 and other key programme documentation, initial engagements with country teams to better understand the work plans, and the experience of the evaluation team in conducting evaluation and other research activities.

### Summary of data collection methods and targets

Stakeholder Group	Kiribati	Solomon Islands	Vanuatu	Samoa	Regional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research methods not requiring ethics               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation review</li> <li>Programme documentation</li> <li>Administrative data/Country doc's a</li> <li>Review of M&amp;E data</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Primary data collection methods requiring ethics approval					
Key informant (individual or small group) interviews (KIIs) with:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNICEF</li> <li>Development Partners/CP Stakeholders</li> <li>Government Agencies</li> <li>NGO Service Providers</li> <li>National Committees/ Independent monitoring agencies</li> </ul>	1	1	1	1	3
					8
	6	6	5	8	
	2	2	2	1	
	1	2	2	2	
Sub-total KIIs	10	11	10	12	11
Focus group discussions with:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frontline practitioners</li> <li>Community leaders, counsellors, Youth leaders, etc.</li> <li>Judicial officers/Police</li> <li>Community members</li> </ul>	2	2	1+1 <sup>b</sup>	2	
		1	1 <sup>b</sup>	1	
	1				
			1 <sup>b</sup>		
Sub-total FGDs	3	3	4	3	

<sup>a</sup> To the extent that this data and information is both available and reliable.

<sup>b</sup> Conducted in Tafea Province (outer island) – see sub-national consultation in Vanuatu below. These included KIIs and FGDs.

### Documentation review and analysis

Document review and analysis covered a range of sources, including UNICEF programme documents for the countries covered by the evaluation and other PICTs under UNICEF the Pacific office, and to the extent they were available, administrative data for government sources.

**Desk review and programme documentation:** A review of UNICEF CP programme documents, including those relating to the design, implementation and monitoring, commenced in the inception phase was undertaken. The purpose of this review was to better understand the programme design, and the nature and extent of implementation; draw initial reflections from routine and ad hoc monitoring; and to investigate the GEHRDI considerations throughout the programme cycle (planning, design, implementation, and dissemination).

A desk review to complete the context of key social, political, economic, demographic, and institutional factors that have a direct bearing on Child Protection in the Pacific was undertaken to:

- review the relevance to partner government's strategies and priorities, international, regional or country development goals, strategies and frameworks;
- review the relevance to UNICEF corporate goals and priorities, as appropriate (e.g. in terms of size, influence, or positioning);
- identify a clear and relevant description (where appropriate) of the status and needs of the target groups for the intervention;

- undertake an equity analysis of structural marginalisation, and social and cultural patterns, affecting groups targeted by the evaluation object, and a discussion of gender, power and human rights considerations in the design of the object; and
- explain how the context relates to the implementation of the Child Protection programme.

**Administrative data:** A review of available administrative data to help inform the context analysis which is directly relevant to assessment of achievements against outcomes and influencing factors, as well as the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability and impact of the programme. Country documentation included national policy documents, as well as any broader child protection evaluations, reports and project documentation from international and national implementing partners and associates.

The evaluation team noted that a key assumption in some versions of the ToC was that there would be media dissemination of information about child development and protection issues. While the evaluation team considered adding a media scan to determine the extent to which this has occurred, it was decided not to include this element, in the interests of containing budget. This is a potential area for ongoing monitoring of the impact of the CP programme, as an indicator of public awareness of the issues at stake.

**Data from monitoring and evaluation sources:** An evaluability assessment<sup>35</sup> of the UNICEF Pacific CP programme was conducted in 2023. It found that there were limited, reliable information sources from which to draw for monitoring and evaluation for Outputs 2 and 3, and proposed tools for the CP team to use to gather evidence about the programme outcomes. The UNICEF Pacific CP team refined the proposed tools, and piloted and administered two surveys in 2023 with social workers, members of child protection working groups, and policy makers.

Following discussions with UNICEF Pacific on proposals to survey groups of social workers and key government officials to capture some quantitative information using revised tool(s), it was jointly decided that the proposed surveys would not be undertaken. Hence, the data collection in this evaluation relies on qualitative information from key informant interviews and focus group discussions, and the review of documentation that is available.

### Key informant interviews (KIIs)

**Sampling strategy:** The sampling strategy for the qualitative data collection was purposive and non-random. It included key stakeholders at the sub-regional, national, and sub-national level who play a role in the implementation of the programme and in child rights in the Pacific more broadly. The sample was selected on the basis of information provided by UNICEF Pacific country teams on the organisations/groups who were implementing partners that programme activities were implemented by or with (e.g., government agencies, NGOs, CSOs); the organisations/groups that the activity was delivered to (e.g., recipients of services/advice, participants, etc); and the names and roles of the key people in the respective organisations/groups. In addition, the evaluation team identified other prospective participants from UNICEF documents.

Drawing from the stakeholder analysis (see **Annex F**), purposive sampling was used, based on their satisfaction of criteria relevant to the evaluation questions, and drawing on individuals whose information was likely to be of use for developing and testing emerging analytical ideas. Diversity was prioritised, to ensure that respondents of diverse roles, backgrounds, and with various perspectives were included in the evaluation. The following target groups were included in the sample:

- UNICEF programme staff in Fiji (Pacific Multi-country office), Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and included former staff who played a leading role in the design and initial implementation;
- senior managers/officials responsible for CP in the lead Government ministries within the target countries (Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu);
- Chairpersons/key members of any national coordinating committees or similar, with a focus on national CP systems and processes;
- any independent body (such as an Ombudsman) that monitors a government's performance in protecting the rights of children;

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/reports#/detail/19206/evaluability-assessment-of-unicef-pacific-child-protection-programme>



- senior members of associated Ministries/government agencies with CP-related mandates (eg, Justice, Health, Police, Education);
- CP programme implementation partners in the target countries;
- community agencies benefiting from CP interventions; and
- UNICEF programme development partners and CP stakeholders including the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), UNFPA, UN Women, Save the Children Fund, ChildFund Alliance members,<sup>36</sup> and Pacific Council of Churches.

**Semi-structured interviews:** Sixty-one KIIs were conducted in the end (the target was 54 KIIs), which involved 79 key informants. A list of KIIs agencies by country are presented in Annex F. Interviews were conducted either remotely or in-person, by either the lead evaluators or by the local member of the evaluation team, who jointly participated in some key interviews. The aim of the interviews was to capture a breadth of stakeholder perceptions of the programme across the KEQs represented in the Evaluation Framework. Participant information sheet and consent forms were attached in Annex A of the Inception Report and draft semi-structured topic guides were attached in Annex B.

Not all KII target groups were present in all countries; the specific organisations/targets to be interviewed were dependent on the activities of the CP programme in respective countries. This involved/required further conversations with key UNICEF Pacific staff. The evaluation team aimed to interview approximately 10-12 respondents in each of the four countries, and to undertake around nine KIIs with regional programme development partners/roles. Some interviews also included two-three informants, for example if there are two-three different roles in a ministry/agency with a perspective on the UNICEF CP programme. Annex C in the Inception Report lists the key informant agencies that were provisionally identified for interviews. Key roles and responsibilities of UNICEF Pacific and PS Services for the recruitment of the key informants for the KIIs along with the focus group discussions can be found in the Inception Report's Annex D.

At the start of the interview, the interviewer explained the purpose and value of the evaluation and asked the participant if they had any questions or concerns regarding it. The interviewer then asked the participant if they (a) consent to participate in the interview, and (b) consent for the interview to be recorded. The purpose of the recording was to assist the interviewer with any notes taken and was not shared with anyone outside the evaluation team. For in-person interviews, the interviewer asked the participant to sign a form; for remote (on-line) interviews, the interviewer recorded consent being provided verbally. Once consent was given, the interview commenced.

The consent form was based on a previous UNICEF consent form that was provided, which was pre-tested and ethical approval granted. However, like the semi-structured topic guides for the KIIs and the focus group discussions, these were reviewed by the evaluation team to ensure that they would work in the context they were applied. The evaluation team was also fully briefed on both the data collection tools and the consent forms to enable them to use these in a way that was both culturally and contextually appropriate and elicit the information needed for the key evaluation questions.

Given that the KIIs were semi-structured interviews with several different key informants in each of the four countries, the evaluation team built in touch points during the data collection phase to collectively come together to review the data collection tools to ensure they were collecting the information needed to address the key evaluation questions and to identify any opportunities for strengthening.

### **Focus group discussions**

Twelve focus group discussions (involving 73 participants) were undertaken overall. In each of the four countries, 3-4 FGDs were conducted in local languages by the national evaluators, and used culturally appropriate frameworks, such as Tok Story in the Solomon Islands.

The FGDs were held with the following target groups who have received UNICEF-sponsored training or programme interventions in relation to CP within the past 12-18 months:

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<sup>36</sup> ChildFund Australia operates in Vanuatu; ChildFund New Zealand operates in Kiribati and Solomon Islands.

- front-line practitioners (typically social workers or child protection officers, but may have included other practitioners such as community counsellors, police, school principals/teachers, health workers, and judiciary)
- community leaders (churches, community elders, youth, facilitators) in geographical areas close to main centres (but see **Sub-national consultation in Vanuatu** below)
- community members who were involved in an activity or intervention in the Tafea Province, Vanuatu.

The 12–18-month timeline was to ensure that participants were more likely to have a useful recall of the programme interventions and had time to consider what impacts the interventions have had on their knowledge and behaviours in relation to CP issues. However, some flexibility was allowed if this was necessary to achieve the desired numbers and coverage of participants. Not all target groups could be captured in every target country. The information provided to the evaluation team indicated that different targeted activities occurred in each country, within the target timeframe. Where specific voices were not heard directly, the evaluation team sought indirect feedback via KIIs and other stakeholder groups.

The aim of the FGDs was to capture a broad view of participant perceptions of the respective programme interventions, and the extent to which they were relevant and meaningful, and have had an impact on participants' awareness, knowledge and/or behaviours when it comes to tackling CP issues and the situations in which these may arise. Views were also sought on whether the respective interventions could be made more effective. Participant information sheet and consent forms were attached in Annex A of the Inception Report and semi-structured discussion group topic guides were included in Annex B.

Participants were selected using a convenience sample at sites selected in conjunction with UNICEF Pacific and/or its implementing partners, based on records of attendance of respective activities. The evaluation team aimed to achieve six-eight participants per group, of mixed genders, and different levels of experience (among practitioners). Recruitment of participant front-line practitioners, community leaders and community members, and the proposed respective roles and responsibilities for these processes and planning for the FGDs are detailed in Annex D in the Inception Report. The evaluation team was reliant on local UNICEF in-country programme managers to identify the participants, seek approval for their attendance and make arrangements for the FGDs, in liaison with the local evaluators who facilitated the discussion groups.

The evaluation team notes that for Kiribati, interviews with remote participants were conducted by telephone, instead of a discussion group, after emailing a set of high-level question areas due to issues around connectivity and access.

At the discussion group, the local evaluator:

- re-stated the purpose of the discussion groups, covering the information provided in the participant information sheet (Annex A in the Inception Report);
- asked participants if they have any questions about the group discussion and address these; and
- asked if each participant (a) consents to take part in the group discussion, and (b) consents to the discussion to be recorded (if the facilitator wished to adopt this approach). The consent form was then completed by the participants.

Once consents were given and recorded, the discussion group started.

### **Sub-national consultation in Vanuatu**

UNICEF Vanuatu strongly supported the need for KIIs and/or discussion groups to include sub-national consultations. There is comparatively far more access to child protection and wider police and justice services in and around Port Vila. However, beyond the main centre, the complexity of issues is magnified by geography, accessibility and the limited availability of CP services. This will also be true of the other three countries, and all four countries (to a greater or lesser extent) also probably share the constant challenges around connectivity, service delivery and coordination.

In Vanuatu, data was collected from stakeholder groups based both in and around the main centre (Port Vila) and the more remote outer Tafea province (Tanna Island) in which there has been good levels of CP programme activities.

Other reasons to support data collection directly in a more remote Vanuatu province was consideration of the impact of frequent natural disasters on a fragile/weak CP system, which potentially could draw some valuable insights around the development-humanitarian nexus that could be applied to other Pacific countries. It would also be an opportunity to

directly engage with community members and receive their input and use this as a case study for UNICEF to extrapolate to activities in other remote Pacific areas.<sup>37</sup>

The member of the evaluation team that was based in Vanuatu travelled to Tanna, in the Tafea Province, for three days in early May 2024. She was able to connect with all the groups of stakeholders who were involved in UNICEF-supported interventions including child protection officers, community leaders, local police, and community members, either in KIIs or in discussion groups.

### Tui: Data analysis and interpretation

The analysis, synthesis and integration of data from multiple sources is a collective process that identified themes, patterns, similarities and variations in the data, and focused on responding to the overall KEQs, identifying and verifying how well the CP programme is meeting its key goals and outcomes, and where improvements can be made for the future.

The qualitative data was provided as detailed notes (not full transcripts) from interviews and FGDs by the evaluation team interviewers. These notes were augmented from recordings (where consent to record was given) to assure accuracy and that key illuminating comments were captured. Interview notes were stored by the evaluation team in a secured folder. At the completion of the evaluation, the local evaluators were required to delete all data from their storage devices and computers.

Data was disaggregated as appropriate, but not to a level where it was possible for individual respondents to be identified. Data, including any quotations, is presented in the final report in an anonymous manner, referring only to the category of respondent (e.g., government official, community leader, social worker, caregiver, etc). The evaluation team will retain copies of the interview notes in a secure folder for five years, in accordance with ethics standards. Once data collection was completed, the evaluation team focused on data analysis and synthesis. A pre-existing generic evaluative rubric was developed to guide the evaluation and to assist the evaluation team in making evaluative judgements against each of the KEQs.

#### *Generic rubric for assessing descriptive data into absolute determination of merit*

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Excellent	Clear example of exemplary performance or best practise in this domain; no weaknesses
Very good	Very good or excellent performance on virtually all aspects; strong overall but not exemplary; no weaknesses of any real consequence
Good	Reasonably good performance overall; might have a few slight weaknesses but nothing serious
Barely adequate	Fair performance; some serious (but nonfatal) weaknesses on a few aspects
Poor	Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning; serious weaknesses across the board or on crucial aspects

*Note. Reproduced from "Evaluation methodology basics: The nuts and bolts of sound evaluation" by E. Jane Davidson 2005. p. 137. Copyright Sage.*

The intention was then to develop rubrics aligned to the KEQs on which to assess both the progress made and the quality of that progress. However, the evaluation team found that the available range and the quality of available evidence was more limited than anticipated, especially in terms of existing quantitative monitoring data and available secondary data. Consequently, the evaluation team considered that relying on a limited evidence base as a basis for rubric assessment purposes would potentially be misleading.

The data analysis process therefore relied on a framework analysis to organise data around the KEQs and a thematic analysis to find meaning, patterns and relationships in the data. The evaluation team were also able to explore differences between variables by using comparative analysis (for example, between different stakeholder groups and countries where meaningful). Where available, different evidence sources were triangulated to test the validity of the findings. The evaluation team corroborated data across all sources to generate findings and recommendations.

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<sup>37</sup> Based on the Evaluation Team’s engagement with country teams, the only other useful opportunity that exists to reach out to community members existed in Guadalcanal. This was excluded because of difficult logistical challenges (confirmed by UNICEF Solomon Islands CP Team), the upcoming Solomon Island election, as well as timeframe and budget reasons.

As the data collection proceeded, initial thoughts and preliminary findings were presented to the Evaluation Management Team (EMT) on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024, and to EMT and DFAT on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2024, to keep both UNICEF Pacific and DFAT informed of progress.

Following the first draft of the evaluation report, a collaborative sense-making and recommendations co-creation workshop was held in Suva on 11 and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024. The workshop was attended by the evaluation team, the EMT including the UNICEF multi-country evaluation specialist and the Chief of the Child Protection Section, the Child Protection programme staff, a representative of DFAT, and an independent child protection consultant. The Fiji-based programme team and the UNICEF EMT attended in person, along with the lead evaluators Ingrid van Aalst and Dr Iain Matheson. The UNICEF Child Protection programme team from Vanuatu, Samoa and the Solomon Islands attended online (the Kiribati programme team missed part of the first day of workshop due to prior commitments with the Government of Kiribati), as did one of the local evaluators (Solomon Islands); other local evaluators were unable to attend.

The summary findings of the evaluation were presented by the evaluation team and jointly discussed and analysed by the participants on the first day of the workshop. The detailed findings were shared with the participants and reviewed by them before reconvening on the second day to deliberate on recommendations linked to the credible findings. The evaluation team was then able to group the recommendations and map them to their own recommendations to refine and co-create the final recommendations.

### Ethics

The evaluation was guided by the UNEG norms and standards, the [UNEG Ethical Guidelines](#), the [UNEG Code of Conduct](#), the [Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System \(GEROS\)](#), the [UNICEF UNEG Quality Checklist for ToR and inception reports](#), the [Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations](#), the [UNICEF Report Standards Checklist for evaluation reports](#), the [UNICEF procedures for ethical research involving children](#), the [UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis](#), and ensured:

- *Respect for rights of individuals and institutions:* The evaluator will accord informants the opportunity to participate voluntarily while maintaining their anonymity, and to make an independent decision to participate without pressure or fear of penalty (informed consent/assent). Also, interviewers will assure respondents that information would be confidential and that reports would be written such that responses/contributions would not be traced back to them. Interview notes and any recordings will be accessible only to the evaluation team.
- *Respect for cultural identities and sensitivities:* Variances in ethnicities, culture, religious beliefs, gender, disability, and age will be respected.
- *Professional responsibilities and obligations of evaluators:* The evaluation team will exercise independent judgement and operate in an impartial and unbiased manner. During data collection, any sensitive issues and concerns will be addressed through the appropriate mechanisms and referral pathways. The evaluation team briefed the local UNICEF Country team (or the appropriate person/people in country) for guidance on what the mechanisms and referral pathways are in each country prior to the start of the data collection with community leaders and/or the community.
- Children, vulnerable groups or marginalised groups were not part of the data-gathering efforts.

The evaluation team undertook the Evaluation according to the following values:

- *Independence:* The evaluation team is completely independent, and has had no prior engagement in the design, implementation or supervision of the CP programme.
- *Impartiality:* The evaluation team is committed to providing a comprehensive and balanced assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. The evaluation process will be unbiased at all stages and take into account and fairly consider all views and opinions received from stakeholders – such stakeholder views are considered primary evidence in the process of forming the external assessment of the programme.
- *Transparency:* The evaluation team will communicate as openly as possible the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria that will be applied and the expected use of the results. This evaluation report will provide transparent information on its sources, methods and approaches.
- *Disclosure:* The evaluation report will serve as a mechanism by which the findings and lessons identified will be disseminated to management and programme staff in the regional and Pacific UNICEF office, as well as to external stakeholders such as the DFAT donor, etc.

- **Credibility:** The evaluation will be based on data and observations that will be demonstrably reliable and trustworthy with respect to the quality of the instruments, procedures and analyses used to collect and interpret the information gathered.
- **Usefulness:** The evaluation team will strive to be as well informed as possible, and ensure the evaluation report is as relevant, timely and as concise as possible. The evaluation will draw on the principles and values of Utilisation Focused Evaluation (UFE) approaches that put client needs at the centre of the evaluation and understands the evaluation process as a whole as a learning exercise for the client, where the utility of the final product determines all steps taken through the evaluation process.
- **Conflicts of interest:** The evaluation team has no conflict of interests, as reflected in comments with regards to Independence above with its role as evaluator of the UNICEF Child Protection programme.

The evaluation always maintained strict confidentiality among participants, and all data has been anonymised, password-protected and encoded. While the evaluation findings will be owned by UNICEF Pacific and they will have authority over any public dissemination/publication following the conclusion of the evaluation, UNICEF Pacific will not have access to notes or recordings of interviews.

Protocols for the protection of human subjects in the evaluation, as outlined in the Inception Report and repeated in the above methodology, were assessed by an independent UNICEF Multi-Country Evaluation Specialist (MCES). These received ethics review approval, conveyed by letter dated 06 March 2024.

### **Risks and mitigation**

Key risks associated with this evaluation, and proposed mitigations, were outlined in the Inception Report, and in Section 3.6 of this report.

## Annex F: Stakeholder Matrix

**Note:** Any details that could identify a respondent such as name, position and/or role have not been included to protect the anonymity of the person/people involved in the evaluation, in accordance with the approved ethics protocol for this evaluation.

Agency/Organisation	Sub-Agency	Primary role in CP	Involved in Programme Intervention	Evaluation Respondent	Evaluation Tool
<b>Solomon Islands</b>					
• Ministry of Health and Medical Services	Social Welfare Division	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
• Ministry of Women, Youth, Children & Family Affairs	Children's Development Division	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
• Ministry of Home Affairs	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
• Ministry of Education & Human Resource Development	n/a	Implementing partner Policy development	Yes	Yes x 2	KII
• Office of the Ombudsman of Solomon Islands	Children's Guardian	Handles complaints and investigates administrative conduct of the public sector including CP	Yes	Yes	KII
• Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs	Commerce Division (Child Trafficking)	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes x 3	KII
• Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs	Correctional Services	Implementing partner	Yes	Yes x 2	KIIs
• Public Solicitors Office	n/a	Implementing partner	Yes	Yes	KII
• Think Place Global	n/a	Design of CP community activities	Yes	Yes	KII
• Save the Children	n/a	International NGO working in CP sector	Yes	Yes	KII
• World Vision	n/a	International NGO working in CP sector	Yes	Yes	KII
• Oxfam Solomon Islands	n/a	International NGO working in CP sector	Yes	Yes	KII
• People with Disability Solomon Islands	n/a	Local NGO working in CP sector	Yes	Yes	KII
• Empower Pacific	n/a	NGO working in CP sector	Yes	Yes	KII
• Hope Trust	n/a	Local CSO working in CP sector	Yes	Yes	KII
• Family Support Centre	n/a	Local NGO working in CP sector	Yes	Yes	KII
• Christian Care Centre	n/a	Local CSO working in CP sector	Yes	Yes	KII

Agency/Organisation	Sub-Agency	Primary role in CP	Involved in Programme Intervention	Evaluation Respondent	Evaluation Tool
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seif Ples, Rove</li> </ul>	n/a	Local CSO working in CP sector	Yes	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontline practitioners</li> </ul>	SW, CP officer	Working directly in CP sector	Yes	Yes x 2	FGD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNICEF Country Team</li> </ul>	n/a	Managing and delivering CP programme	Yes	Yes	KII
<b>Kiribati</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport &amp; Social Affairs</li> </ul>	Welfare Division	Implementing partner	Yes	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Justice</li> </ul>	Ombudsman, Human Rights Division	Handles complaints and investigates administrative conduct of the public sector including CP	No	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kiribati Judiciary</li> </ul>	n/a	Implementing partner	Yes	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kiribati Police Service</li> </ul>	Domestic Violence Unit	Implementing partner	Yes	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of the Public Legal Services</li> </ul>	n/a	Implementing partner	Yes	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Education</li> </ul>	Policy Division	Implementing partner Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kiribati National Human Rights Taskforce</li> </ul>	n/a	Taskforce focuses on 4 key UN instruments	No	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Government</li> </ul>	Island Mayors	Implementing partners	Yes	Yes	KIIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport &amp; Social Affairs</li> </ul>	Welfare Officers	Working directly in CP sector	Yes	Yes x 7	FGD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of the Public Legal Services</li> </ul>	Legal Officers	Working directly in CP sector	Yes	Yes x 8	FGD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Protection Working group</li> </ul>	Various	Implementing partner	Yes	Yes x 5	FGD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNICEF: Country Team</li> </ul>	n/a	Managing and delivering CP programme	Yes	Yes	KII
<b>Vanuatu</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Justice &amp; Community Services</li> </ul>	Child Desk, National Human Rights	Implementing partner	Yes	Yes x 3	KIIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Justice &amp; Community Services</li> </ul>	Ombudsman	Handles complaints and investigates administrative conduct of the public sector	No	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Youth Development &amp; Sports</li> </ul>	Youth Development	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Education &amp; Training</li> </ul>	Education Policy	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vanuatu Red Cross Society</li> </ul>	n/a	Local NGO working with CP	Yes	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vanuatu Council of Churches</li> </ul>	n/a	Local CSO working with CP	Yes	Yes	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vanuatu Women's Centre</li> </ul>	n/a	Local CSO working with CP	Yes	Yes x 2	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Save the Children</li> </ul>	n/a	International NGO working in CP sector	Yes	Yes x 2	KII
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World Vision</li> </ul>	n/a	International NGO working in CP sector	Yes	Yes x 2	KII

Agency/Organisation	Sub-Agency	Primary role in CP	Involved in Programme Intervention	Evaluation Respondent	Evaluation Tool
• Frontline practitioners – Child protection officers	n/a	Working directly in CP sector	Yes	Yes x 2	FGD
• Community – CFP Trainers	n/a	Working directly in CP sector	Yes	Yes x 6	FGD
• Community members – Women	n/a	Involved in CP activities	Yes	Yes x 13	FGD
• Community members - Men	n/a	Involved in CP activities	Yes	Yes x 13	FGD
• UNICEF: Country Team	n/a	Managing and delivering CP programme	Yes	Yes x 2	KII
<b>Samoa</b>					
• Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development	Division for Social Development	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
• Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development	Prevention & Early Intervention Unit	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes x 2	KII
• Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development	Division for Research, Policy & Planning	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
• Ministry of Justice & Courts Administration	Corrections, Enforcement & Maintenance Division	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
• Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment	Disaster Management Office	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
• Ministry of Police, Prisons & Corrections Services	Police	Implementing partner	Yes	Yes	KII
• Ministry of Education Sports & Culture	Education Division	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
• Samoa Bureau of Statistics	n/a	Implementing partner Legislation/Policy development	Yes	Yes	KII
• Samoa Victim Support Group	n/a	Local NGO working in CPO sector	Yes	Yes	KII
• Samoa Red Cross	Practitioners	NGO working with CP	Yes	Yes x 2	FGD
• Community members – Cases	n/a	Involved in CP activities	Yes	Yes x 8	FGD
• Community members – Received vouchers	n/a	Involved in CP activities	Yes	Yes x 5	FGD
• Community members – Positive Parenting	n/a	Involved in CP activities	Yes	Yes x 6	FGD
• UNICEF: Country Team	n/a	Managing and delivering CP programme	Yes	Yes	KII
<b>Regional and development agencies, UNICEF</b>					
• Australia Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade		Primary funder of the CPP	Yes	Yes x 2	KII
• UN Population Fund	Pacific Island Countries		No	Yes x 3	KII
• UN Women	Asia and the Pacific	Involved in GBV sector	No	Yes x 3	KII
• Save the Children	New Zealand	International NGO involved in CP	No	Yes	KII



Agency/Organisation	Sub-Agency	Primary role in CP	Involved in Programme Intervention	Evaluation Respondent	Evaluation Tool
• ChildFund Alliance	Australia	International NGO involved in CP	No	Yes x 2	KII
• ChildFund Alliance	New Zealand	International NGO involved in CP	No	Yes	KII
• Pacific Council of Churches		Implementing partner	Yes	Yes	KII
• UNICEF Pacific Chief		Managing UNICEF Pacific	Yes	Yes	KII
• UNICEF Pacific CP Chief		Managing and delivering CP programme	Yes	Yes	KII
• UNICEF CP Suva Based Team		Managing and delivering CP programme	Yes	Yes	KII

## Annex G: Site Visits

### Country Visits

One of the lead evaluators (Ingrid van Aalst) visited Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands (April 2024) to conduct face-to-face KIIs with targeted key stakeholders, along with the national member of the evaluation team members, who were also responsible for conducting some interviews and running focus/discussion groups with key target groups.

Both lead evaluators (Iain Matheson and Ingrid van Aalst) also conducted KIIs remotely with key stakeholders in countries they did not visit, and with regional stakeholders and UNICEF CP programme staff. Remote interviews were also conducted with stakeholders who were not available to meet with the lead evaluators when in-country. Local in-country evaluators conducted the balance of interviews (including FGDs) in countries not visited by lead evaluators.

The KIIs and FGDs were undertaken primarily in Apia (Samoa); Honiara (the Solomon Islands); Port Vila (Vanuatu) and Tarawa (Kiribati). The location of the KIIs were at the respective agency's offices and the FGDs were located at either the UNICEF country office or at a government agency.

### Sub-national consultations in Vanuatu

There is comparatively far more access to child protection and wider police and justice services in and around the main centres of each of the four countries. However, beyond the main centre, the complexity of issues is magnified (to a greater or lesser extent) by geography, accessibility and the limited availability of CP services. The countries also probably share the constant challenges around connectivity, service delivery and coordination.

The evaluation team engaged the CP programme teams in each country to assess the value and feasibility of reaching out to more remote areas for data collection purposes.

There were good levels of recent CP programme activities in more remote areas in Vanuatu. Other reasons to support data collection directly in a more remote Vanuatu province are consideration of the impact of frequent natural disasters on a fragile/weak CP system, which potentially could draw some valuable insights around the development-humanitarian nexus.

Accordingly, a three-day visit by the ni-Van evaluation team Member to Lounapouktuan Village, on Tanna Island in the Tafea Province, Vanuatu, was conducted in April 2024. This involved a series of KIIs and FGDs with community leaders and community members, along with KIIs with government officials and front-line practitioners.

A potential opportunity to reach out to community members in Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, was also considered. However, this was excluded because of difficult logistical challenges (confirmed by UNICEF Solomon Islands CP team), budget reasons, and the upcoming Solomon Island election, which restricted travel.

## Annex H: Data Collection Instruments

As noted in Annex E: Evaluation Methodology, this evaluation relied on:

- Documentation review and analysis
- Key informant semi-structured interviews (KIs)
- Focus group discussions (FGDs)

Interview and topic guides were developed for KIs and FGDs, respectively. These guides were applied flexibly by experienced evaluators in the evaluation team, with areas of questioning adapted to reflect the respondents' roles and responsibilities in relation to the CP programme and CP services, and their levels of understanding of different aspects of the programme. The core guides for the KIs and FGDs that are the data collection instruments are presented below.

### Key Informant Interviews: Semi-structured Interview Guide

*Notes for Interviewers:*

1. *For some interviewees, CP will be their primary responsibility, while for others it will be much more marginal.*
2. *Similarly, while some interviewees may have an overview of the entire UNICEF Pacific CP programme, others will not and potentially some may just be involved in a narrower range of activities. While not all interviewees will be familiar with how UNICEF Pacific groups their activities, they will all fall under one of the following three UNICEF Pacific outputs:*  
**Output 1:** *Governments have strengthened child protection institutional frameworks, particularly in target countries*  
**Output 2:** *Government and other service providers (non-governmental agencies) have enhanced capacities to provide child protection services that prevent and respond to violence and abuse, particularly in target countries.*  
**Output 3:** *Parents, caregivers and teachers have increased knowledge and skills to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from violence and abuse, particularly in target countries.*  
*As such you may need to tailor references to the UNICEF CP programme to those aspects that the interviewee is familiar with.*
3. *As well as generally asking interviewees to sometimes expand on aspects of their responses, a lot of specific probes have been included for use if not addressed in the response and any discussion around the main questions. However, not all probes should be used.*
4. *Where appropriate do ask for some specific examples.*

<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>What is your role with the [Name of Government Agency]? How long have you been in the role and agency?          Could you please describe for me what you understand the UNICEF CP programme to be?          What contact or involvement have you had with the UNICEF Child Protection programme?          Which of their activities are you most familiar with?</p>
<p><b>Relevance</b></p> <p>Over the past 5 or so years, in your view, how well do the activities align with your government's child protection policies and strategies?          Have they addressed or supported the issues and needs your government has identified as priorities for attention?</p> <p><b>Probes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, what has UNICEF done to achieve this? What has worked well and why? Can you give me a couple of examples.</li> <li>• If not, or not always, can you explain why not/give an example(s)?</li> <li>• Have your government's child protection priorities changed over the last five years? If yes, what has led to that change?              Has the CP adapted to these changes?</li> </ul>
<p>Are the UNICEF CP programme interventions and support currently relevant to, and consistent with your government's current child protection strategies and priorities, and moving forward?</p> <p><b>Probes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If not</i>, or there are gaps, where and how can the UNICEF CP programme and its activities become more relevant?</li> <li>• What needs to change?</li> </ul>
<p>In your country who benefits most from the UNICEF Pacific CP programme and its activities, and how?          How well do the programme activities link to those beneficiaries' needs?          What could the UNICEF programme do better to link to those beneficiaries' needs?</p> <p><b>Probes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are those who you would have expected to see benefit?</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there beneficiaries missing?</li> <li>• Are there any other individuals, groups, or organisations, whether targeted or not, that benefit directly or indirectly, from the UNICEF Pacific CP programme?</li> </ul>
<p>To what degree are the <b>ways</b> that the UNICEF Pacific CP programme works, relevant to and are appropriate for your country context?</p> <p>What are the key things that UNICEF done to achieve this?</p> <p>If not relevant and/or appropriate, what are the gaps? How can these be strengthened?</p> <p><b>Probes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well aligned is it to your country's political, social and cultural context?</li> <li>• Does it recognise your country's child protection strengths and well as your challenges?</li> <li>• How well are the cultural practices in your country understood, and those relating to children in particular?</li> <li>• Does the UNICEF Pacific CP programme value Pacific or country-specific knowledge and ways of working? Does it work in ways that are culturally appropriate?</li> <li>• Does it account for the availability an engagement with non-government and community organisations as partners?</li> <li>• To what extent does it understand the capacity of your organisation to engage on child protection activities?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Effectiveness</b></p> <p>Over the past 5 years or so, to what extent do you believe that children have been increasingly protected in [your country] from violence and abuse?</p> <p>In your view how has the UNICEF Pacific CP programme contributed to this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Probe for each output the interviewee is familiar with</b></li> </ul> <p>Is this better or worse than you might have expected?</p> <p>Would this have been achieved without support from UNICEF CP programme?</p> <p>What else/more/different could UNICEF do to make its activities more effective?</p> <p>As well as your professional judgement, is there any supporting evidence that you can share with us or point us to?</p>
<p><b>Efficiency</b></p> <p><i>UNICEF Pacific delivers its CP programme using a variety of different partnership modalities e.g. modalities in terms of partnership models, meaning INGOs, NGOs, Government, regional bodies.</i></p> <p>Which of these modalities are you familiar with and to what extent do you think that this/these are the best partnership modalities for the UNICEF Pacific CP programme in your country? Why is that?</p> <p>What other methods could be used, or done differently? Are the relationships/engagements with the UNICEF Pacific (country) teams or engagement with non-government/community providers that deliver activities of the Child Protection programme working effectively?</p> <p>Why or why not? How can these be strengthened?</p>
<p>To what extent has UNICEF Pacific contributed to <b>improving child protection coordination</b> in your country across the various stakeholder and interest groups and agencies?</p> <p>How has it improved?</p> <p>How have they done this?</p> <p>If it has not improved, why not, and what can could UNICEF do more of/less of/do differently?</p>
<p><b>Gender equality and human rights-based approach</b></p> <p><i>UNICEF is committed to the principles of gender equality, human rights and disability inclusion throughout its programme of interventions and support activities.</i></p> <p>How would you say children from marginalised communities, children with disabilities, girls and other disadvantaged groups have benefited from the UNICEF CP programme in your country?</p> <p>Do you have evidence or data to support this? If so, can you share it with us?</p> <p>How can they do better?</p> <p><b>Probes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know to what extent marginalised groups have been involved in the process for identifying needs, developing interventions, and participating in activities?</li> <li>• Are these principles actively and explicitly considered, discussed and referred to in technical advice or support provided, and interventions that are designed and delivered? Is there a specific focus on them?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>What in your view have been the main impacts of the UNICEF CP programme on children, their families and communities in your country? What difference has the UNICEF CP programme made, in protecting children from violence and abuse?</p> <p><b>Probes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has there been an improvement in the protection of children? In what ways?</li> <li>• Have there been any negative impacts? What were these?</li> <li>• Have there been any unintended impacts – either positive or negative?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <p>Overall, do you think the UNICEF CP programme and its activities, and the ways in which it works is sustainable? Why/why not?</p> <p>What would make them more sustainable?</p> <p><b>Probes:</b></p>

- formal systems linking with traditional customs and/or community-based and practices
- CP more fully integrated into government policies or plans
- government funds allocated to CP issues
- local providers taking up the implementation of activities
- UNICEF embedded into a key ministry that focuses on CP issues
- key government and other staff being retained
- CP capability and capacity growing

Are these activities, strategies, and ways of working that can be scaled up and extended in your country? Why/why not? What would it take for that to happen?

#### **In summary - Key Strengths & Areas for Improvement**

In summary, what would you say is the one thing that UNICEF Pacific and its CP programme does really well in supporting your country in improving protection for children?

And what would you say is the one key improvement that UNICEF Pacific could make in terms of the design and delivery of the CP programme, and the support provided in this area?

#### **Thanks & Close**

Provide contact details if any evidence can be shared with us, or if participant has any further information they wish to share in relation to the matters talked about.

Remind participants of assurances of confidentiality and protection of data/privacy.

Expectation that UNICEF Pacific will share findings from the evaluation once the report is completed.

## Focus Group Discussions: Topic Guides

### Community Members

#### **Awareness**

Where did you learn about key messages regarding protecting children? Who from?

What key messages did you hear?

What new things did you learn?

If not much, why was that?

Was the way in which the [intervention] was delivered the right way to do this?

What was good about it?

What could have been done better, or differently, to get the messages across?

What difference, if any, have these messages made to your way of thinking, and how you act, in relation to protecting children from violence or abuse?

Did the [intervention] address issues that are relevant to your community? Why do you say that?

Have you noticed changes in how parents and children interact in your community, after [the intervention]? What changes?

What do you think caused these changes?

#### **Gender equality and human rights-based approach**

Do you think the [intervention] met the needs of children from marginalized communities, children with disabilities, girls, and other disadvantaged groups? Why/how or why not?

#### **Key Strengths & Areas for Improvement**

Is there anything else that you would like to learn about [this context]?

If yes, how you would like to learn about it?

#### **End**

### Practitioners, Community Leaders

#### **Training received – Relevance**

Do you believe that the training that you attended was relevant and useful to you in your role?

Reasons why useful

Reasons if not useful

#### **Effectiveness**

Did the people delivering the training have a good understanding of the training material, and make it relevant to the context you work in?

If not, why say this?

Could the training be improved and strengthened to achieve even better results regarding child protection issues in your country/area? In what ways?

### **Impact**

What differences (if any) has the training made to doing your job (e.g., as a child protection worker/community care/youth facilitator)?

Reasons if no/little difference?

Have you had the opportunity to apply what you learned? Why/why not??

What difference has it made to your clients/the people you have to deal with relating to CP issues?

In your roles, do you see any improvements in the status of child protection, in your communities, as a result of UNICEF-supported initiatives? What changes?

### **Gender equality and human rights-based approach**

To what extent are the needs of children from marginalised communities, children with disabilities, girls, and other disadvantaged groups being addressed through the UNICEF CP programme?

Can they do better? If so, how?

### **Key Strengths & Areas for Improvement**

What could UNICEF do to strengthen its programme to deliver even better results regarding child protection issues in your country?

### **End**

## Annex I: Terms of Reference

<b>SHORT DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Institutional contract for the evaluation of the UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Programme</b>

<b>BACKGROUND</b>
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The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), its two Optional Protocols and other key international human rights instruments outline the States' responsibility to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. In addition to the CRC, the SDGs sets specific target for child protection (CP) in relation to violence against women and girls (5.2), harmful traditional practices (5.3), child labour (8.7), provision of safe spaces (11.7), violence and violent deaths (16.1), abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children (16.2) and birth registration (16.9). The SDGs also promote strengthened national institutions for violence prevention (16.a). UNICEF's global Child Protection Strategy calls for creating a protective environment "where girls and boys are free from violence, exploitation and unnecessary separation from family; and where laws, services, behaviors and practices minimize children's vulnerability, address known risk factors, and strengthen children's own resilience". The UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Region Child Protection Program Strategy 2007 similarly emphasizes that child protection requires a holistic approach, identifying and addressing community attitudes, practices, behaviors and other causes underpinning children's vulnerability, engaging these within children's immediate environment (children themselves, family and community), and ensuring an adequate system for delivery of holistic prevention, early intervention and response services.

The Pacific has among the highest rates of violence against children. Child Protection Baseline Studies in several Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICT) show an average of 77 per cent reported use of physical discipline against children within the home<sup>38</sup>. Pacific children are also exposed to high rates of family violence in their homes, with nearly half of ever-partnered women reporting experiencing intimate partner violence<sup>39</sup>. The percentage of girls who are married before 18 years of age is 18 to 26 per cent in five countries. Sexual abuse of girls before the age of 15 is reported by 2 to 37 per cent of women aged 15-49 in nine countries. Violence in schools is common as well, with 27 to 67 per cent of children 13 to 15 years of age reporting having experienced bullying, 31 to 75 per cent having been in physical fights and 39 to 68 per cent having suffered severe injuries as a result. In seven countries, 6 to 62 per cent of children aged between 5 and 11 are involved in child labor.

Family separation is widespread throughout the Pacific, with 9 to 25 per cent of children in nine countries not living with either biological parent. Data on children in contact with the justice system are limited throughout the Pacific, although available information suggests that the number of children's cases proceeding through the formal justice system is quite low in most countries, and in general, the justice system is not very child-friendly to child victims, witnesses and offenders. Adolescents' risky behaviors including substance abuse, petty crime, inappropriate use of the internet, such as bullying, abuse and accessing inappropriate contents, and suicidal ideation are emerging issues in the Pacific.

The drivers of child protection concerns are cultural, rooted in the lack of knowledge and understanding about child psychological, emotional and social development stages and needs and of the impact of violence on children, as well as the lack of parenting skills in this area. Major social changes, in particular urbanization, migration and globalization, have also had an impact on child protection in the Pacific. Economic factors, particularly poverty, and family dysfunction also play exacerbating roles in the wellbeing of children in the Pacific.

The UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Office (hereafter "UNICEF Pacific") Child Protection Program's foundations were laid in 2018, with a systems approach comprising of three interlinked components (child-friendly justice system; child-focused social welfare system; family and community strengthening;) supported by an enabling legal and policy framework and operational inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms. Respectively, the UNICEF Multi-Country Program

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<sup>38</sup> UNICEF Child Protection Baseline Reports: Palau (2014), FSM (2014), Samoa (2013), RMI (2012), Fiji (2008), Kiribati (2008), Solomon Islands (2008), Vanuatu (2008); Nauru Child Protection System Review (2015).

<sup>39</sup> UNICEF. 2015. Harmful Connections: Op, cit. p. 4.

CP outcome for 2018-2022, that children in the Pacific are increasingly protected from violence and abuse, is supported by three outputs:

1. Governments have strengthened child protection institutional frameworks.
2. Government and other service providers (non-governmental agencies) have enhanced capacities to provide child protection services which prevent and respond to violence and abuse.
3. Caregivers, families and communities have increased knowledge and skills to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from violence and abuse.

With the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF Pacific focused its system strengthening in all PICTs to meet the increased needs resulting from the pandemic. The Child Protection Program continues to be shaped by the 2021 global CP strategy<sup>40</sup>, while promoting child protection system approaches, and addressing emerging issues for children in the Pacific. Additionally, a guideline on Child Protection System Strengthening (CPSS) was developed by UNICEF which clarifies the approach, benchmarks, and interventions of Child Protection at the country level. A new UNICEF Multi-Country Programme started in 2023, which will continue to support an incremental system-strengthening approach to build sustainable, coordinated and well-resourced child protection services.

UNICEF Pacific has received around US\$2.4 million of Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) funding support for the period of April 2019 to June 2024 that aims to protect children in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu from neglect, abuse and exploitation by strengthening multi-sector, multi-stakeholder children systems including establishment of a normative framework, strengthening services and promoting social and behavioural change.

An evaluability assessment of the UNICEF Pacific CP Program was conducted in 2022. The CP Program design, available data and relevant information for an evaluation, adequacy of systems to deliver monitoring information, data management practices, quality of measurements, available financial resources for monitoring and evaluation, and the plans for an evaluation were assessed. The assessment proposed five tools for the CP Section to use to gather evidence that documents the Program's contributions to breaking the intergenerational violence cycle. The tools were piloted and refined in 2023 for baseline setting.<sup>41</sup>

With the advent of the end of the DFAT grant for the CP Program in 2024, and in line with the UNICEF Pacific Costed Evaluation Plan 2023-2027, an independent evaluation is proposed at this time to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality and human rights-based approach, impact and sustainability of this Program. This evaluation is intended to contribute to improved program implementation, learning, and to enhance accountability to donors.

## OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS

This evaluation will inform the results of the program based on six criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality and human rights-based approach, impact, and sustainability). An evaluation was planned as part of the DFAT funding requirements, and the current evaluation includes in its scope all elements of the CP program, including those funded from core and other resources. This external evaluation at the end of the funding period is therefore expected to contribute to both strengthening accountability of UNICEF to its donor and key stakeholders including rights holders, and to learn from this experience to inform future CP programming. More specifically, the key objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality and human rights-based approach, impact, and sustainability of the UNICEF Pacific CP programme.
- To draw lessons and recommendations that improve and enhance UNICEF Pacific CP Section's support to Governments in the PICTs under the current country programme (2023-2027) in addressing critical child protection issues, including reducing intergenerational violence cycles.

UNICEF Pacific Child Protection Section is the primary duty bearer for the programme results and children and their caregivers in the target countries are the primary rights holders of the programme. The primary audience of this evaluation is UNICEF Pacific, particularly the Child Protection Section, and the Australia Department of Foreign Affairs

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/media/104416/file/Child-Protection-Strategy-2021.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/reports/#/detail/19206/evaluability-assessment-of-unicef-pacific-child-protection-programme>



and Trade (DFAT). Secondary audiences are UNICEF Pacific development partners in child protection, including UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, IOM, ILO and UNDP, line ministries in countries where the evaluation takes place, and other UNICEF offices and UNICEF Pacific teams. The evaluation will inform their future investments and prioritization, as well as partnerships and contribute to sectoral knowledge and learning. The evaluation approach will also promote utilization as primary users start to apply the findings of the evaluation before the evaluation report is produced, and formally respond to the evaluation recommendations within 60 days of report finalization.

In terms of time, the evaluation will cover the period from the beginning of 2018 until data collection starts. Note that the evaluation crosses two programme cycles, 2018-2022 and 2023-2027. The geographical area to be covered by the evaluation include Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Thematically, all three outputs of the program and the relevant activities contributing to them are within the scope of the evaluation. The evaluand is the UNICEF Pacific Child Protection programme, and not cross-sectoral programmes of UNICEF Pacific, which may include child protection as a component.

The evaluation needs to adhere to [UNICEF Evaluation Policy](#); to [UNICEF procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis](#); to [UNEG Ethical Guidelines](#); to [UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#); to [UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards](#); and to the [Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System \(GEROS\) quality standards](#). The Evaluation will also adhere to [DFAT Evaluation Standards](#). Further, the evaluation approach, data collection and analysis methods must be human rights based, including child rights based and gender sensitive, and wherever possible evaluation data to be disaggregated by gender, age, socio-economic status, and disability. At the core of the ethical principles to be followed during the evaluation is to ensure doing no harm to children, parents or other participants in the evaluation. The evaluation team will be expected to apply for and obtain ethical clearance. The evaluation firm will need to outline any ethical considerations in their proposal and inception report.

It is crucial that the evaluation embraces the views of all key stakeholders, including a fair representation of girls and boys, especially the most marginalized and disadvantaged. Children's safety and wellbeing should always be paramount, hence the inclusion of children and adolescents in the evaluation should be in compliance with the [Ethical Research Involving Children \(ERIC\) Principles](#), and the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis. The evaluation team, including enumerators, must read and sign the [UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation pledge](#) and the [UNEG Code of Conduct in Evaluation](#). All members of the Reference Group and evaluation team should also complete the '[Evaluation Fundamentals: UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Online Course](#)' on Agora.

The evaluation will provide answers to the following questions:

**Relevance:**

1. How relevant and consistent are the programme interventions to Government child protection strategies and priorities?
2. How do the programme interventions and strategies link to the beneficiary needs?
3. How relevant are approaches for the Pacific programming context, including civil society partnership and links to customary practices?

**Effectiveness:**

4. To what degree has UNICEF Pacific's Child Protection programme contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes for children in the Pacific to be increasingly protected from violence and abuse? What have been the results along the three programme outputs:
  - a. strengthened targeted government child protection institutional frameworks.
  - b. government and other service providers' increased capacities to provide child protection services that prevent child abuse and neglect.
  - c. caregivers, families and communities' increased knowledge and skills to eliminate harmful practices and better protect children from violence and abuse.

**Efficiency:**

5. Are the utilized partnership modalities the best ones for implementing the CP programme?
6. To what extent and how has UNICEF improved coordination to achieve the planned results for child protection?

**Gender equality and human rights-based approach:**

7. How successfully has the CP programme integrated UNICEF's commitment to gender equality and human-rights and disability inclusion throughout the programme cycle?
8. To what extent did children from marginalized communities, children with disabilities, girls and other disadvantaged groups benefit from the child protection programme?

**Impact:**

9. What were the main impacts (positive/negative, expected/unexpected) as perceived by the children, their families and communities? i.e. What has happened as a result of improving CP in the Pacific?

**Sustainability**

10. To what extent do sustainability and scalability have the potential to be achieved? To what extent did the programme foster links between formal systems and customs and/or community-based practices?

The evaluation will take a combined summative and formative view, drawing lessons to inform the program, while also assessing the merit and worth of the interventions and their contribution to the child protection outcome (direct and indirect; intended and unintended). The evaluation will be utilization-focused, providing continuous and rapid feedback to primary users in the course of the evaluation process. The evaluation will rely on a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Specifically, the evaluation should utilize a qualitative comparative case approach, at the level of child protection cases. This analysis should be complemented with data from surveys, interviews, and group discussions with social workers, community members, and legal, judicial and police authorities. It will also be important for bidders to identify appropriate ways to engage community members in the evaluation, particularly children, adolescents and their caretakers, to ensure their voices are included.

There are three phases in this evaluation:

a) Inception

- *Desk Review:* A list of references and documents will be agreed and shared with the vendor. These may include but not limited to the evaluability assessment, baseline results of output level data collection, MICS, program progress reports, strategies, concept notes, proposals, donor reports, workplans, national policies and budget for child protection, needs assessments, sector-specific studies, etc.
- *Data Collection Instruments:* Development/testing/adaptation of evaluation instruments like in-depth interview guides, questionnaires and surveys, focus group discussion guides, and other required instruments.
- *Inception Report submission:* The inception report will include a clear evaluation design, timeline and detailed methodology (including sampling method) for conducting the evaluation which should include an evaluation matrix i.e. a table showing how each evaluation question will be answered and how the information will be collected and analyzed. The data collection plan must include the categories of stakeholders to be interviewed and engaged with during the course of evaluation.
- *Ethical Clearance:* Obtaining ethical clearance, based on national policies and UNICEF ethics in evidence generation guidelines, and from accredited Ethics Review Board(s), for protection of human subjects before data collection commences.

b) Data collection

The data collection would focus on collecting key information enabling the evaluation team to analyze and assess the merit or worth of the CP Program as per the evaluation matrix. The data collection will draw on key informant interviews (KII), focus group discussions (FGD), comparative case studies, quantitative surveys, and non-participant observation. Equity, gender, disability and social inclusion criteria should be considered when identifying informants in these activities. This phase should promote child participation, including age-appropriate opportunities for children to be involved in this process. KIIs, FGDs and case studies are expected to be accurately recorded (with informed consent) to allow quotes from participants to be used in the evaluation report together with high-quality photos to illustrate the findings. Sampling of informants and selection of areas for the study should be done in consultation with UNICEF.

c) Data Analysis, validation and Reporting

Analysis will systematically respond to the evaluation questions. An analytical framework will be articulated through the evaluation matrix to facilitate analysis, triangulation and support the report writing phase. An evaluation report with conclusions and recommendations based on evidence and the analytical framework highlighting the learnings will be drafted. Prior to finalization of the evaluation report, a consultation workshop

will be organized to validate the findings, review conclusions and seek advice on recommendations together with relevant stakeholders to ensure utilization of the evaluation. A PowerPoint presentation linked to the final report will be established for dissemination purposes.

The evaluation team will operate under the supervision of an Evaluation Management Team (EMT), who will be responsible for the day-to-day oversight and management of the evaluation, including management of the evaluation budget, assuring independence of the evaluation and its alignment with UNEG Norms and Standards and Ethical Guidelines, providing quality assurance, checking that the evaluation findings and conclusions are relevant and recommendations are implementable and propose improvements to the recommendations if required. The EMT comprises of the UNICEF Pacific Multi-Country Evaluation Specialist and the program officer in the Child Protection Section.

An evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will be established composed of the Chief of Child Protection, a representative from DFAT, Regional Child Protection Adviser, Regional Evaluation Adviser, a member of the UNICEF Monitoring, Research, Evaluation, Studies Committee (MRESC), relevant UNICEF Pacific Field Offices, representatives of key ministry officials in selected countries, and civil society organizations where possible. The ERG will provide comments and substantive feedback to ensure the technical quality of key evaluation products, including methodology and design, evaluation instruments, inception and final reports. The ERG will also assist in identifying internal and external stakeholders to be consulted during the evaluation process, participate in review meetings organized by EMT and the evaluation team as required, play a key role in learning and knowledge sharing from evaluation results, contribute to disseminating the findings of the evaluation and follow-up on the implementation of the management response.

**An initial and more detailed methodology is to be submitted by the applicant as part of the technical proposal which will be used as a basis for proposal assessment by UNICEF.**

**LOCATION, DURATION AND TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS**

The contract duration is estimated to be 10 months, possibly starting from October 2023. All international and domestic travel cost should be budgeted for and included in the total contract value and described in the financial proposal. The consultants assigned by the selected vendor will be responsible for making their own travel arrangements which is in economy class via the most direct and economical route. The consultant assigned by the selected vendor is expected to have their own laptop, camera, mobile phone and other relevant communications and working equipment.

**ACTIVITIES, DELIVERABLES, TIMELINES AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE**

ACTIVITY	DELIVERABLES	ESTIMATED TIME OF COMPLETION	PAYMENT (%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desk review of relevant documents &amp; data;</li> <li>Draft inception report, including desk review, methods, evaluation matrix, workplan, data collection instruments in accordance with UNEG guidelines;</li> <li>Finalize inception report with all comments from the ERG cleared, and ethical clearance received;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final Inception report<sup>42</sup></li> <li>Ethical approval letter for the evaluation from an accredited ethics review board</li> </ul>	<i>Within 8 weeks of contract signing</i>	<i>25% of contract total</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Logistical arrangements for field work, with support of UNICEF Pacific CP Section;</li> <li>Pilot tools, conduct data collection, field work, action learning;</li> <li>Organize meeting to validate data collection results;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PowerPoint presentation of data collection results and meeting minutes</li> </ul>	<i>Within 8 weeks of ethical clearance</i>	<i>25% of contract total</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Processing and analysis of the collected data, and drafting of the interim report;</li> <li>Review and respond to comments by the EMT on the first draft report, and produce a second draft;</li> <li>Review and respond to comments by the ERG on the second draft report, and produce a third draft report;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft evaluation report</li> <li>Comment matrix of issues addressed</li> </ul>	<i>Within 6 weeks of data validation meeting;</i>	<i>25% of contract total</i>

<sup>42</sup> Max 20 pages/8000 words, excluding annexes, in accordance with UNEG Inception Report guidelines.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document all comments raised and how they have been addressed in a comment matrix<sup>43</sup>;</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the respond to comments by ERG and UNICEF Rep until clearance of all pending comments;</li> <li>Submit final report conforming to UNICEF Evaluation Reports Standards and the GEROS Quality Assessment System;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final evaluation report<sup>44</sup></li> </ul>	<i>Within 6 weeks of draft evaluation report acceptance</i>	<i>25% of contract total</i>

**QUALIFICATIONS, SPECIALIZED EXPERIENCE AND ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

The selected vendor must have a good track record and extensive experience in planning and conducting evaluations, particularly in the field of child protection. The composition of the proposed evaluation team must be gender balanced to ensure accessibility of both male and female informants during the data collection process. The vendor will be expected to engage local and qualified researchers within the Pacific Island Countries and Territories to ensure evaluation is well grounded in locally appropriate methods, to build national evaluation capacity, and for efficiencies in data collection. A UNICEF staff member with an evaluation role may be embedded within the evaluation team with the consent of the regional evaluation adviser, to provide additional capacity to the evaluation team. The selected vendor should have the following minimum qualifications individually or jointly:

The international consultants should meet the following specific requirements, demonstrated in their CV and sample (co-)authored reports:

- Excellent value for money, including competitive consultancy rates, a detailed work-plan and budget, a clear methodology to ensure products will be delivered in line with the agreed costs, a mitigation strategy for financial risk.
- Extensive evaluation experience (at least 10 years) with an excellent understanding of evaluation principles and quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, notably qualitative comparative case approach, evidence of research or implementation expertise in child protection programmes, an awareness of human rights (incl. child rights), gender equality and equity in evaluation and UNEG norms and standards.
- Technical knowledge of social welfare, child protection including juvenile justice system and familiarity with systems building from a UN or international NGO perspective.
- Understanding of child protection system strengthening, social and behavioural change, justice for children, and violence against children.
- Specific evaluation experience in the child protection area is strongly desired.
- Strong mixed-method evaluation background.
- Experience working in the Pacific context is desirable, together with understanding of Pacific context and cultural dynamics.
- Expertise in communications, dissemination and advocacy around evaluation findings, including a good understanding of the use of evidence-based approaches to influence stakeholders.
- Adaptability and flexibility, client orientation, proven ethical practice, initiative, concern for accuracy and quality.
- Demonstrated capacity to train and mentor junior evaluators in a cross-cultural context.
- Excellent English communication and report writing skills.

The local and qualified researcher(s) based within the Pacific Islands should meet the following specific requirements, demonstrated in their CV or sample (co-)authored reports:

- Extensive experience in social welfare and child protection including juvenile justice system in the Pacific
- Demonstrated experience or extensive training in using quantitative and qualitative research methods
- Solid analytical skills
- Firm understanding of child rights, human rights-based approaches to programming, including gender and equity considerations.
- Fluency in one or more local languages.

<sup>43</sup> A template for the comment matrix will be provided by the EMT

<sup>44</sup> Max 45 pages/30,000 words, excluding annexes and executive summary; prepared according to the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards, and UNICEF standards for evaluation reports as per GEROS guidelines

Knowledge of UNICEF mandate, procedures and working methodologies, and an in-depth understanding of the organization's approach to child protection would be an asset for all members of the evaluation team. Back-office support assisting the team with logistics and administrative matters is also expected.

It is vital that the same individuals that develop the methodology for the proposal and inception report will be involved in conducting the evaluation. In the review of the proposals, while adequate consideration will be given to the technical methodology, significant weighting will be given to the quality, experience (CV's and written samples of previous evaluations) and relevance of proposed team members who will be involved in the evaluation. Documents required in the technical offer:

- CV(s)
- 10-page technical proposal articulating the approach to the assessment activities and products, including a time schedule for the work.

## Annex J: Internal<sup>45</sup> UNICEF Documents Reviewed<sup>46</sup>

### Pacific multi-country design, policies, strategies and plans

Year	Title
2017	Child protection [Programme Strategy Note]
2019	DFAR investment design: Child protection programme <sup>47</sup>
2022	UNICEF Pacific multi-country programme 2023-2027 programme rationale document: Child protection
ca. 2022	Costed evaluation plan – Pacific Island countries – UNICEF multi-country programme of cooperation, March 2023–December 2027.
2023	UNICEF evaluation management response template: Evaluability assessment of the UNICEF Pacific Child Protection programme.
2023	UNICEF Pacific child protection theory of change and strategic partnerships report (Desi Consulting).

### Pacific multi-country annual reports<sup>48</sup>

Year	Title
2019	Country Office annual report 2018: Pacific Islands Multi-Country Programme
2020	Country Office annual report 2019: Pacific Islands Multi-Country Programme
2021	Country Office annual report 2020: Pacific Islands
2022	Child protection programme in Kiribati, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands: Progress and utilisation report - submitted to Government of Australia's DFAT
2022	Country Office annual report 2021: Pacific Islands
2023	Child protection programme in Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands: Progress and utilisation report - submitted to Government of Australia's DFAT
2023	Country Office annual report 2022: Pacific Islands
2024	Child protection programme in Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands: Progress and utilisation report - submitted to Government of Australia's DFAT
2024	Country Office annual report 2023: Pacific Islands

### Pacific multi-country monitoring, reviews, evaluative activities, and evaluation

Year	Title
2020	Review of the UNICEF Pacific Multi-country Programme Strategy Note (PSN) consolidated addendum.
2023	Summary Report of DFAT Impact Assessment and DFAT Impact Assessment Report <sup>49</sup>

### Kiribati

Year	Title
2018	A kukurei ataei e kukurei Kiribati: Happy children happy Kiribati (facilitation by Australian Aid, the Government of Vanuatu and UNICEF Pacific).
ca. 2023	Child protection legislative checklist: Kiribati
ca. 2023	Kiribati: UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2023-2027 – 2023-2024 consolidated workplan.

<sup>45</sup> UNICEF documents that are in the public domain are listed in the Annex J.

<sup>46</sup> As well as the documents specifically listed here, data from 24 downloaded reports from UNICEF RAM (Results Assessment Module) programme performance management and reporting platform, has also been collected and qualitatively analysed. Each report covers an output (4) and a year (6) e.g. Country Programme Full Approval Report: RAM 2018\_1

<sup>47</sup> Some, but not all Annexes, of the DFAT investment design document were accessed including Annex 6 (M&E Framework – Vanuatu)

<sup>48</sup> UNICEF annual DFAT reports covering 2018 and 2019 were not available to the evaluation team.

<sup>49</sup> Two versions of report of survey of social workers, members of child protection working groups and policymakers in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu

## Samoa

Year	Title
ca. 2023	Child protection legislative checklist: Samoa
ca. 2023	Samoa: UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2023-2027 – 2023-2024 consolidated workplan.

## Solomon Islands

Year	Title
n.d.	Untitled Solomon Islands' child protection facilitation manual
ca. 2023	Child protection legislative checklist: Solomon Islands
ca. 2023	Solomon Islands: UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2023-2027 – 2023-2024.

## Vanuatu

Year	Title
ca. 2023	Child protection legislative checklist: Vanuatu
ca. 2023	Vanuatu: UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2023-2027 – 2023-2024 consolidated workplan
2024	A review of children in the formal justice system: Country report – Vanuatu (draft Child Frontier report).

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