

UNICEF Evaluation Management Response Template

Evaluation Title: Evaluation of UNICEF Work in Early Childhood Development and Early Childhood Education (2018-2023), Serbia country report
Region: Europe and Central Asia
Office: Serbia
Evaluation Year: 2025
Person-In-Charge for Follow-up to Management Response: Ana Prodanovic, Child Rights Monitoring Specialist

Overall Response to the Evaluation:

The purpose of this evaluation was to support organizational learning and accountability for UNICEF investments in ECD work from 2018 to 2023. On the learning side, the evaluation succeeded in assessing how UNICEF has leveraged organizational investments on the integrated ECD approach and used its knowledge, resources, and experiences to support countries in strengthening their national ECD programmes. The evaluation also provides a nuanced assessment UNICEF achievement of results aimed to increase access to holistic ECD services for accountability purposes. Evidence from the evaluation will be designed to facilitate decision-making, advocacy, and resource mobilization and to contribute to global learning within the ECD.

Planned Use of Evaluation: The intended uses are to strengthen ECD programming and to support planning for the next Country Programme Document (CPD). The primary internal audience for this evaluation is UNICEF managers and specialists, including senior leadership and those responsible for the strategic choices ECD programming and reporting within the organization. The secondary external audience for the evaluation includes the Government of Serbia and the ministries responsible for health, education, social policy, family and demography, and local self-governments (LSGs). The intended uses are to share major achievements and bottlenecks for ECD interventions and to inform them of the need for further investments for sustainability. With the formation of the new Government in 2025, UNICEF will disseminate the evaluation report to key stakeholders, and propose a session of the Government working group on ECD to examine the findings to create a roadmap for advancement on recommendations where the responsibility lies with government. The report will also inform UNICEF’s advocacy effort at highest levels of Government and with national and local stakeholders.

Allowed Editor: Ana Prodanovic

RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS:

Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 1: Develop a costed and integrated National ECD Action Plan

Continue and scale-up UNICEF advocacy, communications and technical support to central level ministries responsible for ECD programming in health, education and social protection sectors to develop a costed and integrated National ECD Action Plan.

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

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed	Actions taken	Supporting documents

				Cancelled		
<p>Conduct high-level advocacy with the Ministry of Health to take a leadership role in establishing an intersectoral working group on ECD to develop and support implementation of ECD Action Plan.</p>	CO	ECD Specialist	December 2025	Underway	<p>Initial advocacy meetings held with MoH and other ministries.</p> <p>Draft concepts note for the intersectoral group and proposal of membership prepared and submitted to MoH.</p> <p>Parenting Policy Benchmark conducted and preliminary findings shared with MoH and key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Meeting minutes, Concept note for intersectoral WG</p>
<p>Generate and share evidence to inform the Action Plan, including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy benchmarking (e.g., Parenting Policy Benchmark) - Implementation research (e.g., on service delivery models and workforce readiness) - Analysis and costing studies (e.g., HVN and ECI services) 	CO	ECD Specialist	June 2026	Underway	<p>Parenting Policy Benchmark conducted.</p> <p>Implementation research in progress.</p> <p>Analysis and costing of ECD Services (home visiting and ECI) initiated</p>	<p>Parenting Policy Benchmark report, Costing studies, Policy papers</p>

- Analysis of ECEC investments across LSGs						
Provide technical assistance to support the development of an integrated and costed ECD Action Plan with indicators and budget, with specific attention to inequity.	CO	ECD Specialist	December 2026	Not started		
Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 2: Incentivize LSGs to continue their action planning and interventions for children and families 2.1. Continue and scale-up advocacy to sustain the engagement of LSGs through a UNICEF supported advocacy platforms, such as the #EarlyMomentsMatter (EMM) campaign, the Child Friendly Cities (CFCs) initiative (or similar). 2.2. Explore other modalities or incentives for the sustained engagement of LSGs to continue action planning and investment in ECD services, such as through private sector engagement, family-friendly policies and the scaling of PORI (early childhood intervention services).						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Partially Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: The Country Office will continue advocacy efforts to sustain the engagement of local self-governments (LSGs) in scaling up local intersectoral ECD programming and budgeting. However, this will not be pursued through a revitalization of the Child-Friendly Cities (CFC) initiative, due to its politically sensitive connotation, which is currently not well received in the national context. Alternative locally acceptable platforms and modalities will be used.						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Provide technical assistance to enhance LSG capacities for sustainable ECD service provision, including development and dissemination of tailored guidance, tools, data	CO	ECD Specialist, Education specialist, CRM Specialist	December 2026	Underway		Draft toolkit, Guidance revision inputs, Capacity-building calendar.

and capacity-building packages with specific attention to inequities in access.					Technical support framework developed. Draft tools and revised guidance under review. Capacity-building cycle initiated in selected LSGs.	
Provide technical assistance to document and analyse public spending for early learning at the local level	CO	Education Specialist	December 2026	Not started		
Define recommendations for private sector engagement in ECD and family friendly policies including through ongoing collaboration with private sector stakeholders on ECD	CO	ECD Specialist /PSFR	December 2025	Underway	Analysis of Business as a Catalyst for ECD Impact conducted	Business as a Catalyst for ECD Impact Presentation of Findings & Recommendations
<p>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3: Ensure a new round of MICS or similar national-level studies are implemented to collect relevant data in 2025 to demonstrate the results of UNICEF investments for young children</p> <p>3.1. Implement the ECD Module to ensure data is collected on children’s developmental status and parental support for early stimulation and responsive care.</p> <p>3.2. Synthesize other studies demonstrating the results of UNICEF-supported ECD programming into a policy brief for continued advocacy with decision makers on effective interventions.</p>						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway	Actions taken	Supporting documents

				Completed Cancelled		
Conduct MICS7 survey	CO	CRM Specialist	December 2026	Underway		