

# UNICEF Turkmenistan Country Programme 2021-2025 Evaluation

## Final report

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## Contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
Abbreviations.....	5
Executive summary.....	7
Key Findings.....	9
Conclusions.....	13
Lessons learned.....	14
Recommendations.....	15
1. Introduction.....	18
2. Country Programme components and goals.....	26
2.3. Social and child protection.....	27
2.4. Quality and inclusive education.....	28
2.5. Programme effectiveness component.....	28
3. Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope.....	29
4. Evaluation methodology.....	29
4.1. Evaluation criteria and questions.....	29
4.2. Evaluation approach and methodology.....	30
4.3. Data collection and analysis.....	31
4.4. Ethical considerations.....	31
4.5. Limitations and mitigation measures.....	32
5. Evaluation findings.....	34
5.1. Relevance.....	34
5.2. Effectiveness.....	44
5.3. Coherence.....	54
6. Evaluation conclusions and lessons learned.....	57
a. Conclusions.....	57
b. Lessons learned.....	58
7. Recommendations.....	59
Annexes.....	64
Annex 1. Terms of Reference.....	64
Annex 2. Evaluation Matrix.....	67
Annex 3. List of people consulted.....	71
Annex 4. Re-constructed overall Theory of Change for the CP.....	73
Annex 5. ToC for the governance for children priority area of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP.....	75
Annex 6. ToC for the child health, nutrition and early development priority area.....	76
Annex 7. TOC for the social and child protection priority area.....	77
Annex 8. ToC for the quality and inclusive education priority area.....	78

Annex 9. Degree of achievement of CP outputs as measured by output indicators. ....	79
Annex 10. Data collection instruments .....	91
Figure 1 Regular and other resources, UNICEF Turkmenistan, 2021-2024.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 2 Population pyramid for Turkmenistan, 2022.....	21
Figure 3 Net ODA received per capita (current US\$).....	21
Figure 4 Turkmenistan donor landscape.....	21
Figure 5 Policy cycle.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 1. Summary budget of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP.....	18
Table 2 UNCDF outcomes, related SDGs and UNICEF contribution.....	19
Table 3 Evaluation criteria and questions .....	29
Table 4 Integration of UNEG ethical principles into the evaluation process. ....	31
Table 5 CPD alignment with NPAC 2018-2022 and 2023-2028.....	35
Table 6 Alignment of CP outputs with national thematic policies.....	36
Table 7 CPD alignment with CRC Concluding Observations on general measures for implementation of the CRC. ....	37
Table 8 CPD alignment with other CRC Concluding Observations. ....	39
Table 9 Consistency of CPD outcomes with leave no one behind principle. ....	41
Table 10 Goals set in National Plans of Action for Realization of Children’s Rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 and 2023-2028.....	42
Table 11 Degree of achievement of output indicators in 2021-2023. ....	45
Table 12. Examples of CPD interventions across children's life cycle.....	53

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## Abbreviations

AWP	Annual Workplan
BFHI	Baby-Friendly Hospitals Initiative
CCA	Climate change adaptation
CO	Country Office
CR	Chief rehabilitation specialist
CSO	Civil society organization
CP	Country Programme
CPD	Country Programme Document
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ECD	Early childhood development
ECE	Early childhood education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product
GPR	Gender Programme Review
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
HDI	Human Development Index
ISLD	Institute of State, Law and Democracy
JP	Joint Programme
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MIS	Management information system
MoAEP	Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoFE	Ministry of Finance and Economy
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoHMI	Ministry of Health and Medical Industry
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
NPAC	National Plan of Action on Realization of Child Rights
NRCS	National Red Crescent Society
ODA	Official development assistance
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PSN	Programme Strategy Note
RAM	Results Assessment Module
RMNCAH	Reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health
RWP	Rolling Work Plan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSC	State Statistics Committee
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
ToC	Theory of change
ToR	Terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF ECARO	UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office

UNSDCF  
USAID  
WHO

United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework  
United States Agency for International Development  
World Health Organization

## Executive summary

1. This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the UNICEF Turkmenistan Country Programme (CP) 2021-2025, focusing on UNICEF's activities across its priority areas (outcomes). The evaluation examines the relevance, effectiveness and coherence of the CP. The evaluation is commissioned by UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, covering UNICEF programmes in Turkmenistan. The evaluation is intended to support the planning process for the next programming period, and to strengthen UNICEF's accountability. Its objectives are to identify good practices, draw lessons, and inform forward-looking recommendations. The evaluation assesses the linkages between international, regional, national and institutional strategies to bring about overall improvement in the status of children. It also evaluates the extent to which interventions focus on and deliver results for the most vulnerable categories of children in Turkmenistan. Finally, it evaluates the performance monitoring systems in place at national and UNICEF levels.

### Overview of the Country Programme 2021-2025

2. The overall goal of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP was to **support the Government of Turkmenistan to meet its commitments to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children**, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and further reaffirmed in the National Plan of Action on Realization of Child Rights for 2018–2022 (NPAC). The CP's priority areas include: Governance for children; Child health, nutrition and early childhood development; Social and child protection; Quality and inclusive education; and Programme effectiveness.

#### *Priority area 1: Governance for children*

3. The long-term vision of change in this programme component is that, by 2025, in line with Goals 1 and 6 of the NPAC, the child-focused commitments in the national development and planning frameworks are translated into measurable targets and evidence-based implementation plans for all children, including those at risk of being left behind, and supported with appropriate financial resources and governance structures established or reinforced.

#### *Priority area 2: Child health, nutrition and early development*

4. The long-term vision of change in this component is that, by 2025, in line with Goal 2 of the NPAC, child mortality from preventable causes in the first year of life is reduced, and children have healthy mothers and receive optimal age-appropriate nutrition, strengthening their growth and resistance to illnesses, and develop to their full potential in early childhood.

#### *Priority area 3: Social and child protection*

5. The long-term vision of change in this component is that, by 2025, in line with Goals 4 and 5 of the NPAC, the reform of the Turkmenistan social and child protection systems continues to provide increasingly effective services to the children and families in need of protection.

#### *Priority area 4: Quality and inclusive education*

6. The long-term vision of change in this component is that, by 2025, in line with Goal 3 of the NPAC, all boys and girls in Turkmenistan, including those with disabilities, enjoy quality inclusive education and learning opportunities that develop their competencies and foster their well-being, resilience and integration, enabling them to fully participate in and contribute to a modern economy.

#### *Priority area 5: Programme effectiveness*

7. The component provides cross-cutting support to the CP, ensuring that it is efficiently coordinated, managed and adapted to meet quality programming standards in achieving results for children. It will ensure the coordinated mainstreaming of gender, disability, youth

participation and risk-related dimensions, while supporting evidence-based advocacy and communication

### **Purpose of the evaluation and its audiences**

8. This strategic evaluation covers the whole CP and complements sectoral evaluations and studies conducted in the past five years. The evaluation's purpose is to strengthen UNICEF's accountability to national stakeholders by evaluating its contribution to results for children, particularly for the most vulnerable children, at scale. The evaluation is national, without focus on specific regions. The evaluation is also intended to inform the development of the next UNICEF Country Programme, by collating the lessons learned from activities and results. This will enable the best use of UNICEF change strategies in the future.
9. The primary users of this evaluation are intended to be UNICEF country and regional offices. Secondary users are the Government of Turkmenistan, United Nations agencies and development partners present in Turkmenistan. The evaluation builds on the agreements made among these partners, and assists in the establishment of strategies for their ongoing collaboration in the next planning and programme cycle.

### **Evaluation context**

10. The evaluation was conducted in a relatively stable country. Turkmenistan, a landlocked country in Central Asia, borders Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Afghanistan. It has significant gas reserves, the fourth largest globally, accounting for about 10 per cent of global reserves. Turkmenistan took significant steps to manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure the well-being of its population. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 6.2 per cent a year between 2021 and 2023, but inflation was high, at 21 per cent in 2021. Serdar Berdimuhamedow became President in 2022, continuing policies of neutrality and international cooperation.
11. The economy of Turkmenistan, an upper-middle-income country, relies heavily on natural gas exports. The Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.745, with significant public expenditure on education, health care and social protection.
12. Due to its income status, donor interest is limited, making official development assistance (ODA) unstable. Top donors include the United Arab Emirates, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Fund, and the United States, with significant portions of ODA supporting education, health care and social infrastructure.

### **Evaluation methodology**

13. The Terms of Reference proposed a theory-based approach, based on the CP Theory of Change (ToC) developed by the UNICEF Country Office (CO). The evaluation questions were structured around the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and coherence. The evaluation criteria of impact and sustainability were also covered to a certain extent by the evaluation, through questions on relevance and effectiveness. An Evaluation Matrix was developed during the inception phase to map out evaluation questions and sub-questions, judgement, data collection methods and sources.
14. The evaluation employed quality data collection methods, including a wide-ranging document review and 34 interviews with 79 individuals that were conducted online and in Ashgabat. The Country Office helped to identify respondents, who were consulted using semi-structured

interviews. These included interviews with UNICEF, government entities, United Nations agencies and other development agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and mass media organizations. In addition, internal UNICEF databases were reviewed, and an AI-generated country profile developed using internal UNICEF databases was consulted.

15. The evaluation methodology fully considered the ethical obligations of evaluator. Child rights, equity and gender were highlighted throughout the evaluation.

## Key Findings

### **Relevance**

16. **Design:** The Country Programme (CP) was designed in 2019-2020 in a participatory process, aligning with the National Plan of Action for Realization of Child Rights in Turkmenistan (NPAC) for 2018-2022.
17. The UNICEF CP 2021-2025 in Turkmenistan was based on evidence and lessons learned from implementation of previous interventions, needs assessments, strategic prioritization and studies conducted before and during CP implementation.
18. **The alignment of the CP to children's needs and the national priorities** was based on national statistics and strategic planning frameworks for children's rights, as well as CRC Committee Concluding Observations. The frameworks included the NPAC 2018-2022, the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy, the National Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Strategy, the National Programme on Healthy Nutrition, and the Early Childhood Development Strategy for 2020-2025. UNICEF interventions were designed to address the needs of children across all periods of a child's life cycle. The needs were identified in the process of CP development based on available data and studies, including the 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2019), as well as a number of analytical studies including Analysis of the Situation of Children's and Women's Rights in Turkmenistan (2018), the Youth Situation Analysis (2019), the UNICEF Country Programme Gender Review (2018), the evaluation of Government of Turkmenistan-United Nations Partnership Framework for Development 2016-2020 (2019) and other analytical documents.
19. The evaluation has also found that the **CP has contributed to implementation of at least nine recommendations presented in the 2015 CRC Concluding Observations.**
20. CPD had an explicit focus on supporting the government to uphold and fulfil the rights of children. UNICEF worked within the current programme cycle, keeping children rights high on the national political agenda by, for example, working with the Parliament, supporting the development of national policies, building the capacity of the Department on Child Rights in the Ombudsman's Office, building public awareness and knowledge on child rights, and supporting the production of data on results for children.
21. **While the focus on gender equality is less pronounced overall, certain CP activities have explicitly addressed gender issues.** For instance, UNICEF's efforts to meet the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers were guided by the findings of the 2018 UNICEF Gender Programme Review (GPR). Gender equality considerations also informed UNICEF's initiatives to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education for girls, develop gender education manuals for teachers and parents, and conduct training on gender in emergencies in pilot schools.

22. **Pandemic response:** UNICEF provided essential supplies, supported schools, ensured vaccine supply, and coordinated with partners during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was the only United Nations agency collecting data on families with disabilities during the pandemic.
23. UNICEF Turkmenistan was **positioned as a source of specialized knowledge and expertise** on child-related issues, facilitating government access to this expertise.
24. **UNICEF's expertise on disability and inclusion.** The evaluation also found that other United Nations agencies in Turkmenistan see UNICEF as a source of expertise on disability and inclusion. Most likely this reflects the fact that in the current programme cycle the CO has done a lot of work on disability and inclusion. For example, based on the interviews with United Nations partner agencies, UNICEF established and co-chairs the United Nations Social Inclusion Group and leads the United Nations Disability Group. UNICEF supported the State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan to conduct the first-ever national Survey on the Situation of Children and Adults with Disabilities, published in 2022. In 2021 UNICEF presented a model of budgeting compliant with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the Government.
25. **Advocacy and policy inclusion.** Due to UNICEF advocacy and technical support, explicit reference to disability was included in NPAC 2023-2028, based on the review of NPAC and interviews with UNICEF and United Nations staff.
26. **Responsiveness to stakeholder needs.** Many national stakeholders consulted in the course of this evaluation noted that UNICEF was their preferred partner, and noted that the CO was highly responsive to their needs and requests. The evaluation has found a vivid example of such responsiveness.
27. Limited scale-up means that the social services introduced with UNICEF do not cover all children, as services are not available everywhere and not for all children. If UNICEF does not advocate scaling up pilot services, children will be left behind.
28. The CP is fully consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) guiding principles. It has a strong focus on child rights and disability. The focus on gender equality is less pronounced. CP priorities, especially the outcomes, are fully consistent with Agenda 2030, and the 'leave no one behind' principle, but the limited scaling up of social services introduced with UNICEF support may leave some children behind in terms access to these services.

### **Effectiveness**

29. **Progress on indicators.** The CP has made progress on all the 39 output-level indicators set to measure the achievement of its 10 outputs. By 2024 the end-of-CP targets were achieved for 3 output indicators. Progress is presented in Table 11 and the Annexes.
30. **Limited national capacity for evidence-based policy planning,** and results-based management and budgeting continue to be important external restrictive factors affecting UNICEF's progress and the scaling up of programme results. Analysis conducted by the CO during the development of the 2021-2025 Country Programme, along with evaluation data, indicates that the demand for data and their use in results-based management and budgeting are interconnected. **There is potential to support an evidence-based and results-oriented decision-making system.**

31. **The small size of the UNICEF CO technical team increases** the risk that staff turnover could affect the continuity of operation. The CO mitigates this risk by establishing long-term partnerships with organizations that have necessary competencies. The UNICEF Turkmenistan CO has a very small team. The CO compensates for limited in-house human resources by establishing long-term partnerships with organizations with the necessary competencies: for example, Ankara University supports the CO's work in the area of early interventions, St. Petersburg Early Interventions Institute supports CO work in the area of early child development, and Cerci Lisboa, a Portuguese CSO working on disability issues, that supports the CO with expertise on disability inclusion.
32. **Limited reach of interventions.** Behaviour change interventions and those directly targeting children are often limited to the numbers provided by national partners for in-person events. Evaluation data suggests that UNICEF CO does not focus on ensuring full national coverage of the relevant service providers. For example, the activity under the National Action Plan on Child Rights 2023-2028 on implementation of the Concept of Inclusive Education – which is supported by UNICEF and covers the full six-year period – foresees the piloting of inclusive education in selected educational facilities in the capital and all five regions during the third and fourth years, and expanding the number of facilities that provide inclusive education in the sixth year. The number of pilot institutions and extent of expansion are not defined, but it is clear that full coverage of all relevant facilities is not foreseen.
33. **Resource mobilization challenges.** The donor environment in Turkmenistan is not conducive to resource mobilization. UNICEF mitigates this by collaborating with other United Nations agencies to develop Joint Programme proposals to United Nations global funds. Turkmenistan has upper-middle income status, which leads to limited donor interest and increases reliance on the government funding. The CO's approach to resource mobilization is both strategic and opportunistic. The CO is building its relations with the national authorities to position itself as a partner of choice for procurement services. There are ongoing negotiations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Finance and Economy on signing a Contribution Agreement with the Government of Turkmenistan that would enable the government to fund projects implemented by UNICEF. But even in the absence of this agreement, UNICEF is already providing procurement services for the government in the areas of immunization and food fortification (outside the CP framework as Procurement Services).
34. **Effective technical support.** UNICEF's technical support effectively enhances regulatory, institutional, and individual capacities within national systems. However, nationwide scaling up and adherence to the 'Leaving no one behind' principle require stronger national commitment.
35. **Recognition of expertise.** National stakeholders and United Nations agencies in Turkmenistan recognize UNICEF as a source of expertise on working with children, disability and inclusion.
36. **Strong cooperation culture:** UNICEF is seen as a responsive partner with a strong cooperation culture within the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), aiding the advancement of children's rights.
37. UNICEF provides **comprehensive technical support, targeting interlinked regulatory (enabling environment), institutional and individual capacity levels, and spanning the full policy cycle** from needs assessment through planning and implementation to evaluation.

38. **The reach of behaviour change interventions and interventions that directly target children** is usually limited to the numbers provided by the national partners for in-person events. For example, in 2022 UNICEF, in cooperation with the Parliament and the Ministry of Education, conducted a training session on the CRC and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) for children in summer camps, reaching 270 children in total as part of the preparation of the CRC National Report. Considering that social and behaviour change (SBC) initiatives were introduced in the middle-of the programme cycle, further refining of approaches and topics to be covered by SBC were being defined at the time of this evaluation. At the same time, relations were established with the Women’s Union and National Media Agency, enabling wide information campaigns and training in the area of nutrition and healthy motherhood.

### **Coherence**

39. **Effective partnership and impactful collaboration.** UNICEF Turkmenistan used its comparative advantages related to its expertise, strategic focus and adaptability to build and sustain effective partnerships with the Government of Turkmenistan, United Nations agencies and development partners, as well as CSOs.
40. **High buy-in from the government** on several issues related to child rights, allowed strong partnerships to be built with the relevant national ministries and agencies. For example, UNICEF was identified as a partner of choice for data collection and reporting activities, establishment and better operation of cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms.
41. **Enhanced advocacy.** Partnership with United Nations agencies and development partners on common points of interest enabled UNICEF to enhance its advocacy capacity when promoting recommendations to the government. CSOs and Young SDG Advocates were key partners for advocacy and implementation, enabling UNICEF to engage with local communities and the most vulnerable children.
42. **Data production for decision-making.** While major activities to produce data to inform government decision-making – including the survey on the Situation of Children and Adults with Disabilities, the Labour Force Survey that measured the impact of the global pandemic, MICS7 and the Evaluation of NPAC 2018-2022 – were supported within the framework of the Governance for children priority area of the CP; while several other studies and assessments were conducted under the three other priority areas of the CP.
43. **Cross-sectoral collaboration.** Within the current programme cycle under the Governance for children priority area UNICEF continued supporting the Interministerial Commission on Human Rights, which is the main national cross-sectoral coordination mechanism that supports implementation of and reporting on Turkmenistan’s international human rights obligations. UNICEF supported the establishment and operation of several thematic cross-sectoral mechanisms.
44. **Effectiveness of Joint Programmes.** The Joint Programme (JP) model was recognized as successful by UNCT, and United Nations agencies are continuing efforts to develop new JPs. There is also a joint effort to secure the government’s interest and commitment to fund JPs. UNICEF is effectively engaged in the above-mentioned efforts.

45. In 2020-2022, the UNICEF-led JP to improve the system of social protection by introducing inclusive quality community-based social services (2020-2022) created the first-ever cadre of professional social workers, and supported the launch of bachelor's degree in social work in two higher education institutions. UNICEF is also continuing to promote the importance and added value of engaging professional social workers through its other activities. For example, the interviewed representatives of the Commission on Minors and law enforcement authorities were certain about the importance of engaging social workers in their work with children. With UNICEF advocacy and support, the agenda of ensuring children's access to social services and building the capacity of social workers was integrated into the NPAC 2023-2028.
46. **Involvement of CSO staff and volunteers.** UNICEF involves CSO staff and volunteers in its activities. In 2021, UNICEF trained 50 National Red Crescent Society (NRCS) volunteers on infant and young child feeding practices and early childhood development (ECD). In 2022, UNICEF trained 48 volunteers from the Women's Union and NRCS to conduct awareness sessions on healthy nutrition for women and adolescent girls.

## Conclusions

47. The evaluation shows that UNICEF Turkmenistan has successfully **addressed a range of important and pressing needs for children in the country, particularly the most vulnerable.** Stakeholders appreciated UNICEF's contribution to behavioural change among caregivers and duty bearers (based on the examples of initiatives in the area of breastfeeding, girls in STEM, and children with disabilities) but this impact was limited by deeply embedded social norms and values. It may take longer than the timeframe of a single CP to see the effectiveness of social and behaviour change interventions, especially in the areas of child protection and inclusive society.
48. The assessment on relevance and effectiveness shows that UNICEF Turkmenistan **responded to the needs of children in the country, especially girls and children with disabilities,** and has supported policy and instructional development. This success was based, in large part, on advocacy and technical assistance to strengthen data analysis and research on children's needs and to promote evidence-based decision making. This ensured that the needs of vulnerable children are informing government priorities. UNICEF supported the government's initiatives to strengthen its capacity to collect and analyse data through capacity-building programmes, including training for key stakeholders. At the same time, use of data in policy planning was limited, and the review of national programmes and consultations with the partners indicate that the country does not yet fully engage in results-oriented planning and budgeting.
49. **Behaviour change interventions and those directly targeting children** often have limited reach, and are primarily limited to the participants in in-person events organized by national partners. Given that social and behaviour change initiatives were introduced midway through the programme cycle, further refinement of approaches and topics was still ongoing at the time of this evaluation. However, established relationships with the Women's Union and the National Media Agency facilitated extensive information campaigns and training sessions on nutrition and healthy motherhood, broadening the impact of these initiatives.
50. The **CP is on track to achieve its intended results at output level but is not able to achieve the outcome-level result,** that by 2025 all boys and girls in Turkmenistan shall benefit from services introduced with UNICEF support. Evaluation of the United Nations Joint Programme on Social services, interviews with the CO and United Nations agencies, government institutions and social workers showed the efficiency of results, but at the same time the limited number of

social workers was not able to address all the emerging needs, and the social workforce requires further development and expansion to other areas of the country.

51. UNICEF has **positioned itself as the main driver introducing and scaling up the new approaches, models and services that produce better results for children**. UNICEF's impact on enhancing child rights was evident through a strengthened focus on child protection and the establishment of two child-friendly investigation rooms for children in contact with the law. The development of NPAC 2023-2028 and the ECD Strategy 2020-2025, as well as the creation of child-friendly hospitals and investigation rooms, evidence the effectiveness. At the same time, due to the absence of scaling up models or strategies for the pilot projects—sustainability of achieved progress could be questionable.
52. UNICEF identified and reassessed bottlenecks throughout implementation of the CP and implemented strategies **to cope with them in a changing context**. This was evidenced by adaptation in response to the global pandemic, and other contextual changes in the past four years.
53. UNICEF was identified as a key lead in the area of ECD. This is confirmed through the joint development of the ECD National Strategy and joint monitoring of its implementation. This included advocacy interventions and capacity building programmes, **strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation**.
54. At the same time, **it takes time to achieve effective results in areas that require cross-sectoral cooperation**. For example, the need to strengthen coordination between different government institutions resulted in slow progress in the development of an early identification system for providing services for children with disabilities or for de-institutionalization.
55. UNICEF **improved its approach to gender equality during the CP**, with substantial efforts towards Education and Health outcomes. This evaluation concludes that approaches to gender equality may also be expanded in other priority areas, to increase UNICEF effectiveness.

## Lessons learned

56. The desk review conducted for this report confirms the importance of evidence-driven decisions for the sake of children, at the same time it is not enough for the results at scale. The interviews conducted with the partners and document review showed that evidence driven policies can be developed and change for children rights is achieved only with full government ownership, that requires strategic partnerships and resourcing for children at the national and local levels.
57. Partnerships with other United Nations agencies, local development partners and CSOs produced the greatest results when they strategically meet the advocacy goals. UNICEF Turkmenistan was successful in leveraging partnerships in the areas of data, child rights monitoring, social protection, child protection and ECD. Some of the examples could serve as a model for other countries.
58. Innovative approaches based in model and piloting projects, and the use of innovative technologies, have generated visible results, for example for girls in STEM, social work and child protection. However, these approaches require strategic development at institutional and technical levels if they are to be scaled up by the government. Successful upscaling requires full government ownership. This involves planning and budgeting at government scale from the

outset, and continuous monitoring and evaluation before and after scaling up to inform the institutionalization of programmes at government level.

59. Analysing the results of implementation of the Joint Programme on Social Services offers lessons for generating change for children at scale. UNICEF worked with the government and development partners to integrate social work into strategic national documents and budgets. Another example of the strategic approach is home visiting health services, which UNICEF expanded over the years of the CP through training and advocacy. This combination of strategic, institutional and local activities contributed to increasing access to health and social services in the country. In contrast, the strategic approach and institutional strengthening activities were not as strong in social and behaviour change, as well as in results-based budgeting. This resulted in fewer visible results in these areas.
60. Experience in the social, health and education sectors show high staff turnover in the government, which affects the sustainability of results and weakens advocacy efforts. A systematic and strategic approach is needed to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of results. This can be achieved through higher-level advocacy and policy change.
61. SDG Ambassadors, a United Nations-wide initiative, demonstrated the importance of youth engagement and created a safe platform for youth to be engaged in policy planning and monitoring. Young volunteers helped with several UNICEF interventions and activities, and for the first time ever were engaged in evaluating a national document: the NPAC. This practice showed efficiency, and could be applied in further monitoring activities as a good approach.

## Recommendations

62. **Recommendation 1.** Continue strengthening evidence-based, innovative, and diverse approaches in social and behavioural change.
63. Given the social norms that hinder the promotion of child rights, UNICEF is advised to consider supporting interventions in the areas identified, with targeted SBC campaigns to ensure stronger demand for services. SBC campaigns should be informed by the behavioural bottleneck analysis of factors and social norms that prevent children from fully benefiting from these services. SBC could be operationalized through the Ministry of Education – to reduce stigma concerning children with disabilities, increase the number of girls studying STEM subjects and reduce violence at home and in school. Expand partnerships with the CSOs for community engagement and use of perception measurements and social listening evaluations of programmes.
64. **Recommendation 2:** Strengthen data collection to inform evidence-based policy making and programme evaluations
65. UNICEF should support the government to maximize the use of its data collection efforts by integrating administrative data, survey data and other available sources into a comprehensive, evidence-based policymaking process. This will ensure that data are not just used for reporting, but also to guide policies and decision-making in key areas such as child protection, education, social protection, and health. Enhanced data use should also contribute to the regular monitoring and evaluation of programmes, making them more responsive to the needs of children and youth. UNICEF is strongly advised to initiate an evaluability assessment or mapping of baseline data and targets for the NPAC 2023-2028 priorities, to identify potential interventions for the next programme cycle, including the scaling up of innovative approaches and models introduced with UNICEF support. This analysis shall provide a solid foundation for

discussions with the government of priorities for the next CP. Use the available data to shape advocacy campaigns by presenting evidence-based arguments that clearly show the impact of policies and interventions on children's well-being. Strengthening the evaluation culture and plan in advance of evaluations of model and pilot interventions in partnership with the government will contribute to efficient and evidence-based policy making, and greater buy-in from the government, as well as allowing better tracing of the connection between advocacy, policy, technical support and institutional changes.

66. **Recommendation 3.** Develop a leveraging strategy that focuses on financial and institutional sustainability for selected models where there is clear government commitment and results can be achieved at scale. Gain support from development partners, including United Nations agencies, to enhance the sustained impact of the intervention.
67. Evidence collected and lessons learned reveal conditions that need to be met from the moment of planning local pilot and model projects. Projects have been most effective when they had realistic strategies for scaling up, a recognition of budget limitations and budget uptake by the government, plans for strengthening institutional capacity at local and national level, and means for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. UNICEF is strongly advised to identify a few areas in which it would be possible to achieve wider coverage and impact by 2030 of services introduced with UNICEF support, and include corresponding interventions in the next CP to ensure that more children have access to and benefit from support and protection services by 2030. Potential services to be considered include the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, community-based social services, and services related to prevention and response to child protection violations. In the area of education, a potential area could be promoting school disaster risk reduction preparedness, institutionalization of climate change education across all education levels, and expanding access to pre-primary education.
68. **Recommendation 4.** UNICEF should intensify its advocacy efforts to influence government policies and increase investments per child by leveraging partnerships with key stakeholders.
69. UNICEF should intensify its advocacy efforts to influence government policies and increase investments in child protection, social protection and social services development. This can be achieved by leveraging existing and new partnerships with key stakeholders – such as government ministries, civil society organizations, and international partners – to emphasize the critical importance of social cash benefits and comprehensive social work services. Specifically, advocate for increased national budget allocations and policy reforms that prioritize vulnerable children's access to essential services – such as child protection, health care, education and justice. Emphasize how placing social work at the core of an integrated support ecosystem can significantly enhance access to these services for the most vulnerable children. Increase public awareness of available social services through targeted information campaigns. These campaigns should highlight the importance of social protection, and inform vulnerable families and communities about how to access services, including social cash benefits and child protection resources.
70. **Recommendation 5.** Support the development of cross-sectoral cooperation in areas where it is essential for the realization of child rights, and most prominently for the realization of the rights of children with disabilities.
71. UNICEF should prioritize strengthening interministerial cooperation in areas where it is critical for the realization of child rights, with a particular focus on the rights of children with disabilities. Promoting cross-sectoral collaboration among ministries and other key

stakeholders at both national and local levels will ensure a more coordinated and effective response to children's needs.

72. **Recommendation 6.** Strengthen and institutionalize child and youth participation in decision-making at national and local levels
73. UNICEF should continue and expand its support for the meaningful participation of children and youth in decision-making processes related to public institutions at both national and local levels. Institutionalizing child and youth participation ensures that their voices are heard in policy discussions that affect their lives, and that their involvement is consistent and impactful.
74. **Recommendation 7.** Establish strategic partnerships with major donors to address priority bottlenecks identified in the Situation Analysis and national priorities.
75. A stakeholder analysis at Outcome or Output levels during CP planning should identify the most influential potential partners and establish partnerships in the initial phases of the advocacy process. Strategic partners should assist in planning specific advocacy activities.
76. **Recommendation 8:** Expand approaches to gender equality in the next programme cycle.
77. By integrating gender equality strategies across all programmatic areas, UNICEF can ensure a more comprehensive and impactful approach to promoting gender equity and improving outcomes for all children. Based on the Gender Analysis, identify specific gender-related barriers and opportunities. This will help tailor interventions to address the unique needs of boys and girls. Ensure that gender equality is a core component of programme design across all sectors.

## 1. Introduction

1. This report presents the findings of the evaluation of UNICEF Turkmenistan’s Country Programme (CP) 2021-2025, focusing on UNICEF’s activities across its Priority areas (outcomes). The evaluation examines the relevance, effectiveness and coherence of the CP. The evaluation is part of a cohort of nine country programme evaluations that has been commissioned by UNICEF’s Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, as part of the preparation of a next cycle of Country Programmes.
2. The evaluation was conducted in April–July 2024 and covers the current UNICEF Country Programme during the first three-and-a-half years of the five-year programme. In addition, the evaluation considers previous programmatic interventions that contributed to higher-level results related to UNICEF’s global strategic plans for 2018-2022 and 2022-2025. The evaluation looks at the Country Programme as whole rather than specific sectors, and is national, with no specific focus on geographical regions.
3. The total estimated budget of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP was US\$7.5 million. Sixty per cent of the budget was covered by UNICEF regular resources. Table 1 provides the breakdown of funds by priority area.

Table 1. Summary budget of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP.

Programme component	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
	Regular resources	Other resources	Total
Governance for children	800	600	1 400
Child health, nutrition and early development	1 200	900	2 100
Social and child protection	1 000	700	1 700
Quality and inclusive education	1 000	600	1 600
Programme effectiveness	520	181	701
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 520</b>	<b>2 981</b>	<b>7 501</b>

Source: UNICEF (2020). UNICEF Turkmenistan CPD 2021-2025.

4. The overall goal of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP is to **support the Government of Turkmenistan to meet its commitments to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children**, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and further reaffirmed in the NPAC for 2018–2022. The shared vision of the NPAC and the CP is that all girls and boys in Turkmenistan can reach their full potential and equitably enjoy their rights to survive, thrive, learn, participate and be protected.<sup>1</sup> The key assumption is that the government will safeguard and increasingly allocate more financial and human resources for successful realization of the NPAC, achieving the SDGs and supporting the scaling up of joint initiatives.
5. The CP includes five priority areas:
  - Governance for children;
  - Child health, nutrition and early childhood development;
  - Social and child protection;

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (2020), [Country Programme Document - Turkmenistan \(unicef.org\)](#) 2021-2025 (p.5).

- Quality and inclusive education; and
- Programme effectiveness.

#### *Programme management*

6. Overall implementation of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). UNICEF holds annual reviews (through the designated Result Groups together with other United Nations agencies) with partners and conducts regular programmatic visits to assess progress, identify key strategic, programmatic, operational and financial risks, and define appropriate mitigation measures. Training sessions for UNICEF staff and partners were delivered to ensure that the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) was being followed. UNICEF strengthens partners' accountability by providing capacity building and conducting HACT assurance activities and spot checks.

#### *Risk management*

7. At the time of development of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP, UNICEF foresaw the following risks:
- A lack of UNICEF financial resources to support the reforms of the social sectors and take the joint initiatives to scale,
  - insufficient policy implementation and monitoring capacity, particularly for multisectoral approaches,
  - a lack of quality, disaggregated data to inform policymaking.
8. Planned mitigation measures included:
- advocate and provide technical assistance for increasing the adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency of resources for children and women, while actively leveraging domestic, regional and global resources, including through cost-sharing with the government,
  - explore innovative ways to build national capacities (prioritizing support to the long-term planning of human resources) in line with national strategies,
  - use the joint United Nations approach to high-level advocacy for better data availability.

#### *Position of UNICEF CP within the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)*

9. The Government of Turkmenistan and the United Nations system identified three priority areas for cooperation to accelerate SDG implementation:
- People-centred governance and rule of law;
  - Inclusive, green, and sustainable economic growth; and
  - Quality, inclusive, and affordable health, education and social protection.
10. UNICEF CP is contributing to four of the five outcomes set in the UNSDCF 2021-2025 (Table 2).

*Table 2: UNCDF outcomes, related SDGs and UNICEF contribution.*

<b>UNSDCF outcomes</b>	<b>UNICEF is contributing</b>
<p>Outcome 1. Enhanced governance and rule of law By 2025, people have access to more effective, innovative, and transparent public administration based upon the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, labour rights, and quality data Contributes towards achievement of SDGs and targets: 5. Gender equality: 5.1, 5.2, 5.c; 8. Decent work and economic growth: 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.8; 10. Reduced inequalities: 10.2, 10.3 11. Sustainable cities and communities: 11.a.1, 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions: 16.1, 16.3, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, 16.b; 17. Partnerships for the goals: 17.18.</p>	Yes
<p>Outcome 2. Sustainable economic diversification By 2025, conditions for sustainable and inclusive economic diversification are strengthened with competitive private and financial sectors, enhanced trade and investment promotion, and the adoption of new and digital technologies Contributes towards achievement of SDGs and targets:</p>	No

1. No poverty: 1.2; 2. Zero hunger: 2.3, 2.4, 2.a; 5. Gender equality (5.1, 5.2, 5.a, 5.c); 8. Decent work and economic growth (8.2, 8.5, 8.10); 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure (9.2, 9.3, 9.5, 9.b); 10. Reduced inequalities (10.2, 10.3, 10.4); 13. Climate action: 13.1; 17. Partnerships for the goals (17.3, 17.6, 17.11, 17.17)	
Outcome 3. Strengthened environmental management and climate resilience By 2025, there is effective design and implementation of disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation and mitigation measures, enabling a more rational use of resources, increased resilience, and a 'green' economy transition Contributes towards achievement of SDGs and targets: 5. Gender equality: 5.1, 5.a; 6. Clean water and sanitation: 6.3, 6.b; 7. Affordable and clean energy: 7.1, 7.3; 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure: 9.4; 11. Sustainable cities and communities: 11.3, 11.6, 11.a, 11.b; 12. Responsible consumption and production: 12.1, 12.4, 12.5; 13. Climate action: 13.2, 13.3; 15. Life on land: 15.1, 15.2, 15.3	Yes
Outcome 4. Quality, inclusive health and social protection By 2025, the population of Turkmenistan enjoys higher quality and inclusive health and social protection services Contributes towards achievement of SDGs and targets: 1. No poverty: 1.3, 1.a; 3. Good health and well-being: 3.1, 3.2 (3.2.1, 3.2.2), 3.4, 3.7, 3.8; 5. Gender equality 5.1, 5.2, 5.6; 10. Reduced inequalities: 10.2; 11. Sustainable cities and communities: 11.7.1	Yes
Outcome 5. Quality education and skilling By 2025, the education and skilling system offers all people the skills and knowledge for employment success and enhanced social integration and resilience in a diversifying economy Contributes towards achievement of SDGs and targets: 4. Quality education: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5; 5. Gender equality: 5.1, 5.5, 5.a; 8. Decent work and economic growth: 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.8; 10. Reduced inequalities: 10.1, 10.2	Yes

Source: 2021-2025 UNSDCF, UNICEF Turkmenistan 2021-2025 CPD.

11. This strategic evaluation complements the sectoral evaluations and specialized studies that have been conducted by UNICEF and external partners during this period. The evaluation is intended to inform priorities for UNICEF Turkmenistan's next CP and the decisions on the most effective strategies to be used for a CP that will have real impact. The evaluation assesses the relevance, coherence and effectiveness achieved through implementation of the CP. It is a contribution to accountability, and draws transferable lessons learned for the future.

12. The evaluation assesses the collaboration of the CP not just with government structures, but also with United Nations agencies and other development partners, as well as the civil society organizations (CSOs) that participated in the CP as implementing partners or in joint efforts alongside UNICEF.

*a. The context and current situation*

13. Turkmenistan is located in Central Asia and borders Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. Although bordered by the inland Caspian Sea, which offers abundant natural resources of gas and oil deposits, Turkmenistan is a landlocked country. The country's gas reserves are estimated to be the world's fourth largest, making up about 10 per cent of global reserves.

14. Turkmenistan is an upper-middle-income country. The national economy relies on significant revenues from exports of hydrocarbon resources, mainly natural gas. A Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>2</sup> of 0.745 (0.726 for female and 0.760 for male) positions the country in the high human development category.<sup>3</sup> In 2022, 67.7 per cent of public expenditure was spent on education, health care, and social protection.<sup>4</sup>

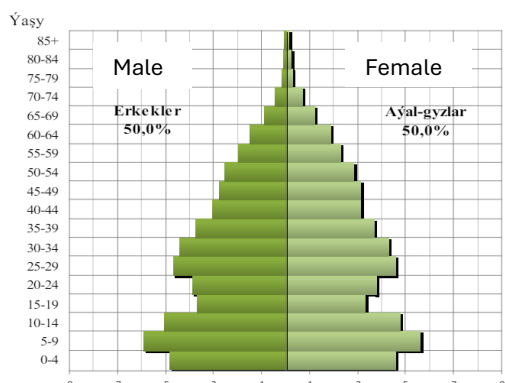
<sup>2</sup> HDI is a measure of measure of achievement in the basic dimensions of human development across countries: <https://hdr.undp.org/about/human-development>.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Turkmenistan (2022) 'Country Situation Update 2022'.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Turkmenistan (2023) 'Country Situation Update 2023'.

15. According to the 2022 census, Turkmenistan’s population was 7.057 million.<sup>5</sup> The age cohorts 0-4, 5-9, and 10-14 exceeded in number all other population cohorts (Figure 2). Young people below 18 years of age (children) make up 34.9 per cent of the population.<sup>6</sup>

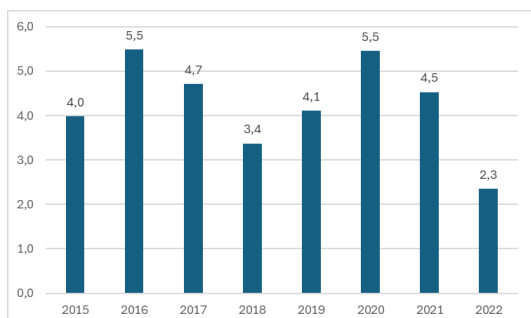
Figure 1 Population pyramid for Turkmenistan, 2022



Source: UNFPA in Turkmenistan. Presentation “2022 Complete Population and Housing Census of Turkmenistan”.<sup>7</sup>

16. Due to Turkmenistan’s upper-middle income status and other geopolitical challenges, the donor interest to support the country is limited and provision of official development assistance (ODA) is unstable (Figure 3).

Figure 2 Net ODA received per capita (current US\$).



Source: The World Bank Data (2024).

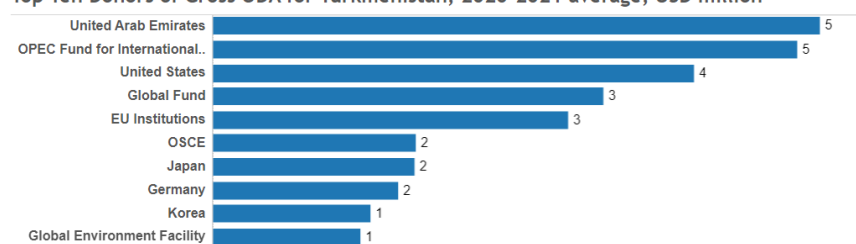
The top donors that provided assistance to Turkmenistan are the United Arab Emirates, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Fund for International Development and the United States (Figure 4). In 2020-2021, 36 per cent of ODA went to support education, 19.6 per cent to health and population issues, and 21.5 per cent to other social infrastructure and services. Figure 3 Turkmenistan donor landscape.

<sup>5</sup> Data taken from State Statistics Committee, at [www.stat.gov.tm/](http://www.stat.gov.tm/).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan (2023) ‘2022 Complete Population and Housing Census of Turkmenistan’, at [https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/WS3YamatovENG\\_0.pdf](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/WS3YamatovENG_0.pdf).

Top Ten Donors of Gross ODA for Turkmenistan, 2020-2021 average, USD million



Source: OECD-DAC (2024).<sup>8</sup>

### *b. Situation of children*

17. Turkmenistan ratified the CRC in 1994. The first NPAC (for 2018–2022) was adopted in 2019. It covered a broad spectrum of child rights and addressed the 2015 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.<sup>9</sup>
18. Turkmenistan’s neonatal, infant and under-5 mortality rates (24, 36, and 48 per 1,000 live births respectively)<sup>10</sup> are the highest in UNICEF’s Europe and Central Asia region.<sup>11</sup> Child immunization rates are high: in 2023, all 13 vaccines in the national schedule achieved coverage of 90 per cent or more, and total immunization coverage ranged from 98 per cent to 99 per cent.<sup>12</sup> The exclusive breastfeeding rate is 56.5 per cent.<sup>13</sup> Turkmenistan is doing well in terms of timely introduction of solid, semisolid and soft foods at 6-8 months (91 per cent of children), while 97 per cent of children aged 6-23 months receive minimum meal frequency, and 69 per cent of this age group receive minimum dietary diversity.<sup>14</sup>
19. UNICEF Turkmenistan is continuing to support the government to introduce universal ECD services. This process began with the development of the first National Strategy on Early Childhood Development for 2017-2020 and continued with the second National Strategy for 2020–2025<sup>15</sup> which emphasizes the need for human resource capacity development across all sectors, cross-sectoral coordination, data and monitoring systems, and targeted support to the most vulnerable children, families and communities.<sup>16</sup>
20. The net school attendance ratio of children aged one year younger than the official primary school entry age by the end of the calendar year (SDG 4.2.2), based on the 2019 Multiple Indicator

<sup>8</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, ‘Aid at a Glance’ [https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDDACAidataglacebyrecipient\\_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display\\_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no?&:showVizHome=no-DAC](https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDDACAidataglacebyrecipient_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no?&:showVizHome=no-DAC), accessed 25 October 2024.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (2020) ‘Turkmenistan Country Programme Document 2021-2025’, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Estimated by the United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (2023) ‘Situation of Children in Europe and Central Asia’ at [www.unicef.org/eca/media/27346/file/Report.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/eca/media/27346/file/Report.pdf), p 24.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund ‘Immunization regional snapshots’. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/regional-immunization-snapshots/>, accessed 27 October 2024.

<sup>13</sup> State Statistics Committee, United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Children’s Fund (2020) ‘Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019’, at [https://mics.unicef.org/sites/mics/files/Turkmenistan%202019%20MICS%20SFR\\_English.pdf](https://mics.unicef.org/sites/mics/files/Turkmenistan%202019%20MICS%20SFR_English.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (2023). ‘Situation of Children in Europe and Central Asia’ [www.unicef.org/eca/media/27346/file/Report.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/eca/media/27346/file/Report.pdf), p.27

<sup>15</sup> [National Strategy for ECD \(early child development\) 2020-2025 rus.docx](#)

<sup>16</sup> Ombudsman for Human Rights in Turkmenistan, ‘The Rights of Children [Prava Detey]’, at [https://ombudsman.gov.tm/rights\\_of\\_child.html](https://ombudsman.gov.tm/rights_of_child.html), accessed 25 October 2024.

Cluster Survey (MICS 2019) was 49.8 per cent.<sup>17</sup> In 2020 Turkmenistan adopted a programme for 2020-2025, to improve the activities of preschool establishments in the area of early development and enhance the preparation of children in Turkmenistan for school. Primary and secondary education are compulsory for 12 years. But significantly fewer girls than boys continue their education into university.<sup>18</sup>

21. Violence against children remains high. Sixty-nine per cent of children aged 1-14 have experienced at least one violent method of discipline.<sup>19</sup>
22. Social inclusion of children with developmental delays remains a challenge. Most children in residential care in Turkmenistan are children with disabilities. This is confirmed by TransMonEE data (from a database that is annually updated by the State Statistics Committee) which shows that consistently between 2015 and 2021 around 87-88 per cent of children in residential care were children with disabilities.<sup>20</sup>
23. Climate change, environmental degradation, limited access to energy sources and disasters are now being understood as a child rights issue, as they directly threaten a child's ability to survive, grow and thrive. While there are no limitations in Turkmenistan in access to energy sources, children face moderate levels of exposure and vulnerability to climate change hazards (as measured by the Children's Climate Risk Index developed by UNICEF). Turkmenistan is in ninetieth position globally in the Children's Climate Risk Index.<sup>21</sup>

### *c. Evolution of national context since 2021*

24. According to national statistics, in 2021-2023 the GDP was growing at 6.2 per cent per year.<sup>22</sup> But consumer prices, including on essential food, were growing at a higher rate. Every year, the minimum wage, pensions, stipends and social allowances are increased by 10 per cent. But this increase is below the inflation rate, which reached 21 per cent in 2021.<sup>23</sup>
25. In March 2022, Serdar Berdimuhamedow was elected President of Turkmenistan, succeeding his father and former President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow. This resulted in a further strengthening of previously followed principles of Turkmenistan's foreign policy of neutrality and constructive international cooperation, and of the macro socio-economic objectives of pursuing progress and high standards of living for the people.
26. Since the start of the 2021-2025 CP, Turkmenistan has adopted several important policies. At the end of 2021, the government adopted a new Law on Social Services that introduced social work and social services in Turkmenistan and aimed at developing inclusive social services at community level. The Social Code of Turkmenistan was revised and amended in accordance with the new Law on Social Services.<sup>24</sup> Implementation of the Law on Social Services started from five

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<sup>17</sup> State Statistics Committee, United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Children's Fund (2020) 'Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019', at

[https://mics.unicef.org/sites/mics/files/Turkmenistan%202019%20MICS%20SFR\\_English.pdf](https://mics.unicef.org/sites/mics/files/Turkmenistan%202019%20MICS%20SFR_English.pdf), p.118.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (2020) 'Turkmenistan Country Programme Document 2021-2025' p.4.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (2023) 'Situation of Children in Europe and Central Asia', p.37.

<sup>20</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, 'ECAR TransMonEE database (2015-2021)'.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (2021). *The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index*.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Turkmenistan. 'Country Situation Update 2022'.

<sup>23</sup> United Nations Turkmenistan. 'Country Situation Update 2023'.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations Country Team Turkmenistan (2023). 'Final Report. Mid-Term Review of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Turkmenistan (2021-2025)'.

by-laws regulating implementation of the Social Services Law. The Law is fully operational. At the same time, approval of the National Plan of Social Services Development has been pending since 2022.

27. Since 2020, Turkmenistan has also adopted several national strategies contributing to better situation of children, including:
  - the National Healthy Nutrition Programme for 2020-2025 and its Action Plan,
  - the National Action Plan for ensuring gender equality in Turkmenistan for 2021-2025 (provides for specific criminalization of gender-based violence against girls),
  - the Action Plan for the implementation of the “State Programme in the Field of State Youth Policy of Turkmenistan for 2021-2025”,
  - the National Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Strategy 2021-2025,
  - the National Programme of Turkmenistan on the Aral Sea for 2021-2025.
28. In February 2022 the country adopted the Programme for the Revival of a New Era of a Powerful State: The National Programme for the Socio-Economic Development of Turkmenistan in 2022-2052. The Programme covers various aspects of the economy, social well-being, environmental sustainability, governance, international affairs, and research and development. In July 2022 the country adopted the Programme of the President of Turkmenistan for the socioeconomic development of the country for 2022-2028. The programme aims to achieve stability, boost GDP growth, and enhance social protection. Objectives set for education, health care, sports, youth, and social organizations include educational reforms, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, and better infrastructure for vocational schools.<sup>25</sup>
29. Following national consultations in 2022, the government adopted a new **National Action Plan on child rights (NPAC) for 2023-2028**, which is intended to enhance child protection, education, and health care, aligning with the CRC. It focuses on preventing child labour, violence, and exploitation, while promoting equal opportunities and collaboration between the government, the United Nations, NGOs, and other international partners.
30. Also, in 2023, Turkmenistan adopted the Strategy for International Cooperation of Turkmen Youth in 2023-2030. This Strategy is intended to strengthen youth engagement in global initiatives through education, cultural exchange, and international collaboration. It focuses on developing young people's skills, fostering innovation, and promoting their participation in international forums, aligning with global trends. The strategy seeks to enhance opportunities for Turkmenistan's youth in science, technology, and diplomacy, while encouraging partnerships with international organizations.
31. With the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) support the government developed National SDG Commitments presented at the SDG Summit in September 2023. The commitments identify several priority transformational areas for investment:
  - Strengthening the social protection system, with a focus on jobs and comprehensive, quality, inclusive social services to protect the most vulnerable (linked to SDG 1 and SDG 8).
  - Food security and effective water management (linked to SDG 2 and SDG 6).
  - Achieving universal health coverage through high-quality healthcare (linked to SDG 3).
  - Early and consistent investments in transformed education systems to increase access to and the quality of education and vocational training at all levels and ensure life-long learning for all (linked to SDG 4 and SDG 9).

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<sup>25</sup> UNCT Turkmenistan (2023). Final Report. Mid-Term Review of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Turkmenistan (2021-2025).

- Investing in youth for peace (linked to SDGs 4, 5 and 16).
  - Investing in women and girls (linked to SDGs 4, 5 and 16).
  - Mitigating climate change and ensuring green energy transition (linked to SDG 7 and SDG 13).
  - Digital transformation for all (linked to SDG 9).
32. The global COVID-19 pandemic exerted immense pressure on the health-care system and society. The country has not reported COVID-19 cases, but at the same time the government has undertaken comprehensive measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission in the country. Despite the global challenges related to delivery of supplies caused by the pandemic, the Government of Turkmenistan and UNICEF ensured the continuity of the immunization programme in Turkmenistan, which helped the country to maintain high vaccination coverage rates, prevent vaccine stock outs and outbreaks of other vaccine-preventable diseases. Schools were functional, with measures introduced to protect children and teachers. Lessons learned from the global crisis are being utilized to strengthen the post-pandemic health-care system's ability to respond to future challenges by enhancing emergency management plans, supply chains and data infrastructure.
33. Several national studies contributed to better availability of data on the situation of children, including the first-ever survey on the Health and Status of a Woman in the Family (2022), the survey on Situation of Children and Adults with Disabilities (2022), and the Labour Force Survey, which measured the global pandemic's impact. In 2022 Turkmenistan conducted its Population and Housing Census.

## 2. Country Programme components and goals

34. The overall goal of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP is to **support the Government of Turkmenistan to meet its commitments to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children**, in line with the CRC and as further reaffirmed in the NPAC for 2018–2022.
35. There was no overall theory of change (ToC) for the CP, but Programme Strategic Notes provide ToCs for each component.
36. Overall, the CP is based on the shared vision of the NPAC, that CP will be directed towards ensuring that all girls and boys in Turkmenistan are able to reach their full potential and equitably enjoy their right to survive, thrive, learn, participate and be protected. The key assumption is that the government will safeguard and increasingly allocate more financial and human resources for successful realization of the NPAC, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and supporting the scaling up of joint initiatives.
37. The CP includes five priority areas:
- Governance for children;
  - Child health, nutrition and early childhood development;
  - Social and child protection;
  - Quality and inclusive education; and
  - Programme effectiveness
38. Annex 4 presents an overview of the links between intended outcomes, outputs, inputs and key Country Programme stakeholders. The ToC presented is a reconstructed ToC, based on the review of the Programme Strategic Notes and the ToCs for each of the Outcomes, except for Programme Effectiveness, which was re-constructed by the consultant. A description of the ToC is available in Annex 4.

### 2.1. *Governance for children*

39. **Focus:** Translating child-focused commitments into measurable targets and plans for all children, including those at risk.

#### 40. **Challenges:**

- Strengthening governance mechanisms, especially public finance alignment with child-focused budgeting and SDGs.
- Supporting child rights coordination, protection, and monitoring.
- Enhancing data for evidence-based decision-making.

#### 41. **Planned interventions:**

- Provide policy advice on strategic planning and budgeting.
- Strengthen planning functions in social sectors.
- Improve legal and normative acts to align with the CRC.
- Enhance coordination mechanisms at national and local levels.
- Advocate for civil society participation and inclusion of children in decision-making.
- Support the State Statistics Committee in conducting surveys.
- Develop sectoral management information systems.
- Use disaggregated data for targeted policy interventions.

- Expand cooperation with the government in evaluating development policies.
42. Annex 5 presents the Governance for children priority area ToC.

## 2.2. Child health, nutrition and early development

43. **Focus:** Reducing child mortality and ensuring healthy mothers and optimal nutrition.

### 44. Challenges:

- Non-compliance with service standards, insufficient trained personnel, fragmented health interventions, financial barriers, unbalanced medical service provision, data deficits, sub-optimal health financing, and limited policy analysis capacity.
- Lack of data, inadequate knowledge among parents and health professionals, shortages of specialists and supplements, and fragmented implementation of nutrition standards.
- Low capacity of service providers, lack of specialized services for children with developmental delays, inadequate parental knowledge, and financial barriers.

### 45. Planned interventions:

- Collaborate with the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry (MoHMI) to improve planning, implementation, and quality of services for newborns, children, and mothers.
- Enhance the skills of health-care providers for managing childhood illnesses and preventive measures.
- Revise and cost the basic benefit package to reduce health expenditure burdens on families.
- Implement the National Nutrition Programme (2020–2025) to reduce malnutrition and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls and pregnant/lactating women.
- Revise flour fortification and introduce new supplements.
- Strengthen nutrition counselling and promote healthy practices.
- Improve systems for promoting and monitoring infant and young child feeding.
- Facilitate information exchange and document good practices through the Nutrition Partnership Platform.
- Reform home-visiting services to reach households and develop skills of front-line workers.
- Apply international monitoring instruments for child growth and development.
- Establish referral mechanisms for children with developmental delays.
- Empower families to provide comprehensive care for young children.

46. Annex 6 presents the Child health, nutrition and early development priority area ToC.

## 2.3. Social and child protection

47. **Focus:** improve social and child protection systems for children and families in need.

### 48. Challenges:

- Medicalization of disability and preference for specialized care facilities.
- Lack of community-based social services and frontline workers.
- Insufficient alternatives to residential care for children with disabilities.
- Outdated social services legislation.
- Harmful social norms regarding child discipline.
- Inadequate prevention, response, and protection services.
- Lack of data on children in contact with the law.

#### **49. Planned interventions:**

- Develop and expand inclusive community-based social work.
- Advocate social worker positions in the government system.
- Foster cross-sectoral collaboration among social protection, health, and education authorities.
- Enhance mechanisms to prevent and respond to violence against children.
- Promote positive parenting and non-violent discipline.
- Upgrade legal and operational frameworks for law enforcement and social protection entities

50. Annex 7 presents the Social and child protection priority area ToC.

## **2.4. Quality and inclusive education**

51. **Focus:** Ensure all children, including those with disabilities, receive quality inclusive education and learning opportunities to develop competencies, well-being, resilience, and integration.

#### **52. Challenges:**

- Low availability of data on the education sector.
- Limited access to pre-primary education.
- High kindergarten fees and low employment among mothers, leading to children staying home until primary school.
- Limited capacity of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to implement and sustain new policies.
- Gaps in legislation making pre-primary preparation non-mandatory.
- Insufficient budget allocations for education.

#### **53. Planned interventions:**

- Provide policy advice and technical support for a universal pre-primary preparation program.
- Scale up training for education professionals.
- Develop quality assurance and monitoring mechanisms for early learning.
- Support integration of children with developmental delays into mainstream kindergartens.
- Revise and upgrade curricula to include interactive, child-centred practices.
- Develop and apply credible learning-assessment systems.
- Create a framework for inclusive education.
- Integrate disaster risk reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) into school curricula.
- Prototype the “Green School” concept.

54. Annex 8 presents the Social and child protection priority area ToC.

## **2.5. Programme effectiveness component**

51. **Focus:** Provide cross-cutting support to the work under priority areas to ensure efficient coordination, management and adaptation, as well as coordinated mainstreaming of gender, disability, youth participation and risk-related dimensions, while supporting evidence-based advocacy and communication.

52. UNICEF planned to review its advocacy and partnership strategies and foster multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with civil society and the private sector. UNICEF also planned to continue

using its procurement services to support the national immunization and fortification programmes.

53. No ToC for this outcome.

### 3. Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope

54. The overall aim of this evaluation of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP was to assess whether the Turkmenistan CO is on track towards achieving its objectives and planned targets, as well as to assess how well UNICEF is strategically positioned in the country context and among national partners. The evaluation had to assess relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the CP so far, to meet the following three objectives:

- Provide an independent assessment of the selected programme results so far,
- Provide an assessment of UNICEF's positioning with the government and among the national partners, and
- Draw lessons from CP 2021-25 implementation for planning the new CP 2026-2030.

55. The evaluation focused on implementation of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP during 2021-2024. Given that the goal of the CP was to support the Government of Turkmenistan to meet its commitments to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children, the evaluation focused on how UNICEF supported the government, and the immediate results this has produced. In the long term these immediate results are expected to translate into better results for children, though at this stage, it is too early to assess if they happened.

56. The evaluation looked at all priority areas of the CP. UNICEF interventions were not linked to any specific geographic locations, but targeted national systems through transformations in the national-level institutions and looked nationwide.

### 4. Evaluation methodology

#### 4.1. Evaluation criteria and questions

57. The evaluation assessed the performance of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP 2021-2025 against the criteria of relevance, effectiveness and coherence.

58. The Terms of Reference included a tentative list of evaluation questions (Annex 1). During the inception phase the evaluation questions were clarified and adjusted in consultation between the evaluation consultant, UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) and UNICEF Turkmenistan CO. Table 2 presents the resulting list of evaluation questions grouped by criteria.

*Table 3 Evaluation criteria and questions*

Criteria	Evaluation questions
<b>Relevance</b>	1. To what extent have CPD priorities have been consistent with the priorities set in national policy frameworks, CRC Concluding Observations and SDGs guiding principles (human rights, gender equality, disability, and leave no one behind)?
	2. How has UNICEF positioned itself among the most influential stakeholders to achieve results for children?
<b>Effectiveness</b>	3. To what extent have the Country Programme outputs (as described in the current CPD) been achieved so far?
	4. What external and internal (including financial, human and other resources) enabling/restrictive factors affected UNICEF's progress? Were there any factors outside of UNICEF control that substantially affected the implementation of the CP so far? Could they have been better managed by the CO?
	5. To what extent has UNICEF been effective (so far) in responding to the needs of all children, including the most vulnerable in planning and implementation of programme areas?

<b>Coherence</b>	6. To what extent have UNICEF interventions worked in convergent ways to implement CPD priorities?
	7. To what extent has UNICEF been coordinating its interventions with other key governmental and non-governmental actors?

Source: UNICEF (2024). Evaluation ToR.

## 4.2. Evaluation approach and methodology

59. The evaluation was guided by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.
60. The Terms of Reference proposed a theory-based approach, based on the CP ToC developed by the UNICEF CO. The evaluation questions were structured around the [OECD DAC criteria](#) of relevance, effectiveness and coherence. This methodology was chosen to provide insight on how UNICEF's activities, in combination with policies and legislation ensuring children's rights and access to services, contributed to improving the situation of children and adolescents in Turkmenistan.
61. A theory-based approach was applied for the evaluation, based on explicit Outcome ToCs developed by the UNICEF CO, and re-constructed by the consultant into an overall ToC. The re-constructed ToC and individual outcome ToCs are presented in the Annexes.
62. An Evaluation Matrix (Annex 2) was developed during the inception phase to map out evaluation questions and sub-questions, judgement, data collection methods and sources.
63. The evaluation is intended to identify good practices and draw lessons and forward looking recommendations to inform the next cycle of the CP planning process. The evaluation used the following methods of data collection: (a) document review; (b) key stakeholder interviews, presented in the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 2), and (c), a review of AI-generated country profiles and UNICEF internal databases.
64. The evaluation used a **consultative approach**. Because the evaluation was commissioned to assess only the progress of the CP across the outputs, the sample of interview respondents did not include rights-holders who were expected to benefit from achieving these outputs. At the same time, the evaluation consultant conducted a desk review of all sectoral evaluations and studies that presented the perspectives of the vulnerable groups and met with representatives of various institutions and representatives of UNICEF Country Office, that work closely with vulnerable families and children.
65. The evaluation methodology comprised data collection methods that enabled a mixed approach and triangulation:
- **Semi-structured interviews** with UNICEF CO staff and consultants who were involved in implementing the CP activities, representatives of national stakeholders – mainly national ministries and agencies involved in CP implementation, as well as representatives of other United Nations agencies, national CSOs and mass media. Overall, the evaluation consultant conducted 34 interviews with 79 individuals. A general guide was developed for questions, but was tailored for each interview to make the best use of the interviewees' knowledge.

- A **desk review** of CP-related documentation, including the Country Programme Document (CPD), Programme Strategy Notes, workplans, implementation reports, relevant analytical reports, national policies, evaluation reports, surveys and studies.

66. The evaluation had three phases: (1) inception; (2) data collection; and (3) analysis and reporting.

### 4.3. Data collection and analysis

67. Most of the data collected during this evaluation were qualitative. Likewise, most of the indicators used to measure progress on CP outputs were qualitative. The evaluation consultant conducted thematic analysis of the data related to CP performance in each of the priority areas to identify emerging themes and patterns. The data collected through semi-structured interviews were triangulated with data from the desk review.

68. The evaluation applied a purposive sampling strategy to select interviewees and documents for review: that is, the authors deliberately sought out of the most data-rich sources. The aim of the sampling strategy was to cover the CP as a whole. During the evaluation inception phase, in consultation with UNICEF CO staff, the evaluation consultant conducted stakeholder mapping which informed the selection of interviewees for review.

69. Further, the evaluation consultant compared themes and patterns identified for each of the priority areas for possible convergence or divergence, and identified common patterns and themes to construct answers to the evaluation questions.

70. In line with the Terms of Reference for the evaluation, children and adolescents have not been interviewed or consulted directly. The consultant instead decided to rely on sectoral evaluations and studies, which have presented the perspectives of these groups more thoroughly than would have been possible during this evaluation.

71. Three participatory workshops were organized with CO staff. These were intended to: 1) familiarize the evaluation consultant with the CP; 2) discuss the evaluation questions; and 3) present and validate the findings and discuss preliminary recommendations.

72. The analysis methods are set out in the evaluation matrix. Conclusions and lessons learned were derived from evaluation findings, which in turn informed evaluation recommendations. The lessons learned are formulated based on the experience of UNICEF Turkmenistan, considering the most important challenges and experiences of responding to these challenges. The recommendations were developed based on in-country consultations and analysis of data, findings and conclusions.

### 4.4. Ethical considerations

73. The work of evaluation consultant was the guided by ethical principles set by the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (Table 4). This means that the evaluation consultant upheld the appropriate obligations of evaluators, including maintaining the independence, impartiality, credibility and accountability of the evaluation process.

*Table 4 Integration of UNEG ethical principles into the evaluation process.*

Ethical principle	Related considerations
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Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In her communication with interview respondents the evaluation consultant was open about the limits of her authority and power to influence the decisions that will be informed by the evaluation findings.</li> <li>• The evaluation consultant made conscious efforts to maintain her independence and impartiality throughout the evaluation process.</li> </ul>
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluation consultant was responsive to suggestions made by CO staff regarding important sources of information.</li> <li>• She also tried to be flexible about timing and modalities on interviews.</li> </ul>
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluator tried to ensure meaningful engagement for all stakeholders involved in the evaluation processes.</li> </ul>
Beneficence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When developing evaluation recommendations, the evaluation consultant was conscious of her responsibility to ensure that the evaluation makes an overall positive contribution to human and natural systems and to the mission of the United Nations.</li> </ul>

74. During all the interviews, the evaluation consultant took written notes that were later converted into electronic notes and used for analysis. All the records developed during this evaluation were deleted and destroyed after full approval of the evaluation report.

75. The evaluation consultant was not subject to any conflicts of interest. Throughout data collection, analysis and reporting, the evaluator aimed to ensure the integrity of the evaluation by respecting the ethical standards of UNICEF, as presented in the “UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation and Data collection and Analysis” (2015). Special attention was paid to issues of harms and benefits, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and conflict of interest.

76. The need for anonymity and confidentiality for the government officials interviewed was strictly upheld.

77. As no data were collected from vulnerable groups or children under 18, an ethical review was not required.

#### 4.5. Limitations and mitigation measures

##### **78. Staff turnover**

79. The evaluation covered the period from 2020 to 2024. According to key stakeholders, during this period staff turnover in the CO was relatively high. Many of the interviewed staff were not involved in CP development. Some of the staff involved in implementing the CP under evaluation, have already left the country and were not available for interviews. The evaluation consultant mitigated this limitation by reviewing all the available CP documentation, interviewing the ECARO staff who supported the development and implementation of the CP and triangulating with external stakeholders.

##### **80. The output indicators do not fully capture outputs (the immediate results) of the activities implemented by the CO**

81. The CO is using standard UNICEF Strategic Plan indicators to measure the CP progress on outputs. Many of these indicators are qualitative, and require making judgements about the state of the targeted national systems. To get a more comprehensive understanding of progress, the

consultant looked at Country programme activities contributing to intended system changes focused on Output-level results, as contributors to change.

82. Even though the Outcomes were intended to achieve full coverage by 2025, overall, the changes that UNICEF was seeking to make were mostly long-term and countrywide and a 3.5-year timeframe is not sufficient to allow for impact for children at scale. This was too ambitious to state in the CP.

At the same time, based on the consultation with CO management, the aim was to have buy in from the government to work on these issues and develop a timeframe for efficient advocacy and monitoring of interventions. For example, the CP included the output that “child-focused commitments in the national development and planning frameworks are translated into measurable targets and evidence-based implementation plans for all children, including those at risk of being left behind, and supported with appropriate financial resources and governance structures established or reinforced”.

83.

84. While noticeable steps were made (introducing disability-inclusive budgeting, developing the NPAC and others), higher-level national processes meant that it was difficult to plan for full realization of outputs and outcomes. Evaluability of similar interventions was another challenge, as it was not always possible to meet state officials at high level to determine their perceptions of UNICEF’s contribution.

85. There was no ToC for the CP overall, or for the Programme Effectiveness outcome. Therefore, consultant re-constructed the ToC, based on available documentation, and used it as a framework for the evaluation.

## 5. Evaluation findings

### 5.1. Relevance

- 86. Evaluation question 1. To what extent have the CP priorities have been consistent with the priorities set in the national policy frameworks, CRC Concluding Observations and SDG guiding principles (human rights, gender equality, disability, and leave no one behind)?**
87. **Design:** The UNICEF CP 2021-2025 in Turkmenistan was designed in 2019-2020 in a participatory process, aligning with the National Plan of Action for Realization of Child Rights in Turkmenistan (NPAC) for 2018-2022.
88. The CP was based on evidence and lessons learned from previous interventions, needs assessments, strategic prioritization and studies conducted before and during its implementation.
89. The 2019 Situation Analysis on Children and Women, as well as the CRC Committee Concluding Observations, MICS 2019 and Thematic Evaluations were the main documents informing the current CP, and covered the remaining challenges for fulfilling the rights of all children in Turkmenistan.
90. According to the CP priorities and the context analysis, UNICEF sought to affect the most vulnerable children in Turkmenistan. Periodic, planned interventions identified and supported the needs of vulnerable children, including girls, children with disabilities and children in contact with the law. Additional interventions addressed emerging needs that arose when the global pandemic hit in 2020.
91. The alignment of the CP to children's needs and the national priorities was based on national statistics and strategic planning for children's rights, as well as CRC Committee Concluding Observations.
- 92. Alignment with national priorities:** The CP was aligned with overarching and thematic national policies, including the NPAC 2018-2022, the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy, the RMNCAH Strategy, the National Programme on Healthy Nutrition, and the Early Childhood Development Strategy for 2020-2025.
93. According to CO staff – and based on discussions with national partners, as well as desk review – the CP was designed in 2019-2020 through a comprehensive participatory process that involved detailed analysis of national legal and policy frameworks. As a result of this process the CP priorities were well aligned with NPAC, the overarching national framework for all national policies and development priorities related to children (Table 5).

Table 5 CPD alignment with NPAC 2018-2022 and 2023-2028.

UNICEF CP Outcomes	NPAC 2018-2022	NPAC 2023- 2028
<p><b>Outcome 1:</b> By 2025, Turkmenistan makes considerable progress in implementing the CRC, Sustainable Development Goals, Sendai Framework and other international commitments for children, with the maximum, effective and efficient use of available resources.</p> <p><b>Output 1.1: Results-based planning and budgeting</b>  <b>Output 1.2: Cross-sectoral mechanisms for child rights realization</b>  <b>Output 1.3: Data, statistics and analysis</b></p>	<p><b>Goal 1:</b> Ensure the implementation of the CRC and its optional protocols in Turkmenistan with the maximum use of available resources and within the framework of international cooperation.</p> <p><b>Goal 6:</b> All children have a right to participate in the decision-making affecting their life, well-being and development and express their opinion.</p>	<p><b>Goal 1:</b> Progress in realizing the rights of children set out in the CRC and the SDGs is achieved through improved legislation and programs based on evidence and quality data, improved results-based intersectoral cooperation, with more efficient use of budgetary resources, and increased public private partnership.</p> <p><b>Goal 7:</b> All children have multiple opportunities to exercise their rights to participate in decisions that affect their lives, well-being and development.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 2:</b> By 2025, every new-born, child, adolescent and woman of reproductive age in Turkmenistan, especially those most vulnerable, increasingly benefit from equitable access to high-impact and quality health, nutrition and ECD services.</p> <p><b>Output 2.1: Mother, new-born and child health</b>  <b>Output 2.2: Healthy nutrition</b>  <b>Output 2.3: Early childhood development</b></p>	<p><b>Goal 2:</b> Children should have all conditions for physical, mental and social well-being, including medical aid, protection and improvement of their health, disease prevention, high level of nutrition, access to safe drinking water and high level of sanitation</p>	<p><b>Goal 2:</b> Children, adolescents and their families have access to better, more diverse and comprehensive health services, nutrition, safe drinking water and improved sanitation.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 3:</b> By 2025, children of Turkmenistan, particularly girls and boys in vulnerable families, residential care institutions and in contact with the law, are increasingly protected from all forms of violence, ill-treatment and socio-economic vulnerabilities, benefiting from quality social and child protection services.</p> <p><b>Output 3.1: Social protection for children and families</b>  <b>Output 3.2: Protection of children from violence</b></p>	<p><b>Goal 4:</b> All children have a right to decent material living standards and safe environment required for comprehensive physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.</p> <p><b>Goal 5:</b> All children have a right to be free from violation, exploitation, ill-treatment in the family and society and cannot be abandoned without care and guardianship.</p>	<p><b>Goal 4:</b> All children and their families, especially children from the most vulnerable groups benefit from an improved standard of living and an effective social protection system that provides individualized support.</p> <p><b>Goal 5:</b> All girls and boys in vulnerable families, special education institution for students with disabilities and for orphans and children left without parents/ guardians and in contact with the law, receive individual protection against all forms of violence, abuse and socio-economic vulnerability through quality social and child protection services.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 4:</b> By 2025, all boys and girls in Turkmenistan, especially those with disabilities, equitably enjoy quality inclusive education and learning opportunities that develop their competencies and foster their well-being.</p> <p><b>Output 4.1: Early learning</b>  <b>Output 4.2: Quality education: Inclusive education</b>  <b>Competency-based education</b>  <b>DRR and Climate Change</b></p>	<p><b>Goal 3:</b> All children have a right to education and comprehensive and full development of their abilities.</p>	<p><b>Goal 3:</b> All children, including children from the most vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities, have access to modern education to achieve their full potential and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for free and successful employment and increase social inclusion and resilience in a diversifying economy.</p> <p><b>Goal 6:</b> All children and their families, especially those living in areas adversely affected by environmental factors and climate change, benefit from the implementation of disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.</p>

73. In the area of child health, nutrition and early childhood development, the CP was also explicitly aligned with the “Healthy Mother – Healthy Child – Healthy Future” RMNCAH

Strategy for 2021-2025, the National Programme on Healthy Nutrition of the Population for 2020-2025 and the Early Childhood Development Strategy for 2020-2025.<sup>26</sup>

74. The CP is also well aligned with national policies that were developed in the current programming cycle with UNICEF support, both overarching (NPAC 2023-2028) and thematic, such as the pending Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy or the Concept of Inclusive Education and Action Plan (Table 6).

*Table 6 Alignment of CP outputs with national thematic policies.*

<b>UNICEF CO outputs</b>	<b>National policies adopted before 2021</b>	<b>National policies developed and adopted in the current programme cycle</b>
Output 1.1: Results-based planning and budgeting		National Programme of the President up to 2052 and 2028
Output 1.2: Cross-sectoral mechanisms for child rights realization		National Action Plan on Realization of Child Rights 2023-2028  On Human Rights, On Gender, On Refugees
Output 1.3: Data, statistics and analysis		National Programme of the President up to 2052 and 2028
Output 2.1: Mother, new-born and child health	RMNCAH Strategy “Healthy Mother – Healthy Child – Healthy Future” for 2021-2025	
Output 2.2: Healthy nutrition	National Programme on Healthy Nutrition of the Population for 2020-2025	
Output 2.3: Early childhood development	Early Childhood Development Strategy for 2020-2025	
Output 3.1: Social protection for children and families		National Social Services Development Plan 2024-2028 (draft)
Output 3.2: Protection of children from violence		Concept of Strengthening the Provision and Protection of the Rights of Children of Victims and Witnesses of Crimes in Turkmenistan for 2022-2025 (draft). Concept of Diversion with a Restorative Justice (draft)
Output 4.1: Early learning	Programme for Improving the Activities of Preschool Institutions in the Field of Early Development and Pre-primary Preparation of Children in Turkmenistan for 2020-2025	
Output 4.2: Quality education:	National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2021-2025 State Youth Policy of Turkmenistan for 2021-2025	
Inclusive education		Concept of Inclusive Education and Action Plan (draft)
Competency-based education		2021 Law on Education (which includes provision for digitalization of education) Roadmap for introducing competency-based education (adopted in 2021)
DRR and Climate Change		2021 Law on Education (which includes provision for integration of climate change and DRR issues in education) (adopted in 2021) Child-centred Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy (draft) Green School Programme (draft)

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund Turkmenistan (2020) ‘Programme Strategy Note’, p. 25.

75. The CP is fully consistent with the SDG guiding principles, and has a strong focus on child rights and disability.
76. Turkmenistan submitted its combined fifth and sixth report the implementation of the CRC in 2020 (the report was developed with UNICEF technical support).<sup>27</sup> The report includes information on implementation of the CRC Concluding Observations to the previous report issued in 2015.
77. During CP development, the CO – in partnership with national partners – analysed implementation of the CRC Committee recommendations in detail (Table 7 presents the results of this consultations) concerning overall governance of the CRC implementation process, and identified areas where progress was limited. The analysis identified limited progress in the areas of coordination and resource allocation.

*Table 7 CPD alignment with CRC Concluding Observations on general measures for implementation of the CRC*

CRC Recommendation	UNICEF and partners assessment of progress at CPD design	CPD priorities aligned with CRC recommendations
<b>Coordination</b>		
The Committee urges the State party to establish an efficient body at a high inter-ministerial level with sufficient authority and a strong mandate to coordinate all activities relating to the implementation of the Convention at the cross-sectoral, national, regional and local levels	<b>Limited</b> Ministry of Justice proposed the establishment of an inter-sectoral Central Commission on coordination and control of observing the rights of the child and family support by merging the national-level functions of the Commission on Minors' Affairs and Guardianship and Trusteeship.	Output 1.2: Cross-sectoral mechanisms for child rights realization The NPAC 2023-2028 developed with UNICEF support includes a section on coordination but does not provide for establishment of a dedicated body. The document says that “as necessary, cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms at the national and local levels can be established to effectively implement and monitor NPAC” (Chapter 6). The NPAC is being implemented by the Interministerial Commission on Human Rights, which oversees implementation of national obligations under international treaties.
<b>Allocation of resources</b>		
Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the budget and resources needed for guaranteeing children’s rights, with particular attention to children in situations of vulnerability, including children with disabilities and children living in rural areas, and allocate the necessary financial and human resources	<b>Limited</b> There has not been a comprehensive assessment of budgetary allocations against the needs of children. Work in some areas, such as pre-primary education, has started and requires close follow up in terms of data availability and implementation.	Output 1.1: Results-based planning and budgeting UNICEF introduced the concept of CPRD-compliant budgeting. Conducted workshops on result-based planning and budgeting for the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Conducted workshops on health system costing tool for specialists from MoHMI and health departments.
Ensure that the budget system is child-friendly, includes a child-rights perspective, specifies clear allocations to children in the relevant sectors and agencies, and includes specific indicators and a tracking system	<b>Limited</b> The work on programme-based budgeting started, but the progress has been limited. UNICEF is ready to support the Government both in terms of public finance management with consideration of child rights and strengthening strategic planning processes.	Supported development of costed package for scaling up social services. Advocated use of local child budget analysis.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (2021) ‘Turkmenistan Country Office Annual Report 2020’, p.4.

Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the efficacy, adequacy and equitability of the distribution of resources allocated to the implementation of the Convention	<b>Limited</b> As above, such mechanisms have not been established yet.	
<b>Independent monitoring</b>		
Establish an independent mechanism for monitoring human rights, including a specific mechanism for monitoring children's rights that is able to receive, investigate and address complaints by children in a child-sensitive manner, ensure the privacy and protection of victims, and undertake monitoring, follow-up and verification activities for victims.	<b>Considerable</b> The Office of the Ombudsman was established in 2017. However, at the time of CP design the office was not yet fully staffed and needed sufficient resources to play a meaningful role in promoting and protecting child rights.	Output 1.2: Cross-sectoral mechanisms for child rights realization UNICEF supported the Office of the Ombudsman, including establishing the department on child rights with 3 staff members supported by 2 consultants. UNICEF supported the Office of the Ombudsman to develop the first Alternative CRC Report, submitted in 2023. UNICEF also supported evaluation of NPAC 2018-2022. In 2024, the "Strategic Plan of the Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan for 2024-2028" was approved, covering such priorities as: achieving substantive gender equality; vulnerable groups including, but not limited to, people with disabilities, children and young people, and rural populations; and civil society organizations that promote and protect human rights. Work has started on accreditation of the national institution by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. In 2024, a department for protection of the rights of women and children was opened in the Office.
Remove restrictions on the functioning of independent civil society organizations, including those working on children's rights	<b>Limited</b> There are strict rules for NGO registration and stringent state oversight of NGO activities.	-
Involve systematically all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of children's rights in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies and programmes relating to children	<b>Moderate</b> At least, one NGO is a member of the Inter-ministerial Commission on Human Rights Body reporting. A limited number of NGOs are invited when drafting laws or policies. Some 2-3 quasi-NGOs and a limited number of independent NGOs (such as Yenme) work on human rights issues, including children's rights.	-

78. The CPD priorities included developing results-based planning and budgeting (Output 1.1) to improve allocation of resources for children; cross-sectoral mechanisms for child rights monitoring to support CRC recommendation implementation; building the capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman (Output 1.2); and data, statistics and analysis (Output 1.3). It should be noted that in the areas under Output 1.1 and 1.2, UNICEF started from a low base: the baseline value for respective indicators were set on the "initiating" level, and progress is thus far limited (see Annex 9).

79. The evaluation has also found that CP has contributed to implementation of at least another nine recommendations presented in the 2015 CRC Concluding Observations (Table 8).

Table 8 CPD alignment with other CRC Concluding Observations.

UNICEF CO outputs	Relevant CRC concluding observations	Examples of UNICEF activities in the current programme cycle, identified during the evaluation desk review and interviews with national partners
Output 2.1: Maternal, new-born and child health	Take measures to ensure that all personnel responsible for the health care of children are well qualified and well trained (para 45 b)	Building the capacity of health professionals on integrated management of childhood illnesses, use of the Home Visitor App and infection prevention and control.
Output 2.2: Healthy nutrition	Enhance its efforts to promote exclusive breastfeeding practices (para 49 a)	Expanding the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, building the capacity of health professionals for exclusive breastfeeding.
	Ensure the systematic collection of data on infant and young child feeding (para 49 d)	Implementing MICS7, including a model of infant and young child feeding.
Output 2.3: Early childhood development	Develop community-based rehabilitation programmes and home-based care, with a view to reducing the institutionalization of children with disabilities (para 43 a)	Supporting the establishment of community-based social services in 20 districts, including piloting new types of social services for children with disabilities, children without parental care, and children at risk of separation from parents.
Output 3.1: Social protection for children and families		
Output 3.2: Protection of children from violence	Take the necessary action to implement the ban on corporal punishment on children in all settings (para 35 a).	With the Ministry of Justice, conducting a review and analysis of Turkmenistan's legislation to prohibit corporal punishment of children and proposing recommendations to include in the ongoing social protection sector reform agenda.
	Improve the system of family support and take measures to strengthen families, in order to prevent abuse, neglect and abandonment of children. Continue to develop and implement a comprehensive deinstitutionalization strategy. Facilitate family-based care for children and establish a system of foster care for children who cannot stay with their families. Abolish the practice of temporary placement of children in children's institutions. Conduct periodic reviews of the placement of children and ensure that institutionalization is used only as a last resort (para 37).	Supporting the preparation an analytical note presenting the evidence on children in alternative care in Turkmenistan. Supporting the development of a Concept of Alternative Care for Children in Turkmenistan that is being undertaken by the Government of Turkmenistan in the framework of the National Action Plan for Children 2023-2028.
	Ensure the provision of qualified and independent legal aid to children in conflict with the law at an early stage and throughout the legal proceedings (para 57 b)	Establishing two child-friendly interview rooms for investigations. Training in child-friendly investigation procedures and forensic interviewing of children. Developing the methodology of protecting children in criminal procedure.
	Promote alternative measures to detention, such as diversion, probation, mediation, counselling or community service, whenever possible, and ensure that detention is used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time and that it is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to ending it (para 57 c)	Developing Guidelines on Application of Diversion with Restorative Justice Approach. Training for specialists of referral bodies and service providers to apply the restorative justice approach.

Output 4.1: Early learning	None	
Output 4.2: Quality education:	Improve the quality of education, including by further enhancing the status of teachers and reviewing school curricula and incorporating therein human rights in general, and the rights of the child in particular (para 55 b)	Training on the CRC and the CRPD with Disabilities for children in summer camps.
Inclusive education	Accelerate its efforts towards the inclusive education of children with disabilities (para 43 b)	Developing the draft Concept of Inclusive Education.
Competency-based education	None	
DRR and Climate Change	The Committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts to provide adequate sanitation and access to safe drinking water throughout the country, particularly in rural areas (para 53)	Training on WASH in emergency in schools in 10 pilot schools; Training on WASH in 215 schools in vulnerable areas in Dashoguz and Lebap regions.

80. The CP had an explicit focus on supporting the government to uphold and protect the rights of children. UNICEF is working in the current programme cycle to keep children’s rights high on national political agenda, for example by working with the Parliament, supporting the development of national policies, building the capacity of the department on child rights in the Office of the Ombudsman, building public awareness and knowledge on child rights, and supporting the production of data on results for children.

81. **CP expanded its focus on girls and children with disabilities** during the design and implementation stages. It particularly strengthened social support through the introduction of new profession of social worker at the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP) and UNICEF advocated the de-institutionalization agenda and inclusive education for all.

82. UNICEF’s work in the current programme cycle had a strong focus on children with disabilities. The rights and needs of children with disabilities were addressed in the framework of all CPD priority areas. For example, under the child health, nutrition and early childhood development area, UNICEF supported the adoption of early intervention services for children under 5 with developmental risk, delay or disabilities. In the social and child protection area, UNICEF supported the introduction of services for children with disabilities. In the quality and inclusive education area, UNICEF supported the development of the concept of inclusive education in the country. UNICEF’s efforts to increase the availability of data included support to the first-ever national Survey on Situation of Children and Adults with Disabilities in Turkmenistan, conducted in 2022.

83. The limited scaling up of social services introduced with UNICEF does not cover all children, as services do not available everywhere and not for all children. Therefore, if UNICEF does not advocate scaling up pilot services, children will be left behind.

84. The focus on gender equality was less pronounced. The evaluation data indicate that there is some “division of labour” between United Nations agencies in Turkmenistan. For example, within the framework of the JP to improve the system of social protection by introducing inclusive quality community-based social services (2020-2022), UNICEF was responsible for designing and piloting new types of social services for children with disabilities, children without parental care, and children at risk of separation from parents; while UNFPA designed and piloted social services that ensure the rights and protection of women and girls facing gender-based violence and various reproductive health risks for girls and women. UNDP

oversaw design and piloting of social services for adults with official disability status, elderly people living alone and people with chronic illnesses.

85. At the same time, some CP activities had an explicit gender focus. For example, UNICEF work to address nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women was informed by the results of UNICEF Gender Programme Review (GPR) conducted in 2018. Gender equality considerations underpinned UNICEF activities to promote STEM for girls, develop manuals on gender education for teachers and parents, and train on gender in emergencies in pilot schools.

86. The GPR conducted in May–August 2024 found that the current CP partially meets UNICEF’s gender-related quality assurance criteria.<sup>28</sup> The GPR commends the CO for following up on the action points, especially pertaining to health and nutrition, recommended by the previous GPR conducted in 2018.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the GPR report notes that “the previous Review did not provide a comprehensive report, but rather provided a template noting few action points”.<sup>30</sup> This has probably contributed to a less pronounced focus on gender in the current programme cycle.

87. **CP priorities are fully consistent with the ‘leave no one behind’ principle.** The formulation of CP outcomes explicitly foresees that UNICEF’s work will benefit all children, including the most vulnerable (Table 9). At the same time, outcome and output indicators specify coverage to be achieved by 2025. As progress on outcome results and indicators depends on the government, rather than just UNICEF, focused policy-level advocacy is required at higher government levels to scale up the services introduced with UNICEF support to ensure no child is left behind.

Table 9 Consistency of CPD outcomes with the ‘leave no one behind’ principle.

CPD Outcomes	Reference universal coverage children	to of	Reference to vulnerable groups
1. By 2025, Turkmenistan makes considerable progress in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Sustainable Development Goals, Sendai Framework and other international and national commitments for children, with the maximum, effective and efficient use of available resources.	-		-
2. By 2025, <b>every newborn, child, adolescent</b> and woman of reproductive age in Turkmenistan, especially those <b>most vulnerable</b> , increasingly benefit from equitable access to high-impact and quality health, nutrition and early childhood development (ECD) services.	Yes		Yes
3. By 2025, <b>children of Turkmenistan</b> , particularly <b>girls and boys in vulnerable families, residential care institutions and in contact with the law</b> , are increasingly protected from all forms of violence, ill-treatment and socioeconomic vulnerabilities, benefitting from quality social and child-protection services.	Yes		Yes
4. By 2025, <b>all boys and girls</b> in Turkmenistan, especially those <b>with disabilities</b> , equitably enjoy quality inclusive education and learning opportunities that develop their competencies and foster their well-being.	Yes		Yes

88. **Pandemic response:** Children’s needs were further identified as UNICEF Turkmenistan responded to the global COVID-19 pandemic. These initiatives included the providing

<sup>28</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund Turkmenistan (2024) ‘Summary of Gender Programme Review (GPR) findings for CPE Evaluation’, para. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., para 3.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., para 3.

essential supplies to medical personnel and supporting schools to adapt to the changing learning environment. UNICEF ensured uninterrupted supply of vaccines for children, and developed guidance for the learning processes and procurement of medical and hygienic supplies. UNICEF was the only United Nations agency that supported data collection during the pandemic to track the situation of families with disabilities, and assessed the impact of the global pandemic on the labour market and economic conditions of the families with children. Throughout the pandemic, UNICEF coordinated its activities with development partners and other United Nations agencies in the country for the overall response.

**94. Evaluation question 2. How has UNICEF positioned itself among the most influential stakeholders to achieve results for children?**

**95. UNICEF Turkmenistan was positioned as a source of specialized knowledge and expertise on child-related issues, facilitating government access to this expertise.**

96. The UNICEF Turkmenistan strategy for 2021-2025 is based on the CO having established itself as a source of (and link to) highly specialized knowledge and expertise on various aspects of working with children. During the current programme cycle, the CO facilitated opportunities for the government to tap into this knowledge and expertise to advance child rights.

97. The evaluation has found that national stakeholders do see UNICEF as a source of expertise on working with children. Key informant interviews and review of official letters to UNICEF suggest that senior government officials prefer to rely on UNICEF expertise when they need to implement complex tasks. This creates opportunities that UNICEF CO is effectively using to advance children's rights.

98. For example, UNICEF used the process to develop the second NPAC for 2023-2028 to persuade the government to include priorities identified by UNICEF and the CRC Committee. The new NPAC includes a new goal –on implementation of disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and mitigation measures (Table 10). UNICEF was also able to ensure explicit reference to vulnerability and disability that were not present in the previous NPAC. Discussions with the CO and national partners suggest this was achieved through continuous advocacy at all levels. But only through joint monitoring visits to rehabilitation centres and discussions with children themselves, did national partners agreed to strengthen this. Moreover, the Survey on People with Disabilities and MICS also were presented at advocacy meetings with the government, and contributed to building government buy in .

*Table 10 Goals set in National Plans of Action for Realization of Children's Rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 and 2023-2028.*

NPAC 2018-2022	NPAC 2023-2028
Goal 1: Ensure the implementation of the CRC and its optional protocols in Turkmenistan with the maximum use of available resources and within the framework of international cooperation	Goal 1: Progress in realizing the rights of children set out in the CRC and the SDGs is achieved through improved legislation and programs based on evidence and quality data, improved results-based intersectoral cooperation, with more efficient use of budgetary resources, and increased public private partnership.
Goal 2: Children in Turkmenistan should have all conditions for physical, mental and social well-being, including medical aid, protection and improvement of their health, disease prevention, high level of nutrition, access to safe drinking water and high level of sanitation	Goal 2: Children, adolescents and their families have access to better, more diverse and comprehensive health services, nutrition, safe drinking water and improved sanitation.

Goal 3: All children without exception have a right to education and comprehensive and full development of their abilities	Goal 3: All children, including children from the most vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities, have access to modern education to achieve their full potential and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for free and successful employment and increase social inclusion and resilience in a diversifying economy.
Goal 4: All children have a right to decent material living standards and safe environment required for comprehensive physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development	Goal 4: All children and their families, especially children from the most vulnerable groups, benefit from an improved standard of living and an effective social protection system that provides individualized support.
Goal 5: All children without exception have a right to be free from violence, exploitation, ill-treatment in the family and society and cannot be abandoned without care and guardianship	Goal 5: All girls and boys in vulnerable families, special education institution for students with disabilities and for orphans and children left without parents/ guardians and in contact with the law, receive individual protection against all forms of violence, abuse and socio-economic vulnerability through quality social and child protection services.
	Goal 6: All children and their families, especially those living in areas adversely affected by environmental factors and climate change, benefit from the implementation of disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.
Goal 6: All children have a right to participate in the decision-making affecting their life, well-being and development and express their opinion.	Goal 7: All children have multiple opportunities to exercise their rights to participate in decisions that affect their lives, well-being and development.

Source: NPAC 2018-2022 and 2023-2028.

99. Another good example is UNICEF’s cooperation with the chief rehabilitation specialist (CR) of MoHMI, who is leading the project to establish a new national rehabilitation centre. The centre is intended to provide rehabilitation treatment and services to both adults and children. The CR had experience in rehabilitation of adults, but no experience in child rehabilitation. Therefore, the CR is leveraging UNICEF as the centre of expertise on child rehabilitation. This gave UNICEF an opportunity to promote the concept of child rehabilitation and the importance of cooperation with education and social protection authorities. UNICEF is supporting the new centre to develop staff requirements and operational protocols to train the staff after hiring. In the future the centre will become the centre of expertise for the rest of the country.
100. Cooperation with the CR of the MoHMI opened a series of new opportunities for UNICEF, including a chance to contribute to the National Strategy on Medical Rehabilitation for 2024-2028 and include priorities related to child rehabilitation, and an opportunity to position UNICEF as a preferred government partner for procuring assistive equipment.
101. **UNICEF’s expertise in disability and inclusion.** The evaluation has also found that other United Nations agencies in Turkmenistan see UNICEF as a source of expertise on disability and inclusion. Most likely this reflects the fact that in the current programme cycle the CO has worked a lot on disability and inclusion. For example, interviews with United Nations partner agencies indicate that UNICEF established and co-chairs the UN Social Inclusion Group and leads the United Nations Disability Group. UNICEF supported the State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan to conduct the first-ever national Survey on the Situation of Children and Adults with Disabilities, published in 2022. In 2021 UNICEF presented the model of budgeting compliant with the CRPD to the government.
102. **Advocacy and policy inclusion.** Due to UNICEF advocacy and technical support, explicit reference to disability was included in NPAC 2023-2028, based on the review of NPAC and interviews with UNICEF and United Nations staff. There is a strong focus on children with disability in CP areas such as early intervention and ECD, inclusive education, social services,

communication for social and behaviour change. For example, in collaboration with the MoE the CO launched Turkmen text-to-speech digital voice software that enables people with visual impairments to access Turkmen-language texts. Issues of the rights of persons with disability were incorporated in the human rights training session for children conducted in summer camps in 2023. Disability issues were also incorporated into CO communication efforts. For example, to celebrate World Children’s Day in 2021 the CO – in partnership with the CSO Yenme – organized inclusive Children’s Festival at the United Nations office and invited children with disabilities.

103. **Responsiveness to stakeholder needs.** Many national stakeholders consulted for this evaluation noted that UNICEF was their preferential partner and noted that the CO was highly responsive to their needs and requests. The evaluation has found a vivid example of such responsiveness. In 2023 the CO received a request from the State Medical University to build the capacity of its first cohort of graduates from the medical social workers’ programme, all of whom landed jobs in primary health-care facilities. Social work is just emerging in Turkmenistan as a professional field. The university has established the medical social workers’ specialization but lacked capacity to teach students all the knowledge and skills they needed to practise as medical social workers.
104. In response to this request, the CO implemented a seven-month course with a focus on social work. The course, comprising 15 modules, was based on materials developed by Cerci Lisboa and St Petersburg Early Interventions Institute. The course benefited 20 medical social workers. In addition, the training manuals developed for each of 15 modules were provided to the State Medical University to enhance the quality of education for the next cohorts of students in the medical social workers’ programme.

## 5.2. Effectiveness

105. **Progress on Indicators.** The CP has made progress on all 39 output-level indicators set to measure achievement of its 10 outputs. By 2024 the end-of-CP targets were achieved for 3 output indicators. Progress is presented in Table 11 and Annex 9.
106. **Limited national capacity in evidence-based policy planning,** and results-based management and budgeting, continues to be an important external restrictive factor affecting UNICEF’s progress and scaling up programme results.
107. A **comprehensive approach and continuity of work** across programme cycles enable UNICEF to progressively improve the targeted national systems.
108. The small size of the UNICEF CO technical team increases the risks of **staff turnover** affecting continuity of operations. The CO mitigates this risk by establishing long-term partnerships with organizations with necessary competences.
109. **Limited reach of interventions.** Behaviour change interventions and those directly targeting children are often limited to the numbers provided by national partners for in-person events.
110. **Resource mobilization challenges.** The donor environment in Turkmenistan is not conducive to resource mobilization. UNICEF mitigates this by collaborating with other United Nations agencies to develop Joint Programme proposals to United Nations global funds.

111. **Effective technical support.** UNICEF’s technical support effectively enhances regulatory, institutional and individual capacities within national systems. However, nationwide scaling up and adherence to the ‘leave no one behind’ principle require stronger national commitment.
112. **Recognition of expertise.** National stakeholders and United Nations agencies in Turkmenistan recognize UNICEF as a source of expertise on working with children, disability, and inclusion.
113. **Strong cooperation culture:** UNICEF is seen as a responsive partner with a strong cooperation culture within the UNCT, aiding the advancement of children’s rights.
114. ***Evaluation question 3. To what extent have the Country Programme outputs (as described in the current CPD) been achieved so far?***
115. At output level, the CP targets national systems and mechanisms, for example, a system of results-based strategic planning, budgeting and financing (Output 1.1); inter-sectoral coordination, implementation and monitoring mechanisms in the area of nutrition (Output 2.2); and the social protection system (Output 3.1).
116. Progress across each output is measured by a set of indicators (Table 11), developed and agreed with the government as the CPD Monitoring Framework. The CO team invested efforts in selecting and developing the CP indicators, including output indicators. Most of the selected indicators are standard global UNICEF Strategic Plan indicators.<sup>31</sup> In most cases these indicators are qualitative, and their measurement involves assessing the state of a particular system against a qualitative categorical scale (usually with three to five levels) and assigning the appropriate score.
117. The Results and Indicators Framework of the CPD, developed in consultation with the government, provides baseline (as of 2019) and target values to be reached by the end of CP in 2025. During CP implementation, the CO set intermediate targets for output indicators each year.
118. Table 11 presents the degree of achievement of output indicator targets set for each year in the annual Rolling Work Plans (RWPs). More details on progress on each of these 39 output indicators are provided in Annex 4. The data indicate that between 2021 and 2023 the CO has made progress on almost all output indicators, except under the output on Results-based planning and budgeting. The 2025 target values were reached for three indicators:
- Number of evaluations of the key national planning documents concerning children conducted during the cycle: as planned the evaluation of the NPAC 2018-2022 was completed.
  - Existence of a Multi-Year Plan for Immunization: the government signed this plan for 2021-2025.
  - Availability of inclusive community-based social services ready to go to scale: in 2024 the government started funding the positions of 45 social workers in 20 districts that were established during the JP to improve the system of social protection by introducing inclusive quality community-based social services (2020-2022) led by UNICEF.

*Table 11 Degree of achievement of output indicators in 2021-2023.*

Legend

<sup>31</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (2021) ‘[Draft results framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025](#)’.

No target set for this year	No progress achieved on this year's target	Partially achieved this year's target	Fully achieved this year's target	Fully achieved 2025 target		
Indicator				2021	2022	2023
<b>Output 1.1: Results-based planning and budgeting</b>						
Strengthened capacity of stakeholders in budgeting at all levels of government to improve spending outcomes for children						
Evidence generated on budgets and their linkages to child outcomes to improve budget allocations/expenditure for children						
<b>Output 1.2: Cross-sectoral mechanisms for child rights realization</b>						
(i) Number of Evaluations of the key national planning documents concerning children conducted during the cycle						
(ii) Timely and quality reporting to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities						
Country has a functioning, national, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism tasked with overseeing national plans or strategies to prevent and response to violence against children and adolescents, with child and adolescents' participation						
An independent national NHRI is in place, in compliance with the Paris Principles and with a child rights mandate (Human rights, participation and non-discrimination) (added in 2022)						
<b>Output 1.3: Data, statistics and analysis</b>						
(i) Existence of a national civil registration and vital statistics strategy(ies) which reflects recent international standards and principles for CRVS systems and are in line with the human rights conventions and protocols ratified by the State						
Improvement of availability of data on vulnerable groups of children.						
Availability of disaggregated data from the new round of MICS						
Updated data availability and disaggregation on SDG indicators concerning children (added in 2023)						
<b>Output 2.1: Mother, new-born and child health</b>						
Costed implementation plan for maternal, new-born and child health care which mainstreamed risk reduction/resilience, inclusive of climate change available						
Policy for home visits is developed and/or revised, adopted and in use						
Existence of a Multi-Year Plan (MYP) for immunization						
<b>Output 2.2: Healthy nutrition</b>						
Implementation of programmes to improve diet diversity in children						
Number of health and nutrition workers trained to provide anaemia prevention and adolescent nutrition counselling services as per national standards						
Integration of nutrition counselling in pregnancy care programmes						
<b>Output 2.3: Early childhood development</b>						
Percentage of districts (or similar administrative units) with health care facilities providing standard early intervention services to children under 5 with developmental risk, delay or disabilities						
Health providers providing home-visiting services with adequate skills related to early detection and intervention for children with developmental risk, delay or disabilities						
<b>Output 3.1: Social protection for children and families</b>						
(i) Existence of data and evidence on how social protection systems are responding to child vulnerability and deprivations (such as health, education, nutrition etc.)						
(ii) Degree of development of the quality assurance system for social service work						
(iii) Social welfare workforces strengthened and connected to social protection system (case management, referral capacity development)						
(iv) Availability of inclusive community based social services ready to go to scale and compliant with international standards for social services including for child centeredness, disability inclusiveness and gender-responsiveness						
(v) Shock-responsive Social Protection: Operational mechanisms are strengthened to adapt and/or expand in a timely manner during crisis (targeting and registration, Management Information System, coordination, monitoring, cash delivery system, complaints, communication, linking with complementary services, Human Resource capacity)						
(i) The system of providing social services and social work is strengthened and linked to the social protection system (case management, referral capacity development)						
<b>Output 3.2: Protection of children from violence</b>						
(i) Existence of legislation that recognize children's right to be heard in civil and administrative proceedings that affect them (in line with Article 12 of the CRC)						
(ii) Existence of procedures and services for children in contact with the law that are applied and delivered in line with international norms						
(iii) Existence of legislation prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment of children, by setting (all settings, and by setting: home, schools, alternative care settings and day care, as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions/detention, and as a sentence for an offence)						
(iv) Measures for prevention of juvenile delinquency and their re-integration tested in a pilot region, their effectiveness assessed and recommended for replication throughout the country (NPAC, Action 5.2.1)						
(ii) An alternative care policy in line with the 2009 Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children is available in the country						
(iv) Country has a functioning, national, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism tasked with overseeing national plans or strategies to prevent and respond to violence against children and adolescents, with child and adolescent participation						

(iv) Degree of development of the quality assurance system for social service work			
<b>Output 4.1: Early learning</b>			
Existence of national policy, leadership and budget for early learning			
Existence of quality teaching and learning environments for early learning			
Assessment and support of children with disabilities done through the use of multidisciplinary teams, working under the social model of disability			
<b>Output 4.2: Quality education</b>			
Individual Education Plans available for children with disabilities and other special learning needs			
Policies available ensuring ALL children's right to be educated in mainstream schools			
Existence of competency-based curriculum at primary and secondary levels			
Existence of curriculum incorporating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction			
National Education Management Information System (EMIS) provides quality and timely data			

Source: Developed based on the review of the UNICEF database on Progress per Priority area

**119. Evaluation question 4. What external and internal (including financial, human and other resources) enabling/restrictive factors affected UNICEF's progress? Were there any factors outside of UNICEF control that substantially affected the implementation of the CP so far? Could they have been better managed by CO?**

120. A key success highlighted in the evaluation is the strong government commitment to data collection and results-based management, particularly through initiatives like the MICS.

121. The Government of Turkmenistan's ongoing support for MICS reflects sustained capacity in the State Statistics Committee, which now implements these surveys with minimal UNICEF assistance. This outcome shows the effectiveness of UNICEF's long-term capacity-building efforts, enabling continuous data collection despite the resource constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

122. Another positive factor identified in the evaluation was UNICEF's **advocacy for evidence-based policy**. This advocacy contributed to increasing recognition of the importance of data-driven decision-making in national planning and budgeting. However, the evaluation notes that while the concept of results-based budgeting is gaining ground, practical implementation has been delayed due to insufficient use of data in policy planning.

123. Additionally, UNICEF's partnerships with government ministries – particularly in vaccine procurement and public health services – were evaluated as key drivers of progress. The evaluation highlighted UNICEF's ability to provide essential health supplies (vaccines and fortified foods) despite economic and logistical challenges. The consistent delivery of these supplies demonstrates UNICEF's success in positioning itself as a trusted procurement partner.

124. Analysis conducted by the CO during the development of the 2021-2025 CP, along with evaluation data, indicates that demand for data and its use in results-based management and budgeting are interconnected. There is potential to support an evidence-based and results-oriented decision-making system. The lack of data utilization in policy planning is a key reason why the government has delayed its transition to results-based budgeting, as mandated by the 2014 Budget Code. Without results-based budgeting, the current system prioritizes capital investment in infrastructure and procurement of equipment over adequate investment in human capital, such as health-care, education and social work professionals, as well as systems development (monitoring and evaluation). This directly affects the effectiveness of UNICEF's

work. In the current programme cycle, UNICEF developed and tested several innovative service models in selected demonstration sites to improve health, education, and protection outcomes for children and families, and advocacy efforts to scale up those services need to continue.

125. In the current programme cycle the government continued funding procurement of vaccines and necessary maintenance of the cold chain and bar coding, as well as supplies for salt and flour fortification that have universal nationwide coverage through UNICEF.
126. For the community-based social services developed in the framework of the UNICEF-led Joint Programme on improving the system of social protection by introducing inclusive quality community-based social services (2020-2022) investment was made to scale up those services and encourage more advocacy and support .
127. The government welcomed evaluation of the NPAC 2018-2022 and UNICEF support in developing a new Action Plan 2023-2028. At the same time the evaluation recommendation to include measurable indicators along with clear baseline and target values for these indicators in the new NPAC, as well as budgeting for the identified interventions have not been followed up by national partners and limits UNICEF’s advocacy and programming efforts to achieve ‘leaving no one behind’ or generate measurable evidence on the progress of NPAC and its impact on the most vulnerable.
128. During the current programme cycle UNICEF has **continued its efforts to strengthen the use of data by government and results-based strategic planning, budgeting and financing.** Efforts included, for example, introducing a model of budgeting compliant with the CRPD (2021);<sup>32</sup> and workshops on result-based planning and budgeting, as well as on the research methods in social work for mid-level MoLSP executives and academics (2022).<sup>33</sup>
129. In 2023 UNICEF supported the MoLSP to prepare costed package for scaling up nationally the social services piloted in 20 districts.<sup>34</sup> At the time of this evaluation the MoLSP was using these estimates to negotiate with the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE) for a higher budgetary allocation for an increased number of social workers.
130. UNICEF has also made progress in building the evaluation capacity of national stakeholders. In 2021 UNICEF CO commissioned an independent external evaluation of NPAC 2018-2022. National stakeholders were involved in setting evaluation objectives as well as being sources of information. NPAC 2023-2028, developed with UNICEF support, includes a section on coordination, monitoring and evaluation. NPAC 2023-2028 includes an explicit provision to conduct its mid-term independent evaluation in 2026 with the participation of adolescents, parents and CSO representatives. NPAC also includes a task of strengthening national evaluation capacity, and foresees regular participation of national specialists in evaluation training (at least once a year), developing national pool of evaluation experts and conducting a series of training on evaluation for students.<sup>35</sup> Subsequently, the participants organized several workshops on

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<sup>32</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund Turkmenistan (2022) ‘Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2021’ p.30.

<sup>33</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund Turkmenistan (2023) ‘Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2022’, p.37.

<sup>34</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund Turkmenistan (2024) ‘Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2023’ p.39.

<sup>35</sup> [National Action Plan for Realization of Children’s Rights in Turkmenistan for 2023-2028 \(NAPC\) | UNICEF Turkmenistan.](#)

evaluation for members of inter-agency working group on SDGs. In an interview with the national partners, UNICEF was mentioned as a champion of evaluation capacity building in the country and was encouraged to continue its efforts to further strengthen evidence-based policy planning.

131. UNICEF provides comprehensive technical support targeting interlinked regulatory (enabling environment), institutional and individual capacity levels and spanning the full policy cycle, from needs assessment through planning and implementation to evaluation
132. For example, one of the areas of work under **Output 3.2: Protection of children from violence** is strengthening **protection of children in contact with the law** (offenders, victims and witnesses of crime). This includes two strings of activities: one related to protection of children at the pre-trial stage; and the other to adoption of a restorative justice model to support diversion of children in conflict with law from formal judicial proceedings.
133. At the **regulatory (enabling environment) level** in 2021, UNICEF worked with the national parliament to conduct a review of national legislative and normative frameworks concerning children in contact with the law. In 2022 the results of this review informed the development of amendments to the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code to enhance the protection of children in contact with the law; these were eventually adopted by the parliament.
134. To promote protection of children at the pre-trial stage, at **institutional level**, UNICEF provided support to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) by presenting international best practices, developing the Inter-Agency Resolution for establishing specialized procedures for protecting child victims and witnesses of crime at pre-trial stage, and necessary operational procedure documents. UNICEF also supported the establishment of two child-friendly interview rooms for investigations in the cities of Ashgabat and Turkmenabad.<sup>36</sup>
135. At **individual capacity level** UNICEF trained 26 investigators on child-friendly investigation procedures in 2022, and 30 police and prosecutor's office investigators in forensic interviewing of children in 2023.
136. To support the diversion of child offenders, at **institutional level** UNICEF supported the development of Guidelines on Application of Diversion with Restorative Justice Approach in Turkmenistan to inform the work of Prosecutor General's Office, MoIA and MoLSP. At **individual capacity level** UNICEF trained 20 referral body and service provider specialists to apply the restorative justice approach.
137. UNICEF's efforts towards **Output 2.2: Healthy nutrition** were directed towards the strengthening the **regulatory (enabling) environment** developed by UNICEF in the previous programme cycle. The National Programme on Healthy Nutrition of the Population for 2020-2025 (adopted in February 2020) was developed with support from UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO).
138. One focus of UNICEF's work under this output is on nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women. This focus was identified because of UNICEF Gender Programme Review conducted in 2018 that recommended, among other things, development and dissemination of appropriate, context-specific nutrition information for adolescent and pregnant women to address the issue of anaemia.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Turkmenabad, the capital of Lebap region, is the second largest city in Turkmenistan. The largest city is the national capital Ashgabat.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Turkmenistan (2020) 'Programme Strategy Note' p.36.

139. At **institutional level** UNICEF supported the development of training packages for nutrition counselling of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and their adaptation and translation into Turkmen language. The MoHMI endorsed all the packages. UNICEF also supported the training of trainers who would use these packages to educate health professionals, community workers, and educators: 24 trainers were trained in 2021, another 46 – in 2023. In addition, in 2021 UNICEF supported training for 50 Red Crescent volunteers on the basics of infant and young child feeding, and early childhood development.
140. UNICEF work also included **direct individual capacity development** for target populations. For example, in 2021 during international and national breastfeeding weeks UNICEF supported a social media campaign that reached 11,000 mothers with information on healthy child feeding. These types of awareness-raising efforts help to develop life skills of target populations who for different reasons might have been left out of mainstream knowledge channels.
141. A good example of the **continuity of UNICEF efforts across the programme cycle** is the Baby-Friendly Hospitals Initiative (BFHI), which encourages health facilities to better support breastfeeding. UNICEF Turkmenistan CO has a long history of promoting exclusive breastfeeding in the country. In 1993 UNICEF organized a study tour to the United States for health professionals from Turkmenistan to learn about exclusive breastfeeding. The same year the first unit where mothers and newborns stayed together following delivery was opened in Turkmenistan to promote breastfeeding. By 2023, 97 per cent of maternity hospitals and 18 per cent of primary health-care facilities had adopted similar breastfeeding promotion practices and were declared ‘baby-friendly’.<sup>38</sup>
142. The first national law in support of breastfeeding was passed in 2009. In 2016, Turkmenistan adopted a new Law on Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding, developed with UNICEF support and aligned with the CRC; this strengthened the **regulatory environment** for breastfeeding. In the framework of UNICEF’s 2016-2020 CP, the CO supported expansion of the BFHI from three to five regions.<sup>39</sup>
143. This work continued during the current CP. In 2021-2023 UNICEF trained over 1,800 health-care professionals on infant and young child feeding (**individual capacity level**). UNICEF and the MoHMI conducted joint monitoring visits to health facilities. As a result, 13 health facilities received their first BFHI certification, and 4 health facilities were re-certified (**institutional level**). The results and recommendations of the monitoring visits were presented to the Inter-sectoral Committee on Nutrition.
144. The UNICEF Turkmenistan CO has a very small team: by the time of the in-country data collection mission for this evaluation, the CO team included six technical officers and specialists. As a result, each technical officer/specialist has to cover a broad range of issues. This, in turn, increases the risks that losing each technical specialist may have a significant impact on the CP progress. For example, in mid-2023, the CO lost an Education Specialist, who, among other things, was working on the development of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and STEM (for example. teaching robotics). National stakeholders interviewed by the evaluator expressed concern that UNICEF work on these matters had stalled.

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<sup>38</sup> Julie Pudlowski (2018) ‘Breastfeeding: A national tradition’, at [www.unicef.org/turkmenistan/stories/breastfeeding-national-tradition#](http://www.unicef.org/turkmenistan/stories/breastfeeding-national-tradition#)

<sup>39</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund Turkmenistan (2020) ‘Country Office Annual Report 2019’.

145. The CO compensates for limited in-house human resources by establishing long-term partnerships with organizations with the necessary competencies, for example with Ankara University, which supports CO work in the area of early interventions; St Petersburg Early Interventions Institute, which supports CO work on early child development; and Cerci Lisboa, a Portuguese CSO working on disability issues, which supports CO with expertise on issues of disability inclusion.
146. Turkmenistan has upper-middle income status, which results in limited donor interest and increased reliance on government funding. The CO's approach to resource mobilization is both strategic and opportunistic. The CO is building its relations with national authorities to position itself as a partner of choice for procurement services. There are ongoing negotiations with the MoFA and MoFE on signing a Contribution Agreement with the Government of Turkmenistan that would enable the government to fund projects implemented by UNICEF. But even without this agreement UNICEF is already providing procurement service for the government in the areas of immunization and food fortification (outside the CP framework as Procurement Services).
147. A significant amount of non-regular resources came from the United Nations SDG Fund and Human Security Trust Fund through JPs with other United Nations agencies. Resources from the United Nations SDG Fund for implementing the JP to improve the social protection system (2020 – 2022) enabled UNICEF and its partner United Nations agencies to achieve a critical breakthrough in developing the system of social services in Turkmenistan. The CO continues investing efforts in developing JP proposals as one of its resource mobilization strategies.
148. The CO is also making efforts to establish strategic cooperation with the few bilateral donors present in the country, and it re-established the Development Partners Coordination Group on Education that was discontinued about 10 years ago.
149. The CO also managed to take advantage of increased donor interest in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021 the CO managed to mobilize US\$500,000 to strengthen risk communication and community engagement in the framework of the Turkmenistan COVID-19 Response Project funded by a World Bank loan to the government.<sup>40</sup> The CO also used an opportunity offered by the European Unions (EU's) recent establishment of a delegation in Ashgabat, and in 2023, UNICEF secured a EUR 150,000 grant from the EU Delegation to Central Asia to support MICS implementation by presenting MICS not as a statistics initiative, but a human rights evidence generation tool.<sup>41</sup> In 2023, UNICEF received around EUR 90,000 from the Federal Foreign Office funds of the Federal Republic of Germany to continue introducing special protection measures for child victims and witnesses of crime in Turkmenistan.
150. The evaluation data indicate that while UNICEF is consistently investing in strengthening relevant national institutions and facilities, national buy-in to cover nationwide is limited. For example, to increase the availability of **early intervention services** UNICEF organizes district-level training for professionals in primary health clinics located in this district. By the start of the current programme cycle, early intervention services had been introduced in 12 per cent of districts. In the current programme cycle UNICEF has continued to support district-level training to expand the availability of early intervention services. Coverage of these services increased to

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<sup>40</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Turkmenistan (2022) 'Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2021', p.14.

<sup>41</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Turkmenistan (2024) 'Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2023'. p.17.

18 per cent of districts in 2021<sup>42</sup> and 30 per cent of districts in 2023.<sup>43</sup> The BFHI certifications reached 97 per cent of maternity hospitals (69 out of 71) and 18 per cent of Houses of Health (16 out of 90).<sup>44</sup> The new model of home visiting system using the digital Home Visitor app was piloted in 2023 in three primary health-care facilities, and UNICEF plans to continue expanding this model.<sup>45</sup>

151. UNICEF often uses an approach in which a new model or service is first introduced in a small number of pilot institutions or facilities and then gradually scaled up to the remaining institutions and facilities. For example, in 2023 UNICEF conducted training on Gender and WASH in Emergencies, Accountability to Affected Populations and DRR in the school context in 10 pilot schools. In 2024 this work was expanded to another 18 schools. These activities were funded in the framework of the UNICEF regional programme supported by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.
152. Evaluation data suggests that the UNICEF CO does not focus on ensuring the full national coverage of the relevant service providers. For example, the activity in the National Action Plan on Child Rights 2023-2028 on implementing the Concept of Inclusive Education – which is supported by UNICEF and covers the full six-year period – foresees piloting this inclusive education in selected educational facilities in the capital and all five regions during the third and fourth years and expanding the number of facilities providing inclusive education in the sixth year. The number of pilot institutions and the extent of expansion are not defined, but it is clear that full coverage of all relevant facilities is not foreseen.
153. It should be noted that the evaluation has found examples where UNICEF made efforts to ensure full coverage by the relevant service providers and facilities. For example, in 2021-2022 UNICEF supported the development of five methodological manuals for teachers to incorporate climate change topics into five subjects across primary and secondary education curricula. The manuals were officially approved by the MoE, the National Institute of Education, and the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan. UNICEF supported the printing and distribution of manuals to ensure that every school in the country gets two copies of each manual.
154. The JP on improving the system of social protection by introducing inclusive quality community-based social services (2020-2022) piloted social service in 20 districts and developed a costed plan for expanding the services nationwide. By the time of the evaluation, the MoLSP was using this plan to secure national budget funding for expanding services and investments have been made to do this gradually.
155. As for behaviour change interventions and interventions that directly target children, their reach is usually limited to the numbers provided by the national partners for in-person events. For example, in 2022 UNICEF, in cooperation with the parliament and the MoE, conducted a training session on the CRC and the CRPD for children in summer camps, reaching 270 children in total, as part of preparation of the CRC National Report.<sup>46</sup> In 2023 these sessions engaged 250

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<sup>42</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Turkmenistan (2022) 'Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2021', p.63.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Turkmenistan (2024) 'Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2023', p.69.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Turkmenistan (2023) 'Rolling Work Plan 2023' (unpublished).

<sup>45</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Turkmenistan (2024) 'Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2023'. p.112.

<sup>46</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Turkmenistan (2023) 'Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2022', p.23.

children, as part of preparing the Ombudsman’s Alternative Report.<sup>47</sup> In 2023 UNICEF also organized, for example, a series of events dedicated to the International Day of Child Protection, Earth Day, Conference of Youth, Eco Camps, the regional Youth Forum and World Children’s Day, which cumulatively reached 2,500 children.<sup>48</sup> As SBC initiatives were introduced in the middle of the programme cycle, further refining of approaches and topics to be covered by SBC were at the stage of definition at the time of this evaluation. At the same time the relationships established with the Women’s Union and National Media Agency, enabled wide information campaigns and training in the areas of nutrition and healthy motherhood.

**156. Evaluation question 5. To what extent has UNICEF been effective (so far) in responding to the needs of all children, including most vulnerable in planning and implementation of programme areas?**

157. UNICEF’s interventions were designed to address the needs of children across all periods of the child’s life cycle (Table 12). The needs were identified in the process of CP development based on available data and studies, including MICS 2019, as well as several analytical studies including the Situation Analysis of Children’s and Women’s Rights in Turkmenistan (2018), Youth Situation Analysis (2019), the UNICEF Country Programme Gender Review (2018), the evaluation of Government of Turkmenistan-United Nations Partnership Framework for Development 2016-2020 (2019) and other analytical documents.

Table 12. Examples of CPD interventions across the child's life cycle.<sup>49</sup>

	Prenatal period	Neonatal period	Early childhood	Early school age	Adolescence
<b>Child health, nutrition and early development</b>	Development of training packages for nutrition counselling of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, training of trainers, training for health professionals, community workers, and educators		Building the capacity of health professionals on Integrated management of childhood illnesses and on use of the early identification tool (GMCD).		
	Nutrition counselling of pregnant and lactating women	BFHI	Support for the adoption of early intervention services for children under 5 with developmental risks, delays or disabilities.		
<b>Social and child protection</b>			Design and piloting of new types of social services for children with disabilities, children without parental care, and children at risk of separation from parents Building the capacity of police and prosecutor's office investigators in forensic interviewing of children, and strengthening measures to protect girls and boys who have been victims or witnesses of crime		

<sup>47</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund Turkmenistan (2022) ‘Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2023’, p.24.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Childhood periodization is based on the model provided in Kudlová, Eva (2004) ‘Life cycle approach to child and adolescent health’. In *Central European Journal of Public Health* 12(3), pp. 166-170. Retrieved from [www.researchgate.net/publication/8209636\\_Life\\_cycle\\_approach\\_to\\_child\\_and\\_adolescent\\_health](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/8209636_Life_cycle_approach_to_child_and_adolescent_health).

Quality and inclusive education	Support for the introduction of one-year pre-school education	Introduction of competency-based education, child-centred teaching methods. Integration of climate change and DRR into primary and secondary education. Promotion of STEM.
	Introduction of inclusive education.	
Governance for children		Training on human rights in summer camps.

Source: Developed by the evaluation consultant (2024).

### 5.3. Coherence

158. **Effective partnership and impactful collaboration.** UNICEF Turkmenistan used its comparative advantages related to its expertise, strategic focus and adaptability, which enabled it to build and sustain effective partnerships with the Government of Turkmenistan, United Nations agencies and development partners, as well as CSOs.
159. Partnerships contributing to the assessed impact of UNICEF included bilateral cooperation with United Nations agencies and other international organizations, implementing partners (as in case of the social work JP, human rights and MICS), and partnerships in the framework of the UNSDCF and the Development Partners Coordination Group. Partnership was an important implementing strategy for UNICEF in Turkmenistan, enabling the CO to create synergies with other organizations and institutions, and partnership with stakeholders. The CP was intended to review its advocacy and partnership strategies to effectively support the priorities in this country programme and attune its capacities accordingly. By the time of evaluation only the communications and advocacy strategies had been finalized. Partnership and resource mobilization were under development, despite only one year being left until the end of the CP.
160. At the same time, even without a strategy, multi-stakeholder partnerships – including with CSOs and the private sector – were fostered, ensuring continuity of a number of interventions, as well as support to overcome the issue of limited budget availability initially.
161. **High buy-in from the government** to several issues related to child rights, enabled the building of strong partnerships with the relevant national ministries and agencies. For example, UNICEF was identified as a partner of choice for data collection and reporting activities, and for establishing and better operating cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms.
162. **Enhanced advocacy.** Partnership with United Nations agencies and development partners on common points of interest enabled UNICEF to enhance its advocacy capacity when promoting recommendations to the government. In addition, CSOs and Young SDG Advocates were key partners for advocacy and implementation, enabling UNICEF to engage with local communities and the most vulnerable children.
- 163. Evaluation question 6. To what extent have UNICEF interventions worked in convergent ways to implement CPD priorities?**
164. **Data production for decision-making.** Major activities to produce data to inform government decision-making – including the survey on the Situation of Children and Adults with Disabilities, the Labour Force Survey with the measurement of the impact of the global pandemic, MICS7, and the Evaluation of NPAC 2018-2022 – were supported in the framework of the Governance for children priority area of the CP. In addition several studies and assessments were conducted under the three other priority areas of the CP. For example, in the Child health,

nutrition and early development priority area, UNICEF supported implementation of the 2024 Turkmenistan National Micronutrient Survey. In the DRR component of the Quality and inclusive education priority area, UNICEF conducted a safety assessment of 360 schools and 110 pre-schools.<sup>50</sup> In the Social and child protection priority area UNICEF and MoLSP assessed the national child protection system. The assessment included a functional analysis of the Guardianship and Trusteeship Function, the Commission on Minors Authorities and Medical Pedagogical Commissions.<sup>51</sup>

165. Within the current programme cycle under the Governance for children priority area, UNICEF continued supporting the Interministerial Commission on Human Rights, the main national **cross-sectoral coordination mechanism** that supports implementation of and reporting on Turkmenistan's international human rights obligations. UNICEF supported the establishment and operation of several thematic cross-sectoral mechanisms. For example, within the Quality and inclusive education priority area, UNICEF supported the establishment and served as a secretariat of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group made up of representatives of MoE, Parliament, MoHMI and MoLSP to lead development of the National Concept of Inclusive Education. Under the Health, nutrition and early development priority area, UNICEF supported the operations of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on ECD. In the Child Protection area, UNICEF supported strengthening of the operations of the national system of Commission on Minors, one of the oldest cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms in the country, which brings together representatives of local and law enforcement authorities.

166. In 2020-2022 the UNICEF-led JP on improving the system of social protection by introducing **inclusive quality community-based social services** (2020-2022) created the first-ever cadre of professional social workers and supported the launch of bachelor's degree in social work in two higher education institutions. UNICEF is also continuing to promote the importance and added value of engaging professional social workers through its other activities. For example, the interviewed representatives of the Commission on Minors and law enforcement authorities were certain about the importance of engaging social workers in their work with children. With UNICEF advocacy and support, the agenda of ensuring the access of children to social services and building the capacity of social workers was integrated into the 2023-2028 NPAC.

167. In the current programme cycle, **UNICEF efforts on DRR and CCA and mitigation measures** are located in the Quality and inclusive education area. However, given the cross-sectoral nature and growing support, it has eventually expanded to other areas. Due to UNICEF advocacy and technical assistance, DRR- and CCA-related goals were integrated into NPAC 2023-2028 and National SDG Commitments (2023). The CO and MoHMI made the first steps to introduce CCA and DRR-informed solutions into the health-care system. In 2023 UNICEF supported the installation of solar energy generation system in a primary health-care facility in a rural area to ensure its uninterrupted operation in case of emergency. UNICEF CO's communication team supported the establishment of national Youth Platform on Climate Change.

**168. *Evaluation question 7. To what extent has UNICEF been coordinating its interventions with other key governmental and non-governmental actors?***

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<sup>50</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Turkmenistan (2022) 'Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2021', p.99.

<sup>51</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Turkmenistan (2022), 'Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2021', p.80.

169. According to national stakeholders, the development of an annual workplan (AWP) is an interactive process that involves the exchange of ideas and suggestions between UNICEF and corresponding national partners. According to national stakeholders, each agency works in parallel on AWP with other United Nations agencies to prevent any duplication of efforts. The area of potential duplication that emerged in conversations with national stakeholders is related to building capacity for costing of public services and programmes. National stakeholders were concerned that the United Nations agencies were proposing training on different and seemingly conflicting approaches to costing.
170. The United Nations agencies in Turkmenistan coordinate their work through various working groups, some of which were established during the current programme cycle.<sup>52</sup> There are also direct bilateral cooperation arrangements between United Nations agencies. United Nations agencies operating in Turkmenistan consistently acknowledged UNICEF during interviews, for its outstanding cooperation and collaborative efforts. UNICEF's ability to work effectively with various stakeholders has set a benchmark for inter-agency partnership and effective collaboration.
171. This cooperation helps to create synergies between UNICEF and other United Nations agencies. The most vivid example of such synergy is the JP on improving the system of social protection by introducing inclusive quality community-based social services implemented in 2020-2022. The JP introduced the social services system in 20 districts, created a conducive regulatory environment and a package of standard operational procedures for further scaling up the system. In the framework of the JP, UNICEF was able to introduce four new types of social services for children with disabilities, children without parental care, and children at risk of separation from parents.
172. Another good example of synergies created through cooperation between United Nations agencies is the UNFPA-supported integration and funding of the module on gender-based violence (GBV) within the MICS7. This cooperation helped UNICEF to raise funds to implement MICS7. UNFPA benefitted from this cooperation because the module produced information on GBV prevalence that was necessary to inform UNFPA programming, but at a much lower cost than having a standalone study. UNICEF also worked in partnership with UNFPA in the framework of the "Empowering and Engaging the Youth to Mitigate the Multi-dimensional Threats of the Health Pandemic" (2020-2021) JP, led by UNFPA, which allowed UNICEF to work on DRR issues in two regions.
173. The JP model was recognized as successful by the UNCT, and United Nations agencies are continuing efforts to develop new JPs. There is also a joint effort to secure the government's interest and commitment to funding JPs. UNICEF is effectively engaged in the above-mentioned efforts. In 2023-2024 it was involved in developing four JPs for government cost-sharing:
- Youth, Peace and Security,
  - Improving Public Financial Management to Increase SDG Financing in Turkmenistan,
  - Accelerating Improved Digital Governance to Deliver Citizen-Centric Digital Services and Population Policies,
  - Strengthening the capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan to protect Human Rights in line with the Paris principles.

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<sup>52</sup> Working groups that usually meet once a quarter include the UNSDCF results group; the Human rights, gender and youth group; the Disability group (established in 2022); the Social inclusion group (established in 2024); and the Monitoring, evaluation and learning group (established in 2020 and chaired by UNICEF).

174. Synergies have also been found between UNICEF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)<sup>53</sup> to develop a national EMIS. UNICEF benefitted from UNESCO expertise on developing similar systems in other countries.
175. Several CSOs work in the areas of emergency preparedness, disability and climate change. For example, UNICEF cooperates with the National Red Crescent Society (NRCS) in the areas of emergency response and preparedness. The NRCS staff were involved in training organized by UNICEF, including on gender in emergencies. Under a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF, the NRCS keeps UNICEF emergency supplies in its warehouse as prepositioned stock to be used in the event of emergency situations.
176. An example of partnership is the CSO Yenme, which provides support to people with disabilities. This partnership led to a joint inclusive Children’s Fest at the United Nations office to celebrate World Children’s Day in 2021.
177. There are also examples in which UNICEF involved CSO staff and volunteers in its work, for example as trainers or to deliver training of trainers. In 2021, UNICEF trained 50 NRCS volunteers to deliver training on the basics of infant and young child feeding practices, and early childhood development.<sup>54</sup> In 2022, UNICEF trained 48 volunteers from the Women’ Union and NRCS to conduct awareness raising session for women and adolescent girls to improve their knowledge and skills in healthy nutrition.<sup>55</sup>

## 6. Evaluation conclusions and lessons learned

### a. Conclusions

178. The evaluation shows that UNICEF Turkmenistan has successfully **addressed a range of important and pressing needs for children in the country, particularly the most vulnerable**. Stakeholders appreciated UNICEF’s contribution to behavioural change among caregivers and duty bearers (based on the examples of initiatives in the area of breastfeeding, girls in STEM, and children with disabilities) but this impact was limited by deeply embedded social norms and values. It may take longer than the timeframe of a single CP to see the effectiveness of social and behavioural change interventions, especially for child protection or inclusive society.
179. The assessment on relevance and effectiveness shows that UNICEF Turkmenistan **responded to the needs of children in the country, especially girls and children with disabilities**, and has supported policy and instructional development. This success was based, in large part, on advocacy and technical assistance to strengthen data analysis and research on children’s needs and to promote evidence-based decision making. This ensured that the needs of vulnerable children inform governmental priorities. UNICEF supported the government’s initiatives to strengthen its capacity to collect and analyse data through capacity-building programmes, including training for key stakeholders. At the same time, use of data in policy planning was limited, and the review of national programmes and consultations with partners suggest that results-oriented planning and budgeting are not yet present in the country.

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<sup>53</sup> UNESCO does not have an office in Turkmenistan.

<sup>54</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund Turkmenistan (2022) ‘Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2021’, p.60.

<sup>55</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund Turkmenistan (2022) ‘Combined Outcome/Output Reports and End-Year Summary Narrative 2022’, p.63.

180. **Behaviour change interventions and interventions directly targeting children** often have limited reach, primarily constrained by the number of participants in in-person events organized by national partners. Given that SBC initiatives were introduced midway through the programme cycle, further refinement of approaches and topics was still ongoing at the time of this evaluation. However, established relationships with the Women’s Union and the National Media Agency have facilitated extensive information campaigns and training sessions on nutrition and healthy motherhood, broadening the impact of these initiatives.
181. The **CP is on track to achieve its intended results at output level but is not able to affect outcome-level results**, which foresee that by 2025 all boys and girls in Turkmenistan shall benefit from services introduced with UNICEF support. Evaluation of the United Nations Joint Programme on social services, interviews with the CO, United Nations agencies, government institutions and social workers showed the efficiency of results, but the same time the limited number of social workers were unable to address all the emerging needs, and the social workforce needs further development and expansion to other areas of the country.
182. UNICEF has positioned itself as the **main driver in introducing and scaling up new approaches, models and services that produce better results for children**. UNICEF’s impact on enhancing child rights was evident through strengthened focus on child protection and establishment of two child-friendly investigation rooms for children in contact with the law. The development of NPAC 2023-2028 and ECD Strategy 2020-2025, the creation of child-friendly hospitals and investigation rooms are evidence of effectiveness. At the same time, due to the absence of scaling up models or strategies for the pilot projects, and evaluability plans, the sustainability of achieved progress could be questionable.
183. UNICEF has identified and reassessed bottlenecks throughout implementation of the CP, and implemented strategies **to cope with them in a changing context**. This was evidenced by adaptation in response to the global pandemic and other contextual changes in the past four years.
184. UNICEF was identified as a key lead in the area of early childhood development. This was confirmed through joint development of the ECD National Strategy and joint monitoring of its implementation. This included advocacy interventions and capacity building programmes, **strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation**.
185. At the same time, **it takes time to achieve effective results in areas that require cross-sectoral cooperation**. There is, for example, a need to strengthen coordination between different government institutions. The gap in this resulted in slow progress in developing an early identification system for providing services for children with disabilities and de-institutionalization.
186. UNICEF **improved its approach to gender equality during CP**, with substantial efforts in education and health outcomes. This evaluation concludes that approaches to gender equality may also be expanded in other priority areas and increase UNICEF effectiveness.

## b. Lessons learned

187. The desk review conducted for this report confirms the **importance of evidence-driven decisions** for the sake of children, but the same time this is not enough for results at scale. The interviews conducted with the partners and document review showed that evidence-driven policies can be developed and change for children rights achieved only with full government

ownership, which requires strategic partnerships and resourcing for children at the national and local levels.

188. **Partnerships with other United Nations agencies, local development partners and CSOs produced the greatest results** when they strategically met advocacy goals. UNICEF Turkmenistan was successful in leveraging partnerships in the areas of data, child rights monitoring, social protection, child protection and ECD. Some of the examples could serve as a model for other countries.
189. **Innovative approaches based in model and pilot projects and use of innovative technologies have generated visible results**, for example for girls in STEM, social work and child protection. However, these approaches require strategic development at institutional and technical levels if they are to be scaled up by the government. Successfully scaling up requires full government ownership. This involves planning and budgeting at governmental scale from the outset, and continuous monitoring and evaluation of programme before and after scaling up to inform the institutionalization of programmes at government level.
190. Analysing the results of implementation of Joint Programme on Social Services **offers lessons for generating change for children at scale**. UNICEF worked with the government and development partners to integrate social work into strategic national documents and budgets. Another example of this strategic approach is home-visiting health services, which UNICEF expanded through training and advocacy of the years of the CP. This combination of strategic, institutional and local activities contributed to increased access to health and social services in the country. In contrast, the strategic approach and institutional strengthening activities were not as strong in social and behavioural change, or in results-based budgeting. This resulted in fewer visible results in these areas.
191. Experience in the social, health-care and education sectors show high staff turnover in the government. This affects the sustainability of results and weakens advocacy efforts. A systematic and strategic approach is needed to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of results. This could be achieved through higher-level advocacy and policy change.
192. SDG Ambassadors, a United Nations-wide initiative, demonstrated the importance of youth engagement and created a safe platform for youth to be engaged in policy planning and monitoring. Young volunteers helped with several UNICEF interventions and activities, and for the first time ever were engaged in evaluating a national document – the NAPC. This practice was an efficient use of resources, and could be applied in further monitoring activities.

## 7. Recommendations

193. *Recommendation 1. Continue strengthening evidence-based, innovative, and diverse approaches to social and behavioural Change.*
194. To address the social norms that hinder promotion of child rights, UNICEF is advised to consider supporting interventions in the areas identified, with SBC campaigns to ensure stronger demand for services. SBC campaigns should be informed by the behavioural bottleneck analysis of factors and social norms that prevent children from fully benefiting from these services. SBC could be operationalized through the MoE: to reduce stigma around children with disabilities, increase girls' participation in STEM and reduce violence at home and in school. Partnerships

with CSOs should be expanded for community engagement and use of perception measurements and social listening evaluations of the programmes.

195. **Recommendation 2:** Strengthen data collection to inform evidence-based policy making and programme evaluations
196. UNICEF should support the government to maximize the use of its data collection efforts by integrating administrative data, survey data and other available sources into a comprehensive, evidence-based policymaking process. This will ensure that data are not just used for reporting,, but also to guide policies and decision-making in key areas such as child protection, education, social protection, and health.
197. Enhanced data use should also contribute to the regular monitoring and evaluation of programmes, making them more responsive to the needs of children and youth. UNICEF is strongly advised to initiate an evaluability assessment or mapping of baseline data and targets for the NPAC 2023-2028 priorities, to identify potential interventions for the next programme cycle, including the scaling up of innovative approaches and models introduced with UNICEF support. This analysis shall provide a solid foundation for discussions with the Government of priorities for the next CP.
198. Use the available data to shape advocacy campaigns by presenting evidence-based arguments that clearly show the impact of policies and interventions on children’s well-being. Strengthening the evaluation culture and plan in advance of evaluations of model and pilot interventions in partnership with the government will contribute to efficient and evidence-based policy making, and greater buy-in from the government, as well as allowing better tracing of the connection between advocacy, policy, technical support and institutional changes.
199. **Recommendation 3.** *Develop a leveraging strategy that focuses on financial and institutional sustainability for selected models where there is clear government commitment and can be achieved at scale. Gain support from development partners, including United Nations agencies, to enhance the sustained impact of the intervention.*
200. Evidence collected and lessons learned reveal conditions that need to be met from the moment of planning local pilot and model projects. Projects have been most effective when they had realistic strategies for scaling up, a recognition of budget limitations and budget uptake by the government, plans for strengthening institutional capacity at local and national level, and means for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. UNICEF is strongly advised to identify a few areas in which it would be possible to achieve wider coverage and impact by 2030 of services introduced with UNICEF support, and include corresponding interventions in the next CP to ensure that more children have access to and benefit from support and protection services by 2030. Potential services to be considered include the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, community-based social services, and services related to prevention and response to child protection violations. In the area of education, a potential area could be promoting school disaster risk reduction preparedness, institutionalization of climate change education across all education levels, and expanding access to pre-primary education.
201. **Recommendation 4.** *UNICEF should intensify its advocacy efforts to influence government policies and increase investments per child by leveraging partnerships with key stakeholders.*
202. UNICEF should intensify its advocacy efforts to influence government policies and increase investments in child protection, social protection and social services development. This can be

achieved by leveraging existing and new partnerships with key stakeholders – such as government ministries, civil society organizations, and international partners – to emphasize the critical importance of social cash benefits and comprehensive social work services. Specifically, advocate for increased national budget allocations and policy reforms that prioritize vulnerable children’s access to essential services – such as child protection, health care, education and justice. Emphasize how placing social work at the core of an integrated support ecosystem can significantly enhance access to these services for the most vulnerable children. Increase public awareness of available social services through targeted information campaigns. These campaigns should highlight the importance of social protection, and inform vulnerable families and communities about how to access services, including social cash benefits and child protection resources.

203. To operationalize this recommendation, UNICEF should revisit the findings and recommendations from the Evaluation of the Joint Programme on Social Services and the Evaluation of the National Action Plan for Children (NAPC). Building on these evaluations will further inform the advocacy strategy and ensure that reform efforts are evidence-based and contextually relevant.

204. By intensifying advocacy and strengthening partnerships, UNICEF can create a stronger, sustained government commitment to advancing child and social protection systems, with social work serving as the linchpin for connecting vulnerable children to other essential services.

205. *Recommendation 5. Support the development of cross-sectoral cooperation in areas where it is essential for the realization of child rights and most prominently for the realization of the rights of children with disabilities.*

206. UNICEF should prioritize strengthening interministerial cooperation in areas where it is critical for the realization of child rights, with a particular focus on the rights of children with disabilities. Promoting cross-sectoral collaboration among ministries and other key stakeholders at both the national and local levels will ensure a more coordinated and effective response to children’s needs. Key areas where interministerial cooperation is essential include:

- Early childhood development (ECD): Support the integration of health, education, and social services to ensure a holistic approach to ECD, especially for children with disabilities. This includes fostering collaboration between ministries responsible for health, education, and social protection to provide seamless services to young children and their families.
- Youth empowerment and engagement: Strengthen partnerships across sectors such as education, labour, and social welfare to develop programmes that promote youth participation in civic life, education and employment opportunities. Interministerial cooperation will be key to scaling up successful models of youth engagement at national level.
- Prevention of violence Against children: Encourage the development of coordinated policies and programs that involve the education, justice, health-care, and social welfare sectors to prevent violence against children, both in schools and in families. This cross-sectoral approach will ensure that preventive measures are in place and that effective responses are coordinated when incidents occur.
- Mitigating the impact of climate change on children: Facilitate collaboration between ministries responsible for environment, education, health care and disaster management to protect children from the effects of climate change. This includes developing child-sensitive

DRR strategies and integrating climate resilience into school curricula and community programmes.

207. Implementing this recommendation will require:

- Supporting the government to develop a framework that outlines mechanisms for interministerial cooperation, with a particular emphasis on children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. This framework should include clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms for each ministry involved.
- Encourage local-level cross-sectoral practices: National-level planning and policies should be designed to foster local-level cross-sectoral cooperation. This will ensure that local authorities and service providers are equipped to implement coordinated approaches that address the specific needs of children in their communities.
- Promote shared accountability for child rights: Advocate a system of shared accountability among ministries for protecting and fulfilling child rights. This can be achieved by establishing joint action plans, performance indicators and regular reviews to monitor progress on cross-sectoral initiatives.

208. *Recommendation 6. Strengthen and institutionalize child and youth participation in decision-making at national and local levels*

209. UNICEF should continue and expand its support for the meaningful participation of children and youth in decision-making processes related to public institutions at both the national and local levels. Institutionalizing child and youth participation ensures that their voices are heard in policy discussions that affect their lives, and that their involvement is consistent and impactful.

210. Key areas of focus should include:

- Engagement in evaluations and monitoring: Continue the practice of involving children and youth in programme evaluations, CRC reporting, and independent monitoring of child rights through the Office of the Ombudsman. UNICEF should provide technical support to ensure that young participants are adequately prepared and that their contributions are valued and integrated into decision-making processes.
- Youth Consultative Group in parliament: Advocate the formal establishment of the Youth Consultative Group in the Parliament, which has been initiated but not yet completed. This group would provide young people with a direct channel to influence legislative processes, ensuring that youth perspectives are considered in national policymaking.

211. *Recommendation 7. Establish strategic partnerships with major donors to address priority bottlenecks identified in the Situation Analysis and national priorities*

212. A stakeholder analysis at Outcome or Output levels during CP planning should identify the most influential potential partners and establish partnerships in the initial phases of the advocacy processes. Strategic partners should assist in planning specific advocacy activities.

213. Key components should include:

- Identifying and engaging development partners the priorities of which align with UNICEF's objectives of addressing bottlenecks in child protection, social protection, health, education and other critical areas.

- Conducting a comprehensive stakeholder analysis at the Outcome or Output level during the CP planning phase. This analysis should focus on identifying partners with the capacity and influence to support transformative advocacy efforts and to solve the bottlenecks highlighted in the situation analysis. This ensures that partnerships are targeted, impactful and contribute directly to addressing key issues.
- Engaging strategic partners in joint advocacy planning from the outset, ensuring they contribute to the design and implementation of advocacy activities aimed at tackling systemic issues like inequities in service delivery, policy gaps, and underfunded child protection systems. This includes collaborating on high-impact initiatives that address cross-cutting issues, such as the rights of children with disabilities, early childhood development and child-friendly climate policies.
- Expanding partnership base beyond traditional donors to include the private sector, philanthropic organizations, and non-state actors with the resources and influence to drive change. This wider circle of partners can bring innovative solutions, technical expertise and additional funding to tackle entrenched issues in child rights and protection.
- Establishing clear mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of strategic partnerships to ensure they remain focused on UNICEF's priorities, including solving critical challenges identified in the situation analysis. Partnerships should be regularly assessed to verify that resources and efforts are aligned with key advocacy goals and programmatic outcomes, rather than shifting toward donor-driven priorities.
- Using evidence from the situation analysis and bottleneck assessments to guide discussions with partners, ensuring that advocacy is grounded in data and focuses on real, systemic issues that impact children's lives.

214. *Recommendation 8: Expand approaches to gender equality in the next programme cycle.*

215. By integrating gender equality strategies across all programmatic areas, UNICEF can ensure a more comprehensive and impactful approach to promoting gender equity and improving outcomes for all children. Based on the Gender Analysis, identify specific gender-related barriers and opportunities. This will help tailor interventions to address the unique needs of boys and girls. Ensure that gender equality is a core component of programme design across all sectors. This includes setting gender-specific goals, indicators, and outcomes. Provide training and resources to staff and partners on gender equality principles and practices. This will enhance their ability to effectively implement gender-sensitive programmes. Strengthen partnerships with organizations that specialize in gender equality, including government agencies, CSOs and community groups. Collaborate to leverage their expertise and resources. Use data to inform and adjust strategies as needed.

# Annexes

## Annex 1. Terms of Reference

2024 Country Programme Evaluations in Europe and Central Asia

### Turkmenistan version for CO discussions

*This is a shorter version of the original ToR of CPEs conducted in Europe and Central Asia region in 2024.*

#### INTRODUCTION

Country Programme Evaluations (CPEs) in UNICEF generally play a key role in identifying lessons which can inform the design of the next Country Programme or adjustments to the current Programme, and identify opportunities to improve UNICEF's performance. The CPEs usually assess (i) the contribution of the Programme of Cooperation to national development results; (ii) UNICEF's contribution to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and (iii) UNICEF's strategic positioning in relation to its child rights mandate. Being strategic evaluations, CPEs are mostly used to inform the direction of Country Programmes (CPs), which are outlined in the country programme documents that are designed and planned every five years, on average.

#### OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

In line with the corporate CPE guidelines, the object of this CPE will be the implementation of UNICEF Country Programme (CP) in Turkmenistan for a period of at least three years (2021-2024) to assess the programme results achieved so far. Since 2021, UNICEF Turkmenistan has been supporting the Government of Turkmenistan in meeting its commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as pledged in Turkmenistan's National Plan of Action for Realization of the Rights of the Child (NPAC). According to UNICEF Annual Report 2023, the current CP remains largely relevant to the national priorities on advancing health, transforming education, integrating social protection for the most vulnerable, and focusing on young people. Therefore, assessing the progress of the CP up to now, and drawing some lessons for the rest of the CP period and for developing a new CP will be a logical direction for this CPE. In so doing, the evaluation will look at the country programme as a whole. The main components of the current Turkmenistan CP and respective budget are in Table 1.

*Table 1. Current CPD components of Turkmenistan and Indicative budget*

	<b>Current CPD components</b>	<b>Indicative Budget as in the latest CPD (In thousands of US dollars)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	Governance for children	800 (RR) + 600 (OR)	4,520 (RR) + 2,921 (OR) = 7,501 (Total)
	Health, nutrition, and early development	1,200 (RR) + 900 (OR)	
	Social and child protection	1,000 (RR) + 700 (OR)	
	Inclusive and quality education	1,000 (RR) + 600 (OR)	
	Programme effectiveness	520 (RR) + 181 (OR)	

While building on the results of the previous country programmes, UNICEF's current CP reflects the expanded scope of cooperation with the government of Turkmenistan. UNICEF CO has partnered with more institutions to ensure equitable access to high-impact and quality health, nutrition and early childhood development services; to protect children from all forms of violence, ill-treatment and socioeconomic vulnerabilities; as well as to increase access to quality inclusive education and learning opportunities for Turkmenistan's children and youth.

When assessing the CP results up-to-date, consideration for the most recent UNICEF’s nine change strategies as per UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025 will be given emphasis to identify how they are implemented under the Turkmenistan office’s current cycle and if they need to be adapted in the next programme cycle (2026-2030). These changes include the following and shall be selected as relevant during the inception stage:

1. Advocacy and communications
2. Community engagement, social and behaviour change
3. Data, research, evaluation and knowledge management
4. Digital transformation
5. Gender-equality programming for transformative results
6. Innovation
7. Partnership and engagement: public and private
8. Risk-informed humanitarian and development nexus programming
9. System strengthening to leave no one behind

## OBJECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION

The overall aim of the CPE will be to assess if the Turkmenistan CO is on track towards achieving its objectives and targets as planned as well as to assess how strategically positioned UNICEF is within the country context and among national partners. The CPE will evaluate relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the CP so far (as per the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria) with the following three objectives, which are to:

- Provide an independent assessment of the selected programme results so far,
- Provide an assessment of UNICEF's positioning within the Government and national partners, and
- Draw lessons from the CPD 2021-25 implementation for the new CPD 2026-2030.

## SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The principal focus will be on the present country programme from 2021 to 2024. Since the period of 2019-2020 was overwhelmingly dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic globally with no evidence of its real impact on the country’s population especially on children, this period will provide more a "background context" to understand the justification for the programming goals set.

When evaluating the results, there will not be any assessment of the CP progress in achieving outcome and impact level results due to the early stage of the current CP implementation.

## TENTATIVE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Following the UNICEF corporate CPE guidelines, the Turkmenistan CPE will look at the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness and cohesion.

Original question	Kept or deleted	Reformulated
<b>Relevance</b>		
1. To what extent has UNICEF been effective (so far) in meeting the needs of all children and been consistent with the priorities set in national policy		

frameworks and SDGs? What needs to be done to continue relevance in the next CPD?		
<b>Effectiveness</b>		
2. To what extent were the Country Programme results achieved so far as described in the current CPD?		
3. What external and internal enabling/restrictive factors affected UNICEF's progress?		
4. To what extent did UNICEF position itself among the most influencing stakeholders to achieve results for children?		
<b>Coherence</b>		
5. To what extent do the individual Country Programme components reinforce each other to leverage the contribution that UNICEF makes towards expected results?		
6. To what extent is the Country Programme consistent with other actors' interventions in the same context and add value while avoiding duplication of effort?		

## Annex 2. Evaluation Matrix

Criteria	Evaluation question	Sub-questions	Sources of data	Methods	Assumptions
Relevance	1. To what extent have CPD priorities have been consistent with the priorities set in national policy frameworks, CRC Concluding Observations and SDGs guiding principles (human rights, gender equality, disability, and leave no one behind)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What mechanisms did UNICEF CO use to ensure that CP is consistent with national priorities and policy frameworks during CPD design?</li> <li>• What mechanisms did UNICEF CO use to ensure that CP remains consistent with evolving national priorities and policy frameworks during CP implementation?</li> <li>• What mechanisms did UNICEF CO use to ensure that CP is consistent with the CRC Concluding Observations?</li> <li>• What mechanisms did UNICEF CO use to ensure that CP is consistent with SDGs guiding principles (human rights, gender equality, and leave no one behind) during CPD design and implementation?</li> <li>• To what extent is each of CP priority sub-areas consistent with the CRC Concluding Observations?</li> <li>• To what extent is each of CP priority sub-areas consistent with national priorities and policy frameworks?</li> <li>• To what extent is each of CP priority sub-areas consistent with SDGs guiding principles?</li> </ul>	<p>CPD, COARs, evaluation reports</p> <p>National policies (as per the Document map)</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Interviews with UNICEF CO staff and national stakeholders</p>	<p>The CO has staff members who were involved in CPD design.</p> <p>National stakeholders who were involved in the CPD design will be available for interview.</p>
	2. To what extent has UNICEF been effective (so far) in responding to the needs of all children, including the most vulnerable in planning and implementation of programme areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information and mechanisms did UNICEF CO use to ensure that CP is responding to the needs of children, including the most vulnerable groups of children, during CPD design?</li> <li>• What information and mechanisms did UNICEF CO use to ensure that CP is responding to the needs of children, including the most vulnerable groups of children, during CP implementation?</li> <li>• To what extent each of CP priority sub-areas was responding to the needs of children related to this sub-area during CP design and implementation?</li> </ul>	<p>CPD, COARs, evaluation reports</p> <p>Studies (as per the Document map)</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Interviews with UNICEF CO staff and national stakeholders</p>	<p>The CO has staff members who were involved in CPD design.</p> <p>National stakeholders who were involved in the CPD design will be available for interview.</p>

Effectiveness	3. To what extent have the Country Programme results (as described in the current CPD) been achieved so far?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways have interventions implemented under each of the specific CP sub-areas contributed to achievement relevant CP outputs?</li> <li>• What are the key achievements under each of the specific CP sub-areas?</li> <li>• How critical are these achievements for further progress under each of the specific CP sub-areas?</li> <li>• What results were expected, but were not achieved under each of the specific CP sub-areas?</li> <li>• How critical is non-achievement of these results for further progress under each of the specific CP sub-areas?</li> </ul>	CPD, COARs, evaluation reports	Desk review  Interviews with UNICEF CO staff and national stakeholders	Relevant stakeholders are available for interviews.
	4. What external and internal (including financial, human and other resources) enabling/restrictive factors affected UNICEF's progress? Were there any factors outside of UNICEF control that substantially affected the implementation of the CP so far? Could they have been better managed by the CO?	<p>In each of the CP sub-areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were there any internal factors that enabled CP performance? In what ways? Did the CO manage to capitalize on these factors to accelerate progress?</li> <li>• Were there any internal factors that constrained CP performance? In what ways? Did the CO manage to mitigate these factors to accelerate progress?</li> <li>• What are the key lessons learned from dealing with internal factors?</li> <li>• Were there any external factors that enabled CP performance? In what ways? Did the CO manage to capitalize on these factors to accelerate progress?</li> <li>• Were there any external factors that constrained CP performance? In what ways? Did the CO manage to mitigate these factors to accelerate progress?</li> <li>• What are the key lessons learned from dealing with external factors?</li> </ul> <p>For CP in general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were there some internal factors that had a general positive effect on CP progress? In what ways?</li> <li>• Were there some internal factors that had a general negative effect on CP progress? In what ways?</li> <li>• Were there some external factors that had a general positive effect on CP progress? In what ways?</li> </ul>	CPD, COARs, evaluation reports	Desk review  Interviews with UNICEF CO staff, ECARO, contractors (St. Petersburg Early Interventions Institute, Cerci Lisboa), national stakeholders	Relevant stakeholders are available for interviews.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were there some external factors that had a general negative effect on CP progress? In what ways?</li> </ul>			
	5. How has UNICEF positioned itself among the most influencing stakeholders to achieve results for children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the UNICEF CO perspective on UNICEF positioning in Turkmenistan?</li> <li>• Did UNICEF positioning change in any ways in the course of CP implementation in 2020-2024?</li> <li>• What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses on UNICEF positioning in the opinion of UNICEF CO?</li> <li>• Did these strengths and weaknesses have any effect on CP performance?</li> <li>• How do other UNCT members perceive UNICEF positioning and its evolution, if any?</li> <li>• What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses on UNICEF positioning in the opinion of UNCT members?</li> <li>• Did these strengths and weaknesses have any effect on cooperation with UNICEF and UNICEF CP performance?</li> <li>• How do national stakeholders perceive UNICEF positioning and its evolution, if any?</li> <li>• What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses on UNICEF positioning in the opinion of national stakeholders?</li> <li>• Did these strengths and weaknesses have any effect on cooperation with UNICEF and UNICEF CP performance?</li> </ul>		Interviews with: UNICEF CO staff, UNCT members (UNDP, UNFPA, OHCR, IOM, WHO, UNODOC), national stakeholders	Relevant stakeholders are available for interviews.
Coherence	6. To what extent have UNICEF interventions worked in convergent ways to implement CPD priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What mechanisms were used by UNICEF CO to enable cooperation and synergies between interventions within each of the CP sub-areas? What worked well, what did not work so well?</li> <li>• What mechanisms were used by UNICEF CO to enable cooperation and synergies between interventions in different CP sub-areas? What worked well, what did not work so well?</li> <li>• Are there any missed opportunities?</li> </ul>	CPD, COARs, evaluation reports	Desk review  Interviews with UNICEF CO staff	Relevant stakeholders are available for interviews.

	<p>7. To what extent has UNICEF been coordinating its interventions with other key governmental and non-governmental actors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What mechanisms were used by UNICEF CO to enable cooperation and synergies with other UN agencies? What worked well, what did not work so well?</li> <li>• What mechanisms were used by UNICEF CO to enable cooperation and synergies with government agencies? What worked well, what did not work so well?</li> <li>• What mechanisms were used by UNICEF CO to enable cooperation and synergies with CSOs? What worked well, what did not work so well?</li> </ul>	<p>CPD, COARs, evaluation reports</p>	<p>Interviews with: UNICEF CO staff, UNCT members (UNDP, UNFPA, OHCR, IOM, WHO, UNODOC), national stakeholders</p>	<p>Relevant stakeholders are available for interviews.</p>
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### Annex 3. List of people consulted

#### **UNICEF Turkmenistan CO staff**

Sofiya Yuvshanova, CRM-E Specialist

Aysenem Agabayeva, Social Policy Specialist

Shemshat Raimova, Health Specialist

Dilara Ayazova, Procurement Officer

Jepbar Bashimov, ECD Specialist/Disability focal point

Sulgun Berdiyeva, UNICEF ECD Consultant

Serdar Bazarov, Child Protection Officer

Jepbar Bashimov, ECD Specialist/Disability focal point

Nina Kerimi, UNICEF expert

Alexandru Nartea, Deputy Representative

Boris Ter-Semyonov, Operations Manager

Selbi Hanova, Social and Behavior Change Officer

Mahriban Mullabayeva, Communication Officer

Mohammad Fayazi, Representative

Valeria Danilchenko, Emergency, Climate Change, DRR and WASH Officer

#### **UNICEF ECARO**

Ms. Nora Shabani, Education Specialist/Disability focal point

#### **International consultants**

Ms. Filomena Pereira, Cerci Lisboa (Portugal)

Ms. Fatima Duarte, Cerci Lisboa (Portugal)

Ms. Larisa Samarina, General Director, St. Petersburg Early Interventions Institute (Russian Federation)

#### **UNCT staff**

Yelena Butova, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR

Akmurad Danatarov, Governance Portfolio, UNDP

Lale Chopanova, Health Portfolio, UNDP

Merdan Tokaev, Manager of World Bank project, UNDP

Jahan Saparmamedova, Communication Analyst, UNDP

Dovran Yamatov, Population Dynamics Analyst, UNFPA

Mehri Karakulova, Gender Officer, UNFPA

Timur Dosmamedov, Head of Office, IOM

Jahan Nurmuhammedova, Business Operation Associate, WHO

Chary Nurmuhammedov, Team Leader, RCO

## Annex 4. Re-constructed overall Theory of Change for the CP

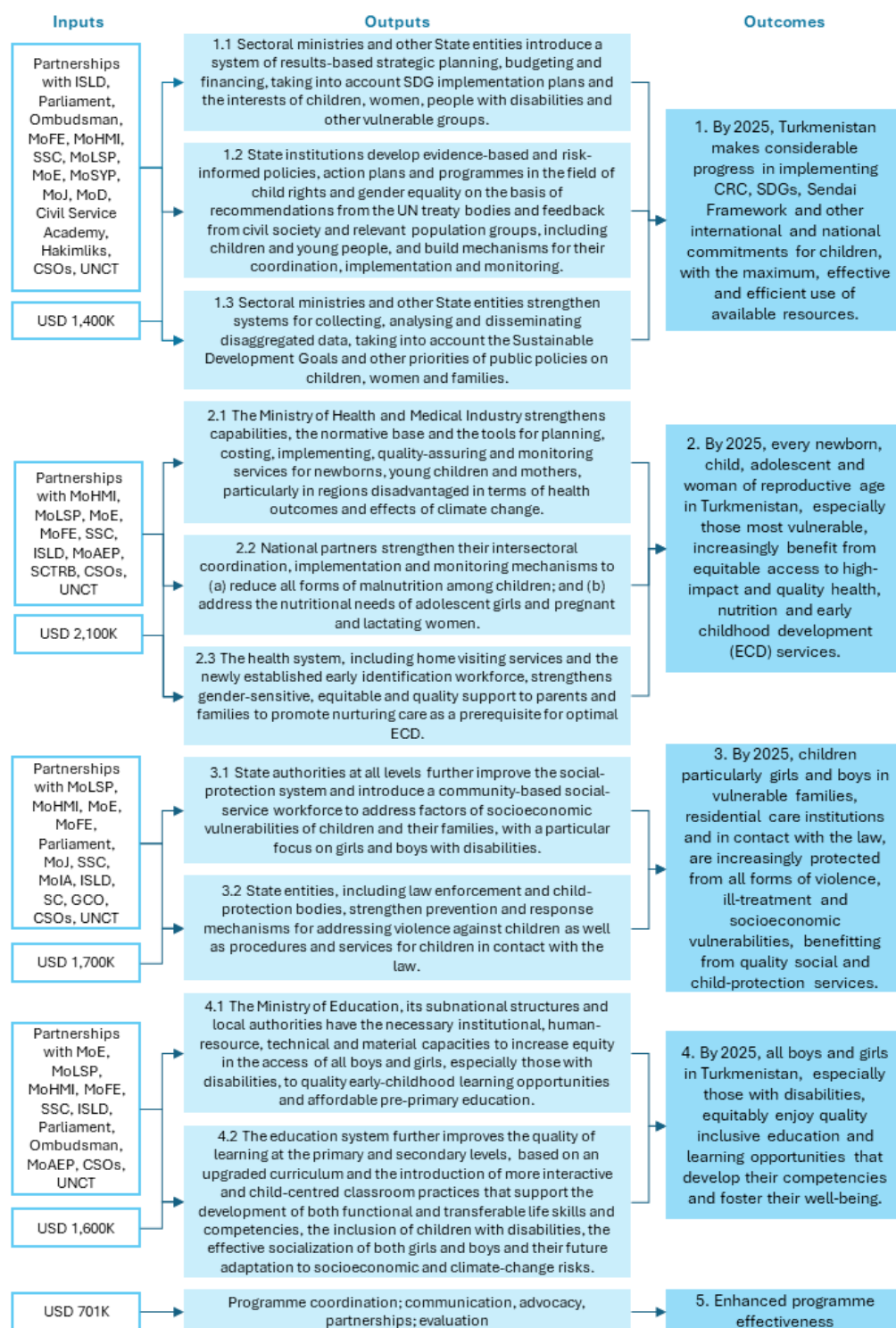
Based on the Theory of Change (ToC) for the individual Outcomes and Outputs (except for Programme Effectiveness, where there was no ToC), and in consultation with the UNICEF Country Office, the consultant developed a ToC for the overall Country Programme (CP) and presented it to the UNICEF Country Office. The re-constructed ToC presented below explains the logical framework developed to evaluate the CP. The ToC model outlines the underlying assumptions and hypotheses that guide programme activities and expected outcomes.

Interviews and documents highlight that partnerships and financial resources played a critical role in effective implementation of the CP, so they were considered the main inputs for the identified Outputs of the CP. In this context, inputs include partnerships with various organizations, primarily government institutions and United Nations agencies.

Outputs are the direct results of programme activities. Based on discussions with the Country Office, these are the results they aimed to achieve. Outcomes are the short-term and medium-term changes that occur because of the programme outputs. However, the outcomes were of a longer-term nature than initially planned and the consultant was not able to draw connections between outputs and outcomes, or confirm that change is being achieved.

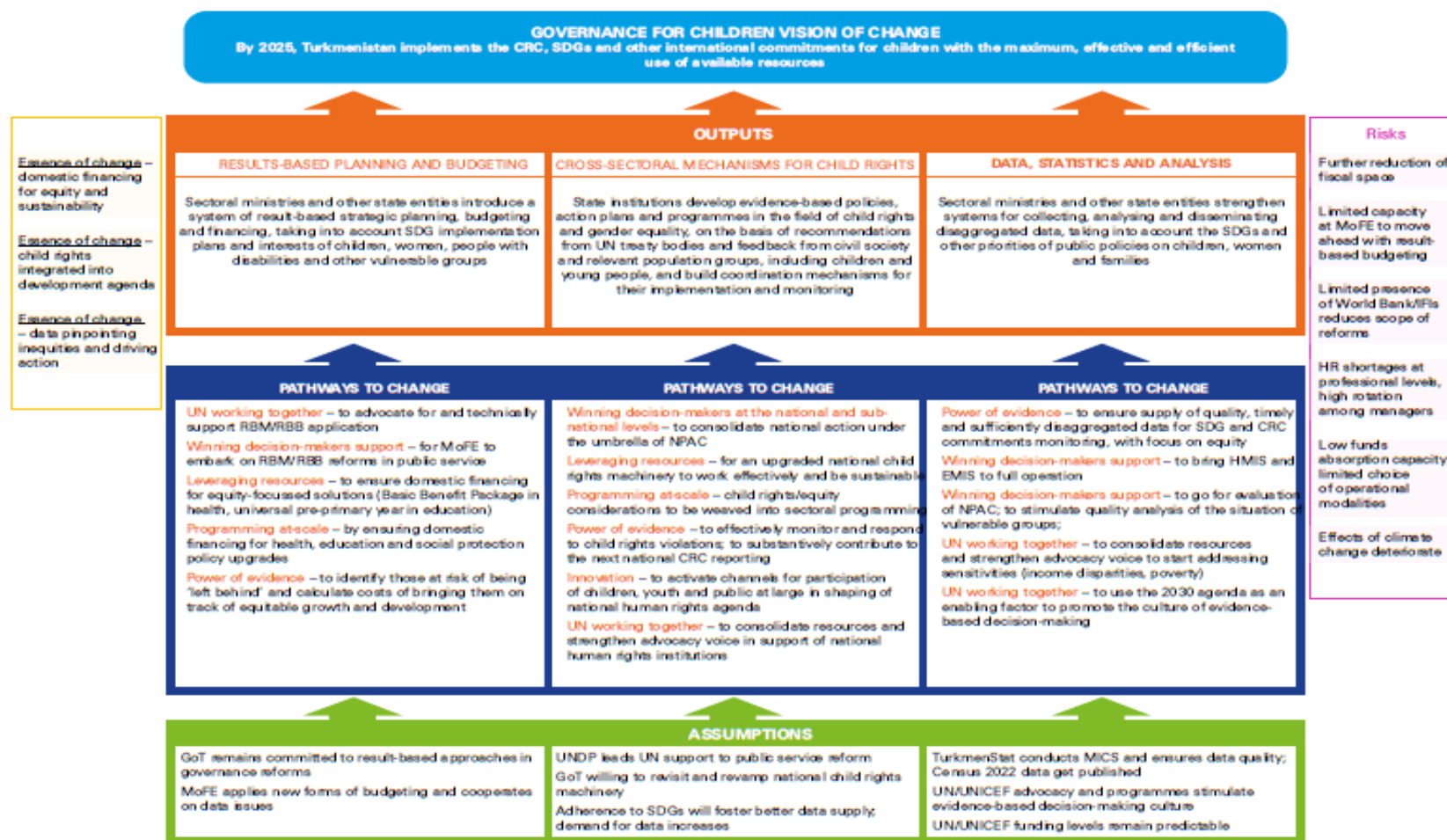
The assumptions guiding the CP were that if technical support and capacity building are provided with adequate resources and in partnership with government institutions, the children of Turkmenistan will benefit from broader realization of their rights and increased access to services.

There was not enough evidence to conclude that the outputs have led to achievement of the outcomes. Overall, the ToC summarizes individual outcome ToCs and the inputs needed to implement the CP.

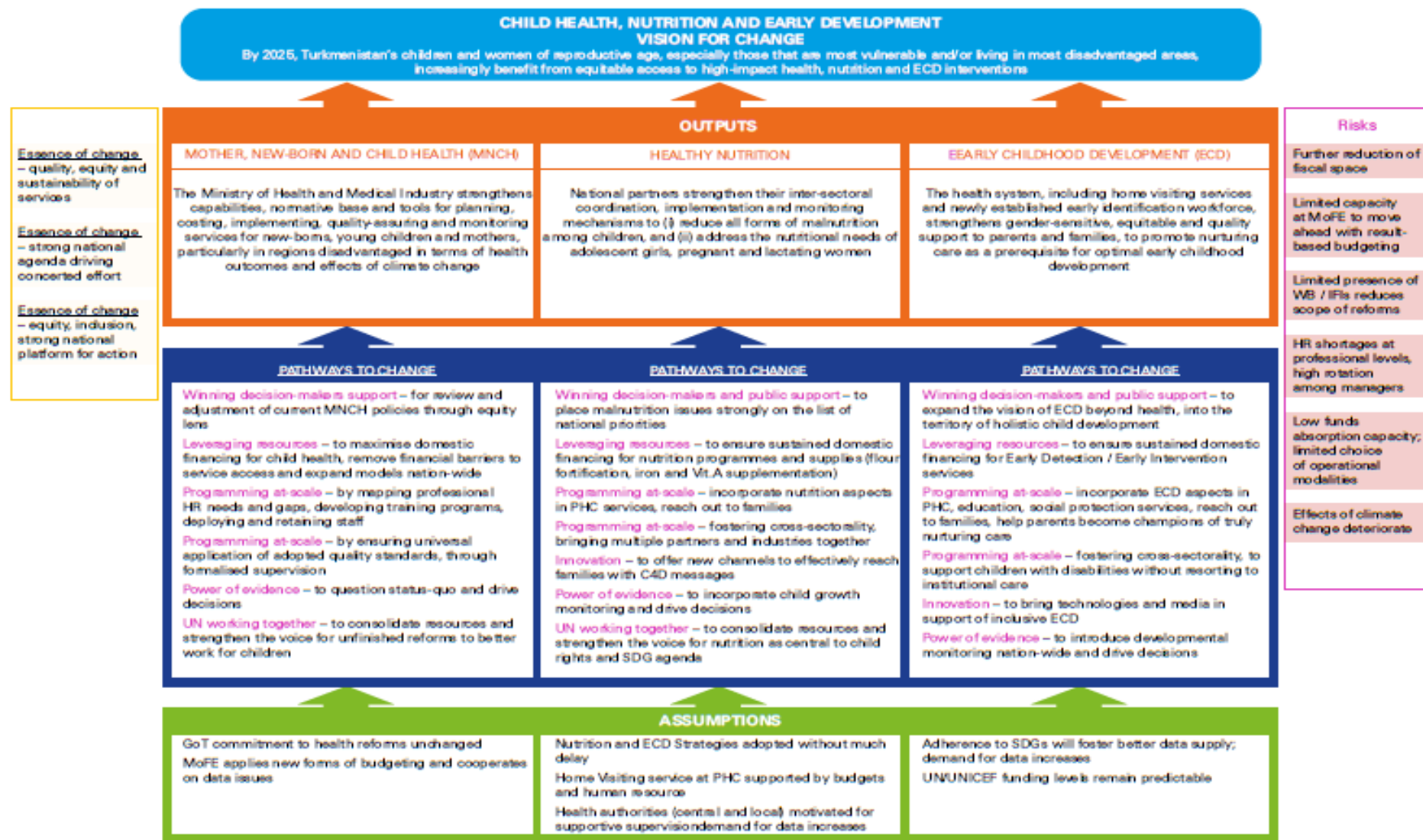


Source: Developed by the evaluation consultant.

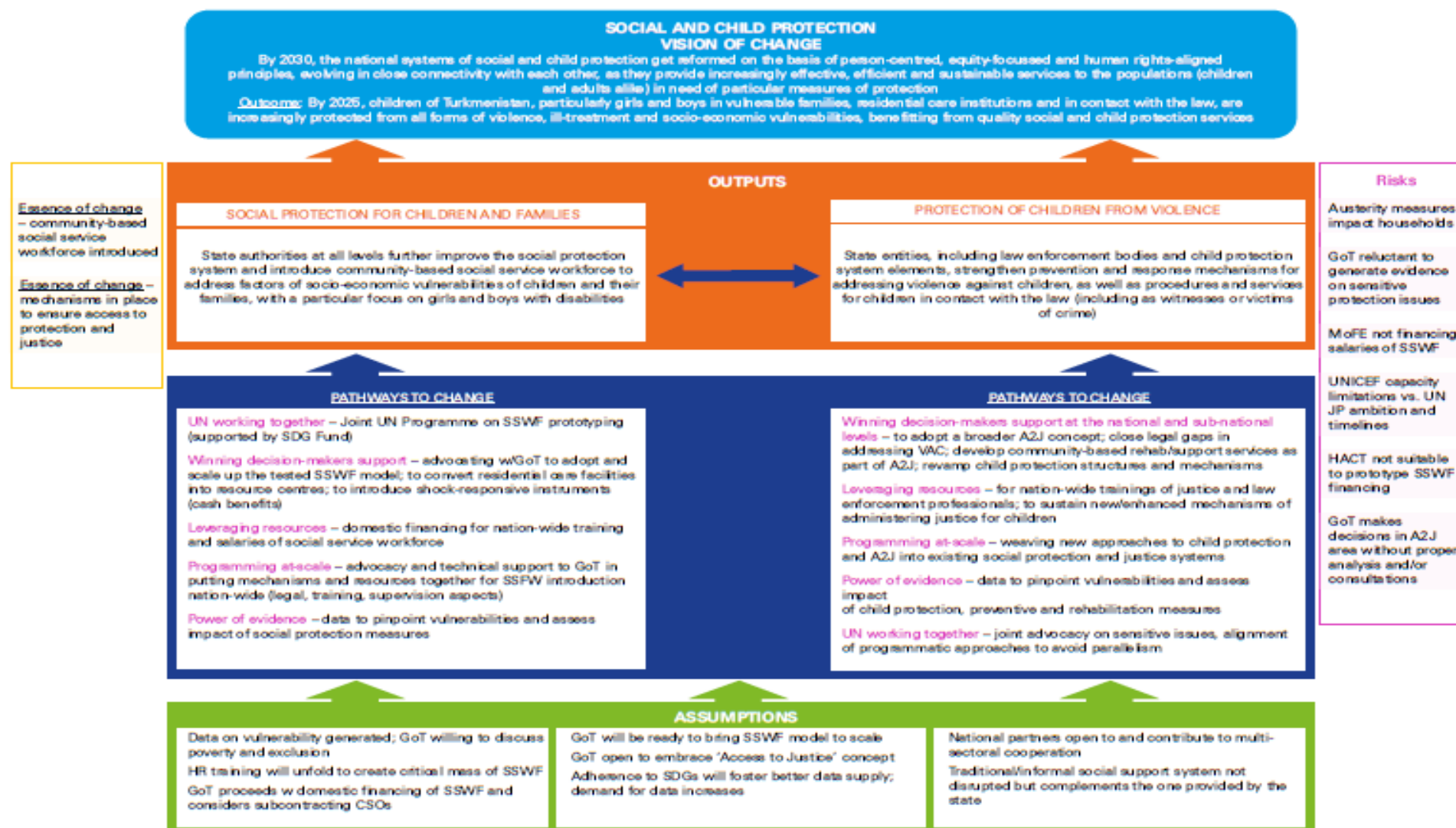
## Annex 5. ToC for the governance for children priority area of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP.



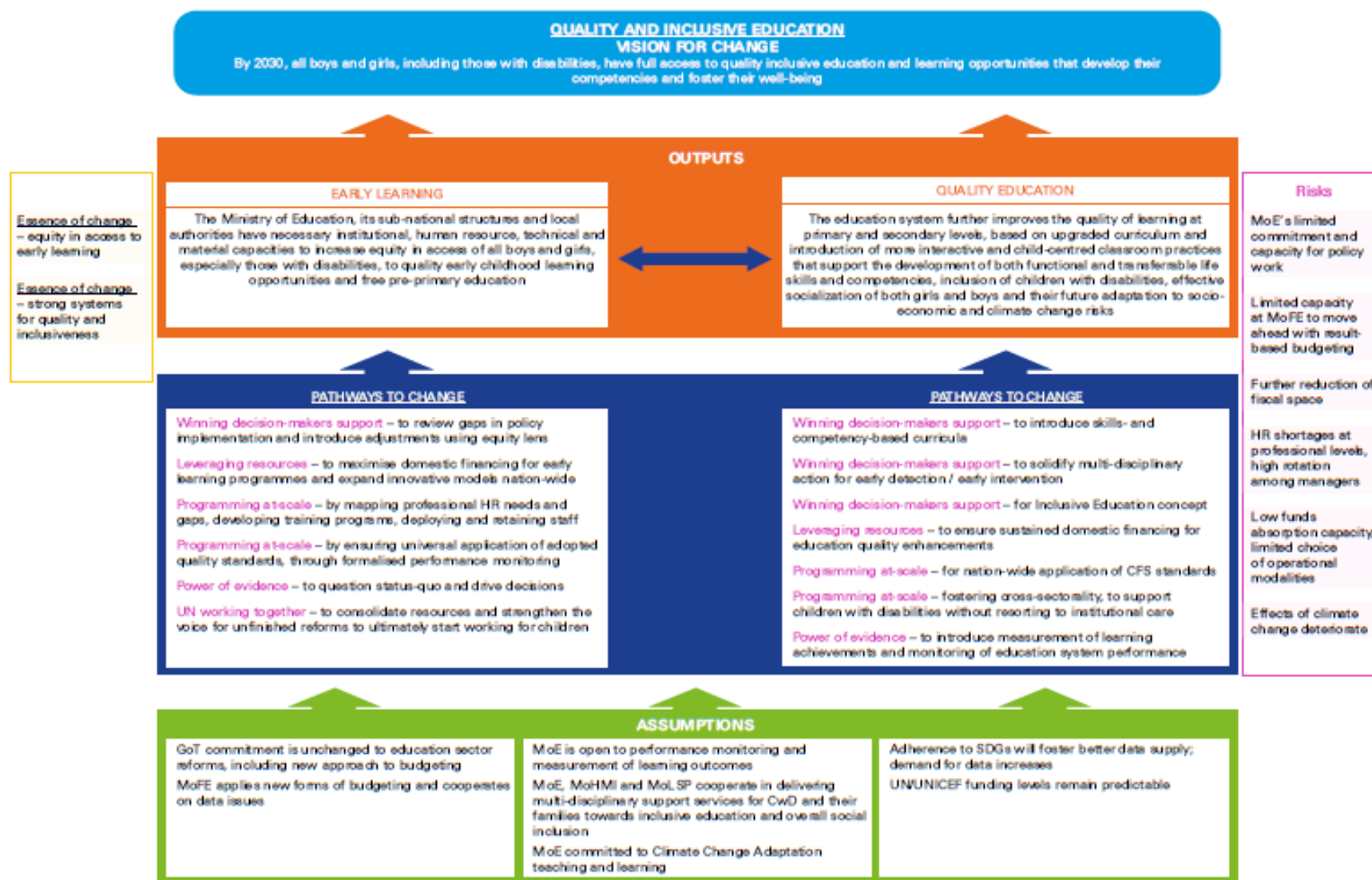
Annex 6. ToC for the child health, nutrition and early development priority area of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP.



## Annex 7. TOC for the social and child protection priority area of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP.



## Annex 8. ToC for the quality and inclusive education priority area of the UNICEF Turkmenistan CP.



## Annex 9. Degree of achievement of CP outputs as measured by output indicators.

### Governance for Children

**Output 1.1** - Sectoral ministries and other state entities introduce a system of results-based strategic planning, budgeting and financing, taking into account the SDG implementation plans and interests of children, women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Indicator	Baseline	Target (by the end of 2025)	Actual (end of 2023)
Strengthened capacity of stakeholders in budgeting at all levels of government to improve spending outcomes for children	<b>Score 1 - Initiating</b> UNICEF is currently planning capacity building activities for key stakeholders at the central and sub-national levels in view of improving/increasing budget allocations/expenditure for policies/programmes for children	<b>Score 2 – Intermediate</b> UNICEF has completed capacity building efforts and is working with the stakeholders to improve spending for children, but the results of these efforts are not yet documented.	<b>Score 1.5 - Initiated</b> UNICEF is undertaking capacity building activities for key stakeholders at the central and sub-national levels in view of improving/increasing budget allocations/expenditure for policies/programmes for children
Evidence generated on budgets and their linkages to child outcomes to improve budget allocations/expenditure for children	<b>Score 1 – Initiating</b> UNICEF is actively working on identifying and establishing partnerships and entry points for providing technical support to financing of social services for children.	<b>Score 2.5 – Established</b> UNICEF has established/formalized partnerships and provided technical assistance around the issue of financing of social services for children and this has led to some advances	<b>Score 2 – Established</b> UNICEF is strengthening the partnership in the provision of technical assistance on the issues related to fiscal space creation for financing social services/services for children

**Output 1.2.** State institutions develop evidence-based policies, action plans and programmes in the field of child rights and gender equality, on the basis of recommendations from UN treaty bodies and feedback from civil society and relevant population groups, including children and young people, and build coordination mechanisms for their implementation and monitoring.

Indicator	Baseline	Target (by the end of 2025)	Actual (end of 2023)
Country has a functioning, national, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism tasked with overseeing national plans or strategies to prevent and response to violence against children and adolescents, with child and adolescents' participation	<b>Score 1 – initiating (out of 4)</b> No coordination body at the central level. The Cabinet of Ministers and Institute for State, Law and Democracy play a certain coordinating role, but that is not sufficient. The role of the Commissions on Minors at the sub-national level are obsolete and need to be revised. A draft regulation exists for establishing a central-level commission.	<b>Score 3 – Established</b> The country reforms the child protection system and different commissions at the sub-national levels and establishes a central level coordination mechanism with human and financial resources, as foreseen in the NPAC.	<b>Score 2</b> Interministerial commission on HR is functioning and oversees implementation of National HR action plans, however access to financial resources is not available

(i) Number of Evaluations of the key national planning documents concerning children conducted during the cycle	The evaluation of Turkmenistan's Nutrition programme took place in 2017 while the evaluation of its ECD policy is planned for 2020	The evaluation of the NPAC (2018-2022) takes place by 2023, informing the development of a new comprehensive policy concerning child rights	Evaluation completed
(ii) Timely and quality reporting to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	The last report of Turkmenistan to the CRC was reviewed in 2015	The report to the CRC was prepared in 2020 and submitted to the committee in 2021.	The report to the CRC was prepared in 2020 and submitted to the committee in 2021. Alternative report was prepared and submitted by the office of Ombudsman.
An independent national NHRI is in place, in compliance with the Paris Principles and with a child rights mandate (Human rights, participation and non-discrimination) (added in 2022)	Institute of Ombudsman follows international standards in 1-2 key domains only	Institute of Ombudsman follows international standards in 1-2 key domains (2023 target)	Child rights function to be introduced in the Ombudsman office.

**Output 1.3** - Sectoral ministries and other state entities strengthen systems for collecting, analysing and disseminating disaggregated data, taking into account the SDGs and other priorities of public policies on children, women and families.

Indicator	Baseline	Target (by the end of 2025)	Actual (end of 2023)
Improvement of availability of data on vulnerable groups of children. The following 5 conditions are necessary: - The UNICEF/Washington Group module on child functioning is used in national censuses and/or surveys - Country reports on the percentage of children with disabilities aged 1- 17 who experienced any physical punishment and/or	<b>Partially met</b> – the new module on child functioning has been added to MICS, but the findings and quality assessment are not yet available. The 2015-16 MICS had quality issues with child disciplining data. Turkmenistan used the ECD index data from MICS to report on the SDG indicator 4.2.1. in its 2019 Voluntary National Review.	<b>Fully met</b> – data on all the five dimensions are available and updated through the 2023 MICS and/or census, administrative data and government reports.	<b>Partially.</b> Census data was published. The National Statistical Committee developed the SDG Portal.

<p>psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country using the ECD Index (MICS) or national equivalent to report on SDG target 4.2.1 (early childhood development)</li> <li>- Country reporting disaggregated childhood mortality data in line with international standards</li> <li>- Detailed data required for emergency preparedness, including disaggregated population data</li> </ul>			
Availability of disaggregated data from the new round of MICS	The fieldwork of the 2019 MICS was completed, but data analysis is going on. The MICS6 survey findings report is expected in 2020.	If there are no major issues with data quality, funding and Government ownership, the next MICS is planned to take place in 2023/24.	MIC7 completed. Data is being processed.
Existence of a national civil registration and vital statistics strategy(ies) which reflects recent international standards and principles for CRVS systems and are in line with the human rights conventions and protocols ratified by the State	No (A Law on Civil Registration has been adopted in 2020, that envisions creation of the system by 2022)	Fully met – Strategy/Road Map for CRVS system development is available	Partially met – System was drafted, Law is available, but Strategy is based on overall Digitalization of Economy Strategy and do not provide details. Road Map developed and shared for Government considerations

## Child Health, Nutrition and Early Development

**Output 2.1** - The Ministry of Health and Medical Industry strengthens capabilities, normative base and tools for planning, costing, implementing, quality-assuring and monitoring services for new-borns, young children and mothers, particularly in regions disadvantaged in terms of health outcomes and effects of climate change.

Indicator	Baseline	Target (by the end of 2025)	Actual (end of 2023)
Costed implementation plan for maternal, new-born and child health care which mainstreamed risk reduction/resilience,	<b>Score 2:</b> No. Current Plan ends in 2019. New one for 2020-2030 is drafted.	<b>Score 1:</b> Costed and budgeted 5-year Action Plan for the new RNMCH Strategy	The targeted Basic Benefits Package was not costed.

inclusive of climate change available			
Policy for home visits is developed and/or revised, adopted and in use	<b>Score 3</b>	<b>Score 1</b> - Yes, the home visiting policy is in-line with WHO/UNICEF Joint Statement on Home Visits	<b>Score 2.</b> The regulatory framework and list of required competencies for Home Visiting were revised by UNICEF experts in 2022. The M&E framework of HV is still under review.
Existence of a Multi-Year Plan (MYP) for immunization	Yes, Multi-Year Plan (MYP) costed for immunization 2016- 2020	Yes, Multi-Year Immunization Plan (MYP) for 2021- 2025 costed and regularly updated	Fully achieved in 2021.

**Output 2.2** - National partners strengthen their inter-sectoral coordination, implementation and monitoring mechanism to (i) reduce all forms of malnutrition among children, and (ii) address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women

Indicator	Baseline	Target (by the end of 2025)	Actual (end of 2023)
Implementation of programmes to improve diet diversity in children	<b>Score 1:</b> There is a draft of a new national Nutrition strategy for that includes prevention and interventions aimed at reduction of stunting in children under five years of age	<b>Score 2:</b> 1. National behaviour change communication strategy to improve the diversity and quality of diets of children aged 6-23 months 2. Initiatives to increase access to and use of diverse, local nutritious foods at the household level 3 Counselling activities to promote diverse diets for children aged 6-23 months	<b>Score 3:</b> The government implemented four to five programs on improving diverse diets for children aged 6-23 months. 97 per cent (69 out of 71) of Maternity hospitals and 18 per cent of Houses of Health (16 out of 90) are BFHI.
Number of health and nutrition workers trained to provide anaemia prevention and adolescent nutrition counselling services as per national standards	0 (2019)	75 national and velayat trainers on anaemia prevention and adolescent nutrition trained by 2025.	46 health workers trained
Integration of nutrition counselling in pregnancy care programmes	No	Yes	In progress. The protocols of nutrition counselling in pregnancy care were developed and translated into the national language. The next step is to include them as a part of antenatal protocols and the discussion between UNFPA and MOH on that is ongoing. (2022)

**Output 2.3** - The health system, including home visiting services and newly established early identification workforce, strengthens gender-sensitive, equitable and quality support to parents and families, to promote nurturing care as a prerequisite for optimal early childhood development.

Indicator	Baseline	Target (by the end of 2025)	Actual (end of 2023)
Percentage of districts (or similar administrative units) with health care facilities providing standard early intervention services to children under 5 with developmental risk, delay or disabilities	12 % Standard EI services initiated in Dashoguz, Mary and Turkmenabat cities, Koneurgench, Sakar and Yolotan etraps.	50% At least 3 etraps in Dashoguz, Mary and Lebap velayats, and at least one etrap in Akhal and Balkan regions.	20%
Health providers providing home-visiting services with adequate skills related to early detection and intervention for children with developmental risk, delay or disabilities	701 (2019)	1900	300 specialists trained in 2022

## Social and Child Protection

**Output 3.1** - State authorities at all levels further improve the social protection system and introduce community-based social service workforce to address factors of socio-economic vulnerabilities of children and their families, with a particular focus on girls and boys with disabilities.

Indicator	Baseline	Target (by the end of 2025)	Actual (end of 2023)
The existence of data and evidence on how social protection systems are responding to child poverty and deprivations (such as health, education, nutrition etc...)	Score 1 - There has been a partial assessment of part of the social protection system including a focus on child outcomes via MICS 5 and MICS 6, which also included a module on social transfers for the first time	Score 2 There has been both an overall system assessment of the social protection system, including an explicit focus on how it is responding to child poverty and system gaps.	Planned to start in 2024. Funding was a constraint. Core Diagnostics Instrument CODI was included in the Social Protection Joint program (JP). The funding for the JP was not received and jointly with UNRC the initiative is continuing. The JP and CODI assessment were discussed at UNCT retreat, and the interested UN Agencies were identified.
Social workers strengthened and connected to social protection system (case management, referral capacity development)	Score 0 - Social work is at the early stage of development as integral part of the social protection system	Score 1 Weak connection between social welfare workforce (to be established) and social protection system.	Score 0.5 Social work is being established and piloted within the system of social protection in every etrap of the country
Availability of inclusive community based social services ready to go to scale and compliant with international standards for social services including for child centeredness, disability inclusiveness and gender-responsiveness	No such services exist beyond emerging ECD services supported by UNICEF through the MoE and MoHMI and palliative care for the elderly/persons with disabilities	Community based social worker established in 5 Etraps with assessment and case management functions; 15 new services (with joint UN support) designed and 300 service users from the JP target groups targeted to receive services (By 2022)	45 social workers funded by state in 20 etraps.

Shock-responsive SP: Operational mechanisms are strengthened to adapt and/or expand in a timely manner during crisis (targeting and registration, MIS, coordination, monitoring, cash delivery system, complaints, communication, linking with complementary services, HR capacity)	Score1: There is no system. Currently there is an emergency fund to provide in-kind support to the families affected by emergencies; no cash transfers have been envisaged while the country has got a good system of distribution of benefits through cards	A mechanism and modality are agreed upon for using the existing cash transfer modalities for emergencies	Score 0.5 - Roadmap for development of operational mechanisms for responding to emergencies through the humanitarian cash transfer programmes of the social protection system is under development
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**Output 3.2** - State entities, including law enforcement bodies and child protection system elements, strengthen prevention and response mechanisms for addressing violence against children, as well as procedures and services for children in contact with the law (including as witnesses or victims of crime)

Indicator	Baseline	Target (by the end of 2025)	Actual (end of 2023)
Existence of legislation that recognize children's right to be heard in civil and administrative proceedings that affect them (in line with Article 12 of the CRC)	<b>NO.</b> It is assessed that such legislation is not in place, particularly for the administrative proceedings, although the exact baseline status is yet to be established	<b>YES.</b> Legislation exists with an explicit reference to children's right to be heard, including potential age limits	Review and Analysis of Legislative and Normative Frameworks of Turkmenistan concerning Children in Contact with the Law completed. Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code were proposed.
The existence of procedures and services for children in contact with the law are applied and delivered in line with international norms.	<b>NO.</b> The main focus of the reform in the country was children in conflict with law.	<b>YES.</b> Child-friendly investigation, trial and sentencing procedures by police, prosecutors, defence counsel and judges, including the use of specialized courts and special protection measures for <u>child victims and witnesses</u> are introduced.	A concept of child-friendly procedures for children in contact with the law was approved by the Ministry of Interior. 2 child-friendly rooms for investigations were established. 30 police officers. and prosecutor's office investigators were trained in forensic interviewing of children, and a methodology for protecting children in the criminal procedure was developed and agreed with the MIA
Country has a national, multi-sectoral plan(s) or strategy(ies) for coordinated action to prevent and respond to violence against children that meets key criteria for quality, according to status of plan.	No such plan exists.	The plan is in the development stage by the end of the CP	During the reporting period, a functional review of the referring bodies, including the Commission on Minors, was carried out as part of the CP assessment, and recommendations were made to the government of Turkmenistan. In 2022, technical support will be provided in the revision of the Regulations on the Commission on Minors (2021).

Existence of legislation prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment of children, by setting (all settings, and by setting: home, schools, alternative care settings and day care, as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions/detention, and as a sentence for an offence)	<b>Partially.</b> The legislation exists but does not explicitly prohibit corporal punishment at home. Requires further analysis.	<b>Fully.</b> The legislation prohibits corporal punishment in all settings.	In 2021, a CP assessment was carried out.
An alternative care policy in line with the 2009 Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children exist-	<b>Partially.</b> Some elements of the Guidelines have already been integrated.	<b>Fully.</b> All elements of the Guidelines are embedded into policies	By the end of 2022, a package of legal documents including the draft Regulations of the Commissions on Child Protection and Family Support was developed. An analytical note presenting the evidence on children in alternative care in Turkmenistan was developed and discussed with the government. Development of a draft concept for the development of an alternative childcare system has started.
Measures for prevention of juvenile delinquency and their re-integration tested in a pilot region, their effectiveness assessed and recommended for replication throughout the country (Action 5.2.1)	<b>Not available.</b> The evaluation of the State Programme on JJ found that while progress has been made in developing a child rights compliant law enforcement approach to handling juvenile delinquency, not all outcomes were achieved within the given timeframe. In particular, there is a need for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Community-based services.</b> Develop community-based services for diversion, rehabilitation and reintegration of children in conflict with the law.</li></ul> <b>Improve mechanisms for rehabilitation and reintegration.</b> Offer support to relevant authorities to improve the existing mechanism for rehabilitation, reintegration and resocialization of juveniles sentenced to custodial measures.	<b>Available.</b> New community-based services are being introduced. Further details of the target to be discussed with partners.	Guidelines on Diversion and Restorative Justice Approach were developed and shared with the government. Approval is pending.
Degree of development of the quality assurance system for social service work	Criteria (i) Normative frameworks	N/A	Criteria (i) Normative frameworks

	<p>Score 1: There is no normative framework</p> <p>Criteria (ii) System of supervision and support</p> <p>Score 1: There is no system</p> <p>Criteria (iii) System for licensing/accreditation of social work</p> <p>Score 1: Work has not started to define the system</p> <p>Criteria (iv) Data collection systems</p> <p>Score 1: There is no system</p> <p>Final assessment:</p> <p>Score of 4: No development</p>		<p>Score 2: Normative Framework and concept of intersectoral coordination mechanisms are in the drafting stages, including piloting for efficient realization of the Law on Social Services</p> <p>Criteria (ii) System of supervision and professional support</p> <p>Score 2: System is in early development stages including piloting</p> <p>Criteria (iii) System for licensing/ accreditation of social work</p> <p>Score 2: System in the early drafting stages including piloting</p> <p>Criteria (iv) Data collection systems</p> <p>Score 1: System is being devised, including piloting</p> <p>Final assessment:</p> <p>Score of 5-7: early development</p>
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## Quality and Inclusive Education

**Output 4.1** - The Ministry of Education, its sub-national structures and local authorities have necessary institutional, human resource, technical and material capacities to increase equity in access of all boys and girls, especially those with disabilities, to quality early childhood learning opportunities and free pre-primary education

Indicator	Baseline	Target (by the end of 2025)	Actual (end of 2023)
Existence of national policy, leadership and budget for early learning	<p><b>Score 3:</b> Provision of pre-primary education nation-wide is mandated; current coverage is 46 per cent with regional disparities in access to and quality of pre-primary preparation, budget allocation is inadequate.</p> <p>The Government is in the process of approving a proposal for nationwide pre-primary expansion by 2025 which includes costed and equity focused options for introducing one- year pre-primary preparation for all 5 years old children. However, the approval of the</p>	<p><b>Score 3.5:</b> One-year pre-primary preparation for all 5 years old children is mandatory with sufficient state budget allocated; the national pre-primary expansion plan ensures equity and access in line with the set targets</p>	<p>One-year half-day pre-primary preparation programme for 5-year-old children prepared in 2021.</p> <p>The MoE has submitted the national pre-primary expansion plan to the Cabinet of Ministers.</p>

	above proposal may be delayed, and it is not clear if the initiative can start.		
Existence of quality teaching and learning environments for early learning	<b>Score 2:</b> Continuum and links between pre-school, pre-primary and primary education curriculum are weak; pre-and in-service teacher training incorporates some components of child-centred and inclusive pedagogy; quality assurance and monitoring of early learning and pre-primary education is weak	<b>Score 2.5:</b> Pre-school and pre-primary education curriculum support continuum of holistic child development, school readiness and safe transition to primary education in line with child-friendly, age appropriate and inclusive teaching and learning. Pre- and in-service teacher training incorporate essential components of child-centred and inclusive pedagogy; institutional capacity to provide quality assurance and monitoring of early learning and pre-primary education is strengthened in line with international standards.	Score 2. Quality assurance and monitoring tools for early learning and pre-primary preparation were finalized in 2021. Selected pre-school professionals strengthened their capacity to support continuum between pre-school, pre-primary and primary guided by child-centred and inclusive pedagogy. The in-service training programs for pre-school professionals incorporate play-based learning methodology and monitoring check lists are used as part of the implementation of a half-day pre-school program.
Assessment and support of children with disabilities done using multidisciplinary teams, working under the social model of disability	<b>Score 3:</b> only a few multi-disciplinary teams nation-wide provide assessment and support of children with disabilities in a coordinated and collaborative manner with active engagement of parents/guardians and informed by the social model of disability. Monitoring system on children with disabilities and their families including tracking and data collection, monitoring progress, referral (and/or transition to mainstream education facility) of children with disabilities and their families, in line with the ICF, is initiated, but data on children with disabilities is poor and based on the medical model and 'defectology' based approach to disability. The current scope of multi-disciplinary service provision for children with disabilities and their families nationwide is not enough to ensure	<b>Score 3.5:</b> Multi-disciplinary teams of professionals are operational and provide support for children with disabilities and their families in line with social model of disability across selected mainstream and specialized facilities under education sector nationwide. Pre- and in-service training for disciplines required for multi-disciplinary support (psychologists, inclusive pedagogues, communication specialists, physical and occupational therapists) is institutionalized. Monitoring system on children with disabilities and their families in line with social model of disability is operational. Normative framework (guidelines, assessment and referral mechanism) in the education sector is aligned to support continuum of service provision across health and social protection sectors.	Capacity development for all multi-disciplinary teams nationwide has been ensured as planned. All 9 multi-disciplinary teams provide monitoring on children with disabilities and their families including tracking and data collection, monitoring progress, referral (and/or transition to mainstream education facility) of children with disabilities and their families in line with the ICF (2021). In-service training programmes (based on blended forms of learning) "preparation of trans-disciplinary specialist", "mental health for children of early age", "communication", required for multi-and trans-disciplinary support, are developed for further institutionalization in selected facilities (2022). Support to the State Medical University for initiation of in-service training programmes on EI, communication, mental health for children from an early

	<p>effective support towards inclusive education and overall social of children with disabilities and their families.</p> <p>Pre- and in-service training for disciplines required for multi-disciplinary support (psychologists, inclusive pedagogues, communication specialists, physical and occupational therapists) is not available.</p>		<p>age is provided. Joint inter-ministerial provision on EI is in process of piloting (2023).</p>
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**Output 4.2** - The education system further improves the quality of learning at primary and secondary levels, based on upgraded curriculum and introduction of more interactive and child-centred classroom practices that support the development of both functional and transferrable life skills and competencies, inclusion of children with disabilities, effective socialization of both girls and boys and their future adaptation to socio-economic and climate change risks.

Indicator	Baseline	Target (by the end of 2025)	Actual (end of 2023)
<p>Individual Education Plans available for children with disabilities and other special learning needs</p>	<p><b>Score 1:</b> Child-friendly standards including inclusiveness component that aim to guide implementation of inclusive education at mainstream schools are adopted but not operationalized. Schools do not identify the individual learning needs of children with disabilities and other learning difficulties</p>	<p><b>Score 2:</b> Child-friendly standards guide development of inclusive education in mainstream schools. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are prepared for children with disabilities across selected schools nationwide with support from multi-disciplinary teams and based on individual learning needs identified through assessment by a qualified professional. The child's progress is reviewed according to IEPs with adjustments to the goals made where necessary. The parents/guardians are strongly involved in development, implementation and monitoring the IEP.</p>	<p>Selected education professionals were trained principles of inclusive pedagogy as part of a series of 13 technical webinars on inclusive education (2021)</p>
<p>Policies available ensuring ALL children's right to be educated in mainstream schools</p>	<p>Score 2.5 - The Education Law ensures the right of all children including those with disabilities to be educated in mainstream education facilities, but also stipulates education of children with disabilities in special education facilities. There is no strategy or normative framework to ensure planning and implementing inclusive</p>	<p>Score 3.5 - Recommendations on aligning the Education Law with the CRPD principles are developed. The national concept of inclusive education provides a framework for cross-sectoral planning and implementing inclusive education policy with costed Plan of Action enforced in line with the agreed targets. Pre-service and in-service teacher training</p>	<p>National concept of inclusive education (IE) with the Action Plan was drafted (2021). The National Concept of Inclusive Education with an Action Plan developed, approval pending.</p>

	education policy. Pre-service and in-service teacher training does not incorporate inclusive education modules	incorporates modules on inclusive education. Capacity development plan is implemented to train and support teachers for further promotion of inclusive education in mainstream education nation-wide.	
Pre-service and in-service teacher training includes modules on diversity and inclusion issues	<b>Score 1.5:</b> Pre-service and in-service teacher training does not incorporate principles of child-centred and inclusive pedagogy. Child-friendly school standards are approved but are not operational to guide implementation of inclusive education across secondary schools.	<b>Score 2:</b> Pre-service and in-service teacher training incorporates modules on inclusive education and is linked to the national child-friendly standards that guide inclusive education at school and classroom practice. Capacity development plan is implemented to train and support teachers for further promotion of inclusive education at school level nation-wide. The national concept on inclusive education provides a framework for cross-sectoral planning and implementing inclusive education policy with costed Plan of Action enforced in line with the agreed targets.	
Existence of competency-based curriculum at primary and secondary levels	<b>Score 1:</b> Primary and secondary education curricula are not competency-based, learning outcomes and assessment approaches are not aligned with international standards. Teacher training does not incorporate competency-based curricula and assessment.	<b>Score 1.5:</b> Competency based curricula including learning outcomes and assessment approaches is developed for primary and secondary education. The curricula support quality and continuity in development of foundational, transferrable and job specific skills and competencies across primary and secondary education. Pre-and in-service teacher training includes some elements of competency-based curriculum and assessment approaches. Guidelines and materials are initiated to translate these into classroom practice.	The steps for initiation of the integration of competency-based approach with relevant assessment approaches for learning achievements in curricula were agreed with education stakeholders. UNICEF organized capacity-building training for 14 specialists who work in curriculum development. 17 teachers from pilot schools received training to strengthen their capacity in competency-based, interactive, and child-centred classroom practices (2021). Integration of the competency-based approach in education into the Maths, Turkmen language, and English language has begun (2022). Draft gender-responsive education manuals and educational robotics manual are developed and under review by the MoE.

National EMIS provides quality and timely data	<b>Score 1:</b> Education data is paper-based, and the quality is poor, while the data are aggregated at the central level. Children with disabilities are not tracked in mainstream pre-school and school facilities. The data are routinely used after the end of the school year.	<b>Score 2:</b> EMIS is piloted across the network of Ashgabat city schools. Education data includes detailed interconnected and disaggregated information on students, school staff and schools, as well as automated generation of indicators, automated reporting and dashboards as real-time data. The data captures all children including children with disabilities. EMIS provides various school management functions such as admissions, automated reporting, monitoring student progress.	Capacity-building activities were conducted and EMIS was installed on a test server. However, the MoE has not allocated a technical infrastructure to run a permanent server for installing a functioning EMIS. UNICEF will continue to advocate for ensuring technical means to host EMIS (2022). Draft EMIS regulations are sent to the MoE. The review and feedback of the Ministry is pending (2023).
Existence of curriculum incorporating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (added in 2022)	Score 1.5 – Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) curricula adopted but is yet to be implemented nationwide. School textbooks for interactive teaching and learning developed but not tested yet. Capacity development of teachers for interactive and child-focused teaching and learning is initiated. DRR is introduced in in pre and in-service teacher training, CCA is yet to be introduced. Adapted disability inclusive CCA and DRR materials not developed.	N/A	Incorporation of the CCA and DRR curriculum into the primary and secondary education has been initiated through publication and handing-over 5 environment-related Methodological Manuals for teachers. The Manuals enabled to strengthen the capacities of the teachers in practicing the interactive teaching and learning of the CCA curriculum. The revision of relevant textbooks and training materials is initiated through introduction of the Methodological Manuals. The Green School Programme complemented by the respective MoU has been prepared for signing (2023). The MoE endorsed the Methodological Manuals promoting climate change adaptation and DRR topics into primary and secondary education (2023).

## Annex 10. Data collection instruments

### Interviews with UNICEF CO staff

Related evaluation question	Interview questions
Intro and scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long have you been with UNICEF CO?</li> <li>• What is your role?</li> <li>• What CP areas and sub-areas do you work on?</li> </ul>
<p>Relevance</p> <p>1. To what extent has CPD priorities have been consistent with the priorities set in national policy frameworks, CRC Concluding Observations and SDGs guiding principles (human rights, gender equality, disability, and leave no one behind)?</p> <p>2. To what extent has UNICEF been effective (so far) in responding to the needs of all children including most vulnerable in planning and implementation of programme areas?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you been involved in the CP design?</li> </ul> <p>If yes,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the process of the CP design for your area?</li> <li>• What considerations informed the CP design in your area?</li> <li>• How were CP priorities identified for your area/sub-area when CP was designed?</li> <li>• What groups of children does the CP target in your area? Are there any vulnerable groups of children targeted?</li> <li>• How did you make decision about CP target groups in your area?</li> <li>• Did you consider any of the national policies when working on the CP design? Which ones? If yes - How did this inform the CP designed for your area?</li> <li>• Did you consider any of the CRC Concluding Observations? If yes - How did this inform the CP designed for your area?</li> <li>• Did you consider human rights, gender equality, disability, and leave no one behind principles when working on the CP design for your area? If yes - How did this inform the CP designed for your area?</li> <li>• Were there any changes in the national context in 2020-2024 that affected your CP area?</li> <li>• How did you address these changes in the CP design for your area?</li> <li>• Were there any changes in the needs of children groups targeted by your CP area?</li> <li>• How did you address these changes in the CP design for your area?</li> </ul>
<p>Effectiveness</p> <p>3. To what extent have the Country Programme results (as described</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What interventions were implemented in your CP area/sub-area?</li> <li>• What were the key results of these interventions?</li> </ul>

in the current CPD) been achieved so far as?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you see as your main achievements in your CP area/sub-area?</li> </ul>
4. What external and internal (including financial, human and other resources) enabling/restrictive factors affected UNICEF's progress? Were there any factors outside of UNICEF control that substantially affected the implementation of the CP so far? Could they have been better managed by CO?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How critical are these achievement for further progress in your CP area/sub-area?</li> <li>• What were the key factors, both internal and external, that enable achieved success?</li> <li>• What did not work as expected in your CP area/ subarea?</li> <li>• Did this result in any gaps in intended results?</li> <li>• How critical are these gaps for future progress in your CP area/ subarea?</li> <li>• Was your work supported by UNICEF communications? In what ways?</li> <li>• Was your work supported by UNICEF procurement? In what ways?</li> </ul>
Coherence 6. To what extent have UNICEF interventions worked in convergent ways to implement CPD priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you coordinate your work in your CP area/ sub-area with other CP areas?</li> <li>• What processes were used for this coordination?</li> <li>• In what ways did this cooperation affect results in your area?</li> </ul>
7. To what extent has UNICEF been coordinating its interventions with other key governmental and non-governmental actors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you coordinate your work in your CP area/ sub-area with other UN agencies, national stakeholders and CSOs?</li> <li>• What processes were used for this coordination?</li> <li>• In what ways did this cooperation affect results in your area?</li> </ul>
Effectiveness 5. How has UNICEF positioned itself among the most influencing stakeholders to achieve results for children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe UNICEF positioning in the country?</li> <li>• Did UNICEF positioning change in any ways in 2021-2024?</li> <li>• Do you see any strengths and weaknesses in UNICEF positioning?</li> <li>• Did this have effect on the CP implementation in your area/ subarea?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the key lessons that you have learned in the course of the design and implementation of the CP in your area/ subarea?</li> </ul>

## Interviews with national stakeholders

Related evaluation question	Interview questions
Intro and scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long have you been with this institution?</li> <li>• What is your role?</li> <li>• On what matters did you cooperate with UNICEF?</li> </ul>
<p>Relevance</p> <p>1. To what extent has CPD priorities have been consistent with the priorities set in national policy frameworks, CRC Concluding Observations and SDGs guiding principles (human rights, gender equality, disability, and leave no one behind)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you been involved in the UNICEF CP design?</li> </ul> <p>If yes,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the process of the CP design for your area?</li> <li>• What considerations informed the CP design in your area?</li> <li>• How were CP priorities identified for your area/sub-area when CP was designed?</li> <li>• What groups of children does the CP target in your area? Are there any vulnerable groups of children targeted?</li> <li>• How decision about CP target groups were made?</li> </ul>
<p>2. To what extent has UNICEF been effective (so far) in responding to the needs of all children including most vulnerable in planning and implementation of programme areas?</p>	
<p>Effectiveness</p> <p>3. To what extent have the Country Programme results (as described in the current CPD) been achieved so far as?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What UNICEF CP interventions are you familiar with?</li> <li>• In what ways you were involved in implementation of this interventions?</li> <li>• What were the key results of these interventions?</li> <li>• What do you see as the main achievements of these interventions?</li> </ul>
<p>4. What external and internal (including financial, human and other resources) enabling/restrictive factors affected UNICEF's progress? Were there any factors outside of UNICEF control that substantially affected the implementation of</p>	<p>Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How critical are these achievement for further progress in this area?</li> <li>• What were the key factors, both internal and external, that enabled achieved success?</li> <li>• What did not work as expected? Why?</li> <li>• Did this result in any gaps in intended results?</li> <li>• How critical are these gaps for future progress in this area?</li> </ul>

the CP so far? Could they have been better managed by CO?	
<p>Coherence</p> <p>7. To what extent has UNICEF been coordinating its interventions with other key governmental and non-governmental actors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know any government interventions that worked on the same issues as UNICEF?</li> <li>• If yes, were there any coordination between government interventions and UNICEF interventions?</li> <li>• Were there any synergies, duplications between government interventions and UNICEF interventions? Did these interventions hinder each other in any way?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know any interventions of other UN agencies that worked on the same issues as UNICEF?</li> <li>• If yes, were there any coordination between these interventions and UNICEF interventions?</li> <li>• Were there any synergies, duplications between these interventions and UNICEF interventions? Did these interventions hinder each other in any way?</li> </ul>
<p>Effectiveness</p> <p>5. How has UNICEF positioned itself among the most influencing stakeholders to achieve results for children?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe UNICEF positioning in the country?</li> <li>• Did UNICEF positioning change in any way in 2021-2024?</li> <li>• Do you see any strengths and weaknesses in UNICEF positioning?</li> <li>• Did this have any effect on the implementation of the UNICEF interventions you are familiar with?</li> </ul>
<p>Relevance</p> <p>1. To what extent has CPD priorities have been consistent with the priorities set in national policy frameworks, CRC Concluding Observations and SDGs guiding principles (human rights, gender equality, disability, and leave no one behind)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your opinion, how relevant are UNICEF interventions that you are familiar with to the national policies and priorities? Please explain your answer.</li> </ul>
<p>2. To what extent has UNICEF been effective (so far) in responding to the needs of all children, including the most vulnerable in planning and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your opinion, to what extent UNICEF interventions that you are familiar with respond to the needs of Turkmenistan children? Please explain your answer.</li> </ul>

implementation of programme areas?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the key lessons that you have learned in the course of the design and implementation of UNICEF interventions you are familiar with?</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what areas UNICEF could be useful in the next programme cycle?</li> </ul>

### Interviews with UNCT members

Related evaluation question	Interview questions
Intro and scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long have you been with this UN agency?</li> <li>• What is your role?</li> <li>• On what matters did you cooperate with UNICEF?</li> </ul>
Effectiveness 5. How has UNICEF positioned itself among the most influencing stakeholders to achieve results for children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is UNICEF role and position in the area where you cooperate?</li> <li>• In your opinion, what are the UNICEF key contributions in this area?</li> <li>• Did UNICEF positioning change in any ways in 2021-2024?</li> </ul>
Coherence 7. To what extent has UNICEF been coordinating its interventions with other key governmental and non-governmental actors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did any of interventions implemented by your agency work on the same issues as UNICEF interventions?</li> <li>• Were there any coordination between these interventions and UNICEF interventions?</li> <li>• Were there any synergies, duplications between these interventions and UNICEF interventions? Did these interventions hinder each other in any way?</li> <li>• Have you been involved in any of the Joint Programmes with UNICEF? What was the UNICEF role in management, coordination and implementation of these Joint Programmes?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you see any good practices and lessons learned emerging from your work with UNICEF?</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what areas you agency could cooperate with UNICEF in the next programming cycle?</li> </ul>