

Evaluation Title: Evaluation of UNICEF Ukraine Humanitarian Cash Transfer Programme

Region: Europe and Central Asia

Office: Ukraine Country Office

Evaluation Year: 2024

Person-In-Charge for Follow-up to Management Response: Satinderjit Singh Toor

Overall Response to the Evaluation: The evaluation of UNICEF Ukraine’s Humanitarian Cash Transfer (HCT) programme – which covered the period between March 2022 and June 2023 – was overall positively received by (and conformed to the expectations of) the Ukraine Country Office (CO). However, there were a few findings, recommendations and lessons learnt that the CO and Reference Group felt could have been phrased differently and could have better reflected the realities of the context and challenges of the humanitarian response on the ground. Subsequently, (many of) the findings and recommendations from the evaluation were also validated or fine-tuned by a joint HQ/RO HCT mission to UNICEF Ukraine in May 2024.

Planned Use of Evaluation:

The evaluation is intended to serve that its findings and lessons will be applied to future phases of UNICEF Ukraine humanitarian cash transfer (HCT) and social protection programming, to ensure more effective and gender-responsive results for Ukrainian children and their families. It is also intended to provide a coherent understanding and background of the socio-economic situation in Ukraine, with focus on poverty and vulnerability, which would help to set the scene for the discussion on how UNICEF Ukraine’s HCT programme affected outcomes for its beneficiary population and to identify gaps and provide recommendations on future studies and data needed on poverty, vulnerability and HCTs in Ukraine.

The final report will be available on the UNICEF internal EISI website. To promote transparency and learning*, an evaluation *summary* will be available on the UNICEF Ukraine CO website. It will also be disseminated through relevant evaluation and social policy networks. Accompanying products such as PowerPoint presentation, webinars and blog posts may be developed for wider dissemination. Dissemination products and the executive summary are expected to be produced in both English and Ukrainian.

* Due to the sensitivities related to some reference in interventions, the partially redacted version of the final report will be shared with stakeholders external to UNICEF who have been interviewed during the process of the evaluation.

The primary intended audiences for this evaluation are:

1. UNICEF Ukraine Social Policy staff with responsibility for designing and implementing social protection and HCT programming;
2. UNICEF Ukraine management, who have responsibility for overall programme management and coherence;
3. The Ukraine Ministry of Social Policy and other national government partners
4. Cash Working Group: International organizations and NGOs providing (and coordinating on) multi-purpose HCTs in the context of Ukraine.
5. Members of the households receiving UNICEF HCT support.

The secondary intended audiences include partner programme units at HQ and RO level including social policy/HCT programme team and EMOPS; UNICEF Ukraine staff overall, and key donors.

UNICEF Evaluation Management Response Template

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RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS:

Evaluation Recommendation 1: Human Resources, funding and systems

Considering the significant lessons which have been generated through the HCT response, it is important that the UCO retains organisational and programmatic HCT expertise. In particular:

- Include use of HCT in scenario planning in response to future shocks. Include a Donor strategy to raise awareness of the UCO's HCT capacity.
- Using lessons generated through HCT Evaluation, UCO can consider what might need to work differently in case of a future shock specific to HR recruitment, surge draw down or secondment opportunities, promote capacity building, and agree a plan to better maximise HCT experience between FO and Kyiv-based teams.
- There remains an opportunity for the UCO to consider programmatic entry points to collaborate on HCT, particularly focused on response preparedness in case of future shocks. Consider options for HCT to piggy-back on other Sector assistance targeting (should an online portal not be used in the future). Linked to this, the UCO would benefit from a focused discussion and comparison on the use of HCTs and / or in-kind in future emergencies and consider criteria to inform this decision. In particular, the value for money comparison between in-kind or HCTs.

Management Response: Partially Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

The second (sub)recommendation is more relevant for HQ/UNICEF's overall emergency procedures (and not necessarily a recommendation for the CO); and the fourth (sub)recommendation, on value for money, is outside the scope of this evaluation.

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Short-term: Enhance coordination and collaboration between the Cash Team, the Field Office(s) and the Emergency Team (through regular meetings, such as weekly or bi-weekly)	Country Office (CO) (Kyiv) Field Offices (FOs)	HCT Specialist; Emergency Coordinator; CFOs; Emergency focal points	31/12/2024	Completed	Evidenced by the recent/2024 successful HCT programmes: evacuation MPCA and cash-for-winterization, which was jointly implemented by cash team and field offices.	Meeting records; action points; CO Annual Report 2024; CSI Reporting
Medium-term: Document the agreed workflow, roles and responsibilities between the Cash Team and the Field Office(s) and between the Cash Team and other sections for sectoral cash assistance	CO (Kyiv) FOs	HCT Specialist; Emergency Coordinator; CFOs; Chief of Social Policy(SP);	30/06/2025	Not started		Documentation of Workflow and roles and responsibilities

		Chief of Field Operations; Section focal points.				
Long-term: Within the possibilities of available funding and assuming continued need for HCTs, ensure sufficient capacity of the HCT team to: a) adequately respond to shocks with emergency cash assistance; b) ensure timely implementation of the regular Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) programme; and c) support the sectoral use of the cash modality.	CO (Kyiv)	HR Manager Chief SP; Senior Management	15/03/2025	Completed	Addressed through the establishment of a NOB Cash Officer in the 2024 Programme and Budget Review (PBR) (recruitment is underway).	PBR decision and organigramme

Evaluation Recommendation 2: Targeting, design and adaptive capacity to context

Following the achievement of the UCO to deliver HCTs at scale, it is important that the UCO considers how it would target a response to future shocks informed by more specific needs information. In particular:

- UNICEF to consider ways in which large scale HCT programmes can bolster rather than inhibit agility and responsiveness to changes in the context, including the flexibility for stand-alone protection focused HCT payments.
- Building on UCO HCT lessons, and as part of response preparedness planning, the UCO can consider how it could scale up and down to shocks.
- Consider technical design based on evaluation lessons on vulnerability targeting (and how to implement and monitor this); options to have electronic or hybrid systems specific to protection related cases; consider entry points to work with and integrate HCT to other Sectors,
- Agree a system to document and disseminate technical and management decisions, within and beyond the UCO.

Management Response: Partially Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

There was disagreement within the Reference Group regarding the use of and prioritization of resources/capacity for ‘stand-alone protection focused HCT payments’, which is not necessarily within UNICEF’s HCT priorities and comparative advantage compared to other (humanitarian) agencies.

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Ongoing: Ensure the continuous incorporation of vulnerability-based eligibility criteria in the targeting of households for cash assistance with inputs from the FOs and relevant sections.	CO (Kyiv) FOs	HCT Specialist	31/12/2024	Completed	Participation in Ukraine Cash Working Group (CWG), application of agreed targeting criteria, reflected in 2024 : evacuation MPCA	Targeting section of the 2024 Cash Strategy

					and cash-for-winterization programmes.	
Ongoing: Continue to systematically document decisions related to the HCT programme.	CO (Kyiv)	HCT Specialist; Emergency Coordinator	31/12/2024	Completed	(UN-wide) Humanitarian Country Team Emergency Management Team (EMT) CMT	EMT action points and meeting minutes.
Short-term: Design and implement (complementary) sectoral-based cash assistance programmes in collaboration with the FOs/Emergency team and relevant sections (in line with CO's priorities).	CO (Kyiv) FOs	HCT Specialist; FO Emergency Specialists; CFOs; Emergency Team; Chief of Field Operations; Relevant Section focal points	31/12/2024	Completed	In 2024, UNICEF Ukraine implemented three sectoral-based cash assistance programmes: cash-for-winterization assistance; cash-for-CP caseloads (based on case management approach); and cash-for-WASH (monetization of hygiene kits)	Meeting records; action points; grant utilization; and reporting (5W/SitRep/CSI/RAM)
Short- to medium-term: Develop a Ukraine CO Cash Strategy for 2024.	CO (Kyiv) FOs	HCT Specialist, Chief SP, Senior Management	30/6/2024	Completed	2024 Cash Strategy developed and updated.	2024 Cash Strategy

Evaluation Recommendation 3: Monitoring and Risk Management

Based on the learning generated through the Evaluation, the UCO should review its monitoring, reporting, accountability and risk management systems to determine how these can be strengthened as there is more capacity following the peak of the response. In particular to prioritise the following in the event of future shocks:

- Consider alternate and diversified ways to i) diversify the range of IPs that undertake monitoring (i.e., continued opportunities to leverage other Section monitoring capacity); ii) increase monitoring capacity than being dependent on PDMs (i.e., consider targeted use of U-Report or other online and off-line tools) and iii) ensure outcome monitoring is in place than rely on process indicators for assessing the impact of cash programming.
- While efforts on PSEA and accountability efforts were being put in place by the end of 2022, there is equally an opportunity to review if these have been sufficient, and what other efforts might remain relevant to consider in the newly accessible and frontline areas.
- While risk management tools were applied through the HCT programme, it would be beneficial for the UCO to standardize risk reporting / risk measurement comparably between in-kind and HCTs. In particular, to ensure there are accountable decision-making processes in place for management respond to an identified risk, i.e., protracted insufficient HCT staffing.

Management Response: Partially Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: The post-distribution monitoring (PDM) tools of the HCT programme is comprehensive (with several rounds of review and enhancements) and also includes outcome monitoring.

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Short-term: Update the risk matrix for the HCT programme for 2025.	CO (Kyiv)	Risk & Compliance Manager, HCT Specialist	15/11/2024	Completed	The risk matrix for the HCT programme was updated by the Risk and Compliance Manager and the HCT Specialist in November 2024.	2025 risk matrix for HCT programme
Short- to medium-term: Introduce simplified two-way communication monitoring (e.g., through RapidPro) to collect more frequent feedback of affected populations and conduct more in-person/qualitative data collection when relevant/possible to diversify the types of monitoring undertaken for the HCT programme.	CO (Kyiv) with FO inputs	HCT Specialist; Chief Planning, Monitoring and Reporting (PMR); Emergency Coordinator; SBC Specialist; Evaluation Specialist	31/12/2025	Underway		PDM reports Field monitoring reports Accountability to affected population (AAP) feedback reporting

Medium- to long-term: Integrate outcome monitoring of the HCT programme into future evaluations.	CO (Kyiv)	Chief CRM-Evaluation, Chief SP, Chief PMR, Evaluation Specialist, HCT Specialist	31/12/2026	Not started		Evaluation reports
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Evaluation Recommendation 4: Linkages with Shock-Responsive Social Protection (SRSP)

With the anticipated increasing capacity and momentum, it will be important for UNICEF to lead the process of navigating the PeReHID Initiative towards longer term goals that improve the involvement of both central and local government, and development actors, in a planned contraction of humanitarian funding streams. This will be multi-faceted but should include some of the following:

- Placing the MoSP firmly in the driving seat. It will also be important that this capacity is transferred to the local authority level.
- Managing the mixed expectations in the PeReHID group. In particular, the Initiative should assist humanitarian agencies to transit out of large-scale emergency response (while maintaining some capacity to respond to new needs) in a positive way through SRSP development, while putting more emphasis on MoSP/government aspirations to reform the wider social protection system. Piloting approaches may help the former, in particular if they are sufficiently targeted at core system functions and are contextualised to the local level. Clear analysis of where the UCO should invest staff time and resources will be important.
- Ensuring, with the support of the Regional Office, that exit strategies (i.e., from reducing aid funding for HCTs), are planned in a meaningful way, and that they cover both policy engagement (in the example of UNICEF's leadership with the PeReHID Initiative) as well as a strategy and communication plan to phase out operational HCT assistance.

Management Response: Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Ongoing: Develop an exit/graduation strategy for the PeReHID Initiative.	CO (Kyiv)	Chief SP	31/3/2025	Underway	As recommended by the UN HC/RC, UNICEF is facilitating a phasing out of PeReHID, with relevant elements of its mandate and recommendations to be pursued under the Social Protection Sectoral Working Group, which is	PeReHID graduation/exit strategy one-pager

					co-chaired by the MoSP, FCDO and UNICEF.	
Ongoing/Long-term: Provide (and expand) technical assistance to the MoSP for them to continue leading the social protection (reform) agenda, including support to making the system more and more shock-responsive and supporting MoSP's ability to coordinate HCTs in Ukraine.	CO (Kyiv) with MoSP Social Recovery office	Chief SP Senior Programme Manager of the Recovery Office	30/04/2025	Underway	SPIRIT Programme (FCDO, UNICEF): Boosting of sectoral working group's (social protection) capacity, establishment of a UNICEF-led Social Recovery Office within MoSP	Workplans, Contracts, and Reports

Evaluation Recommendation 5: Results

The HCT programme became more effective as the operation evolved. Timeliness was a significant delivery issue for the UCO. As the country context remains fluid, retaining HCT operational capacity will be critical to strengthen preparedness for future shocks as much as evidence the UCO's SRSP broader offer on its operational lessons and national engagement:

- Should the UCO intend to provide HCTs in the future, a communication strategy for donors would be beneficial to disseminate UNICEF's operational experience in this area. This should take into account i) UNICEF's comparative offer, which will require further strategic planning to articulate; ii) the UCO's expertise and HCT capacity which can be scaled up/down to shocks; iii) geographical coverage with the option to build collaborative relationships with local authorities (i.e., linked to FO operations or SRSP roll-out); and iv) operational capacity to relaunch new online registration systems.
- Although efficiency has not been included as part of the study, more work is needed to design UNICEF's own cost benefit analysis approach, including between HCTs and in-kind supply, to inform the economic case of the relevance of HCTs – alongside, above or complementary to in-kind assistance in the Ukraine context

Management Response: Partially Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: Though UCO recognises the relevance of a cost/benefit analysis, including for the benefit of UNICEF HCT programming worldwide, the second part of the recommendation (on cost-benefit analysis) is outside of the scope of this HCT evaluation.

Actions planned	Responsible Office	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Medium-term: Develop a Programme Brief for the HCT programme, which details the evolution of UNICEF's humanitarian cash response, to highlight the scale, experiences, lessons learned and adjustments of the HCT programme from 2022 to 2024, along with framing UNICEF's comparative advantage and offer with the aim to use for 2025 advocacy and fundraising.	CO (Kyiv)	HCT Specialist Chief SP Partnerships Specialist / Manager	31/8/2025	Underway	Presentation developed and already presented to several donors	HCT programme brief for 2025 advocacy and fundraising

Approved by:

UNICEF Ukraine Country Office, Representative

Munir Mammadzade

Signature:

Date: