

Evaluation of UNICEF Interventions Supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia

FINAL REPORT

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Prepared by:

Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic, Team Leader

Blerta Perolli-Shehu, International Specialist

Erisa Yzeiraj Pereira, International Specialist and Evaluation Manager

Maja Gerovska Mitev, National Evaluator

Viktor Stojkoski, SILC researcher

Sophia Dunn, Quality Assurance

Kelechi Udoh, Evaluation Manager

Contractor: Konterra Group

Report Commissioned by: UNICEF North Macedonia

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List of Acronyms

ALMPs	Active Labour Market Programs
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CO	Country Office
CP	Country Program
CPD	Country Program Document
CPE	Country Program Evaluation
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Centres for Social Work
CWD	Children with Disabilities
DCC	Day-Care Centres
EM	Evaluation Manager
EPI	Evaluation Performance Indicator
EQ	Evaluation Questions
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESA	Employment Service Agency
ESC	Evaluation Steering Committee
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GD	Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEROS	Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System
GMA	Guaranteed Minimum Assistance
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
IFI	International Financial Institution
IR	Inception Report
ISA	Institute for Social Activities
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MIS	Management Information System
MLSP	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPAA	National Plan for Adoption of Acquis
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
PwD	Persons with disabilities
QA	Quality Assurance
RBM	Result-based management
RO	Regional Office

RRF	Results and Resources Framework
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOP	Standard Operations Procedure
TBD	To be determined
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations County Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNPSD	United Nations Strategy for Partnership for Sustainable Development
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WHO	(United Nations) World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the evaluation of UNICEF Interventions in support to the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia over the period between 2016-2020. The evaluation has both a summative perspective of the implementation of portfolio of social protection interventions, and a formative perspective to identify current bottlenecks and potential mitigation measures, to generate recommendations towards policy improvements and future UNICEF's support to the sector.

The overall goal of the 2016-2020 UNICEF Macedonia Country Programme (CP) was to support Government efforts in advancing the realisation of children's rights, with special attention paid to the most marginalised. Within this framework, social protection support interventions aimed to support integrated and child-sensitive social protection services, and cross-sectoral coordination to design, implement and budget for national social protection policies and measures. UNICEF's overall approved budget for the Social Protection Reform support interventions, was USD1.71 million.

Program Description

The interventions supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia covered a five-year period from 2016-2020 and aimed at supporting integrated and child-sensitive social protection services, as well as cross-sectoral coordination to design, implement and budget for social protection and policies. UNICEF aimed to work with duty-bearers to reform a fragmented and outdated social protection system to be more effective at tackling poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion. The intervention logic focused on adequate planning and delivery of social transfers, improved cross-sectoral coordination, and capacities to design, implement and budget for SP programs, and increased capacity to strengthen resilience of rights-bearers, including Roma and CWD.

The **Outcome** was that by 2020, an increased number of girls, boys and their families benefit from integrated and child sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion. The outcome would be achieved essentially through three outputs which were continuous over the reference period, and which focused on social transfers, cross-sectoral coordination, and capacity building, and streamlined budget allocations for child focused programming. Three SP actions were covered: (i) Legislative interventions - review existing legislation related to social protection and policies; identify gaps in legislation and propose amendments to support integrated and child-sensitive social protection services and develop new legislation to address emerging challenges and ensure comprehensive coverage of social protection programs; (ii) Supporting integrated and child-sensitive social protection services - conducting assessments of existing social protection services and programs and identifying opportunities for integrating social protection services to ensure comprehensive support for vulnerable populations, including children; and (ii) Cross-sectoral coordination to design, implement and budget for social protection and policies. The overall approved budget was USD1.71 million.

Evaluation purpose, methodology and limitations

The evaluation aimed to comprehensively assess UNICEF's contributions to social protection reform. As outlined in the TOR, had three main objectives: assess progress and UNICEF's contribution, evaluate programmatic commitments, and progress, and analyse cross-cutting strategies and mainstreaming. The evaluation assessed UNICEF's contribution to the two major changes introduced in the country's social protection system in the period 2016-2020: 1) reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services (i.e., Day care centres); and 2) the introduction of case management in the centres for social work.

The evaluation followed the 2019 OECD Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability¹, the Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), and the 2018 UNICEF Evaluation Policy and the principles of 'do no harm'. The evaluation was theory-based and used a mixed-methods approach drawing on three main sources of information: pre-existing documentation, pre-existing quantitative or qualitative information and primary qualitative and quantitative information. Primary qualitative data was gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, and site observations involving stakeholders at central, regional, and local levels. Primary and secondary quantitative data was collected through online surveys with Case Workers (CSWs) and reviews of data from UNICEF's and national statistics, as well as the Statistical Data from the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC). The analysis of collected data included descriptive and comparative quantitative analysis, thematic narrative analysis, qualitative iterative data analysis,

¹Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

quantitative EU- SILC data analysis, and contribution analysis. All methods were triangulated both internally and across methods as feasible.

The immediate users of the evaluation findings and recommendations include several internal and external stakeholders, representatives of whom will be part of the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG). These include UNICEF North Macedonia Country Office (CO) who commissioned this evaluation, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), the Institute of Social Affairs and Centres for Social Work (CSW) and other implementing and development partners, and donors.

The evaluation faced delays and rescheduling, partly due to prolonged finalization of the inception report. The Evaluation Team (ET) encountered challenges in obtaining complete historical financial records, leading to gaps in the analysis. UNICEF's insights into efficiency helped fill some gaps, but incomplete work plans affected the depth of the efficiency analysis. Additionally, lack of baselines for certain indicators and absence of historical data for some outputs posed limitations. The ET attempted to reconstruct baselines and conducted remote interviews with donors and partners. A field mission in North Macedonia was undertaken, but availability issues impacted organizing all planned focus group discussions. Stakeholders provided insights beyond social protection measures, but these were not included in the report's scope, although considered in broader impact analysis.

The Main Evaluation Findings

Relevance: The design and implementation of UNICEF's social protection support measures were informed by thorough analyses and were responsive to the needs and observed system bottlenecks. Evidence was critically important for both UNICEF and national counterparts to invest efforts in promoting reform priorities, and to tackle important programmatic directions set forth in UNICEF's CPD 2016-2020². UNICEF's support to the implementation of the 2015 legislative amendments for introducing functional disability assessment based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) was also critical. UNICEF's engagement in reforms of social transfers and the introduction of case management in CSWs were also considered to be extremely important of ensuring that the most vulnerable children and their families have information and access to needed social benefits and protection.

Coherence. The internal coherence within the program provided a coordinated approach to social protection reform. Synergies and coherence were also found between the SP and other CPD intervention areas, notably child protection, education, and health. UNICEF's partnership approaches prioritize cooperation with government and collaboration with other development partners.

Effectiveness. UNICEF effectively contributed to the social protection reform agenda by utilizing its core roles and strategies. Their analytical work identified bottlenecks and key reform priorities, informing legislative drafting. UNICEF's efforts led to the adoption of the Law on Social Protection, improving case management, access to welfare benefits, and disability rights protection. They facilitated a shift to a unified Guaranteed Minimum Assistance system, increasing child beneficiaries of cash transfers and reducing child poverty. UNICEF enhanced staff capacities in social protection institutions and supported the introduction of a case management system in all centres. They diversified social services, introducing innovative options like personal assistants and supported living. Despite successes, operationalization of these initiatives in certain areas requires further attention and consolidation. UNICEF also promoted inclusion and implemented ICF assessments for children with disabilities in North Macedonia.

Efficiency. UNICEF had a well-balanced portfolio of regular funding, grants, and human resources to support Social Protection initiatives, and the budget was fully utilised. Implementation was timely and on-track against the set indicators. The social transfers, cash benefits and child allowance were the most efficient initiatives to addressing the issue of child poverty and leveraging investments and partnership with other key actors in the country.

Sustainability: While changes in legislation and institutional practices achieved through the reform of social protection system in North Macedonia present strong drivers of the sustainability of results, lack of follow-up actions and fragmentation of policies hinder sustainability. The trend of decreasing financing of child protection benefits since 2021 creates a poverty trap for children born in low-income families. The evaluation found that institutional structures are largely in place to sustain levels of achievement. However, sustainability of interventions such as case management is conditioned upon the availability of financial and human resources,

² UNICEF (2015); Country Programme Document 2016-2020

and capacity of local government units to underpin the case management approaches by social services.

Impact: The social protection reform in North Macedonia resulted in improved coverage, targeting and adequacy of social assistance. The system is more effective now in reaching the most vulnerable children and their families. The evaluation found positive impacts of reformed social assistance measures on the access to rights for the most vulnerable children and their families. Other reformed social assistance measures have also had positive impacts on the most vulnerable. UNICEF supported the Government in introducing protocols and manuals for professionals on case management and adjustment to the terms of reference for social workers in CSW to better reflect the use of case management in practice. However, most stakeholders indicated additional need for training and specialization. Grants for financing of social services at the local level by the MLSP and the central registry of licensed providers of social services were univocally identified as good examples for promoting further local social service provision.

All targets under Outputs 1, 2 and 3 were achieved and exceeded. The drafting of the new Law on Social Protection replaced the fragmented system of child benefits with GMA and introduced new social support and care services and tools. Capacities of social welfare professionals in the field of social work case management were strengthened, although this is an area requiring further systemic intervention to strengthen capacities and coordination. The cross-sectoral approach, supporting the training of professionals from different sectors in applying the disability assessment based on ICF and piloting in in Skopje was effective. Lastly, the newly added indicator on child focused government budget allocations is considered useful for monitoring completion of preparatory work and internal capacity building.

The Main Evaluation Conclusions and Recommendations

Relevance

Conclusion 1: Over the reference period, UNICEF's social protection programme effectively addressed crucial unmet needs among the most vulnerable rights-holder groups and played a vital role in supporting national social protection reform initiatives.

Strategic Recommendation (SR) 1. Support evidence-based decision making and oversight of reform of social protection to help the government to reduce indiscriminate social protection and improve equal treatment within the child benefit system. Priority: HIGH. Responsible party: UNICEF.

Operational Recommendation (OR) 1.1 Continue supporting evidence generation efforts under social protection through initiatives such as commissioning research studies, analyses, etc. to help inform policies and resource allocations under social protection domain.

OR 1.2 Support the State Statistical Office to provide regular and updated monitoring of the effects from the social protection and monitoring of the social protection spending.

Coherence

Conclusion 2: By adopting a multi-dimensional approach that operates at different levels and through various pathways, such as advocacy, policy, technical assistance, capacity strengthening, and material support, the program effectively integrated and complemented other UNICEF components.

SR 2. Maximise the potential of available resources within UNICEF by strengthening linkages, mutual leverage, and synergies between social and child protection to enhance results and holistic approaches. Priority: HIGH. Responsible party: UNICEF.

OR 2.1 UNICEF teams, notably social – and child-protection, should explore further synergies and ways on how to deepen mutual leverage of their interventions to ensure that the budgets that are available are maximised in favour of holistic approaches to child rights protection.

Effectiveness

Conclusion 3: UNICEF's multifaceted interventions, including advisory, capacity strengthening, and evidence-based modelling, have successfully influenced policy, legislation, and service provision in North Macedonia, but the challenge now is to ensure sustained positive outcomes amidst a volatile political context, with notable barriers including the fiscal and administrative constraints across the sector, overburdened CSWs and worsening socio-economic conditions of the most vulnerable amid global economic crises.

SR 3. Support the government's efforts to devise and implement specific strategies for optimization of fiscal planning, organization, and implementation of social protection interventions, ensuring that they address the remaining gaps to ensure adequacy and equity. Priority: HIGH. Responsible party: UNICEF.

OR 3.1 UNICEF should envisage technical assistance in support to the capacity strengthening of social protection policy makers and implementers on equity-centered, program-based and performance-informed budgeting to strengthen links between policies, program delivery and budget. UNICEF's positive practices and models should serve as foundation of this support.

OR 3.2 Assist the government to consider policy alternatives for increasing the value of child allowance and replace the administrative based value of the child allowance with a relevant reference standard that will be indexed for inflation and thus contribute toward reducing the high at risk of child poverty rate.

OR 3.3 Assist the government to design policy alternatives for re-establishment of progressive income taxation or for identifying other fiscal space alternatives that would benefit the most marginalized families and children

OR 3.4 Advocate for universalization of the child and educational allowances to help improve child poverty rate and reduce early school leaving in light of the high child poverty rate in the country.

OR 3.5 Ensure consistent follow-up actions and streamline processes for implementation of the above-mentioned policies within social protection system to enhance long-term sustainability

SR 4. UNICEF should support the government to review the case management model and ensure that preconditions (institutional infrastructure, human and financial resources) are in place in CSWs for them to apply case management. Priority: HIGH. Responsible party: UNICEF.

OR 4.1 UNICEF should assist the government to adapt the case management model to ensure it is feasible and implementable in CSWs by critically reviewing the model and adapting it to CSW reality, in particular in larger municipalities where backlog of cases is higher.

OR 4.2 UNICEF should invest in further training on case management and integrated delivery of social services, as well as investment in enhancement of CSW infrastructure.

SR 5. Government should review and revamp Day care centres to ensure their full utility. Priority: HIGH. Responsible party: Government - MoLSP. UNICEF to provide support as applicable.

OR 5.1 Prioritize the diversification and innovation of services, transitioning from traditional DCC structures to more community-based, individualized options.

OR 5.2 Reformulate the current DCC standards, emphasizing the "best interest of the child" principle, ensuring they cater more effectively to children with disabilities.

Efficiency

Conclusion 4: UNICEF's program efficiency was underpinned by its strong team expertise and resource mobilization capabilities, as evidenced by their well-balanced funding portfolio and rigorous oversight, though the program's adaptability introduced monitoring challenges.

SR 6. UNICEF should develop agile monitoring systems at that can adapt to the program's flexibility. This would include real-time data collection, analysis and feedback mechanisms that can keep pace with the potential changes in the programs. Priority: MEDIUM. Responsible party: UNICEF.

OR 6.1 Establish a periodic review mechanism to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs and of monitoring systems. UNICEF should develop a monitoring framework that is designed to adapt alongside the programs, to ensure that monitoring efforts remain relevant and accurate despite the evolving nature of the initiatives.

Impact and sustainability

Conclusion 5: The outcomes and sustainability of the SP initiatives exhibit a mixed picture. On the positive side, there have been notable gains in terms of extending coverage and enhancing the equivalency of GMA and child allowances. However, the absence of coordinated efforts to align cash benefits with other concurrent policy developments, such as minimum wage increases, limited the broader impact and sustainability of these reform efforts. Additionally, while the introduction of case management and subsequent training initiatives bolstered the foundation for integrated social service delivery, the inadequate investment in CSW infrastructure and human resources represents a significant hurdle to the overall progress of the Social Protection reform results.

SR 7. Facilitate intersectoral dialogue between government institutions and other actors dealing with social protection, health, education, and finance to ensure multidimensional needs of the most vulnerable children and their families are met. Priority: MEDIUM. Responsible party: UNICEF.

OR 7.1 Facilitate collaboration and sharing between the health, education, and social protection public, private institutions, civil society, and development partners to promote participatory policy making practices in the social protection domain, to ensure that resulting policies are mutually coherent and not overlapping.

SR 8. Continue advocating with the government on the need to reform CSW modalities of work and to ensure financial framework for reforms in this domain. Priority: HIGH. Responsible party: UNICEF.

OR 8.1 Support further reforms of social protection system by advocating for critical assessment of CSW institutional and financial frameworks in North Macedonia and how the structures can be improved to provide services and protection of the most vulnerable more adequately.

Lessons Learned

Lesson learned 1: Investment in and access to credible evidence base is critical prerequisite for strong policies. Addressing unmet needs of children by generating evidence helps enhance quality, depth, and credibility of resulting policies.

Lesson learned 2: Openness and collaborative approaches among development partners present helpful and appropriate support to government's reform ambition. Investing in collaborative approaches adds value in promoting human-rights-based approaches and aid effectiveness.

Lesson learned 3: Successful reform implementation is dependent on the workforce. Capacity development of staff in key sectors is key to successful reform, as is staff motivation and good performance.

Lesson learned 4: Tangible and transformative support requires systemic approach, long-term funding, cross-sector coordination, and coherent collaboration with development partners over a prolonged period. Well-coordinated and consistent work with the government, development partners and field expertise over multiple sectors is needed for national level transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The UNICEF Country Office (CO) in North Macedonia commissioned an evaluation of UNICEF Interventions Supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia as an opportunity for the CO and other relevant UNICEF stakeholders to benefit from an independent assessment of UNICEF's performance and contributions to the social protection sector reform in the country.

In line with the requirements in the Terms of Reference (ToR) (Annex 1), the evaluation assessed UNICEF North Macedonia's contribution to the Social Protection System reform in North Macedonia during 2016-2020. The evaluation has both a summative perspective of the implementation of the portfolio of social protection interventions, and a formative perspective to identify current bottlenecks and potential mitigation measures, to generate recommendations towards policy improvements.

The **immediate users** of the evaluation findings and recommendations include several internal and external stakeholders, representatives of whom are part of the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) (See ERG ToR in Annex 2). These include UNICEF North Macedonia, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP), the Institute of Social Affairs, Centres for Social Work (CSW), implementing and development partners, as well as donors. The **wider audience** for the findings of this report includes service providers at the local level, civil society organizations representing rights of the most vulnerable groups, and wider social groups.

1.1 CONTEXT

Demographics

The Republic of North Macedonia is an upper middle- income country located in Southeast Europe. The country has a population of 1.8 million, of which 50.4 percent are female³. The country is divided into eight statistical regions, covering 80 municipalities.

In recent years, North Macedonia has experienced a negative population growth, of -0.4 percent⁴ which, coupled with an aging population and high emigration rate, has decreased the working age-group from 71 to 60 percent⁵. According to the latest government statistical report, since the period of 2011-2021 the population aged 65 and up has increased from 11.8 percent to 17.2 percent⁶. This means the population is aging, but with fewer people in the workforce to earn an income to support the elderly. There are also less children being born, which contributes to the trend of a shrinking workforce. The fertility rate decreased from 2.2 in 1991 to 1.5 in 2019⁷. The country has also experienced a decrease in marriages by 9.5 percent in the last decade while the number of divorces has increased by 12 percent⁸. These changes may have impacted on the low birth rate as 80 percent of children are born within wedlock.

The population is largely composed of ethnic Macedonians (58.4 percent) and other ethnic minority groups, including Albanians (24.3 percent), Turks (2.5 percent), Roma (1.3 percent), Serbs (0.87 percent) and Bosnians (0.47 percent)⁹. Ethnic minorities, especially, Albanian and Roma, face slightly different demographic trends, with higher fertility rate and household size. Minority groups are also experiencing higher vulnerabilities in comparison to the ethnic Macedonian population.

Economy

North Macedonia has a relatively stable economy which is strongly integrated in the EU and Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)¹⁰ area. In 2020, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was dominated by the services category at 55 percent, followed by mining, manufacturing, construction at 22.8 percent and lastly agriculture, forestry, and fishing at 8.6 percent¹¹. The economy is however affected by a lack of consistent legal framework that enables effective operations for businesses and a lack of implementation of market laws. The informal economy also continues to represent a hindrance to the market in terms of competitiveness and sustainability. Recent data shows that 14 percent of the working population are informally employed, of which more than half

³ INSTAT, North Macedonia in figures, <https://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/2022/MK-brojki-2022-en.pdf>

⁴ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/MK>

⁵ World Bank, Social Protection Situation Analysis, 2021

⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/MK>

⁷ World Bank, Social Protection Situation Analysis, 2021

⁸ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/MK>

⁹ <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/03/30/north-macedonia-census-reveals-big-drop-in-population/>

¹⁰ UN 2020, North Macedonia Common Country Analysis for the 2021-2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

¹¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/MK>

are engaged in work¹². Overall employment rate in North Macedonia is 66.3 percent. However, there is a distinct gender gap in the labour market where only 48.2 percent of women are engaged in labour compared to 69.7 percent of man. The country has seen stable growth in the employment rate, mainly due to reforms by the Employment Service Agency (ESA) including the Active Labor Market Programs (ALMPs).

Long-term unemployment is high, with job seekers being unemployed on average for over 12 months. This is an improvement from past years where the average unemployment period was 23 months (in 2014)¹³. Youth unemployment also remains high at 34.1 percent¹⁴. There is a mismatch of skill set and market needs as well as outdated technology which further concerns the overall labour market. Furthermore, the labour market shows both regional discrepancies and gender inequality. The northeast of the country has triple the rate of unemployment compared to other regions in the country, at 35.9 percent unemployment rate¹⁵. These and other issues have shaped the political and institutional environment, such as the health and structure of the economy, demographic pressures, and national factors (i.e., increase in socially disadvantaged groups).

Multi- Dimensional Poverty

North Macedonia has the third lowest poverty rate among Western Balkan countries. According to the World Bank, poverty rate (based on the upper middle income class poverty line) has shown a significant decrease from 41 percent in 2009 to 21 percent in 2018¹⁶. The at-risk-of-poverty rate also decreased from 35 percent in 2009 to 21.8 percent in 2018¹⁷.

The country's Gini Index which measures income equality across the country has declined from 33.6 percent in 2016 to 31.4 percent in 2020¹⁸. However, there is a notable inequality among the most vulnerable rights-holders¹⁹, with ethnic minorities, Albanian, and Roma population, multiple-children- households, and single-parent households all facing higher at-risk-of-poverty rates.

According to the latest government statistics, an average household spends 67.2 percent of its income on their basic needs such as food, clothing, and housing. Increased family revenue, due to a rise in income, pensions, and social assistance, has led to increased numbers of households with adequate housing, access to water supply and basic sanitary conditions²⁰.

Education: North Macedonia has achieved universal literacy; however quality education remains a challenge as identified by the low scores in the International Student Assessment (PISA) between the period of 2015-2018. Access to early childhood education in the country has improved at 67.4 percent. However, there is notable disparity in attendance among the poorest quintile (7.4 percent), ethnic groups (Albanians at 14.1 percent, and Roma and other ethnicities at 9.8 percent). Also, children in rural areas have a lower attendance than children in urban areas²¹.

School dropout is also more pronounced among ethnic minorities and in urban settings. Secondary education has higher out-of-school rates particularly among the poorest quintile and Roma. There is no gender disparity shown in relation to school dropout.

Health: North Macedonia basic immunization coverage is at below 90% (2020) according to official information from the Institute for Public Health²², however in recent years there is an immunization hesitancy among parents for children 0-35 months of age at 7.89 percent. This is more prevalent among urban (12.06 percent), richer (34.67 percent) and better educated adults (17.08 percent)²³. After a reversal in 2017, the infant mortality rate continues to decline with the current rate of 5.7 deaths in 1000 live births in 2020²⁴. Maternal mortality has also reduced from 12.7/100,000 live births in 2014 to 5.2 in 2020. Obesity is a growing concern among school-aged children with 38.4 percent of boys and 32.9 percent of girls being overweight²⁵.

Child Protection: North Macedonia signed the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) in 1993. The country's

¹² World Bank, Social Protection Situation Analysis, 2021

¹³ <https://tradingeconomics.com/macedonia/long-term-unemployment-rate>

¹⁴ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=MK>

¹⁵ World Bank, Social Protection Situation Analysis, 2021

¹⁶ World Bank, 2022, Poverty and Equity Brief, https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_MKD.pdf

¹⁷ State Statistical Office, Laken Poverty Indicators in 2020 < https://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2022/4.1.22.40_mk.pdf>

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Children and/or families

²⁰ UN 2020, North Macedonia Common Country Analysis for the 2021-2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

²¹ Ibid

²² <https://zdravstvo.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Programa-za-zadolzhitelna-imunizatsija-na-naselenieto-vo-Republika-Severna-Makedonija-za.pdf>

²³ Multidimensional Child Poverty in North Macedonia

²⁴ UNICEF 2021 Annual Report

²⁵ Ibid

legal framework to protect children is strong with several key strategies and laws such as the National Strategy on Deinstitutionalization for 2018-2027, the Family Law and the Child Protection Law²⁶. Despite this, 73 percent of children ages 1-14 years in 2019 experienced some form of physical or psychological punishment by their caregivers²⁷.

North Macedonia has successfully transitioned from large-scale residential institutions to foster care and kinship care, and small group homes. Children in these large residential institutions have been transferred to alternative services such as group homes, supported living facilities or foster families. Three centres for support of foster families have been established in the country, two of which are government owned. Despite the progress, several challenges remain regarding children deprived of parental care due to limited capacities of alternative care services and limited geographical spread of these services, limited number of foster care families and limited specialized training for these families.²⁸ Children with disabilities face even more obstacles to be placed into foster care.

Children with disabilities face several social and cultural barriers which inhibit their integration in daily life. As part of the deinstitutionalization agenda and to further support the no-children in large institutions strategy, the MLSP instituted day-care centres (DCC) as alternative forms of care for children with moderate and severe mental and physical disabilities and their families. DCCs are fully government funded centres whose management is subordinated to the CSWs. The centres are designed to serve small groups of children, 5-18 years of age, providing them with quality of care, and other psychosocial rehabilitation and counselling services.²⁹ However, their design model is not based on tailored needs of the children with disabilities particular to their area. DCCs are also utilized by both rights-holders posing child safeguarding risks³⁰. Furthermore, DCCs are not well inter-linked with other sectors providing services in the municipality. Thus, these centres act more in social isolation which further marginalizes these children³¹.

Gender: North Macedonia has adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and has set up adequate legislation in place to ensure gender equality. However, the implementation of the legal framework is lacking. The country faces gender disparity in the labour market with high inactivity among rural and ethnic minority women. Gender based violence is another issue in the country, with Roma girls being most vulnerable to it and early child marriage. Traditional gender norms which normalize some form of abuse at home and place the women at the centre of the home are more prevalent among ethnic minority groups. Ethnic minority women are also underrepresented in the political life and participate less in local-policy and decision making³².

Overview of Social Protection system

North Macedonia has a comprehensive social protection system based on four main pillars: 1) social assistance (cash transfers), 2) social services, 3) social insurance (pensions) and 4) labour programs. The legal framework for Social Protection is grounded on the constitutional right to assistance. Social Protection is led by the MLSP which is responsible for the planning, regulating, and financing of the social protection system, the Institute for Social Activities (ISA) which sets standards and supervises social service providers and the ESA which is responsible for labour market policies. At the local level, social protection system is implemented through the CSW, municipalities, and other providers³³. A summary of the 2019 Social Protection System in Macedonia is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. A SUMMARY OF THE 2019 SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM IN MACEDONIA

Category		Benefits and Programs
Social Assistance	Cash transfers to support the poor, the vulnerable and persons with disabilities	Guaranteed Minimum Assistance (means-tested)
		Child Allowance
		Education Allowance (means-tested)
		Parental allowance (means-tested)
		Disability allowance
		Compensation for assistance and care for another person
		Compensation of part-time salary

²⁶UNICEF 2019, Analysis of the Situation of Women and Children in the Republic of North Macedonia

²⁷ <https://data.unicef.org/country/mkd/>

²⁸Bogoevska, Bornarova, and Georgievska, 2023. Transformation of Out-of-Home Services for Children in North Macedonia: Towards Individualized and Child Tailored Care. https://revistia.org/files/articles/ejss_v6_i1_23/Bogoevska.pdf

²⁹ Open the Window, 2020, Report on the Necessity to Design New Day Care Services

³⁰ Dunn, A. 2018 Review and Recommendations for Change: Day Care Centres and Services for Children with Disability

³¹ Ibid

³² USAID 2019, North Macedonia Gender Analysis Report

³³ World Bank, Social Protection Situation Analysis, 2021

Category		Benefits and Programs
		Housing allowance (means-tested)
		Permanent compensation (means-tested)
		One-time financial assistance
		Social Assistance for the elderly
		Healthcare insurance (for those uninsured by other means)
Social Services		Information and referral services
		Professional assistance and support services
		Counselling Services
		Home Services
		Community Services
		Out of family care services
Social Insurance	Pensions	Solidarity Pay
		Mandatory pillar based on individual accounts
		Voluntary private open and occupational pension funds
Employment and ALMPS		Individual counselling
		Intermediation
		Unemployment benefits
		Active Labor Market Programs (ALMPs)
		Entrepreneurship support
		Internship Program
		Financial Support for job creation
		Wage subsidy
		Work engagement
		Training for a well-known employer
		Training for demanded occupations
		Advanced IT skills training
		Youth Guarantee
		Labor Market Activation of vulnerable group projects

Source: Ozen et al., *Social Protection Situation Analysis*, World Bank 2021

North Macedonia has high spending in social protection systems in the Western Balkans however it is well below European standards. The largest spending is on social insurance at 9.9 percent of the GDP (2019), and 1.2 percent for social assistance (2018). Spending on social assistance is below the average of Western Balkans³⁴. As a result, the pre-reform Social Financial Assistance (SFA) impacted poverty reduction by only 3 percent³⁵.

The legal framework, since the last overhaul in 2009, the SP system has evolved into a major reform in 2019 to revamp social protection services in the country. Prior to the 2019 reform, social protection services were fragmented, and services were incoherent and did not target the most vulnerable.

The 2019 reform of Social Protection brought significant change to the delivery of social assistance with the aim to improve user experience by providing integrated social protection which targeted the holistic needs of a family. The new reform introduced the Guaranteed Minimum Assistance (GMA) Scheme to improve targeting, coverage and adequacy of the social assistance, the new Integrated Case Management approach, a means-tested social pension for over 65 years old, and a new educational allowance and new child allowance³⁶.

Social Assistance (cash transfers): Since 2019, social assistance operates in complementarity with the other cash benefits from social and child protection. As a result, low-income families can receive higher financial support in a more targeted way. This approach coupled with the reduced spending on non-effective measures, led to an increase in coverage of families benefiting from Child Allowance and other benefits (Figure 2).

Another major achievement from the 2019 reform was the introduction of disability assessment of children and youth based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) which enables the assessment of disability in a holistic and coordinated way, and links children in need with support services in the field of social protection, health, and education. This is a significant change from the pre-reform where children and youth were assessed on a medical basis only. The ICF-based disability assessment for children and youth was piloted in 2019 and the pilot disability assessment bodies were taken over by the state in 2021, and further

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ 2020 Integrated Social Protection Systems, North Macedonia Case Study.

³⁶ World Bank, *Social Protection Situation Analysis*, 2021

expanded with UNICEF support. A new expert team for coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the functional assessments of Children and Youth under 26 Years Old, has been set up.

Social Services were expanded in the 2019 Social Protection Law with new provisions such as respite care, kinship care etc., while strengthening the legal provisions on existing services in social prevention, rehabilitation and integration, counselling³⁷. A major milestone of the 2019 reform was the introduction of the Integrated Case Management approach which assessed the multi-dimensional needs and vulnerabilities on a family basis. This also ensured an integrated user experience where users would have one point of contact for all the different social services eligible and the key poverty fighting cash benefit – the Guaranteed Minimum Allowance. The 2019 Law also created an enabling environment for the delivery of social protection assistance at the municipality level³⁸. Integrated Case Management integrated a collection of information both on cash benefits and social services on a household needs basis. The management information system to support case management was designed to integrate the two previous existing information platforms, dating back to 2008: *CB-MIS* which was funded by the World Bank to support cash benefits, and *Lirikus* which was supported by UNICEF to effectively record and follow-up delivery of social support and care. Despite the significant progress made, the implementation of the Integrated Case Management remains a challenge. The lack of technical capacity, work overload of the CSWs and a need to re-organize the structure and shift the mentality from various points of contact to one single case manager for a family, remain a challenge in the adequate implementation of this service. North Macedonia has currently 30 CSW serving all municipalities countrywide.

Labor Market Programs (ALMPs): The Employment Service Agency (ESA) is responsible for supporting jobseekers' transition back to the labour market. ESA offers vocational training opportunities and supports youth transition from their education to job opportunities as well as wage subsidy, internship, self-employment, and public work programs opportunities. ESA has closely collaborated with CSW through the Labor Market Activation of Vulnerable Groups pilot project, to specifically target GMA recipients providing individualized support to access labour market opportunities. The services provided by ESA are an important way to address unemployment, however, bureaucratic accreditation processes limit the timely delivery of these services.

Sustainable Development Goals

While North Macedonia adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the National Strategy for the Sustainable Development 2009-2030 does not include all aspects and integrated approach of the 2030 Agenda. This is because the National Strategy was developed before the formulations of the SDGs and no revisions have been made to the National Strategy since. However, the country has prepared its first Voluntary National Review, setting draft SDGs indicators and a baseline for sustainable development. These indicators remain in draft form and are not streamlined within the national strategies³⁹.

North Macedonia has embarked on the EU accession process. The country's policymaking is heavily influenced by the EU integration agenda. However, stronger integration with the EU accession reform and SDGs is needed given that two-third of the agendas between the SDG and EU priorities for the country are fully aligned⁴⁰. The country has developed several documents such as the Government Program 2021-2025, the Economic Reform Program 2020-2022, and the annually updated National plan for Adoption of Acquis (NPAA), which among other things, address reforms related to the SDGs and the EU accession agenda. Currently, the long-term strategy for the SDGs – the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 addresses indicators and target for the SDGs and EU integration, needed to accelerate progress.

Other challenges for the implementation of the SDGs include the lack of political consensus, as well as low level of awareness among local government authorities. In 2018, the National Council for Sustainable Development prioritized SDGs 1, 4, 8, 13 and 16 which largely correspond with the UNDAF 2016-2020 (relevant framework for this evaluation) priority areas as well.

COVID-19

In addition to the health crisis, COVID-19 brought a decrease in the economic growth in North Macedonia with the real GDP declining by 4 percent due to the impact the restrictions had on domestic and external market demands⁴¹. According to 2022 data, the unemployment rate stood at 14.8 percent while youth unemployment rate remained high at 34.8 percent. The war on Ukraine and the energy crisis has also presented a new challenge

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ UN 2020, North Macedonia Common Country Analysis for the 2021-2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

for the economy as the country is facing all-time high inflation rates⁴².

The pandemic also negatively impacted children, in terms of its social and economic impacts. The schools in North Macedonia were closed for 54 weeks compared to the 14-week average in Eastern Europe and Central Asia⁴³. Among other things, the country also experienced an increase in domestic violence cases and children being subject to some form of abuse and neglect.

To address some of the challenges caused by the pandemic, the government of North Macedonia amended legislation to relax the eligibility criteria for GMA, reducing the paperwork required for the application process and processing applications through a unique registry which linked several key government agencies together. As a result, the government was able to expand the coverage through the social assistance program by 25 percent so that families can receive adequate and critical support⁴⁴. The rules of some of the other cash-benefits (e.g., the educational allowance), were also relaxed, and additional temporary social transfers were introduced. The overall socio-economic impact of C-19 and the temporary support measures introduced as part of the response make it difficult to assess the impact of the 2019 reform.

1.2 THE OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

Object of the Evaluation

The object of this evaluation is UNICEF's contribution to the Social Protection System reform in North Macedonia during 2016-2020. This strategic thematic evaluation aimed to examine UNICEF's contribution to the two major changes introduced in the country's social protection system in the period 2016-2020: a) reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services, and b) the introduction of case management in the centres for social work.

The 2016-2020 UNICEF Macedonia Country Program (CP) overall goal was to support duty-bearers⁴⁵ efforts in advancing the realization of children's rights, with special attention paid to the most marginalized rights-holders: Roma children, CWD and child victims of violence and abuse⁴⁶. Within the CP, UNICEF's work on the social protection component sought to strengthen the country's capacity to improve inclusive access to integrated social protection services that tackle poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion⁴⁷.

Based on the Theory of Change (ToC) and the Results and resources framework (RRF) of the CP, the interventions supporting the Social Protection Reform covered a five-year period from 2016-2020⁴⁸ and aimed at supporting integrated and child-sensitive social protection services, as well as cross-sectoral coordination to design, implement and budget for social protection and policies⁴⁹.

The CP was linked to the United Nations National Strategy 2016-2020 for Partnership for Sustainable Development (UNPSD) and directly supported three of its outcomes: Social Inclusion, Governance, and Gender Equality. UNICEF aimed to work with duty-bearers to reform a fragmented and outdated social protection system to be more effective at tackling poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion. The approach was to focus on both the 'social transfers' and 'social services' sides of the system, to eventually provide an integrated response to families with children in need⁵⁰.

Programmatic scope: Three SP actions were covered: 1. Legislative interventions - review existing legislation related to social protection and policies; identify gaps in legislation and propose amendments to support integrated and child-sensitive social protection services and develop new legislation to address emerging challenges and ensure comprehensive coverage of social protection programs; 2. Supporting integrated and child-sensitive social protection services - conducting assessments of existing social protection services and programs and identifying opportunities for integrating social protection services to ensure comprehensive support for vulnerable populations, including children; and 3. Cross-sectoral coordination to design, implement and budget for social protection and policies.

Budget: The overall approved budget for the Social Protection Reform support interventions, approved by the

⁴² World Bank, 2022, Poverty and Equity Brief,

https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_MKD.pdf

⁴³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/impact-education-disruption-europe-and-central-asia-march-2022>

⁴⁴ World Bank, 2022, Protecting North Macedonia's Poorest from Covid's Economic Impact

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2022/03/24/protecting-north-macedonia-s-poorest-from-covid-s-economic-impacts>

⁴⁵ Government and/or service providers

⁴⁶ TOR Evaluation of UNICEF Interventions Supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia

⁴⁷ Annual Report 2016

⁴⁸ UNICEF Outcomes/Outputs and Indicator status report states 01 Jan 2016 as starting date and 28 Feb 2021 as end date

⁴⁹ UN Country Program Document 2015

⁵⁰ Annual Report 2016

Executive Board, was USD1.71 million (USD800,000 from regular resources, and USD910,000 other resources). Based on the UNICEF Outcomes, Outputs, and Indicator Status, USD455,478 was used for expanding coverage and increasing adequacy of child benefits schemes as part of a concerted effort to improve the country's social protection system and reduce child poverty; USD509,779 was utilized for supporting the country's social welfare workforce through capacity development; USD737,184 was utilized for supporting emergency affected populations. According to the indicators report there was no progress on Output 3, and no funds were utilized⁵¹. Table 2 below outlines the budget expenditures for the Social Protection Reform support interventions.

TABLE 2. OVERVIEW OF BUDGET EXPENDITURE FOR THE SOCIAL PROTECTION REFORM SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS

		Funds	Utilized (%)
Outcome Total budget		\$1,702,441	100%
Output 1- All indicators		\$455,478	100%
Output 2	Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are used to follow up on social protection delivery/system	\$329,770	100%
	Other social protection programs ARE adapted to address child poverty and deprivation (such as access to affordable childcare, health insurance, etc.)	\$180,009	100%
Output added in 2018 but discontinued following SMR	Refugees and Migrants boys and girls and other emergency affected populations supported (not included in CPD 2016)	\$518,223	100%
Output added in 2018	Programmatic outreach to vulnerable communities, including in emergency preparedness and response (not included in CPD 2016)	\$218,961	100%
Output 3- (not included in CPD 2016)		\$0	0%

Source: UNICEF Outcomes/Outputs and Indicator status by Region/Business Area as of 4 October 2022

Intervention logic

Aiming to reach more beneficiaries in integrated and child sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion, the intervention logic focused on adequate planning and delivery of social transfers, improved cross-sectoral coordination, and capacities to design, implement and budget for SP programs, and increased capacity to strengthen resilience of rights-bearers, including Roma and CWD.

The interventions to support social protection reform, focused on systemic change by supporting governance reforms towards the development of a national social protection system, with the intention to bring about accelerated change in the way that social protection supports families across North Macedonia. The initial achievements in addressing child poverty are also based on the thorough transformation of the cash benefits schemes to which UNICEF heavily contributed, in partnership with the World Bank. The Government's comprehensive reform of the social protection and welfare systems aimed to curb high child poverty rates and lift households out of poverty through effective social transfers and support services.

UNICEF's previous study on child benefits system had identified inconsistencies faced by the most vulnerable rights-holders in accessing social benefits and found that neither child protection and development nor prevention of family poverty are prioritized within the social protection system. There was a general inadequacy of budget allocations, low budgetary transparency and no effective monitoring and evaluation. There were also a few bottlenecks identified by UNICEF that informed the new support interventions for paving the way towards an integrated social protection system. The interventions were set to work towards the establishment of an integrated social protection system that would not focus only on the disbursement of cash transfers but link them effectively with services provided by other sectors (child protection, health, education, etc.).

In 2018, UNICEF North Macedonia conducted a light strategic review of the 2016-2020 Country Program, together with the government and civil society partners (See Annex 3 with an overview of changes made within the framework of the Light review). As a result, outputs and indicators were added and UNICEF accelerated support to reforms addressing major systemic bottlenecks to child wellbeing⁵². Consequently, Output 3 was amended, and three new outputs were added (not included in the CPD). All three new outputs were later discontinued after the

⁵¹ UNICEF Outcomes/Outputs and Indicator status by Region/Business Area as of 4 October 2022

⁵² Country Office Annual Report 2018

SMR due to lack of activities or funds or needs.⁵³ They are therefore not included in this evaluation.

One of UNICEF's core activities was the support to policy analysis on child poverty and multidimensional deprivations and disparities, and generation of knowledge and data on marginalized children.

UNICEF supported the Government in the full operationalization of the new social protection system, in the development of protocols and manuals for professionals on case management, adjustment of the terms of reference for social workers in centres for social work to better reflect the use of case management in practice and delivery of advanced case management training to all social welfare professionals in the country. The interventions were part of a broad collaboration of UNICEF with the MLSP.

Furthermore, the intervention sought to strengthen the capacity of the national social protection system to improve the resilience of children and their families through stronger linkages with child protection services, early learning, education, and health services, and building the capacities of the social protection system to provide inclusive services to CWD and their families by promoting a social model for assessment of disabilities. Finally, the intervention sought to improve the design and administration of social transfers for children and their families, with a special focus on improving the coverage for the most marginalized children⁵⁴. The Theory of Change for Social Protection is included in Annex 4.

Outcomes and outputs

The **Outcome** is that by 2020, an increased number of girls, boys and their families benefit from integrated and child sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion. The outcome would be achieved essentially through three outputs which were continuous over the reference period, and which focused on social transfers, cross-sectoral coordination, and capacity building, and streamlined budget allocations for child focused programming. The main activities under these three outputs included:

Output 1 is that social transfers are adequately planned, delivered, financed, and monitored to reach the most marginalized children. This included:

- Actions to adopt legislation to enforce reform in the country's social protection and social welfare systems, focused on consolidating the cash benefit system and making sure that child benefits have increased coverage and adequacy.
- Introducing new social support and care services and tools to manage social welfare's system response to the growing needs of vulnerable parts of the population⁵⁵.
- Support for the government in assessing the performance of the current cash transfer programs, identifying reform options as well as fiscal space, with the aim to identify programs that were not reaching the poor and were mainly targeting households in the higher income quintiles.
- Identification of administrative barriers to allow more households to benefit from several programs.

Output 2 is improved cross-sectoral coordination and capacities to design, implement and budget for social protection services and programs. The focus of activities was as follows:

- Support for CSWs, the country's main social protection hubs, by re-qualifying their workforce. UNICEF focused on working with the government to further develop the capacities of all social welfare professionals in the field of social work case management.
- Development and delivery of a comprehensive training program for continuous professional development of social protection professionals in partnership with the Institute for Social Activities (ISA)⁵⁶.
- Support to government to introduce protocols and manuals for professionals on case management and adjusting the terms of reference for social workers in CSWs to better reflect the use of case management in practice.
- Delivery of advanced case management training to all social welfare professionals in the country's 30 CSWs, paired with a mentoring program designed to help social workers introducing case management in their work routines.
- Social contracting- A cost-benefit analysis and a regulatory impact assessment on the introduction of this model was conducted to support introduction of 'social contracting' as a modality for social service delivery.
- Support to further advance towards switching to functional assessment based on the

⁵³ **Output 4:** Refugees and Migrants boys and girls and other emergency affected populations supported (no indicators); **NEW:**

Output 5: Government budget allocations for child focused programming increased and streamlined; and **Output 6:** Programmatic outreach to vulnerable communities, including in emergency preparedness and response (COVID)

⁵⁴ UNICEF Outcomes/Outputs and Indicator status by Region/Business Area as of 4 October 2022

⁵⁵ UNICEF Outcomes/Outputs and Indicator status by Region/Business Area as of 4 October 2022

⁵⁶ Annual Report 2016

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. This included training and mentoring on ICF-based functional assessments, support to create the legislative basis for the switch to the new disability assessment model, as well as support to setup multidisciplinary assessment teams and advocacy for takeover of the system by the Government. UNICEF also supported fifteen workshops to present the new model for functional assessment to service providers – including CSW, schools and kindergartens – as well as parents in the three targeted regions.

Output 3 is that government budget allocations for child focused programming is increased and streamlined. This output was added under this outcome in late 2018, following the mid-term review of the country program. As such, beyond preparatory work and internal capacity building, no significant funding was secured to support the implementation of specific activities under this output. In 2020, UNICEF strengthened its work in this field by supporting the efforts of the government in increasing public investment for children, through budget expenditure analysis and the publication of budget briefs for child-related social sectors⁵⁷. UNICEF also conducted significant analyses, including budget briefs (2018) and public expenditure analyses in 3 sectors (education, social protection, and health). The 2020 UNICEF MK analysis of socio-economic impacts of C19 also included fiscal aspects, as well as analysis of expenditure changes in key child sensitive sectors.

2. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

2.1 MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

Per the TOR, the evaluation is focused on both **accountability and learning**, and had three objectives, specifically:

- To identify the progress made so far in the implementation of the social protection reform subject to this evaluation, and overall contribution of UNICEF to the reform.
- To assess against UNICEF programmatic commitments and overall progress of the reform the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and to the extent possible progress toward the impact of the UNICEF contributions to the reform of the cash benefits schemes and services, and the introduction of the case management in the centres for social work.
- To identify the extent to which cross-cutting strategies such as human-rights based approach, results-based management, analysis of child vulnerability and gender equity have contributed and have been mainstreamed in the interventions and reform's processes to identify lessons learned and make recommendations for interventions' adjustments required to improve and accelerate the effective and sustainable implementation of the cash benefits schemes and services, as well as social work case management in the next years to ensure that children and families are cared for and supported.

2.2 EVALUATION SCOPE

Thematic scope

1. As noted above, the evaluation assessed UNICEF's contribution to the two major changes introduced in the country's social protection system in the period 2016-2020: 1) reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services (i.e., Day care centres); and 2) the introduction of case management in the centres for social work.

Time period

The evaluation covered the period between 2016-2020.

Geographic scope

The Social Protection interventions were national in scope. They focused on systemic change by supporting governance reforms towards the development of a national social protection system. UNICEF engaged with partners to address bottlenecks in the design and administration of the social protection system and to further advance the rights of children to quality social protection and poverty reduction⁵⁸. Hence, the evaluation also covered the entirety of the reform interventions and UNICEF's respective support to the reform.

Cross cutting areas

The evaluation prioritized human rights, equity, and gender equality as key criteria that were mainstreamed across

⁵⁷ UNICEF Outcomes/Outputs and Indicator status by Region/Business Area as of 4 October 2022

⁵⁸ Annual Report 2017

all evaluation questions (EQ). This allowed assessing the extent to which human rights, child rights, disability inclusion and gender equality and equity had been addressed within the program.

Evaluation framework

The evaluation matrix (Annex 10) was developed following the DAC criteria and UNEG standards responding to relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and initial impact (to the extent possible given the relatively short timeframe after the reform). Particularly, as stipulated in the TOR, “UNICEF initiatives toward policy developments related to the cash benefits schemes and services, as well as introduction of the case management in the centres for social work, including the set of laws, strategies, regulations formulated, and capacities built in respect to social protection system reform” were assessed.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 EVALUATION DESIGN AND APPROACH

The evaluation methodology was guided by the Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)⁵⁹ and the 2018 UNICEF [Evaluation Policy](#),⁶⁰ and employed a theory-based approach, whereby the primary focus of the assessment is on understanding cause-effect interactions between SP reform and UNICEF's contributions. The theory-based approach employed in this evaluation sought not only to identify successful outcomes of UNICEF's support to the reform but also to comprehend the underlying drivers, successes, and hindrances. To establish a robust theoretical framework, the Evaluation Team (ET) reconstructed the intervention logic underpinning UNICEF's contributions to the SP reform during the reference period (See the reconstructed Intervention logic in Annex 4). The intervention logic served as the cornerstone for both qualitative and quantitative research, as outlined in the evaluation matrix (Annex 10). The evaluation matrix, aligned with the intervention logic, provides a structured framework for data collection and analysis. It enables the assessment of whether the anticipated mechanisms operated as hypothesized, shedding light on the specific conditions that facilitated their effectiveness. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of not only what worked but also why and how it worked within the context of UNICEF's contributions to the SP reform. In line with the approach, the assessment of UNICEF's contributions was based on assessment of outputs, outcomes, and wider transformative potential as per the reconstructed intervention logic and related judgement indicators that were included in the evaluation matrix for each evaluation question.

The evaluation applied a mixed-method approach⁶¹, i.e., a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The primary qualitative and quantitative data collected by the ET related to four dimensions: i) Qualitative information from a wide range of stakeholders at the central level (national Government institutions, UNICEF, UN agencies, development partners, civil society and other central level stakeholders) regarding UNICEF's contributions to the social protection reform collected through interviews, focus group discussions (FGD) and site observations; and ii) quantitative data collected through online survey with CSWs and the review of quantitative data available in UNICEF's and national statistics and reports, but also through the review of the SILC statistical data.

The sampling for the interviews employed a purposive and diverse approach, ensuring a comprehensive representation of stakeholders involved in Child and Social Protections. Participants were selected from a wide array of sectors and organizations to capture a holistic view of the subject matter. The sample included Representatives from UNICEF sectors specializing in Child and Social Protections; Representatives from regional and local level government bodies, including Ministries, National Institutes, and Municipal duty bearers; Directors of CSWs; Key stakeholders from relevant UN agencies, partners, and donors; Representatives from Social Protection NGOs operating at both national and local levels and Direct Service Providers: In addition to interviews, the data collection process involved on-site observations of social services and CSWs in action. This method allowed for a first-hand understanding of the challenges faced and the impact of social protection initiatives on communities. The combination of interviews and on-site observations added depth to the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Field data collection covered 6 municipalities to collect views of authorities, service providers and communities (See Figure 1 with overview of visited communities and Table in Annex 5). The sampled municipalities were chosen based on the following criteria: one municipality per region; their urban/rural location; their multiethnic character; the regional poverty rate; implementation of case management in the CSW and functional day care centre for children/persons with disabilities. Out of eight country regions, the sampling included municipalities from six

⁵⁹ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

⁶⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/>

⁶¹ See Stern et al (2012), “Broadening the range of designs and methods for impact evaluations”, DFID, Working Paper 38.

regions (Skopje region, East Region, Northeast region, Southwest region, Southeast region and Polog Region). Out of them 4 are urban (Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo and Strumica) and 2 rural (Debar and Delcevo) municipalities. All the selected municipalities are multi-ethnic municipalities. Three of the selected regions are among those with highest multidimensional poverty rates based on calculations of Multi Indicator Cluster Survey (2018-2019). The Eastern region has the highest multidimensional poverty index i.e. 6.08%, closely followed by the Polog and Skopje regions with 4.32% and 3.89%, respectively. In the Southeast region every fourth child under the age of 5 is multidimensionally poor. Based on the official statistics, in 2021 the Northeast region had the higher at risk of poverty (AROP) and highest at risk of poverty and social exclusion rate (AROPE) with 38.7% and 59.6% respectively. In all Centres of Social Work in the selected municipalities the case management is effectively implemented. All selected municipalities have day care centres for children/ persons with disabilities.

FIGURE 1. SAMPLED COMMUNITIES

Source: Free World Maps, <https://www.freeworldmaps.net/europe/macedonia/macedonia-cities-map.jpg>

⁶² Annex 5 Interview guides

TABLE 3. OVERVIEW OF PLANNED AND REACHED KEY INFORMANTS

	Key Informants	Focus groups				Online survey
		No. of focus groups	Total number of respondents	Focus group with Parents of children with disabilities, clients of day care centres	Focus groups with Professionals (social workers, etc.) and service providers	Centres of Social Work
Planned	40	3	30	10	20	26
Achieved	65 persons (53 women, 12 men) reached through 38 Key informant interviews	10	24	0	24	30

Data analysis

The ET undertook a comprehensive data analysis exercise with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous exercises, including using interactive record management to help organize the main findings and evidence. The analysis of collected data included descriptive and comparative quantitative analysis, thematic narrative analysis, qualitative iterative data analysis, quantitative EU-SILC data analysis, and contribution analysis. All methods were triangulated both internally and across methods as feasible.

In line with the participatory approach, the ET held a debriefing session with the CO team while in the country, and then follow-up meetings to check facts and further validate the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Key ERG stakeholders had the opportunity to comment on the draft report. Their comments and inputs were integrated in the final draft report.

Data reliability and other limitations

The evaluation experienced delays and rescheduling, due partly to the long finalization process for the review of the inception report. The ET did not get full details of or other historical records relating to the financial allocation and utilization of funds for the portfolio. This was mitigated by following up with the UNICEF CO team to provide their insights into efficiency, which informed the analysis. Some outstanding gaps remain with regards to availability of amended work plans for the reference years, which affect the depth of efficiency analysis.

Another limitation pertained to the lack of baselines for some indicators, lack of historical data on some outputs within the respective outcome areas which were changed during the reference period. To mitigate this, the ET attempted to reconstruct baselines where possible. However, the lack of historical data on some outputs (e.g., migration related output) could not be mitigated. The evaluation was implemented by using hybrid approach, by which some team members conducted remote interviews with donors and other development partners. The ET also conducted field mission to Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia and sampled communities. However, not all focus group discussions could be organized due to availability limitations. This was mitigated by following up with interlocutors per email, which helped collect more feedback.

During the interviews, many stakeholders provided insights into wider reform achievements beyond specific social protection measures in scope of this evaluation (e.g., deinstitutionalization, foster care, child protection, health, education, etc.). These insights were not included in this report due to the scope of the evaluation but were considered in the wider impact level analysis.

Any potential biases that could affect interviews (e.g. use of language, or conducting interviews in multicultural setting) were mitigated by ensuring that interviews are held in native language of the respondents in-country, while English was used for interviews with international stakeholders. Time constraints were also identified as a potential challenge, but the team mitigated this challenge by arranging interviews at times acceptable for key

informants to allow for ample time for consultations.

Ethical considerations

Adhering to the United Nations Evaluation Ethics Principles: The ET abided by the 2016 UNEG norms and standards, the 2007 UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct and the principles of 'do no harm'. The ET ensured that the gender lens of the evaluation was integrated by ensuring adequate representation of gender considerations in the evaluation processes and assessment of results. The humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality, credibility, conflicts of interest, and accountability were safeguarded in the development of findings and recommendations.

In conducting this research, the evaluators strictly adhered to ethical guidelines and obligations to ensure the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants involved. The following explicit ethical protection actions were carried out (i) Clear Information- Participants were provided with detailed information about the study purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits before obtaining their consent (ii) Voluntary Participation- Participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without consequences (iii) Data Anonymity- all data collected were anonymized and stripped of any identifying information to protect participants' confidentiality and were securely stored with restricted access only to authorized personnel, ensuring confidentiality and preventing unauthorized use or disclosure. Interviews and interactions were conducted in a respectful, non-coercive, and non-discriminatory manner, fostering a safe space for participants to express their views. Cultural norms and sensitivities were respected, ensuring that questions and interactions were culturally appropriate and respectful of diversity. By following explicit ethical protection actions and a rigorous process, the evaluators ensured that the research was conducted with the utmost integrity, transparency, and respect for the participants' rights and well-being. Verbal consent was asked from all stakeholders that were consulted within the framework of this evaluation. Children were not involved in this evaluation, hence the Ethical Clearance from the Ethics Review Board (ERB). was considered as not needed by UNICEF.

4. KEY FINDINGS

This section presents the evaluation findings against the key evaluation questions, and their related judgment indicators in response to evaluation objectives. The synthesis findings were derived from detailed analysis of the overall strategic framework of UNICEF's work in North Macedonia and social protection support interventions specifically over the period between 2016-2020. The responses to evaluation questions present triangulated findings from comprehensive document review, information received from various stakeholders and site observations as well as online survey with CSWs.

4.1 RELEVANCE

EQ 1. How relevant were UNICEF's interventions to the needs of the children and their families, especially to the most vulnerable children?

And

EQ 2. To what extent do UNICEF's intended outcome and the relevant outputs address the priorities identified in the national strategic documents relevant for social protection of children including the National Strategy to Reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion (2010-2020) and the Employment and Social Reform Program 2020?

Finding 1. The design and implementation of UNICEF's social protection support measures were informed by thorough analyses and were responsive to the needs and observed system bottlenecks (supply - government social protection) and analysis of demand for social protection (vulnerabilities, access to rights and services by right holders).

Evidence generation efforts

As an EU candidate country, North Macedonia has been advancing its systemic reforms, including reforms of social protection system, across all different pillars. Analysis of historical records of UNICEF's engagement in North Macedonia (i.e., review of existing evaluations and reports pertaining consecutive UNICEF country programs, other

reports, and studies of the social protection sector) shows that UNICEF has offered stable and reliable support to the government in these reforms, providing technical assistance and advisory to the government in shaping the reforms and their directions.

A review of social protection programming documentation and reports shows UNICEF's efforts to base the program on extensive analyses of critical bottlenecks in the system's targeting and coverage approaches as well

as vulnerabilities of various categories of population (see adjacent box for overview of such publications). Relevant evidence generation efforts also included analysis, advocacy, and support for developing alternative forms of social services for children with disabilities, such as Day Care Centres (DCC). For instance, the Assessment of alternative forms of care and family support services for children with disabilities that was conducted in 2016,⁶³ noted several areas of improvement of Day Care Centres services, which served as advocacy and evidence base for changing approaches to this service. The study found that the DCCs' were located only in bigger cities and were available for 9.8% of all children with disabilities. The study also outlined that transportation was a concern, with limited availability, coverage, and timing issues at many centres. Additionally, most DCCs had low to medium transport accessibility and operated only until 2 p.m., restricting caregivers' work opportunities. The study also emphasized the need to expand social support services and ensure affordable early care for children in poverty-stricken families.⁶⁴

These documents helped identify inconsistencies and challenges faced by the most vulnerable in accessing social benefits, services and rights and recommended specific legislative reforms. Also, UNICEF called for cross-sectoral strategies to address the social exclusion of particularly vulnerable populations of children such as Roma children and children with disabilities and advocated for extra resources to address the barriers to full participation in society faced by girls, Roma, children with disability, children of poor families and children living in rural areas⁶⁵.

In 2020, UNICEF also developed and launched a study on social and economic effects of the pandemic on children as part of its COVID-19 response⁶⁶. It examined national impact on child-related sectors – social and child protection, education, and health – assessed public finance impact, as well as the capacity of the Government to respond. The study highlighted that the most vulnerable are being hit the hardest, with an additional 16,000 children at risk of dropping below the poverty threshold.

UNICEF also conducted cost-benefit and situation analyses that influenced the ICF-based disability assessment model adaptation to the local context, along with technical know-how and advocacy work⁶⁷.

Box 1. Notable reports and publications included but were not limited to:

- Assessment of alternative forms of care and family support for children with disabilities (2016);
- Evaluation of the training program for continuous professional development of social protection staff (2017);
- Regulatory Impact Assessment of Social Contracting (2017);
- Knowledge, attitudes, and practices towards violence against and among children in various setting- cross sectoral, led to training of SP staff in handling these cases (2017);
- Social Protection for Children – North Macedonia Policy Note (2018);
- DCC and Services for Children with disability (2018);
- Analysis of the situation of women and children in the Republic of North Macedonia (2020);
- Reforming the Social Protection System through the Introduction of a new Child Benefits System and Integrated Case Management Approach, (2020);
- A study on social and economic effects of the pandemic on children as part of its COVID-19 response (2020);
- Social Protection for Children – North Macedonia Policy Note (2018)¹,
- the Integrated Case Management Manual for Centers for Social Work and Employment Service Agency (2018)¹;
- Reforming the Social Protection System through the Introduction of a new Child Benefits System and Integrated Case Management Approach, (2020);
- Assessment of alternative forms of care and family support services for children with disabilities (2016).

⁶³Mihajlova, N. (2016) Assessment of alternative forms of care and family support services for children with disabilities, Skopje: UNICEF.

⁶⁴ UNICEF (2018) Social Protection for Children – North Macedonia Policy Note.

⁶⁵ Byrne, K. (2020) An analysis of the situation of women and children in the Republic of North Macedonia: executive summary / Kevin Byrne. - Skopje: UNICEF, 2020.

⁶⁶ Petreski, M., Petreski, B., Tomovska-Misoska, A., Gerovska Mitev, M., Parnardzieva-Zmejкова, M., Dimkovski, V. and Morgan, N. (2020) COVID-19's effects on children in North Macedonia: Rapid analysis and policy proposals, Skopje: UNICEF.

⁶⁷ UNICEF (2016) Assessment of alternative forms of care and family support services for children with disabilities in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

All above mentioned studies were of critical importance for both UNICEF and national counterparts to invest efforts in promoting reform priorities, and to tackle important programmatic directions set forth in UNICEF's CPD 2016-2020⁶⁸, which envisaged sustained support towards 1) institution building and capacity development for improvement of inclusive access to integrated social protection services; 2) evidence generation on child poverty and multidimensional deprivations and disparities, 3) the promotion of a social model for assessment of disabilities; and 4) the improvement of the design and administration of social transfers for children and their families, with a special focus on improving the coverage for the most marginalized children.

Document review and stakeholder interviewees pointed to high relevance of each of these areas to the needs and vulnerabilities of different groups. As found in the document review and corroborated in stakeholder interviews, UNICEF's actual programmatic support combined both the interventions at the supply side (national and local level) through a strong continuing emphasis on capacity and systems development, better quality and coverage of services and national leadership in child rights programming. It also tackled the demand side of social protection spectrum, through information sharing, promotion of access to rights (e.g., through support to information sharing on possible benefits, advisory on how to access benefits, etc.).

Relevance to the needs of the most vulnerable groups of children UNICEF's support to the implementation of the 2015 legislative amendments for introducing functional disability assessment based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) was particularly relevant to addressing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of disabled children. According to interviewed stakeholders, UNICEF's support to the transformation from the medical to social assessment approaches has been helpful to address the needs and rights of children with disabilities and their families. Before the push to introduce an ICF-based disability assessment system, disability was treated only from a strictly health perspective with a lot of stigma. ICF-based disability assessment system aimed to put the focus on what the child can achieve with adequate support in the context in which he/she is living in.

UNICEF's efforts to interlink this support with the introduction of educational assistants in schools has been considered by national actors as relevant and responsive to the leave no one behind principles and rights of children. Stakeholders from the CSWs indicated the new regional assessment bodies that were established in line with the ICF contributed towards enhanced administration of the special child allowance, as beneficiaries are no longer required to visit their family doctors and schedule an appointment for assessment. They can now go straight to the regional assessment body.

UNICEF interventions related to the transformation of the cash benefits system targeted toward children were also particularly relevant as evidenced through document review and stakeholder feedback. Building on the previous investments in research and advocacy⁶⁹, UNICEF's 2016-2020 social protection programming culminated in a series of studies and policy notes⁶⁵ that provided specific prescriptions for improving the child allowance system. UNICEF's advocacy and advice to the government called for: prioritization of the expansion in adequacy and coverage of social assistance for families with children, with the goal of achieving basic income security for all children; and reviewing the value of social transfers to ensure their adequacy, especially for the most vulnerable children and families⁷⁰.

UNICEF's engagement in reforms of social transfers and the introduction of case management in CSWs have been considered by consulted stakeholders as extremely important from the perspective of ensuring that the most vulnerable children and their families have information and access to needed social benefits and protection. The approach of case management addressed critical bottlenecks of fragmented SP services, multiple points of contact with no connection to each other, bureaucratic processes etc. This support was found to be relevant for the most socially excluded groups, such as Roma children and those from the poorest quantile. However, the challenges with operationalization and full utilization of the case management threaten the relevance of efforts as discussed in Finding 7 below.

Finding 2. Clear alignment is evident between UNICEF's social protection strategies and North Macedonia's national social protection reform priorities, with evidence that UNICEF contributed, and in some areas shaped, the selection of policy alternatives and measures in targeted social protection systems.

The findings of this evaluation point to a high degree of matching between UNICEF's envisaged results of support to 1) the case management in social services and social transfers (GMA), 2) the support to disability assessment,

⁶⁸ UNICEF (2015); Country Program Document 2016-2020

⁶⁹ UNICEF (2013); Strengthening Social Protection of Children – Analysis and recommendations for a more equitable and efficient child allowances system. Oxford Policy Management:

https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/media/3026/file/MK_2013_StrengtheningSocialProtectionForChildren_ENG.pdf

⁷⁰ UNICEF (2018) Social Protection for Children – North Macedonia Policy Note.

3) quality of social services and 4) evidence generation on public investment in children and reduction of child poverty, with national objectives and needs as outlined in government policies, strategies, and plans.

The program was designed to support key national priorities as outlined in the country's revised 2006-2015 National Plan of Action on the Rights of the Child; and in particular to contribute to sector strategies in social protection such as the National Strategy on Roma for 2014-2020; the National Strategy on Equalizing Rights of Persons with Disabilities for 2010-2018; the revised National Strategy for the reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion for 2010-2020; and the National Program for the Development of Social Protection for 2011-2021. Specifically, UNICEF's priorities to support the reforms of the cash benefits system and social services were in line with the National Strategy on Alleviation of Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia 2010-2020 (NSPRSI), particularly area 4 (Poverty and social deficiency), result 1 (Provide measures for the support of the socially discriminated).⁷¹

UNICEF's interventions were also aligned and contributed to the normative context of the social protection sector as evident in the 2019 Law on Social Protection and National Social Protection Development Program. The program calls for the development of social prevention as an organized, continuous, and coordinated action at the local level, the increase in the quality-of-service delivery and the creation of conditions to reduce the dependency on institutional care. The program envisaged interventions such as the development of alternative forms of care, introduction of the case management, introduction of a system of continuous professional development, and the development of system of licensing and standardization to achieve these results.

Interviewed stakeholders emphasized that UNICEF has influenced and contributed to the shaping of these main strategic and normative documents through various analysis produced, facilitation of thematic Working groups, piloting of models and approaches, as well as advisory support. These contributions were considered by interviewees to be critical to boost the reform and set the legal and strategic foundation for all support areas in scope of this evaluation.

Stakeholders from the civil society sector indicated that participatory design of UNICEF's programmatic interventions was particularly relevant, as it provided opportunity to share previous successful practices, so that UNICEF's program interventions could be tailored accordingly.

4.2 COHERENCE

EQ 3. To what extent are UNICEF's social protection interventions for children implemented in coherence with other UNICEF's CPD intervention areas?

Finding 1. The evaluation found strong internal coherence and coordination between UNICEF's SP and child protection portfolios but also with education, and health. The internal coherence within the program provides for a coordinated approach to the reform of the social protection system towards the benefit of the citizens in North Macedonia.

The SP intervention logic is sound and provides for a well-coordinated approach to the reform of the social protection system towards benefit of the citizens in North Macedonia. The intervention sought to strengthen the capacity of the national social protection system to improve the resilience of children and their families through stronger linkages with child protection services, early learning, education, and health services, and building the capacities of the social protection system to provide inclusive services to CWD and their families by promoting a social model for assessment of disabilities. Stakeholders note that this was achieved through mutual efforts from all CPD components to coordinate and cooperate. Closer links were found naturally between social protection and child protection portfolios, and, in cases, many stakeholders noted a certain lack of clarity when it comes to determining which activities come under CP or under SP. Nevertheless, the interaction between these two portfolios resulted in synergies and lack of duplication or overlaps. Examples of good synergy include coordination with CP for the development and delivery of comprehensive training program through ISA for development of social protection professionals; cross-sectoral integration on the formal translation of the ICF and its use across all social sectors to improve inclusion of children with disabilities; as well as coordination with emergency response on the refugee crisis, during which UNICEF continued to support social protection and individual case management.

Synergies between SP and child protection were noted during the COVID-19 pandemic as UNICEF supported the development of the individualized online support to children with disabilities and their caregivers by special educators. Reports indicate than more than 3000 sessions were conducted, supporting 140 children with disabilities (50 girls, 90 boys) and 210 parents, reaching both Macedonian and Albanian families residing outside

⁷¹Government of North Macedonia (2010); National Strategy on Alleviation of Poverty and Social Exclusion In the Republic of Macedonia 2010-2020, p. 44.

of the capital to benefit from specialized support.

The new model of disability assessment supported by SP was institutionalized and incorporated in the Law on Social Protection and the Law on Primary Education setting the basis for inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream education and transforming special schools into resource centres. Furthermore, a national concept paper on inclusive education was developed to support tailored training for teachers on disability and inclusion.

EQ 4. Has there been any duplication of efforts among UNICEF's own interventions and interventions delivered by other organizations or entities in contributing to the outcomes?

Finding 4. UNICEF invested strongly in coordination and collaboration with other organizations and institutions, leading to successful synergies and prevention of duplication of efforts in support to SP reform over the reference period.

2. UNICEF's Social Protection Reform program was implemented in close partnership with line ministries (MLSP and MoF), local authorities and public institutions; development partners and donors (World Bank, UNDP, EU, UK Embassy), NGOs and academia. The stakeholder mapping that was conducted within the scope of this evaluation revealed that a number of stakeholders actively supported the reform of social protection in North Macedonia over the reference period. Notably, the World Bank supported the reforms through various interventions including the Social Services Improvement Project (SSIP) that has been in place since 2019, along with a loan amounting to EUR 13.8 million (\$15.2 million equivalent) under the North Macedonia Social Insurance Administration Project. UNDP focused on supporting deinstitutionalization efforts and also implemented its Community Works Programme (CWP), which assisted the provision of work opportunities to unemployed people (mostly women) in the social work sector while developing social services in the community for disadvantage groups (elderly care, early childhood development and supporting children and people with disabilities). The EU invested comprehensive efforts through its Project "Supporting community-based social services and de-institutionalization (CBSS)" but also other interventions focusing on active labour market measures, social inclusion of Roma, youth related budget support, etc. A number of NGOs provided social services or engaged in policy dialogue on social protection as well.
3. Document review and stakeholder feedback provides ample evidence of UNICEF's efforts to coordinate and consult closely with the three ministries (and ministers), which helped to boost technical cooperation and to ensure policy coherence. For instance, there was strong coordination with the WB and MLSP in the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for equitable and efficient child benefit systems, which was considered important to prevent duplication of efforts as cited by interviewed stakeholders. Besides, UNICEF cooperated closely with MLSP and ISA to improve the quality of SP services through the training and increased capacity and how to implement the SOP on case management for social workers by providing on the job training for staff in the 30 CSWs. Although government leadership was considered a driver of coherence in social protection interventions, the frequent changes in the ministry leadership was considered by stakeholders to be a specific risk to the process. Stakeholders acknowledged UNICEF role in mitigating this, serving as institutional memory and ensuring continuity by ongoing advocacy.

Desk research and stakeholder interviews revealed wide participatory approaches to the discussions on different potential alternatives with all other actors, notably with local authorities, CSWs, civil society and development partners. Stakeholders cited great synergy between UNICEF and World Bank in dividing tasks and avoiding overlaps, specifically related to the reformed cash transfers during the period 2018-2020. UNICEF leveraged WB funds through capacity strengthening and empowerment. UNICEF also contributed to the co-organization of the regional conference with the World Bank and MLSP "*Responsive social protection solutions: empowering children, families and communities to end poverty*".

Positive joint programming efforts were also noted among UN agencies, and in particular the UNICEF, UNDP, and UNFPA program "**Working bottom up – building a local model for deinstitutionalization**". This program aimed,

among others, to ensure that children and adults with disabilities benefit from an improved system of support for independent living and integration in the community, develop community-based services and individual plans for reintegration into the society, capacity building and advocacy for inclusion.

In support of the inclusion of Roma children, UNICEF partnered with the Government, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and local CSOs in efforts to secure effective access to quality services for Roma children.

UNICEF established a nationwide partnership with state and CSO representatives to improve the monitoring of child rights realization, promote inclusive and innovative services and increase public support for protection of children from violence and inclusion of children with disabilities. Under overall leadership by the Government, UNICEF supported an inclusive dialogue on advancing the rights of children with disabilities and helped create a consensus on shifting to a human rights-based approach to working with these children. UNICEF supported the inter-ministerial working group on disability assessment, which provided critical input in the development of all aspects of the new disability assessment model.

Stakeholders from the NGO sector specifically found UNICEF to be different from other donors; open and proactive in inter-sector cooperation and coordination, developing plans and interventions jointly with other sectors and with NGOs. However, some international development agencies and NGOs mentioned coordination challenges in deinstitutionalization efforts, referring to UNICEF actions with the DCC as coordinated well with the relevant ministries, but not fully coordinated with other agencies and NGOs working in the area. Some NGO stakeholders noted that similar initiatives were already covered by some NGOs working in the field, and would have benefited from a closer coordination, specifically between non-governmental organisations at local level.

4.3 EFFECTIVENESS

EQ 5. Have UNICEF supported interventions contributed to reducing bottlenecks and to creating an enabling environment (institutional, political, and legislative context) for social protection coverage of poor and vulnerable children and their families?

Finding 5. UNICEF has effectively utilized its core roles and strategies (advocacy, evidence generation, policy dialogue, advisory, modelling and capacity strengthening, convening partnerships) to contribute to reducing bottlenecks and creating an enabling environment for social protection coverage of vulnerable children and their families.

As noted in section 1.2, there have been changes to outputs under the RRF social protection component considering reform framework openings or arising needs. An illustrative example is the 2018 addition of Output 3 related to support to refugees and migrant boys and girls and other emergency affected populations, but then discontinued. Deeper analysis of the programming documents and implementation reports shows roughly three groups of programmatic investment over the reference period, i.e.,

- Investments in improvement of targeting and coverage with social transfers (Output 1)
- Investment in integration of social services by supporting the introduction of the case management system in CSWs and general support to diversification of social services (Output 2)
- Investment in ICF-based disability assessment introduction in North Macedonia (Output 3)

To achieve results under these intervention areas, UNICEF organized its technical assistance through its Core Roles/strategies⁷², including:

- **Advocacy:** advocating and communicating to mobilize political will and dialogue on social protection reform, to positively impact the realization of the rights of all children. For illustration, UNICEF advocacy for diverse services for various groups of children, notably CWD resulted in MLSP introducing the formula for costing of services along with strengthening the licensing process for service providers.
- **Knowledge generation, policy dialogue and advice:** generating independent data, research, evaluation, and analysis on the situation of children and critical bottlenecks to the realization of their rights when it comes to social protection. UNICEF also influenced the development of the normative framework for social protection based on generated

⁷² CEE/CIS RMT Fall 2015 Meeting, Discussion Note on Core Roles and Achieving Results for Children in the CEE/CIS Region

evidence (UNICEF's studies, analyses, etc.) and UNICEF's knowledge of best practices. In particular, early investment in knowledge generation about the gaps in social and child protection systems (i.e., in 2013 the study on Strengthening Social Protection of Children – Analysis and recommendations for a more equitable and efficient child allowances system; In 2018 Policy Note on Protection for Children – North Macedonia) contributed toward evidence base for the social and child protection reform,

- **Convening partnerships and leveraging resources for children:** fostering catalytic partnerships with the government, World Bank, and other national and development partners. More specifically, the cooperation with the World Bank since the onset of the reform (2017), joint organization of workshops to discuss initial reform proposals (2018) and organization of a joint regional conference to promote the social reform (2019) all contributed towards effective support and promotion of the amended social and child protection system.
- **Capacity development of professionals and organizations:** strengthening the technical capacities of government institutions, CSWs, and service providers the improved development, implementation, and monitoring of rights-based child-friendly policies and services. For instance, the investment in trainings for professionals from the CSW, Employment Centres and institutions for social protection contributed towards creating a training for trainers for integrated case management, with more than 55 training organized throughout 2018⁷³.
- **Modelling and testing innovations:** modelling the operationalization of services and of case management programs to demonstrate new ways in which systems and services for children can evolve to reduce equity gaps and guarantee fulfilment of the rights of all children. For example, engaging two consultants from Columbia University in 2018 to work on the Integrated Case Management manual and subsequent trainings effectively contributed to rolling out the implementation of the integrated case management among CSW and Employment Centres.

Document review provided evidence of UNICEF's effective utilization of these above-mentioned roles to boost the reform results. Illustrative examples have been found across UNICEF's investments in reform of the normative framework and institutional practices (e.g., introduction of the case management in the 2019 Social Protection Law; reform of cash transfers or introduction of ICF-based disability assessment). These desk findings were corroborated by interviewed stakeholders who emphasized UNICEF's proactive, supportive, and stable support to the MLSP and targeted public institutions over the reference period. Detailed analysis is presented below.

[Investments in improvement of targeting and coverage with social transfers \(Outputs 2, 4, 5 and 6 under the reconstructed IL\)](#)

Finding 6. UNICEF has utilized pre-existing knowledge, funds, expertise, and partnerships to effectively contribute towards reducing bottlenecks and creating environment for expanding coverage of social and child protection benefits.

Review of historical records pertaining to social protection reforms in North Macedonia showed that a new political opening for the reform was created by the government change in 2017. As emphasized by interviewed stakeholders, UNICEF was among the first partners to renew its engagement with partners to assess bottlenecks in the design and administration of the social protection system. This was marked by UNICEF's active engagement in the interdisciplinary Work Group created by the new Minister of MLSP, to assist in the development of a new law on social protection.

UNICEF's analytical/knowledge generation work⁷⁴ provided crucial evidence of bottlenecks of the system and identifying key reform priorities to inform the legislative drafting. As a result, at the end of May 2019, the new Law on Social Protection was adopted as well as the amendments to the Law on Child Protection, presenting the

⁷³ <http://casemanagement.mk/en/events/>

⁷⁴ UNICEF (2013) Strengthening Social Protection of Children – Analysis and recommendations for a more equitable and efficient child allowances system; Protection for Children – North Macedonia Policy Note (2018); Integrated Social Protection Systems: Review of Different Approaches in UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Region. Inception Report (2019).

foundation for changed approaches to social and child protection and access to the associated rights and benefits in the country. Relevant bylaws⁷⁵ continued to be enacted in 2020. UNICEF's positive contributions to the drafting and adoption of the law have been confirmed by national and development stakeholders.

Interviewed stakeholders noted that the new Social Protection Law included several improved solutions, including the case management (see Output 2 below), improved access to social welfare benefits, diversification of social services, strengthened protection of disability rights, etc. However, most of the interviewed stakeholders identified ongoing challenges related to reformed cash benefits, social services, and application of the case management. Representatives from the CSWs were univocal in their concern about the lack of activation of able-bodied beneficiaries of GMA. They also indicated that the lack of updating the threshold for GMA and Child Allowance with the subsequent increases of the minimum wage since 2019 resulted in exit of many beneficiaries of child allowance and parental allowance, who had access to these benefits due to the reform of 2019. Some stakeholders noted the lack of adequate data exchange between CSW and Centres of Employment, which hinders the matching of GMA beneficiaries with potential employers.

Regarding cash benefits, document review and stakeholder interviews presented evidence of UNICEF's direct contributions to the design of cash benefits. UNICEF worked closely with the MLSP and World Bank to help design diverse cash benefit packages, to ensure that the social protection benefits reach those children and their families that are most vulnerable. To support the full operationalization of the new social protection system, UNICEF continued to engage with the Government to analyse and develop cash benefits for children.

Within these wider efforts, UNICEF also partnered with a local free-legal-aid provider to help remove barriers in accessing social protection benefits faced by some of the most vulnerable groups, particularly the Roma. These measures were considered helpful to address issues and challenges related to the legal aspects of the social protection system for children including the access to legal aid. These efforts were also considered by interviewed stakeholders as helpful to raise awareness of main national actors on barriers and obstacles for the most vulnerable to access rights.

UNICEF partnered with CSWs to establish a free-of-charge telephone line where beneficiaries could call and receive advice or free legal aid from qualified legal practitioners. Also, UNICEF partnered with other donors to produce free legal aid and establish SOS phone lines related to rights to protection for families with persons with disabilities, including children⁷⁶.

Through supporting the reform of social protection, UNICEF contributed to the significant increase of children benefiting from cash transfers and the reduction of child poverty. This was achieved by supporting the government to replace the fragmented system of social benefits with a more unified GMA, for which the benefit is higher, and more people are eligible, resulting in a significant increase of the number of children benefiting from social transfers.

The government increased amounts and coverage of the child and educational allowances by introducing the educational supplement to primary and secondary school children that meet the means testing criteria; as well as for adults that grew up without parental care, enrolled in all stages of education (including higher education) and means-testing for the parental allowance. The overall package of the reformed benefits for vulnerable households with children with no or minimum incomes resulted in a comprehensive social and child benefit, guaranteed rather than conditional, which can be top-upped with other social protection benefits and services.

Table 4 shows that before the reform the total amount received by a household with four members including one child in secondary education was 8,057 MKD, which reduced by 50% after the third year. The top-up energy subsidy was conditional on proof of paid utility bills, which was a bottleneck. After the 2019-reform the same household received 12,200 MKD, which did not reduce over time, and with automatic payment of the energy subsidy. The post-reformed GMA with top up benefits increased to 30-51% depending on the type and size of the household.

⁷⁵Rulebook on Guaranteed Minimum Assistance, Official Gazette No. 109/2019; Rulebook on rights for Child Protection (Official Gazette No. 109/2019; Rulebook on rights for Child Protection (Official Gazette No. 234/2020; Rulebook on Day Care Centers, Centres for Rehabilitation and Centres for Resocialization (Official Gazette, No., 150/2020).

⁷⁶ Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (2020) Realization of rights through free legal aid: Manuel for persons with disabilities and their families, Skopje: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, UNICEF, British Embassy Skopje, UK Aid. (In Macedonian language).

TABLE 4. FROM CONDITIONAL SOCIAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO GUARANTEED MINIMUM ASSISTANCE PACKAGE, COMPARISON 2018 AND POST-REFORM IN 2019

Pre-reform 2018					Post-reform 2019					
Household with no other incomes	Social financial assistance	Energy subsidy (conditioned on receipt of paid utility bills)	Conditional cash transfer (for SFA beneficiaries with children in secondary education)	Total (after the third year the amount reduces by 50%)	Household with no other incomes	Guaranteed minimum assistance	Energy subsidy (automatic payment)	Child allowance	Educational allowance (700 MKD primary education, 1000 secondary education)	Total
Single person	2,871	1,000		3,871	Single person	4,000	1000			5,000
<i>With child in secondary education</i>			1,000	4,871	<i>With a child</i>			1000	700 or 1000	6,700-7,000
Two members	3,933	1,000		4,933	Two members	6,000	1000			7,000
<i>With child in secondary education</i>			1,000	5,933	<i>With child</i>			1000	700 or 1000	8,700-9,000
Three members	4,995	1,000		5,995	Three members	7,600	1000			8,600
<i>With child in secondary education</i>			1,000	6,955	<i>With child</i>			1000	700 or 1000	10,300-10,600
Four members	6,057	1,000		7,057	Four members	9,200	1000			10,200
<i>With child in secondary education</i>			1,000	8,057	<i>With child</i>			1000	700 or 1000	11,900-12,200
Five/more members	7,120	1,000		8,120	Five/more members	10,000	1000			11,000
<i>With child in secondary education</i>			1,000	9,120	<i>With child</i>			1000	700 or 1000	12,700-13,000

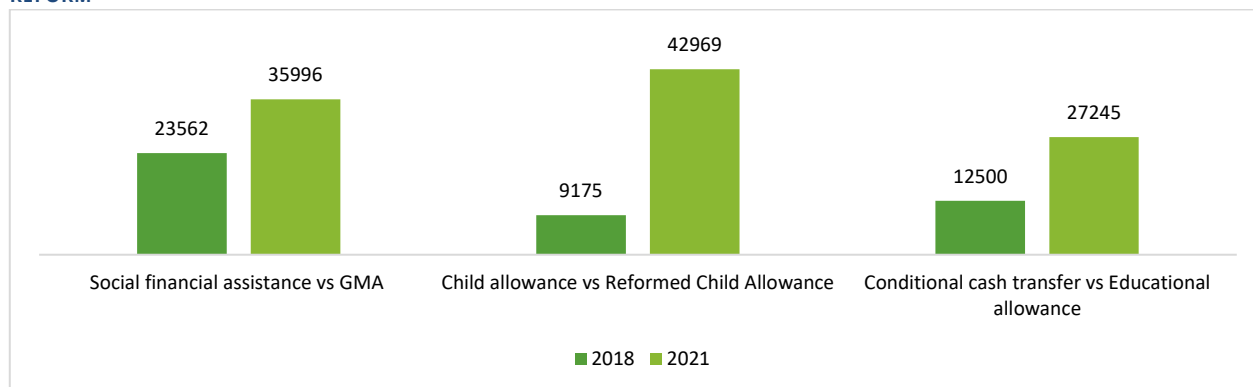
*: The number of beneficiaries of child allowance refers to number of children.

Source: Gerovska Mitev, M. and Carraro, L (2018), *Child poverty and child income support: reform scenario in Macedonia*, Conference paper presented at the international workshop *Addressing Inclusion among Children & Adolescents Living in Poverty: Progress towards Achieving the SDGs*, New York: New School.

Interviewed stakeholders noted that UNICEF's reports, advocacy, and technical assistance helped maintain child rights on the agenda, resulting in positive steps to enhance targeting and coverage of children. The reform doubled the overall adequacy of cash benefits, contributing to the decrease in child poverty rates.

Comparative analysis of data pertaining to cash benefits shows that the number of children benefiting from child allowances increased from approximately 3,500 in 2018 to 27,156 in 2019 and some 4,128 children started benefiting from a new educational allowance in 2019⁷⁷. For example, a family with two school age children where both parents are unemployed was receiving approximately US\$188 in 2020 - up from US\$89 prior the reform⁷⁸. The effectiveness of the improved targeting of the main cash benefit for families with children can be seen in Figure 2 below. While there is a significant increase in beneficiaries for the three main cash transfers for households and families with children (GMA, CA, and educational allowance), the most drastic increase is evidenced in the number of beneficiaries of child allowance.

FIGURE 2. BENEFICIARIES* OF MAIN CASH BENEFITS FOR VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN, PRE AND AFTER THE REFORM



Source: State Statistical Office, *Social Welfare for Children, Youth and Adults, 2018-2021*

Investment in integration of social services by supporting the introduction of the case management system in CSWs and support to diversification of social services (Outputs 1 and 2 under the reconstructed IL)

Finding 7. Investment in the design and introduction of the case management system in all CSWs across the country brought positive transformational potential to the integration of social services. However, the transformational results are still muted by slow operationalization of case management in CSWs and its varying quality and depth, requiring further consolidated focus and attention.

Within the wider advisory and technical assistance to the social protection reform, UNICEF advocated for and supported a crucial reform in the field of social support and care services for vulnerable children by introducing social work case management. This engagement across the reference period built on UNICEF's partnership with ISA on improving monitoring and evaluation in the delivery of quality social work, to support the development of new standards and procedures for case management. For this purpose, UNICEF partnered with Columbia University to develop a module introducing case management in the country, while it advocated with the government to include the case management in the legislative amendments. The support aimed to enhance the capacity of the Centres and their teams to support their clients more effectively and holistically – children and families at risk.

Stakeholders noted that the support was very effective, and the training methodologies were useful and well elaborated. With support from UNICEF, the Government integrated the case manager position in the legislation, as a foundation for the reform of systematization and approaches by CSWs in the country. UNICEF also contributed to the process by designing protocols and manuals for professionals on case management, assisting the MLSP to adjust the terms of reference for social workers in CSWs to better reflect the use of case management in practice, and delivered advanced case management training to all social welfare professionals in the country.

According to input from stakeholders, the concept and approach of case management should form the fundamental basis of social work practices at CSWs. Case management offers the potential to streamline casework

⁷⁷ UNICEF (2020); Country Office Annual Report 2019

⁷⁸ Ibid

processes, yet it may not comprehensively address the challenges arising from limited CSW's financial and human resource capacity, staff shortages and an insufficient workforce structure. Despite UNICEF's efforts to support capacity strengthening of CSWs to apply case management towards integration of social services, the consensus among most stakeholders is that the effective application of this concept within CSWs remains limited.

During stakeholder interviews and on-site visits to CSWs in selected communities, it became evident that case management, as a normative requirement, was being applied to varying degrees across different CSWs. Larger CSWs, such as those in Skopje, Kumanovo, and Strumica, where social workers contend with a higher caseload, faced more significant challenges in fully implementing case management. On the other hand, smaller communities like Delcevo and Debar, with lower caseloads, found it easier to adhere to these practices. The primary obstacle hindering the complete adoption and execution of case management, as revealed by the evaluation findings, is the substantial caseload carried by social workers, particularly in larger CSWs. Other challenges include resistance to change (particularly due to change of methodology), limited financial and human resources in CSWs, and lack of integration of services which were envisaged in the design. In most cases, the case manager is not able to tap into resources available (e.g., different expertise – psychologists, pedagogues, lawyers, etc.) to be able to apply holistic/integrated approach to multidimensional problems of clients. Stakeholders emphasized that these barriers significantly impede the operationalization of case management, despite UNICEF's efforts to enhance the capacity and knowledge of case workers in leveraging case management for the improvement and integration of social services in their respective communities.

Stakeholders further noted that the pre-existing limitations in CSW capacities that the reform addressed, persist to the present day, despite UNICEF's efforts to bolster their capabilities. Additionally, interviewed stakeholders cited inadequate funding as another significant challenge hindering the augmentation of human resource capacities across CSWs. As a result, case management is seen more as a burden rather than a solution as emphasized by CSW professionals and representatives of local institutions. The evaluation found that there is also a missing link between the CSWs and the Agency of Employment as case management does not cover the multiplication of needs and dimensions; individual plans do not have standardized criteria hence there is a lack of standardized qualification that would help the Agency to match the client with employer. The main reason is the specific scope of work of the employment centres which is focused only on people looking for employment and not the whole family/household of the unemployed person. From the experience of the municipality of Tetovo, quality social services, including services for children, is hindered because of lack of both financial capacity of local municipalities, as well as lack of comprehension on their role as a municipality in the social and child protection at the local level.

UNICEF also supported the diversification of social services. One segment of this support pertained to assisting the MLSP to create a formula for costing of social services, while the other was advocacy for diverse services for various groups of children, notably CWD. As a result, the MLSP introduced the formula for costing of services along with strengthening the licensing process for service providers. However, interviewed stakeholders from CSW and NGOs noted that the calculated costs for services are too low for prospective service providers, so they are not incentivized to embark on service provision. Interviewed representatives from the CSW and local authorities noted that legal changes of the social services provision (i.e., licensing) contributed to improved quality standards as well as to integrated registry of social service providers at the local level.

When it comes to diversification of services, the reform promoted innovative services, such as personal assistants, individualized services, transition of DCC services into community services offering variety of individual services to wider range of children, instead of day care, small group homes, supported living, halfway house, inter alia, some with UNICEF's support. These services have been reported by interviewed stakeholders as helpful to the clients, as they offer alternatives to institutionalization but also enable more social inclusion. As mentioned in earlier sections, UNICEF contributed to development of transition plans of the DCCs and developing programmes and providing equipment to support such transition. These support interventions were commended by consulted stakeholders. UNICEF designed its actions based on the assessment of DCCs. A recent UN situational analysis on rights of people with disabilities noted that *"the existing standard for day care centres is focused on adults and does not include the principles relating to 'the best interest of the child' and 'the best will of the person'".*⁷⁹ These study findings were echoed by consulted stakeholders who noted the needs for reforming these to be more nurturing for children with disability.

UNICEF also contributed to World Bank's efforts to establish the Management Information System for processing, approval, record-keeping and monitoring of social benefits and services. The aim of this system was to help improve the CSWs' business processes and access to and quality of services delivered to the vulnerable. Besides, the MIS was planned to serve as an analytical database that would allow for disaggregation of data by demographic characteristics of social protection beneficiaries and income/employment status. Concretely, UNICEF hired an IT

⁷⁹UN (2022) Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021, United Nations.

consultant for business analysis and analysis of IT system for administration of rights and services, which was supposed to contribute to the design of the system. The system is under development at the time of the evaluation, under the leadership of the MLSP. Currently, UNICEF is not engaged in this process.

The evaluation found some documentary evidence of UNICEF's interventions in response to the on-going European refugee and migrant crisis, by supporting the Government and CSOs to develop an efficient case management system for refugee and migrant children in the country. According to UNICEF's reports, support was provided to the MLSP to outpost and equip qualified social workers to the country's two transit centres, the open centre for asylum seekers and the safe house for UASCs. Interviewed stakeholders were not informed about these measures.

Investment in ICF introduction in North Macedonia (Outputs 2 and 3 under the reconstructed IL)

Finding 8. UNICEF successfully supported the introduction of the social model of disability classification in line with International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). This has shifted the paradigm and overall approach to disability, while also creating important efficiency gains for right holders.

The evaluation found significant evidence of UNICEF's effective contributions to the fostering of the inclusion of children with disabilities. With UNICEF's support, intensive national dialogue around inclusion of children with disabilities was underway over the reference period, to tackle societal attitudes towards children with disabilities and the removal of attitudinal barriers that prevent them from taking their place in society. UNICEF supported the government's coordinating body to oversee implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to develop a national de-institutionalization strategy for 2018-2027. This strategy envisaged ending institutional placement of all children by 2020, which was achieved within the planned period.

Following the initial amendments to the Law on Social Protection that were adopted by Parliament in the second half of 2015, the functional disability assessment model was introduced based on the ICF⁸⁰, UNICEF supported the Government in operationalization of the ICF approaches in North Macedonia. UNICEF's support was directed to training and supporting professionals in all social sectors (social protection, health, education, child protection) to build their skills to apply disability assessment based on ICF across the reference period. UNICEF also piloted the disability assessment based on the ICF in Skopje, to inform full-scale national implementation by the three key ministries (Education, Health and Labor and Social Policy). Based on the lessons learned, the government, with support of UNICEF, organized three regional ICF centres with multi-disciplinary teams to work with children and their families to jointly plan a future in which the child can thrive.

All interviewed stakeholders confirmed positive UNICEF's contributions to the operationalization of the ICF-based disability assessment in North Macedonia. Evidence from reviewed documents and stakeholder interviews, indicate that ICF-based disability assessment introduction has improved the access to potential users of child special allowance. A change is observed with regards to a more efficient and rights-based process in access to the services. For illustration, stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation highlighted notable improvements over several areas. They pointed out that waiting times for appointments, which were previously lengthy and cumbersome, have now become shorter. Furthermore, they emphasized that the approach to and treatment of clients have improved significantly, signifying a shift towards more inclusive and supportive practices compared to the past. Now clients go directly to regional disability assessment teams and the CSW has timely information on the findings of the assessments – which helps accessibility. While stakeholders noted positive progress in this regard, most of them raised concern with long waiting times for assessment, challenges with full scale up across the country and still slow uptake.

Factors facilitating the effectiveness of UNICEF's support to the SP reform

Finding 9. UNICEF's contributions to social and child protection reform in this period were driven by effective leadership and coordination among key agencies, evidence-based approaches, simultaneous policy reforms, investments in information systems integration, and support to the social and child protection workforce, including salary increases and staff recruitment. These factors collectively facilitated UNICEF's contributions to the operationalization of reform ambitions and enhanced coordination and information sharing across institutions.

⁸⁰ UNICEF (2016); COAR, p. 37

Several factors can be identified as drivers of social and child protection reform, also driving the UNICEF contribution.

- *Progressive and effective leadership and coordination between UNICEF, World Bank, MLSP, and MoF.* During the period 2017-2019, the heads of these agencies succeeded in effectively arranging and coordinating strategic, financial, and organizational priorities and tasks related to the social and child protection reform.
- *Evidence-based social and child protection reform.* UNICEF and other stakeholders not only utilized previous research and analytical body of evidence to support the social and child protection reform, but also invested in additional reform-focused research⁸¹ which informed the relevance and adequacy of the new cash benefits and social services.
- *Holistic and complementary policy processes.* The social and child protection reform was accompanied with the simultaneous reform of the personal income tax. With respective tax-related legislative amendments at the end of 2018, the progressive taxation of personal income was (re-) introduced as of January 2019. It substituted the flat rate taxation which was implemented in the period 2007-2018. The policy plan, as publicly announced by the Government in November 2018⁸², aimed to direct the increased revenues towards financing the new and reformed social and child protection rights. This has facilitated operationalization of reform ambitions.
- *Investments in integration of information systems for cash benefits and social services.* UNICEF, the World Bank, and other stakeholders assessed the country's information systems for the administration of cash benefits and social services. They also developed recommendations for improvement and a plan to implement a new and improved MIS that will integrate the existing databases (CB-MIS and Lirikus) supported by UNICEF in previous cycles of assistance). This is an important enabler for coordination and information sharing across different institutions.
- *Investments in social and child protection workforce.* UNICEF's contributions to the capacity strengthening of CSW staff, social welfare professionals and NGOs was accompanied with an increase of salaries of workers in the CSW, and recruitment of new staff, (+14 per cent)⁸³.

Hindering factors

Finding 10. The evaluation identified several hindrances to the reform results and UNICEF's contributions, including discontinuation of holistic policy processes, inadequate infrastructure for case management in CSWs, decreasing social protection financing, COVID-19 pandemic, and motivational barriers for professionals in the sector. These challenges collectively impacted the effectiveness and sustainability of the results of UNICEF's support to the reform efforts.

The evaluation found that several factors hindered the reform results and respective UNICEF's contributions to it.

- Lack of follow-up actions and discontinuation of holistic and integrated policy processes related to social and child protection. The turnover of the most senior staff in the MLSP and MoF and the ministers responsible brought some shifts in priorities and approaches to the reform. Illustrative examples include a change in governmental policy priorities (roll back of progressive taxation in January 2020), and lack of follow-up investments in CSW human resources and infrastructure which hindered the initial effects of the adopted social and child protection reform and reoriented the focus and priorities to other policy goals.
- *Lack of adequate human financial and institutional infrastructure for case management in the CSWs.* Interviewed CSW, particularly those located in the bigger municipalities and serving large population, and other stakeholders (development partners, government), reported that, since prior to the introduction of case management, the office space, lack of human resources, huge number of cases per social worker, and infrastructure were, and continue to be inadequate for the successful implementation of case management. For example, social workers lack means to

⁸¹Akilova, M. and Y. M. Marti. (2018). Integrated Case Management Manual for Centres for Social Work and Employment Service Agency. UNICEF and UNDP North Macedonia; Bogoevska, N., Bornarovska, S, GerovskaMitev, M. and Ruzin, N. (2018) Final joint report: Reform proposal for the system of social and child protection. Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the World Bank.

⁸²Nova TV News Release (2018), "PM Statement – Progressive taxation will contribute toward fair society (in Macedonian).

Available at: <https://novatv.mk/zaev-progresivniot-danok-ke-pridonese-za->

⁸³ Barca, V. (2020) Integrated Social Protection Systems Country Case Study – North Macedonia, Oxford Policy Management.

visit households, lack individual and adequate office space to meet and treat clients; they share an office with multiple workers and have loads of files. These limitations, although not linked to case management itself, are preconditions that hinder its successful implementation, the individual work with clients and the case work with families. Other hindrances to the CSWs work include inadequate structure of employees, and a lack of merit-based appointment of most senior CSW managers and directors. According to stakeholder feedback, political and financial cost of addressing these challenges is huge and not easily manageable, leading to the application of ad hoc solutions to service delivery outside of the CSWs.

- *Decreasing trend of financing of social protection.* Despite the 2019 increase of budget for social protection, overall funding of social protection in the country has been decreasing in recent years. Administrative data from the MoF⁸⁴ show that the expenditure on social protection in the period 2021-2023 declined by 4.8% and consumed 11.9% of the GDP in 2023. According to ESSPROS data⁸⁵, the bulk of social expenditure is consumed by pensions and sickness/healthcare, while all other social protection expenditure items were below 2% of GDP, i.e.: Disability – 1.4%, Family and children – 0.9%, Social Exclusion – 0.2% and Unemployment – 0.1%.
- *The COVID-19 pandemic caused worsening socio-economic prospects in the country* and high rates of COVID-19 related health issues. This prompted significant closures across institutions and shifting priorities of the government to respond to immediate needs of the most vulnerable groups.
- Lastly, the UNICEF assessment identified five motivational barriers relevant for professionals in the sector: a heavy administrative burden, invisibility of social outcomes, low salaries and little chance of career advancement, inadequate working conditions, lack of discretion in decision-making due to a rule-bound culture. These barriers were echoed by consulted stakeholders across all stakeholder groups.

EQ 6. To what extent have capacity-building activities supported by UNICEF contributed to effective implementation of the social protection reform interventions?

Finding 11. UNICEF's contribution to strengthening capacities of relevant staff of target social protection institutions (MLSP, CSWs, service providers, ICF-based disability assessment teams) was positive. UNICEF brought a combination of international expertise and local solutions, support to modelling of approaches and measures which were scaled up, bringing positive outcomes in the increased ability of national and local social protection actors to adopt better quality legislation, improve targeting and coverage with social assistance. While capacities are still in place, there are many challenges for successful functioning of social services, including the level of capacities of CSWs to understand and implement case management in line with the Law, but also socio-economic and political factors that hinder wider transformative effects.

With support from UNICEF, government developed and adopted different guidelines, codes, and manuals (E.g. Revised TOR, SoPs for case managers, Manual for case management methods was developed as basis for licensing of social workers working on case management, Integrated Case Management Manual For Centres for Social Work and Employment Service Agencies)⁸⁶ relating to case management, ICF-based disability assessment, licensing of services, etc. which are reportedly used by national and local level administrations and institutions. Interviewed stakeholders also noted that UNICEF's support to these was important as it integrated best international practice. For instance, UNICEF provided translation of ICF standards into local languages as contribution to the ICF-based disability assessment operationalization and advocacy.

Training program: On a technical level, UNICEF supported extensive training and mentoring of CSW staff; member of the ICF-based disability commissions, service providers, on themes such as case management, supervision, licensing services, ICF-based disability assessment, etc. Interviewed participants shared that they had the opportunity to learn and understand more about how to apply and practice their acquired skills in line with

⁸⁴ Ministry of Finance, Economic Reform Program 2023-2025

⁸⁵ Eurostat, ESSPROS, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/social-protection/data/database>

⁸⁶ <https://casemanagement.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ENG-Integrated-Case-Management-Manual.pdf>

legislative provisions. For instance, UNICEF-supported trainings on case management methods since 2018 reached 30 CSWs and 595 social workers and 162 workers in Agencies for Employment. The trainings for improvement of social services through case management included 656 case managers, social workers, and triage persons in the CSWs. With UNICEF support, infographics, educational material for case management approach, and a webpage was also prepared for case management. UNICEF also supported the introduction of mentorship of social workers and practical implementation of the case management, which resulted in training 7 mentors from 6 different CSWs, along with 56 mentorship sessions with 43 case managers from 30 CSWs. UNICEF also supported 168 meetings for exchanges of information on mentorship to share knowledge and 197 from 30 CSWs. While the supported helped increase knowledge on case management across CSWs, as confirmed by CSW stakeholders and online survey, the level of knowledge and ability to apply case management is still not on desired level, and many case managers feel disempowered and not able to apply the approach. This is mainly due to extremely high number of cases that they have (in Skopje, some case managers have up to 800 cases), or lack of adequate education (some case managers fit the profile foreseen by law, but in some cases, they are from different fields, in contradiction to what is foreseen by Social Protection Law). This prevents them to fully grasp the ways in which they can apply case management. Furthermore, per law, case workers should undergo a case management exam to be issued a case management license. However, the licensing still is not implemented as such, otherwise it could make redundant many the current employees in the CSWs. There has also been a huge turnover of staff across CSWs, which affected institutional memory, level of human resources, as such reducing the number of social work professionals that have adequate qualifications and professional experience needed to successfully perform the role of case managers.

In terms of ICF-CY, UNICEF (in cross-sectoral efforts) established a conceptual framework- under Social Protection supported the translation of ICF-CY and under CP and SP the capacity building of various professionals that work with children with disabilities, and produced training manual, mentoring programs, and rulebooks for ICF-CY. UNICEF piloted the new assessment model for additional education, social and health support to children and adolescents based on ICF and this has supported the establishment of local assessment bodies and national assessment body; supported the development of assessment tools and training of selected professionals in disability assessment and developed outreach and awareness materials.

EQ 7. To what extent have UNICEF interventions contributed to adequacy and equity focus of the existing social protection benefits for children and their families?

Finding 12. UNICEF's support of the social and child protection reform of 2019 has greatly contributed toward improved adequacy, accessibility, and coverage of the existing social protection benefits for children and their families.

Document review and stakeholder interviews, FGD and survey responses pointed to several effective UNICEF's contributions to the reform results when it comes to adequacy and equity focus, as detailed below. Adequacy in this section refers to its wider meaning⁸⁷, not only the value of the benefit, but also its integration and complementarity with other benefits.

Guaranteed Minimum Assistance (GMA)

With UNICEF and other development partners' support, the MLSP has reformed the eligibility threshold for the GMA, increasing it by about 40% than the pre-reformed social financial assistance (SFA) threshold. Based on this change, and according to the administrative data, the number of GMA beneficiaries in May 2019 increased by 5,000 compared to April 2019. The value of the GMA benefit also increased, between 30-51% depending on the type and size of the household. Also, according to the reformed approach, GMA beneficiaries were automatically provided with the energy subsidy, which improved accessibility of the benefit, as well as the GMA integration with other benefits, as previously this was possible only to those who submitted receipts of paid electricity bills, which was only a fraction of SFA beneficiaries.

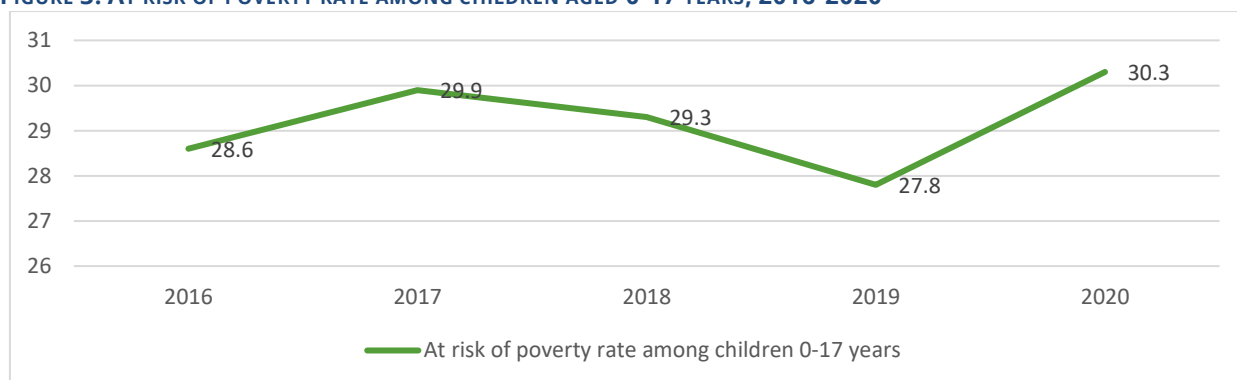
The reformed approach also envisaged automatic access to child allowance for GMA beneficiaries with children, which dramatically improved the adequacy and equity, as previously GMA beneficiaries were not entitled to apply for child allowance. All GMA beneficiaries with children in primary or secondary school are now eligible to access to educational allowance (as long as they attend school regularly), thus improving the adequacy of this benefit among school children. The reformed GMA also promotes a higher equivalence scale for households that have

⁸⁷ Brimblecombe, S. (2013) A multivariable definition of adequacy: Challenges and opportunities in International Social Security Review, Vol.66, 3-4:171-191.

members with disabilities. The GMA can be combined with the disability allowance, which overall improves the equity of vulnerable households with disabled members. The combined effect of improved coverage and increased value of social and child protection benefits for vulnerable families and children (i.e., combination of GMA, Child allowance and educational allowance), resulted in a decrease in the at risk of poverty rate among children in 2019.

Based on Eurostat data⁸⁸, the at risk of poverty rate for children aged less than 18 years in 2019 was 27.8%, a historical low, and 5.1% lower than 2018. However, the decrease of the poverty rate was not evidenced among female children 0-17, as they're at risk of poverty rate in 2019 remained the same as in 2018 (29.8%). The increase in at risk of poverty rate in 2020 is mainly attributed to the effects of the COVID-19, and the lack of continued increase in social protection expenditure, roll back of progressive taxation in 2020, etc.

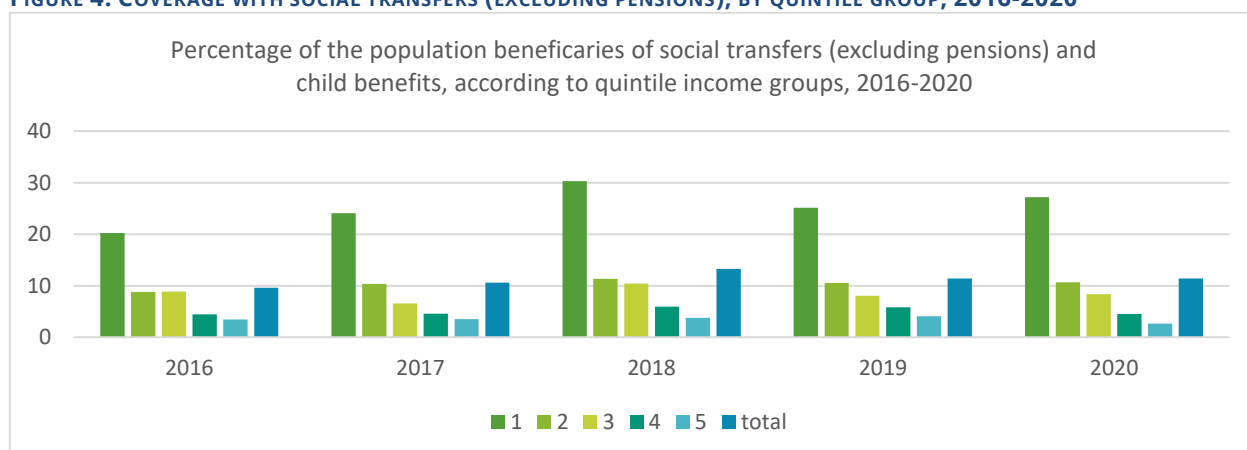
FIGURE 3. AT RISK OF POVERTY RATE AMONG CHILDREN AGED 0-17 YEARS, 2016-2020



Source: Eurostat, At risk of poverty rate by detailed age group, EU SILC survey.

- Based on evaluation calculations of the EU-SILC 2016-2020⁸⁹ data, the coverage of social transfers (excluding pensions) and child allowances of households from the lowest wealth quintile has improved since 2016 by 34.6% or 7 percentage points (p.p.). The overall coverage with social transfers among the lowest income quintile reduced in 2019 compared to 2018. While the reasons for such drop in coverage should be further investigated, some of the possible explanations might include change in eligibility criteria and discontinuation of some of the cash benefits (i.e., parental allowance, permanent social assistance, mobility, deafness and blindness allowance.). However, various income support provided during the pandemic in 2020 has improved the coverage of the lowest income quintile compared to 2019 for 8% or 2 p.p.

FIGURE 4. COVERAGE WITH SOCIAL TRANSFERS (EXCLUDING PENSIONS), BY QUINTILE GROUP, 2016-2020



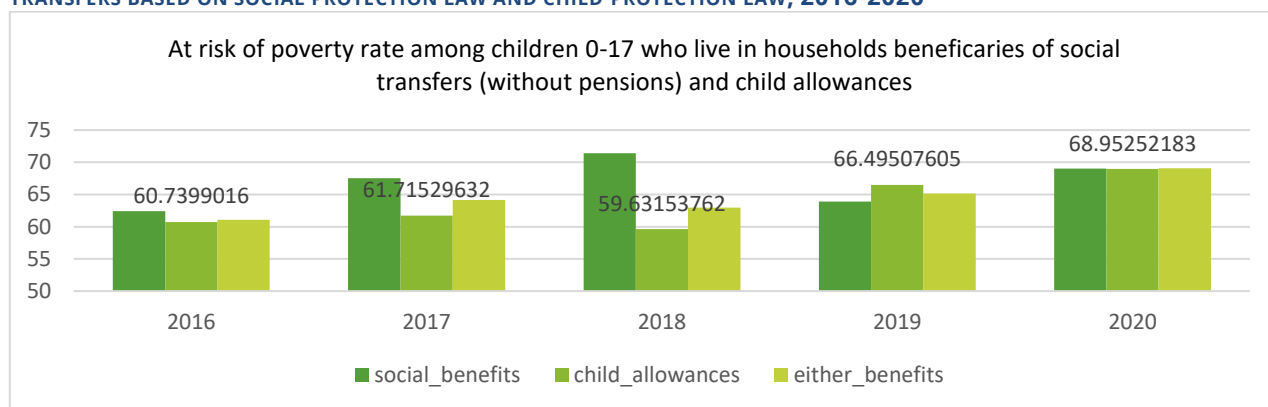
Source: Authors own calculations based on EU-SILC data for North Macedonia, 2016-2020.

⁸⁸Eurostat, At risk of poverty rate by detailed age group, EU SILC survey, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TESSI120/default/table?lang=en>

⁸⁹ EU-SILC 2021 data were not yet published by the State Statistical Office at the time of the finalization of this Evaluation report

5. Looking specifically at the effect of the social reform in 2019, social transfers (excluding pensions and child allowances) had the greatest effect on the at risk of poverty rate among children aged 0-17 living in households that were social transfers beneficiaries. Comparison between 2018 and 2019 shows that the GMA and other social transfers (excluding pensions and child allowances) reduced the at risk of poverty rate among children aged 0-17 living in households that received social transfers by 10.5% or 7.5 p.p. However, the overall at risk of poverty rate among the children aged 0-17 living in households that received transfers based on Social Protection Law and those based on Child Protection Law is extremely high, 69% in 2020, more than double compared to the overall at risk of poverty rate among children aged 0-17 (30.3% in 2020).

FIGURE 5. AT RISK OF POVERTY RATE AMONG CHILDREN 0-17 LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS THAT WERE BENEFICIARIES FROM TRANSFERS BASED ON SOCIAL PROTECTION LAW AND CHILD PROTECTION LAW, 2016-2020



Source: Authors own calculations based on EU-SILC data for North Macedonia, 2016-2020.

Child allowance

Both stakeholder feedback and desk review indicate that significant contributions to adequate coverage and equity have been achieved through the reform of child allowance. Reform has increased the child allowance eligibility threshold threefold, from 2,490 MKD in 2018 to 6,000 MKD in May 2019, resulting in improved coverage⁹⁰. Due to the changed eligibility criteria and changed equivalence scale, CA beneficiaries increased from approximately 9000 children in 2018 to more than 43,00 children in 2022. The new equivalence scales improved the unequal access treatment of families with up to eight members, thus improving the overall adequacy of CA (Table 4). However, the reform did not greatly change the total value of the child allowance. Such a condition makes the child allowance easily accessible, but with value unadjusted for larger families. For example, while the new equivalence scale improved access to CA among Roma families with children, who are overrepresented in the category of families with more than five family members, the total value of the child allowance (which does not increase above the second child) did not improve the overall financial condition of families with three and more children.

TABLE 5. EQUIVALENCE SCALES FOR CHILD ALLOWANCE THRESHOLD, PRE- AND POST-REFORM, 2018-2019

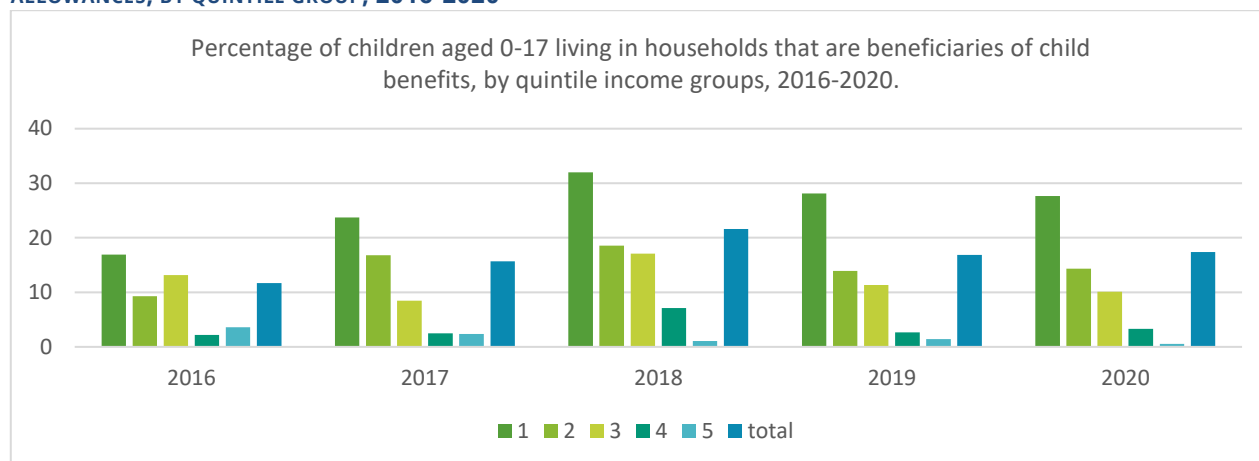
	Pre-reform equivalence scale	Post-reform equivalence scale
One member	1	1
Two members	1.37	1.5
Three members	1.74	1.9
Four members	2.11	2.3
Five members	2.48	2.5
Six members	2.48	2.6
Seven members	2.48	2.7
Eight members	2.48	2.8

⁹⁰ Law on Child Protection, 2018, art. 29 and Law on amending the Child Protection Law, 2019, art.12.

Source: Gerovska Mitev, M. and Carraro, L. (2018)⁹¹

As seen in Figure 6, the coverage of children aged 0-17 living in households that benefit from child allowances from the lowest quintile group has improved in 2020 compared to 2016 for 64% or for 10.8 p.p.

FIGURE 6. COVERAGE OF CHILDREN 0-17 LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS THAT WERE ENTITLED TO BENEFIT FROM CHILD ALLOWANCES, BY QUINTILE GROUP, 2016-2020



Source: Authors own calculations based on EU-SILC data for North Macedonia, 2016-2020.

Despite improved coverage, and as seen in Figure 5, the combined effect of the low value of the reformed child allowance and the transformation of the parental allowance for the third child (from universal to income-based) has resulted in low effectiveness of child allowances and increased at risk of poverty rate among children 0-17 living in households that are entitled to receive child allowances in 2019 compared to 2018 for 11.6% or 6.9 p.p. This signals the need for further investments in child allowances and significant increase of their value.

Special child allowance

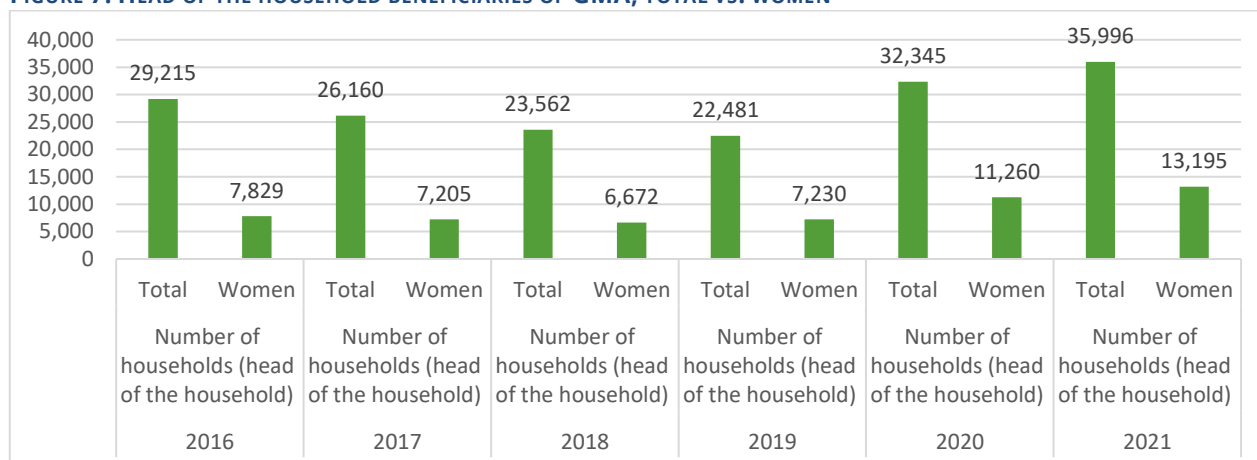
Due to the introduction and implementation of the Disability Assessment based on ICF, the administration of the special child allowance has been improved. Based on the interviews of CSW representatives, parents of children with disabilities now have direct contact with the regional bodies of assessment, thus simplifying the process of application for special child allowance.

EQ 7a. To what extent have UNICEF interventions contributed to adequacy and equity focus of the existing social protection benefits for children and their families?

Finding 13. UNICEF interventions contributed to significant improvement of adequacy and equity focus of the existing social protection benefits for children and families, but there are remaining gaps that needs to be addressed.

Adequacy of the social protection benefits has been improved with the 2019 social protection reform, as significant enhancements have been made related to coverage/targeting, complementarity of benefits and value of benefits, with, inter alia, UNICEF's support. Equity focus was also enhanced. During the period 2016-2020, there is an increase of children from the first quintile group who benefit from child allowances for 63%. Also, number of women benefiting from the GMA in 2021 was for 68.5% higher than compared to 2016 (Figure 7).

⁹¹Gerovska Mitev, M. and Carraro, L. (2018) Child poverty and child income support: reform scenario in Macedonia, paper presented at the International Workshop: Addressing Inclusion among Children & Adolescents Living in Poverty: Progress towards Achieving the SDGs, New School, New York.

FIGURE 7. HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD BENEFICIARIES OF GMA, TOTAL VS. WOMEN

Source: State Statistical Office, *Social Welfare for Children, Juveniles and Adults, 2016-2021*.

Remaining gaps that need to be addressed include: (a) unadjusted thresholds of child allowance, and educational allowance with the value of the minimum wage. Given that 2019 reform provided access to these three benefits to households where one member was working on minimum wage, subsequent increases of the minimum wage in 2020 and 2023 and lack of threshold adjustments for these benefits after 2020, represents an important gap, hindering households with one employed on minimum wage to have adequate child protection: (b) No increase of the value of the child allowances, which hinders its anti-poverty effect.

Rollback of the progressive taxation since 2020, and the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, hindered the initiated progress of the social and child protection reform. All these are accompanied with the lack of significant increase in investment in social and child protection led inevitability to an increase in the child poverty rate, which in 2020 (last available data) stood at 30.3%.⁹²

4.4 EFFICIENCY

EQ 8. Were UNICEF Social Protection support interventions budgets and resources (human, financial and technical) adequately used for addressing priority bottlenecks?

Finding 14. UNICEF had a well-balanced portfolio of regular funding and grants and adequate human resources to support interventions in Social Protection over the reference period. This enabled UNICEF to support the reform.

In this section, efficiency is explored through three main dimensions: adequacy of financial resources, human resources, and timeliness of activities. According to document review and stakeholder interviews, UNICEF's resources were adequately planned and operationalized through the engagement of qualified staff and partners.

Financial Resources

Review of UNICEF's financial data and reporting shows that UNICEF had a balanced portfolio of regular funding and grants that support Social Protection initiatives. About 60 percent of the budget for Social Protection came from UNICEF regular resources and 40 percent came from other resources such as grants and donor funding. Grants and donor funding were mostly allocated to activities related to emergency response and outreach to the most vulnerable while activities related to the social transfers, case management, and disability (ICF) work were largely funded by UNICEF's resources.

The largest donors included USAID through the "Preventing and Responding to COVID-19 in at-risk countries in Europe" grant and Japan through the Japan NATCOM - Immediate response to the migrants and refugee crisis" grant. One advantage of this type of resourcing was that it allowed UNICEF greater flexibility in fund utilization and responding to real time needs and changes in the context. This was also supported by the views of respondents who highlighted UNICEF being very flexible and quick to adapt their activities and approaches.

According to the yearly work plans and financial analysis, the budget was fully utilized. Monthly country management team (CMT) meetings were regularly used to monitor operations. Fund utilization reports by output and outcome as well as by source of funding and expiry date were presented and discussed at CMT meetings.

There are some discrepancies between various sources, such as the Annual Work Plans, the Rolling Plans and the

⁹² State Statistical Office, Laeken poverty indicators in 2020 final data, https://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2022/4.1.22.40_mk.pdf

Indicators Report 2016-2021, Outcome Ratings with the latest progress, and UNICEF's financial system "Vision", on the level of budgets planned vs. funded as well as the total funding available for the sector. These create challenges to get the full picture of the plans and utilization of funds.

According to the 2023 Outcome Ratings Progress report, UNICEF SP had been funded 116 percent of the forecasted funds for the years 2016-February 2021 and utilized at 100 percent. This indicates **UNICEF's strong ability to mobilize funds** through various sources as well as to adequately manage resources.

TABLE 6. JANUARY 2016-FEBRUARY 2021 OUTCOME PROGRESS

Period	Planned (USD)	Funded (USD)	Funded vs Planned %	Utilized (USD)	Utilized vs Funded %	Outcome Progress
Jan 2016-Feb 2021	\$1,468,241	\$ 1,702,474 ⁹³	116	\$ 1,702,474	100%	On-Track

Source: UNICEF "Outcome Ratings with Latest Progress, May 2023"

The funding level has been similar every year except for 2016 due to the emergency response and the nature of activities being supported under this component. For 2020, the financial year was extended until February 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the delays in implementation that it caused.

TABLE 7. SP BUDGET PER YEAR: FUNDED AND UTILIZED

Year	Funded (USD)	Utilized (USD)	Utilized vs Funded %	Observations
2016	\$ 536,192	\$ 536,192	100%	UNICEF's SP budget remained relatively at the same level throughout 2016-2022 with 2016 being an outlier due to the emergency response and the nature of activities.
2017	\$ 270,538	\$ 270,538	100%	
2018	\$ 303,779	\$ 303,779	100%	
2019	\$ 232,486	\$ 232,486	100%	
2020	\$301,185	\$ 301,185	100%	

Source: UNICEF Financial System "Vision"

Similarly, a comparison at the output level indicates that UNICEF has been funded on average 186 percent over the planned budget. Evaluation found that main drivers of this included: 1) UNICEF flexibility in responding to real time needs and changes in the context; 2) including activities related to emergency response and outreach to the most vulnerable while activities related to the social transfers, case management, and disability (ICF) work were largely funded by UNICEF's resources; and also 3) the fact that social transfers, cash benefits and child allowance absorbed the highest portion of the funds, after emergency response.

TABLE 8. 2016-2020 BUDGET PER OUTPUT

Output	Planned (USD)	Funded (USD)	Funded vs Planned %	Utilized (USD)	Utilized vs Funded %	Observations
Output: 001 - Adequate social transfer	\$ 198,255	\$ 424,796	214%	\$ 435,777	103%	UNICEF's SP outputs are funded on average 186% over their planned budget. The emergency response component of the SP has the highest funding utilized per out, followed by the cash transfer.
Output: 002 - Improved Coordination and Capacities	\$ 140,000	\$ 331,377	237%	\$ 334,621	101%	
Output: 003 - Capacities for Resilience	\$ 118,000	\$ 178,052	151%	\$ 178,053	100%	
Output: 004 - Social Protection and Emergency Response	\$ -	\$ 518,223	0	\$ 518,223	100%	

⁹³According to the UNICEF Finance System, "Vision", the overall funding for the Jan 2016-Feb 2021 period is \$1,658,455.99

Output: 006 - Outreach to the Most Vulnerable	\$ 58,000	\$ 191,732	331%	\$ 191,780	100%	
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Source: UNICEF Financial System "Vision"

Human and technical Resources

Since 2016, the SP sector has been a dedicated focal point to support all the SP related activities. Before this, SP was integrated under Child Protection. At the field level, SP works through several local partners to implement its activities. This boosts its human capacity while also building the capacities of local actors, creating a more sustainable approach. The level of achievement in this sector with the level of human resources available (one full-time staff), and the work of the most senior management on issues of social protection speak to UNICEF's **efficient and well qualified personnel**.

Staff are described as passionate, committed, and professional. Stakeholders report that UNICEF staff are open to adapting to the changing context and needs on the ground. Respondents praised UNICEF's ability to adopt its approach to ensure that its interventions were complementary with the government's priorities and what other actors were doing in the ground.

UNICEF's technical resources were of critical importance to ensure continued delivery of activities despite COVID-19 restrictions. As found in document review and corroborated in interviews, UNICEF was adept at shifting a bulk of activities online, which helped overcome delays to the extent possible.

Timeliness

Both document review and interviews with interlocutors indicate that implementation was overall timely and on-track against the set indicators. There were some delays outside of UNICEF's control noted on specific activities. For example, the 2018 referendum and the political situation in the country at this time affected UNICEF-supported legislative changes in the Parliament and as a result limited the possibility for moving forward on key social policy issues such as child poverty and others. COVID-19 also caused further delays due to the limited movement and other restrictions which led to delays in certain activities such as the roll-out of professional supervision in social work.

EQ 9. Which UNICEF's social protection support interventions for children and their families have been the most efficient in meeting the needs of the children (by program type, by target population, by inequities)?

Finding 15. Social transfers, cash benefits and child allowance are the most efficient initiatives in terms of addressing the issue of child poverty and leveraging investments and partnership with other key actors in the country such as the World Bank.

According to the statistical data (official statistical data, as well as administrative sources, i.e., MLSP CBMIS), but also according to document review, and key informant interviews, the social transfers, cash benefits and child allowance are the most efficient initiatives in terms of addressing the issue of child poverty and leveraging investments and partnership with other key actors in the country such as the World Bank. This component has also absorbed one of the highest portions of the SP budget, second after the emergency response.

UNICEF contributed to the significant increase of rights-holders benefiting from cash transfer and as a result reduction of child poverty, compared to 2016, the number of children benefiting from poverty reduction transfers increased fivefold, including a 147% raise between 2019 and 2020.⁹⁴

Prior to the 2019 reform, the cash benefits were too low to have an impact on reducing child poverty. The monthly child allowance before the reform was 740 MKD (USD13) per child up to age 15 and 1,175 MKD (USD21) for children aged 15-18, with a maximum limit of 1,870 MKD (USD33) in total for large families. Furthermore, issues of targeting meant that only 20 percent of the poorest decile benefited from such allowance.

Following the 2019 reform, as "a result of UNICEF intervention, the overall adequacy of cash benefits doubled, which coupled with other measures is expected to decrease the staggering child poverty rates soon. For example, a family with two school going children where both parents are unemployed is now receiving approximately 188USD (up from 89USD)."⁹⁵

⁹⁴ UNICEF Annual Report 2020, pp 5-6

⁹⁵ UNICEF 2021, Realizing Children's rights through Social Policy in Europe and Central Asia. A compendium of UNICEF's contributions (2014-2020)

In addition to the cash transfers, key informant interviews highlighted several other initiatives such as deinstitutionalization and the establishment of small homes and UNICEF's work in supporting the Introduction and expansion of ICF-based disability assessment. ICF-based disability assessment is seen as UNICEF 'bread and butter' by some stakeholders who noted the critical role that UNICEF played in the adaptations of the ICF norms in Macedonia.

4.5 SUSTAINABILITY

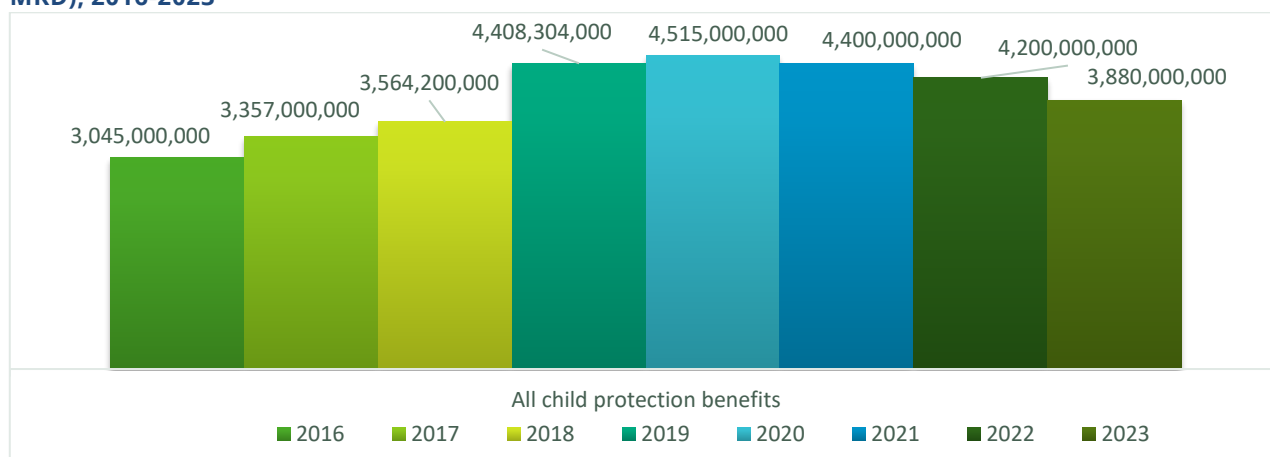
EQ 10. Are legal, institutional/administrative, and financial mechanisms established to ensure monitoring and evaluation as well as sustainability of the results (policies, strategies, services)?

Finding 16. While changes in legislation and institutional practices achieved through the reform of social protection system in North Macedonia present strong drivers of the sustainability of results, lack of follow-up actions and fragmentation of policies hinders long-term sustainability.

The Government of North Macedonia has adopted several normative acts (in particular, new Law on Social protection, and amendments of the Law on child protection⁹⁶), which serve as legal foundations for reformed social assistance, with important revisions of cash benefits for children and their families. In particular, the child allowance, reformed with UNICEF's support, has helped improve targeting and coverage with assistance. These normative acts, which were adopted inter alia with support of UNICEF, foresee more systematized **allocations from the national budget**, and represent strong prerequisites for sustainability and scale-up of reformed social assistance.

Insight into allocations from the national budget on child protection benefits, shows continual increase in the period 2016-2020, with significant rise in 2019 of 23.7%⁹⁷. This is due to the introduction of the reformed child allowance and upgrade of the previous conditional cash transfers (only for children in secondary education) into educational allowance entitled to children in both primary and secondary education. The trend of decrease in financing of child protection benefits since 2021 is mainly due to the reformed parental allowance for third child, which after 2019, was provided only to households with incomes below the minimum wage (unlike previous universal entitlement). While the idea of the child protection amendments was to discontinue the unproductive demographic measures, the reformed parental allowance now serves only as a demographic incentive among low-income families, and without systematic support after the benefit ends, it creates a poverty trap for children born in low-income families.

FIGURE 8. ALLOCATED BUDGET FOR CASH BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN IN THE ANNUAL PROGRAM FOR CHILD PROTECTION (IN MKD), 2016-2023



Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Annual Programs for Child Protection, 2016-2023

Interviewed stakeholders raised concerns that the full operationalization of reformed measures is threatened by changing government priorities, which may affect sustainability of achieved results. Representatives of the CSW

⁹⁶Law on Social Protection, Official Gazette No. 104/2019, Amendments of the Law on Child Protection, Official Gazette No. 104/2019.

⁹⁷ Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Annual Programs for Child Protection, 2016-2023.

indicated that the lack of integration between the minimum wage policy and thresholds for social and child protection cash benefits since 2019, means that many households, which had one member employed on minimum wage, have lost access to child allowance and parental allowance. This was considered as a challenge for most vulnerable families.

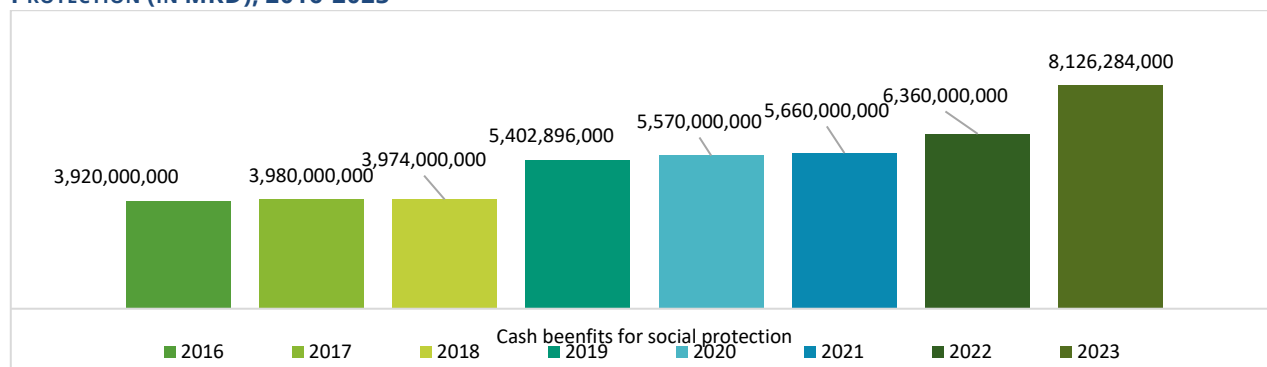
Stakeholders express significant concerns regarding the long-term sustainability of the legal framework underpinning the case management system, which has received support from UNICEF. This concern arises due to ongoing government considerations regarding potential reforms in the working methods of CSWs, which could potentially result in the discontinuation or significant changes to the case management system that was introduced with UNICEF support. This is a significant threat to sustainability of results under this domain (see further analysis in Finding 17 below).

With aim to further the reform, the Government of North Macedonia adopted the *National Program for the Development of Social Protection 2022-2032*⁹⁸. The overall aim of the program is to assist “developing a sustainable, adaptable and effective system of social protection based on participation and guided by the needs of the users in order to strengthen and empower them for independent, productive and active life”⁹⁹. The document envisages several measures, including the preparation of normative and other acts in the field of social protection. With regards to ICF based disability assessment, the new Rulebook for functional assessment was adopted - published in the Official Gazette of the RSM on January 17, 2023, which completes all the legislative changes for the shift from an old medical model of looking at the health condition and disability (medical diagnosis) towards looking into all aspects of human health and certain health components of well-being, in line with ICF standards. These present important foundations for future deepening of the reform.

As evident from Figure 8, initiated changes in the social protection law and the change to conditionality for certain benefits, have removed barriers to the accessing the main SP cash benefits and have contributed to significant and continual increase of the national budget allocations for SP.

Although the highest increase is evident in 2019 (+36%), when the new law was introduced, it is noticeable that the reformed tax-financed social protection benefits continue to require constant annual increases. As evidenced by the stakeholders from the CSW, this is mainly due to the increase in the beneficiaries of financial compensation for assistance and care from another person, as well as the social pension, i.e., mainly benefits targeted toward older people. However, while the 2019 reform was strongly backed by the evidence-based consolidation, the abolition and reduction of coverage of some previous benefits, and the progressive taxation reform, reform’s long-term sustainability is threatened due to lack of continuity of policies that provide fiscal space for a more comprehensive social and child protection.

FIGURE 9. ALLOCATED BUDGET FOR CASH BENEFITS* FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE ANNUAL PROGRAM FOR CHILD PROTECTION (IN MKD), 2016-2023



*: Cash benefits from social protection as identified in budget line 471.

Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Annual Programs for Social Protection, 2016-2023

Finding 17. Institutional structures are largely in place to sustain levels of achievement. Sustainability of case management as approach is conditioned upon the availability of financial and human resources, and capacity of local government units to underpin the case management approaches by social services.

The Government of North Macedonia has established budgetary and institutional structures with mandates to ensure adequate targeting and coverage of the needs of children by systematizing cash benefits. The system in

⁹⁸ Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" no. 237/22

⁹⁹ Ibid

place for processing and provision of cash benefits also helps sustainability of such measures.

Apart from the improved equivalence scales for access to child and social protection benefits, the government has introduced progressive taxation in 2019. This policy and the Law itself were part of the larger social reform package. According to government estimates, the progressive taxation was to affect 1% of the wealthier citizens, and the expected revenues from this measure were estimated at 1,558 million MKD (€25 million). The policy plan, announced by the Government in November 2018, directed the increased revenues towards financing the new social protection rights¹⁰⁰. The publicly available MoF data on budget implementation show that the income from personal income tax in the first 9 months of 2019 increased by 1,664 million MKD (€27 million) compared to the same period in 2018; this increased the projected revenues, estimated at 1,664 million MKD (€27 million)¹⁰¹. However, the trend of overall decrease in social protection expenditure (as % of GDP) during the period 2021-2023 threatens the overall stability of financing of the reformed social and child protection benefits and services.

The Government, with UNICEF's support, has also integrated case management within the Law on Social Protection¹⁰². Article 276 of the Law states that professionals working with the beneficiaries of social protection should apply the case management approach. This is considered a novelty on the professional method of work in centres for social work, so that the professionals will work as planned with the beneficiaries to overcome the social risk and include them in the society.

UNICEF supported government's efforts in increasing institutional capacities to operationalize legislative provisions for case management, through targeted trainings and manuals/guides; revisions of CSW's systematization and job descriptions; and mentoring and piloting case management. These efforts resulted in a case manager position being included in the CSW systematization. Document review and stakeholder interviews provide evidence of extensive training efforts including large cohorts of CSW staff across the country. This resulted in a cumulative increase in understanding of case management and familiarity with tools and approaches to implementation of such measures. However, interviews indicate that new standards of service are difficult to implement due to human and institutional capacities in CSWs and due to resistance to change within CSWs. Main challenge, as emphasized by interviewed stakeholders, is the overburdening of CSW staff with cases, especially those in larger centres (e.g., Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo). For instance, one case manager in Skopje holds over 800 cases, impossible to adequately implement case management in practice.

The reform process has resulted in progressive promotion and diversification of social service provision. Strengthening the framework for licensing of social services has helped to increase the number of licensed social service providers. Per data from the MLSP, by March 2023, a total of 85 service providers were licensed. The MLSP also included a total of 7.8 million EUR, for financing social services. Comparative review with budgetary allocations in 2022 shows high increase with an additional 5.5 million EUR to the 2022 budget. The ministry also amended the Decision on the price of social services for 2023, determining the price of 997 MKD for individual treatment and 1,185 MKD per day per user for an individual hour and the price for daily treatment for a child by an expert worker in licensed day care centres respectively. This would be paid for through the CSW.

Per stakeholder feedback, there is a visible increase in availability of diverse local social services that are licensed and locally registered, which is helpful for the referral by case management system. All these measures help increase the sustainability of service provision. However, interviewed stakeholders raised concerns about the attractiveness of social services for various potential providers (e.g., NGOs) due to difficult procedures for licensing the service, low funds, and strict requirements that many potential providers cannot meet. These are considered as ongoing challenges, affecting the extent to which the case management can be fully implemented.

Disability budgeting at the local level is usually focused on providing financial support for the operation of day care centres and transport for children with disabilities to and from schools. However, as indicated in the recent UN Situational Analysis of Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹⁰³, many municipalities lack the administrative and financial capacities for developing different services for persons with disabilities, and the municipalities that do have day centres have still not taken the competences over them, because there are no binding provisions in the law (ibid, p.57).

When it comes to ICF introduction, the new Commissions for the Assessment of Children with Disabilities have been established in 6 regional centres, with some plans, albeit vague, for further localization. Stakeholder interviews indicate that the regional centres are already functional, though the waiting times and accessibility are still problematic. However, these reformed commissions are considered as sustainable in the medium to long run.

¹⁰⁰ Nova TV News Release (2018), "PM Statement – Progressive taxation will contribute toward fair society (in Macedonian). Available at: <https://novatv.mk/zaev-progresivniot-danok-ke-pridonese-za-pravedno-opshtestvo>

¹⁰¹ Jovanovic, B. (2019), "Where the Minister Got it Wrong", (in Macedonian). Available at: <https://prizma.mk/kolumni/kade-zgreshi-ministerkata/>

¹⁰² Official Gazette no.104/2019

¹⁰³ Kochoska, E. et al. (2022) Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021, Skopje: UNICEF.

When it comes to monitoring, UNICEF's efforts, such as the support to evidence generation through research studies and collection of lessons learned from modelling as well as some, albeit limited support to the standardization of monitoring processes and availability of data (the Management Information System (MIS)), were also cited by interviewed stakeholders as useful. However, informants noted persistent gaps and weaknesses in the government's sectoral MIS, and its insufficient exploitation for planning and budgeting remain challenges going forward with the reform.

EQ 11. To what extent are the mechanisms for financing social protection spending which were supported by UNICEF in partnership with other development partners consistent with the objectives of the programs they are financing? What are the potentials for expanding the existing benefits or introduce new ones?

Finding 18. Legal amendments of the social and child protection addressed fragmentation in the previous system, by explicitly pursuing integration, effectiveness, and comprehensiveness.

Comparative evidence before and after the social and child protection reform shows that legislative changes focused on: removing and reforming costly and non-productive benefits (i.e. Financial Assistance of mother who gave birth to a fourth child, Parental allowance); consolidating different categorical benefits into one (i.e. Allowance for deaf and hard of hearing, Allowance for blindness and mobility, etc.) and widening the scope of cash benefits (Educational allowance) and social services (i.e. respite care, halfway house, supported living).

As indicated in other parts of this report, the changes also introduced: use of one equivalence scale for all means-tested benefits ensuring equal treatment among people in similar circumstances, complementarity between social and child protection benefits (i.e., GMA + energy subsidy + Child allowance + Educational allowance), removing conditionality attached to energy allowance for GMA beneficiaries, etc. Table 8 presents detailed insight into the pre-reformed and post-reformed Law on Social Protection. Some existing benefits were consolidated, overcoming significant fragmentation and incoherence, while several benefits were linked together to strengthen the overall impact.

TABLE 9. COMPARATIVE EVIDENCE OF CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT'S LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION

Pre-reform 2018	Post-reform 2019
<p>Law on Child Protection: Rights from the child protection (art 6):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child allowance 2. Special child allowance 3. One-off financial assistance for new-born 4. Parental allowance 5. Participation for kindergarten 	<p>Law for amending and supplementing the Law on Child (2019): Rights from the child protection (art 6):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child allowance 2. Special child allowance 3. One-off financial assistance for new-born 4. Parental allowance 5. Educational allowance 6. Participation for kindergarten
<p>Law on Social Protection: Rights of financial assistance from social protection (art. 44):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Financial Assistance 2. Permanent Assistance 3. Financial assistance for a person that by the age of 18 had the status of a child without parents and parental care. 4. Financial Assistance of mother who gave birth to a fourth child. 5. Right to financial assistance for foster care 6. Financial compensation for assistance and care from another person 7. One off financial assistance 8. Salary allowance for part-time working due to taking care of child with physical or mental disabilities. 	<p>Law on Social Protection: Rights of financial assistance from social protection (art. 27):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guaranteed minimum assistance (previous 1) 2. Disability allowance (previous 2) 3. Financial compensation for assistance and care from another person (previous 6+9+13) 4. Salary allowance for part-time work 5. Housing allowance (previous 3) 6. Permanent allowance (previous 5+10) 7. One-off financial assistance

Pre-reform 2018	Post-reform 2019
9. Allowance for deaf and hard of hearing 10. Financial assistance for single parents that has a child with disabilities. 11. Right to financial assistance for social housing 12. Right to health protection 13. Allowance for blindness and mobility.	
Law on Social Protection: Non-residential protection (art. 26): 1. First social service for beneficiaries of social protection 2. Individual Assistance 3. Family Assistance 4. Home care and assistance to individuals and families, 5. Daily and temporary care as assistance to an individual and family 6. Placement in a foster family, 7. Accommodation in a small group home and - organized living with support	Law on Social Protection: Social services (art.70): 1. Information and referral services 2. Professional assistance and support services 3. Counselling services 4. Home services (help and care in the home and personal assistance) 5. Community services (day care, respite care, halfway house) 6. out-of-home care services (supported living, foster care, residential living)

Source: Law on Social Protection (2015), Law on Social Protection (2019).

Finding 19. Mechanisms for financing social and child protection supported by UNICEF were consistent with the objectives of wider support for vulnerable families and children.

The increase in social and child protection expenditure during the period 2016-2020 was consistent with the objectives of the financed programs. Specifically, the increase of financing of child cash benefits was consistent with the objective of expanding child allowance and providing wider support for families with children, all of which led to the reduction of the child poverty rate in 2019.

In addition, reformulation of the parental allowance for third child was consistent with the evidence base showing that during the 10 years of its implementation as a universal cash benefit (2009-2019), it has not resulted in higher birth rates or lower child poverty rate.

Similarly, the increase of financing for social protection cash benefits was compatible with the objective of removing barriers and focusing the targeting on most vulnerable, which led towards increase in GMA beneficiaries, and their more comprehensive coverage than before the pre-reform period. All this was enabled through an increase in tax revenues; eliminating unproductive cash transfers; and use of borrowing/loans from the international financial institutions.

However, there are two options for further expansion of the existing benefits and introducing new ones (i) (re-)introduce progressive taxation and thus broaden the fiscal space for more comprehensive social protection (ii) increase the overall social and child protection financing as a percentage of GDP and align the social expenditure close to the EU average.

Most of the interviewed stakeholders were familiar with the UNICEF contribution to the social and child protection reform. However, there was no clear recognition/awareness whether UNICEF has facilitated consistency between the mechanisms for financing social protection spending and the objectives of the social protection programs. The exception in this relation was the wider recognition among stakeholders of UNICEF's financing support to case management, which was seen as crucial for advancing further the overall administration of social services and cash benefits.

4.6 IMPACT

EQ 12. Are there early indications that the reforms of family and child focused benefits and reformed social services have contributed to social inclusion of children and their families?

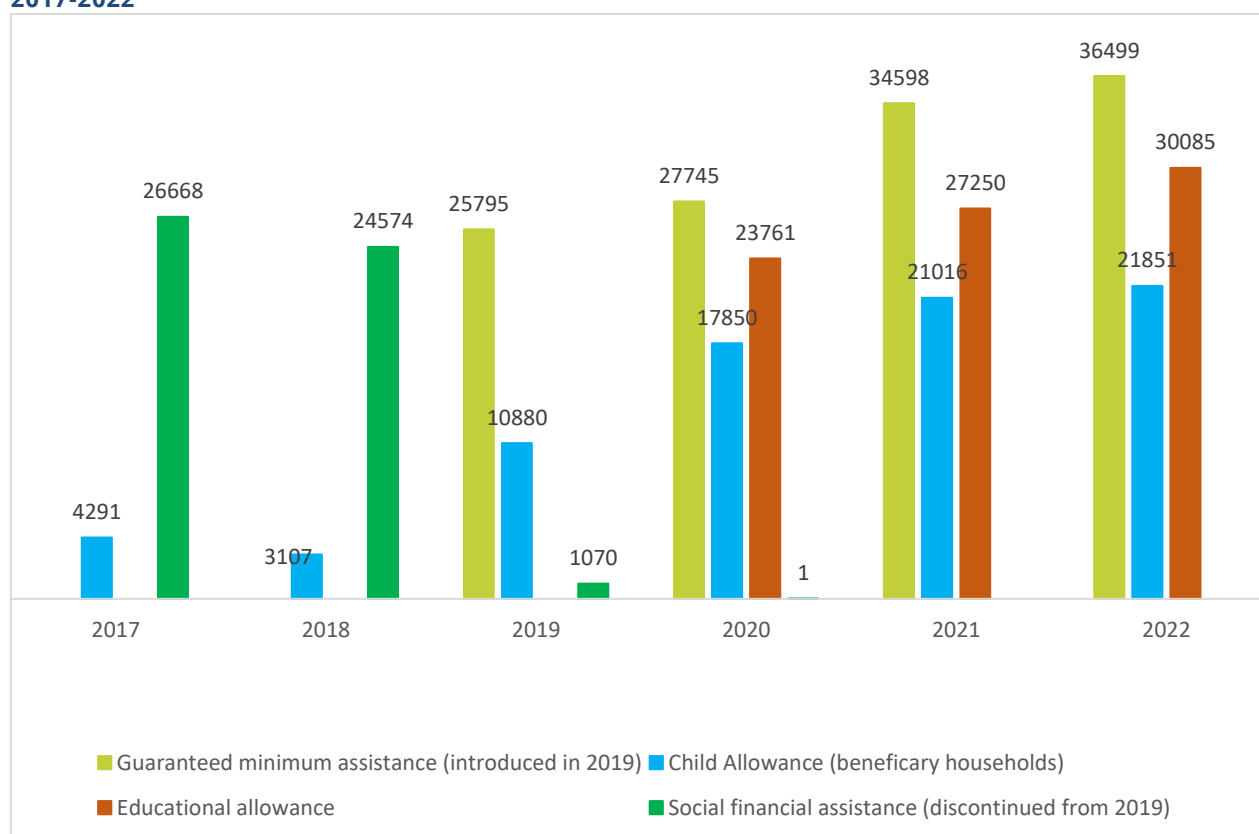
Finding 20. Ambitious social protection reform in North Macedonia has resulted in improved coverage, targeting and adequacy of social assistance. The system is comparatively

more effective than the previous scattered social protection programs in reaching the most vulnerable children and their families.

Document review and stakeholder interviews provided evidence of positive impacts of reformed social assistance measures on the access to rights for the most vulnerable children and their families. According to the available statistical data, the reforms have resulted in an overall increase in coverage and better targeting of the most in need of such assistance. The most significant comparative increase was recorded with child allowance from 2017, from 5,517 children in 2017 to 45,089 children in 2023. This is mainly thanks to the improved eligibility criteria for CA, which now permit GMA beneficiaries to apply for child allowance (as discussed in effectiveness section). Also, more favourable equivalence scales for accessing GMA and CA enabled multi-member families (5+) to have more equitable treatment, which was particularly favourable for access to CA among Roma households. Increased coverage was also noted in terms of Educational Allowance, achieved because of reforming the Educational Allowance to also include primary school children.

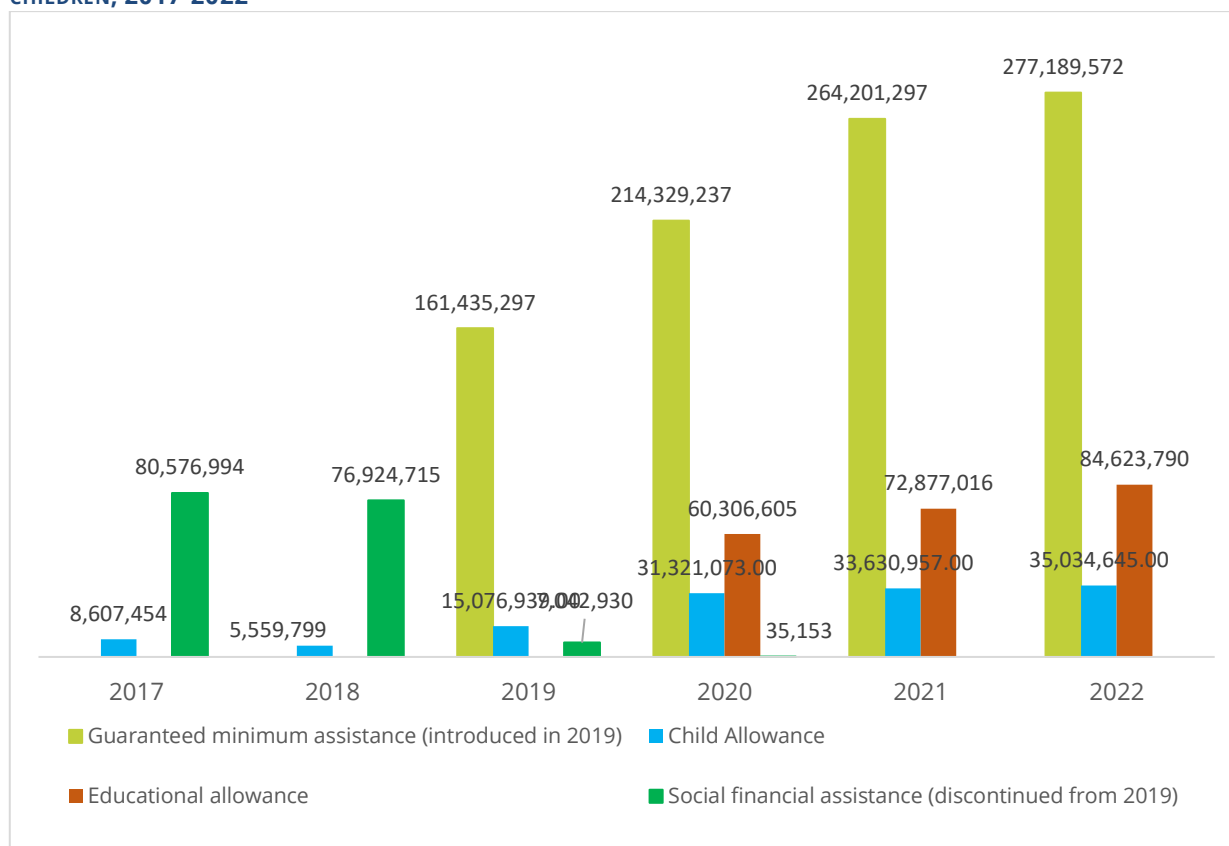
Many other adjustments in terms of cash benefits were made to ensure that the coverage and targeting is good. These include discontinuation of the universal parental allowance for third child, which has shown to have no impact on birth and child poverty rates and to primarily benefit higher income households; integration of rights between social and child protection, existing benefits were consolidated, overcoming significant fragmentation and incoherence, equivalence scales and other core parameters were uniformed across programs addressing previous equity challenges, removal of the reduction of social financial assistance/GMA of 50% after the third year, etc. See Annex 9 for a detailed overview of social assistance changes over the reference period.

FIGURE 10. BENEFICIARIES OF SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION CASH BENEFITS FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN, 2017-2022



Source: MLSP

FIGURE 11. AMOUNT SPENT (MKD) ON SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION CASH BENEFITS FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN, 2017-2022



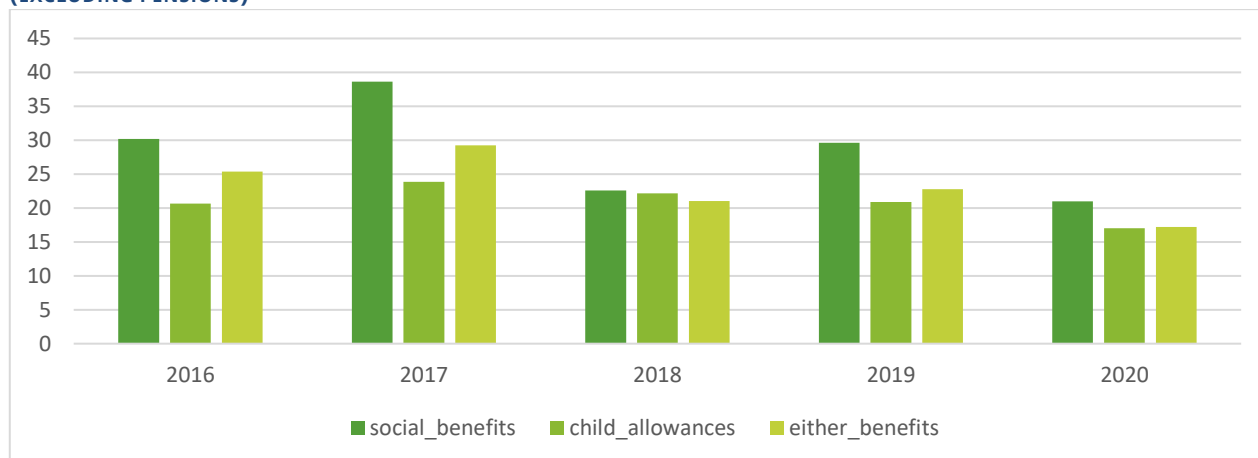
Source: MLSP

The evaluation also found other reformed social assistance measures, that have had positive impacts on the most vulnerable. For instance, the coverage of reformed guaranteed minimum assistance (GMP) at the end of 2022 was 35,748, which is an important increase in comparison to 25,095 households that received GMP in 2019. Document review and stakeholder interviews indicate that overall GMP was significantly improved towards ensuring that the assistance provides for comprehensive social safety net. Available studies (e.g., the World Bank Study) found that the previous Social Financial Assistance (SFA) scheme was cost-efficient, but had low coverage and low adequacy, hence with no impact on poverty.¹⁰⁴ The main change that helped improve coverage was the change of the eligibility threshold and changed amounts of cash benefit, both of which were considered as a good reform. Further MLSP data shows that 11,153 households (i.e., 31.7% of the total number of GMP beneficiary households) also use child allowance, while one in five households receiving GMP (21.2% or 7,681 households) also used Educational Allowance for children in 2022.

The rate of severely materially deprived children aged 0-17 living in in households' beneficiaries of social transfers (excluding pensions) and child allowances has reduced in the period 2016-2020. Children aged 0-17 living in households that are entitled to receive child allowance have a lower severe material deprivation rate compared to children aged 0-17 living in households that receive social transfers (excluding pensions).

¹⁰⁴ World Bank (2022); North Macedonia: Social Protection Situational Analysis

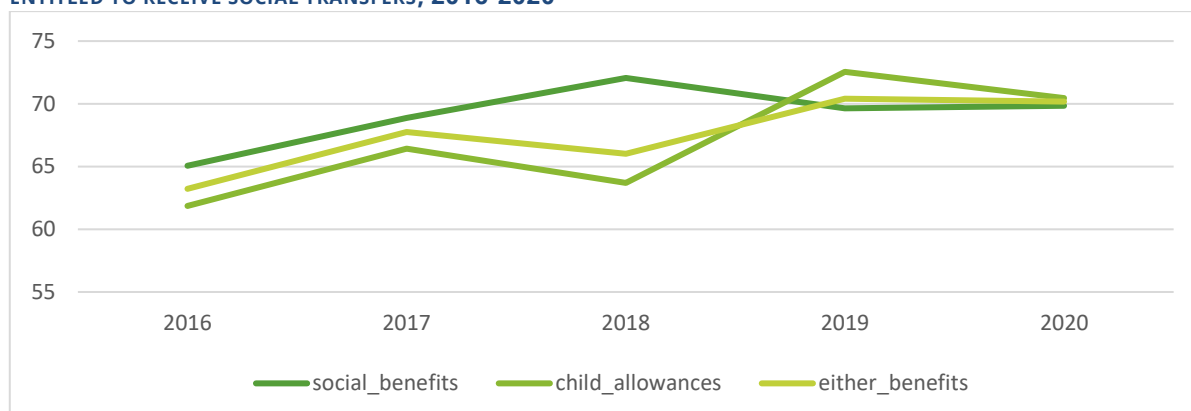
FIGURE 12. SEVERELY MATERIALLY DEPRIVED CHILDREN 0-17 LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS' BENEFICIARIES OF SOCIAL TRANSFERS (EXCLUDING PENSIONS)



Source: Authors own calculations based on EU-SILC data for North Macedonia, 2016-2020.

However, during the analysed period, the at risk of poverty rate or social exclusion has increased among children aged 0-17 living in households' beneficiaries of social transfers (excluding pensions). In 2019, this was particularly evident among children 0-17 beneficiaries of child allowances. Factors that affect child poverty or social exclusion are the labour market situation of the parents which is also linked to their level of education, as well as the composition of the household in which the children live.

FIGURE 13. AT RISK OF POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION AMONG CHILDREN 0-17 LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS THAT WERE ENTITLED TO RECEIVE SOCIAL TRANSFERS, 2016-2020



Source: Authors' own calculations based on EU-SILC data for North Macedonia, 2016-2020.

Since 2023, the government also adjusted the social and child protection rights with the cost of living, which resulted in a change in an increase in cash benefits across different rights by up to 14.2% (i.e., GMA rights, allowance for help and care from another person, right to disability, right to child allowance, special allowance, civil disability, permanent care allowance, part-time allowance, housing, social security allowance for the elderly). To boost the protection of rights of persons with disability, reforms of social assistance brought an increase of the amount of the special allowance by 15%, along with lowering the age limit for using the right to permanent compensation for parents who looked after a child with a disability (from 64 to 62 years for men and from 62 to 60 for women). The reformed classification of health and health-related conditions for children based on ICG model has also reached out to 1,699 children¹⁰⁵. These all ensure the inclusion of children and people with combined disabilities in the personal assistance service.

Impact of case management and social services

While there are still a significant number of challenges related to case management implementation identified by the stakeholders from the CSW and Employment Agency, CSW respondents still agreed that it contributed to improved holistic assessment of the families and better referral of beneficiaries to different cash benefits and social services. In relation to case management of social services, most of the interviewed stakeholders in the CSW

¹⁰⁵ Data received from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

felt unequipped for it. Although UNICEF supported the Government in introducing protocols and manuals for professionals on case management and in adjusting the terms of reference for social workers in CSW to better reflect the use of case management in practice, most interviewed case workers still indicated additional need for training and specialization.

Grants for financing of social services at the local level by the MLSP, and the central registry of licensed providers of social services were univocally identified as good examples for promoting further local social service provision. CSW respondents felt more reassured to refer clients to the licensed social service providers, which, according to them, made the whole process more transparent and reliable. The Municipality of Kumanovo indicated that they used their own local budget to support civil society organizations to equip them with adequate resources to be able to be licensed in the future. This example shows that municipalities with higher fiscal capacity can lead the process of expansion of local social services and prospectively also the decentralization of cash benefits from social and child protection.

EQ 13. What positive/negative unintended outcomes have UNICEF's interventions contributed to so far?

Document review and stakeholder interviews revealed a number of results as presented in the preceding sections. The findings of this evaluation point to the breadth of the reform, which included and invested in a number of areas to test innovative methods and approaches in tackling social protection of the most vulnerable groups. The evaluation revealed that some reform initiatives, notably, the introduction of the case management for all institutions in the social protection system turned out to bring some unintended negative outcomes. Illustrative examples include the increasing backlog of cases in some CSWs or the fact that some institutions, such as the Agency for Employment, could not implement it despite the legal requirement to integrate case management in its work. The Agency tested it as a pilot project and it turned out that the type of work/service they offer was not adjusted to this method, as they only work with employable persons. During their test period, there were occasions where the whole family would come to the session, which created challenges to the Agency as they are not equipped to work with the families as groups. When it comes to CSWs, notably in bigger municipalities, case management application is not feasible due to lack of space, time, or resources for social workers to fully implement it. Due to these issues, the backlog in some municipalities actually increased instead of desired decrease and streamlining of the CSW's work.

Another unintended outcome of the reform activities relates to the discontinuation of eligibility to CA/EA of some households because of the lack of increasing the access threshold of CA/EA in line with the increase of the minimum wage. In this respect, the reform related to the child and educational allowance was made in such way that in case the household is a nuclear family made of a couple with two children and if one of the parents is employed and receives the minimum wage, then the household will be entitled to CA/EA (their per adult equivalent income for the purpose of CA/EA was $5217 = 12000 / 2.3$, which is below the eligibility threshold of 6000). The minimum wage at that point was 12,000 MKD. Since the increase of the minimum wage and no change in the access criteria, households with one employed member on minimum wage have lost access to child allowance/educational allowance.

4.7 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

EQ 14. To what extent have UNICEF's interventions contributed to gender equality, non-discrimination, and disability inclusiveness?

Finding 21. The targeted and systemic approach through legislative changes, capacity building and sector and resource mobilization ensured combined positive effects for all vulnerable groups contributing largely to non-discrimination, inclusion and no one left behind principle.

The SP interventions provided support to the most vulnerable, with integration of protection, gender, and disability principles. With the reformed social protection system benefits put in place, coverage and quality for all citizens who experience vulnerability was increased, enhancing gender equity and women's empowerment.

The combined effect of improved coverage and increased value of social and child protection benefits for vulnerable families and children resulted in the decrease of at risk of poverty rate among children in 2019. However, gender impact assessment shows that at risk of child poverty in 2019 remained the same among females aged 0-17 years.

The principle of non-discrimination was observed with the introduction of the more equitable equivalence scales for households of different size, when accessing GMA, child allowance and educational allowance. This particularly

improved access to CA among Roma families with children, who are overrepresented in the category of families with more than five family members.

Reformed cash benefits from child protection had a gender equality dimension: the amended Law on child protection in 2019 stipulated mothers as main beneficiaries to whom the child allowance, as well as the parental allowance is being directly paid to. Naturally, gender considerations require a coherent, cross-cutting approach through advocacy and partnership to address not only social protection but also maternal and child health, education, prevention of violence, etc. Findings suggest that UNICEF made marked contributions through strengthening the legal framework and workforce capacity to ensure that all children both boy and girls- have the best and most equitable chance for long-term opportunities and development.

Public advocacy on the rights of persons with disability and children with disabilities contributed largely to non-discrimination. Disability inclusiveness was supported by enforcing the ICF implementation, which among other enhanced the process of application of special child allowance. Due to the introduction and implementation of the International Classification of Functioning, the administration of the special child allowance was improved. Furthermore, structured interventions targeting schools enabled a move from special education to resource schools and inclusive education, incorporation of ICF in the law form primary education and development of national concept on inclusive education foreseeing specialized teacher training on disability issues and inclusion.

5. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This section provides a set of conclusions derived from the evaluation process, relating to the relevance of UNICEF's contributions to the reform of social protection in North Macedonia; specific outcome level contributions; efficiency, sustainability, impact, and coherence. The evaluation recommendations are derived from extensive consultations with key stakeholders across the evaluation process, analysis of documentation, and the findings and conclusions of this evaluation. Interviews and FGDs were also used to generate ideas for UNICEF's potential future strategic directions in support of social protection. By engaging with a diverse group of participants, including UNICEF co-workers, experts, government officials, partners, donors, associations representing rights of vulnerable groups, and direct service providers, the study aimed to capture multifaceted perspectives. The combination of interviews and on-site observations added depth to the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Relevance

C1: Over the reference period, UNICEF's social protection programme effectively addressed crucial unmet needs among the most vulnerable rights-holder groups and played a vital role in supporting national social protection reform initiatives.

Leveraging its strategic positioning, UNICEF provided essential assistance to duty bearers in crafting evidence-based policies and enhancing targeted social assistance to citizens. This approach not only facilitated the provision of adequate support to the most vulnerable children and their families but also ensured the programme's relevance during the social protection reform process. The incorporation of evidence-based research, focusing on access to social and child protection for vulnerable groups, contributed significantly to the success of UNICEF's programming and implementation. Moreover, the participatory design of programmatic interventions allowed for the sharing of successful practices, enabling UNICEF to tailor its interventions effectively. The human rights-based approach, RBM, child vulnerability consideration and gender equity principles enhanced the relevance, effectiveness, and inclusivity of the social protection interventions. The interventions supported not only the provision of essential tailored support to rights-holders, but also supported duty-bearers to adopt processes that demonstrated commitment to upholding human rights, protecting vulnerable populations, and advancing gender equality. Overall, UNICEF's commitment to evidence-driven strategies and collaborative efforts has made a substantial impact on improving the lives of the most vulnerable populations, particularly children and their families, within the context of social protection reform by the provision of evidence to inform reform directions.

Strategic Recommendation (SR) 1. Support evidence-based decision making and oversight of reform of social protection to help the government to reduce indiscriminate social protection and improve equal treatment within the child benefit system. **Priority: HIGH. Responsible party: UNICEF.**

Operational Recommendation (OR) 1.1 Continue supporting evidence generation efforts under social protection through initiatives such as commissioning research studies, Situational analyses, policy papers, etc. to help inform policies and resource allocations under social protection domain. For instance, using the

comparative evidence from the neighbouring countries, UNICEF should support the government in prioritizing increase of the social protection spending in line with the other EU candidate countries (i.e., Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, and Herzegovina). Example from Montenegro related to introduction of universal child allowance should be promoted and tested in North Macedonia. (based upon findings from EQ1)

OR 1.2 Support the State Statistical Office to provide regular and updated monitoring of the effects from the social protection and monitoring of the social protection spending.

Coherence

C2: By adopting a multi-dimensional approach that operates at different levels and through various pathways, such as advocacy, policy, technical assistance, capacity strengthening, and material support, the program effectively integrated and complemented other UNICEF components.

UNICEF's social protection program has demonstrated the power of collaborative and flexible approaches in fostering both the internal synergies across various UNICEF portfolios, including child protection, education, and health and external synergies with other reform actors. This strategic approach not only enhanced the programme's transformational potential but also provided a more comprehensive and cohesive support framework to the national government and public/civil society service providers. The promotion of synergies among UNICEF's portfolios internally underscored UNICEF's commitment to a holistic and integrated approach to address the complex challenges faced by vulnerable populations when it comes to social protection. Progressive leadership and partnering with other donors maximized and leveraged results relating to the identification of vulnerable households that were not in the social protection system; brought direct assistance and support to vulnerable families; minimized duplication of efforts; and streamlined support among multiple actors and donors. This has been a strength of the program in the reference period of this evaluation. As a result, UNICEF's efforts in the realm of social protection have contributed significantly to its broader mission of improving the well-being of children and the significant decrease (of 5.1%) of the at risk of poverty rate among children in North Macedonia.

SR 2. Maximise the potential of available resources within UNICEF by strengthening linkages, mutual leverage, and synergies between social and child protection to enhance results and holistic approaches. **Priority: HIGH.**
Responsible party: UNICEF.

OR 2.1 UNICEF teams, notably social – and child-protection, should explore further synergies and ways on how to deepen mutual leverage of their interventions to ensure that the budgets that are available are maximised in favour of holistic approaches to child rights protection. (based upon findings from EQ3)

Effectiveness

C3: UNICEF's multifaceted interventions, including advisory, capacity strengthening, and evidence-based modelling, have successfully influenced policy, legislation, and service provision in North Macedonia, but the challenge now is to ensure sustained positive outcomes amidst a volatile political context, with notable barriers including the fiscal and administrative constraints across the sector, overburdened CSWs, unreformed DCCs and worsening socio-economic conditions of the most vulnerable amid global economic crises.

UNICEF's advisory, capacity strengthening, and modelling interventions proved highly effective in shaping positive models and approaches that inform policy and legislation design as well as service provision. Evidence generation through research studies and lessons learned from implemented models played a crucial role in shedding light on the challenges and needs of the most vulnerable populations and providing insights on how to address them. This evidence-based approach has been instrumental in driving positive change in social assistance, social services, and case management. UNICEF's efforts to promote and introduce a social model of disability classification in alignment with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) yielded significant benefits for the targeted individuals and their families, resulting in improved access to services, social assistance, and empowerment. The tangible transformational results of these efforts are evident in the integration of applicable tools and approaches into national legislation and policies in North Macedonia.

UNICEF's contributions were valuable for strengthening evidence within the social and child protection reform through support to the monitoring and evidence generation. However, it is important to recognize that there are ongoing issues and weaknesses within the government's sectoral MIS, and its limited utilization for effective planning and budgeting represents a continuing challenge as the reform progresses. Addressing these persistent gaps and enhancing the government's capacity to leverage MIS data will be crucial for the successful

implementation and sustainability of the reform efforts.

Overall, UNICEF's outputs have been delivered with good quality and in a timely manner, the challenge now lies in ensuring that investments in targeted thematic areas translate into sustainable outcome-level results, especially within the context of a volatile political landscape. Persisting challenges include fiscal and administrative limitations within the sector, the strain on already overburdened CSWs, and deteriorating socio-economic conditions faced by the most vulnerable, exacerbated by ongoing global economic crises. Besides, DCCs who have also been supported by UNICEF, have shown positive outcomes in promoting social inclusion and offering alternatives to institutionalization. Moving forward, the key will be to address the existing challenges and sustain the momentum to further enhance the well-being and support for the most vulnerable populations in North Macedonia.

SR 3. Support the government's efforts to devise and implement specific strategies for optimization of fiscal planning, organization, and implementation of social protection interventions, ensuring that they address the remaining gaps to ensure adequacy and equity. **Priority: HIGH. Responsible party: UNICEF and government of North Macedonia.**

OR 3.1 UNICEF should envisage technical assistance in support to the capacity strengthening of social protection policy makers and implementers on equity-centered, program-based, and performance-informed budgeting to strengthen links between policies, program delivery and budget. UNICEF's positive practices and models should serve as foundation of this support. (Based upon findings from EQ6)

OR 3.2 Assist the government to consider policy alternatives for increasing the value of child allowance and replace the administrative based value of the child allowance with a relevant reference standard (i.e., at risk of poverty threshold, minimum wage, equity concerns) that will be indexed for inflation and thus contribute toward reducing the high at risk of child poverty rate. (Based upon findings from EQ7a)

OR 3.3 Assist the government to design policy alternatives for re-establishment of progressive income taxation or for identifying other fiscal space alternatives that would benefit the most marginalized families and children (Based upon findings from EQ7a)

OR 3.4 Advocate for universalization of the child and educational allowances to help improve child poverty rate and reduce early school leaving in light of the high child poverty rate in the country. (Based upon finding from EQ5).

OR 3.5 Ensure consistent follow-up actions and streamline processes for implementation of the above-mentioned policies within social protection system to enhance long-term sustainability (Based upon finding 16).

SR 4. UNICEF should support the government to review the case management model and ensure that preconditions (institutional infrastructure, human and financial resources) are in place in CSWs for them to apply case management. **Priority: HIGH. Responsible party: UNICEF.**

OR 4.1 UNICEF should assist the government to adapt the case management model to ensure it is feasible and implementable in CSWs by critically reviewing the model and adapting it to CSW reality, in particular in larger municipalities where backlog of cases is higher. Based upon finding from EQ6).

OR 4.2 UNICEF should invest in further training on case management and integrated delivery of social services, as well as investment in enhancement of CSW infrastructure. Based upon finding from EQ6)

SR 5. Government should review and revamp Day care centres to ensure their full utility. **Priority: HIGH. Responsible party: Government - MoLSP. UNICEF to provide support as applicable.**

OR 5.1 Prioritize the diversification and innovation of services, transitioning from traditional DCC structures to more community-based, individualized options (Based upon finding 7).

OR 5.2 Reformulate the current DCC standards, emphasizing the "best interest of the child" principle, ensuring they cater more effectively to children with disabilities (Based upon finding 7).

Efficiency

C4: UNICEF's program efficiency was underpinned by its strong team expertise and resource mobilization capabilities, as evidenced by their well-balanced funding portfolio and rigorous oversight, though the program's adaptability introduced monitoring challenges.

UNICEF's program efficiency was boosted by the organization's team expertise and resource mobilization prowess reflected in a well-balanced portfolio of funding and grants. UNICEF maintained thorough oversight, ensuring timely implementation of all planned activities. However, the programme's flexibility and adaptability, while advantageous in responding to changing circumstances, also introduced challenges in terms of monitoring and measuring results. Despite these challenges, UNICEF's resource mobilization and management capabilities remained pivotal in maintaining programme efficiency, highlighting the organization's commitment to effectively and efficiently delivering its mission.

SR 6. UNICEF should develop agile monitoring systems at that can adapt to the program's flexibility. This would include real-time data collection, analysis and feedback mechanisms that can keep pace with the potential changes in the programs. Engaging stakeholders in the monitoring processes to gather diverse perspectives can provide a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact and help in devising effective monitoring strategies. **Priority: MEDIUM. Responsible party: UNICEF.**

OR 6.1 Establish a periodic review mechanism to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs and of monitoring systems. Flexibility in the monitoring approach helps keep up with the adaptable nature of the programs. UNICEF should develop a monitoring framework that is designed to adapt alongside the programs, to ensure that monitoring efforts remain relevant and accurate despite the evolving nature of the initiatives. Define clear and measurable KPIs aligned with the program's goals and objectives and regularly track these KPIs to gauge progress and identify areas that require attention.

Impact and sustainability

C5: The outcomes and sustainability of the SP initiatives exhibit a mixed picture. On the positive side, there have been notable gains in terms of extending coverage and enhancing the equivalency of GMA and child allowances. However, the absence of coordinated efforts to align cash benefits with other concurrent policy developments, such as minimum wage increases, limited the broader impact and sustainability of these reform efforts. Additionally, while the introduction of case management and subsequent training initiatives bolstered the foundation for integrated social service delivery, the inadequate investment in CSW infrastructure and human resources represents a significant hurdle to the overall progress of the Social Protection reform results.

The evaluation of UNICEF's involvement in the social and child protection reform during the 2016-2020 period highlights significant strides in improving the well-being of vulnerable families with children, marked by enhanced access to benefits and an expanded array of social services. Nevertheless, the failure of the social protection reform to substantially increase child allowances has resulted in an elevated risk of poverty among children aged 0-17 in households receiving these allowances since 2019.

Furthermore, the reform's long-term impact has been hindered by a series of unforeseen challenges, including the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, shifting policy priorities, changes in ministerial leadership, and substantial price increases. To sustain and build upon the progress achieved, the success of the social protection reform will depend on the next phases and follow-up activities, which are equally vital as the efforts made up to 2020. This will necessitate substantial endeavours to engage all stakeholders in addressing the identified gaps, notably regarding financing, and the creation of realistic programmes of support.

Regarding case management, the model itself, when fully realized, holds the promise of bringing about substantial changes in terms of comprehensive coverage, precise targeting, needs fulfilment, accessibility enhancement, and empowerment of the most vulnerable groups. UNICEF played a crucial role in promoting and the introduction of case management at CSWs. However, during its scaling up and implementation, challenges have surfaced due to the limited institutional capacity of CSWs and the absence of consistent political support for the fundamental changes necessary for the model's effectiveness (including merit-based employment in key CSW positions, restructuring of staff roles, increased funding, and additional workspace provisions, etc.). It is crucial for UNICEF to continue advocating for the model's potential benefits and to tailor case management to the specific realities of CSW in North Macedonia, as its successful institutionalization and long-term sustainability are currently uncertain.

SR 7. Facilitate intersectoral dialogue between government institutions and other actors dealing with social protection, health, education, and finance to ensure multidimensional needs of the most vulnerable

children and their families are met. **Priority: MEDIUM. Responsible party: UNICEF.**

OR 7.1 Facilitate collaboration and sharing between the health, education, and social protection public, private institutions, civil society, and development partners to promote participatory policy making practices in the social protection domain, to ensure that resulting policies are mutually coherent and not overlapping.

SR 8. Continue advocating with the government on the need to reform CSW modalities of work and to ensure financial framework for reforms in this domain. **Priority: HIGH. Responsible party: UNICEF.**

OR 8.1 Support further reforms of social protection system by advocating for critical assessment of CSW institutional and financial frameworks in North Macedonia and how the structures can be improved to provide services and protection of the most vulnerable more adequately.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson learned 1: Investment in, and access to, credible evidence base is a critical prerequisite for strong policies. Experience from UNICEF's support to social protection in North Macedonia shows that addressing unmet needs of children by generating evidence to inform the design of institutional capacity strengthening measures and policy advisory helps enhance quality, depth, and credibility of resulting policies.

Lesson learned 2: Openness and collaborative approaches among development partners enable provision of appropriate support to government's reform ambition. The experience from this program shows that investing in collaborative approaches with the government and with other development partners in policy advisory adds value in promoting human-rights-based approaches and aids effectiveness.

Lesson learned 3: Successful reform implementation is dependent on the workforce. Capacity development of staff in key sectors is key to successful reform, as is staff motivation and good performance. This requires on-going political will and long-term systemic change to develop mechanisms that drive a well-motivated and high-performing social welfare workforce and allows capacities to grow and reforms to be embedded.

Lesson learned 4: Tangible and transformative support requires systemic approaches, long-term funding, cross-sector coordination, and coherent collaboration with development partners over a prolonged period. Lessons from UNICEF support in transformation of the Day Care Centres in North Macedonia reveal that well-coordinated and consistent work with the government, development partners and field expertise over multiple sectors is needed to identify needs and gaps, develop proposals, and bring knowledge and know-how to shape the framework, approach and strengthen capacities for national level transformation.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terms of Reference for a Contractor

Evaluation of UNICEF Interventions Supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia (December 2022)

Basic Information

Title of the evaluation	Evaluation of UNICEF interventions supporting the social protection reform
Office	CO North Macedonia
Date	December 12, 2022
Type of consultancy	Institutional contract

UNICEF is the agency of the United Nations mandated to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

The overall goal of the previous UNICEF Country Program Document (2016-2020) for North Macedonia was to support Government efforts in advancing the realization of children's rights, with special attention paid to the most marginalized: Roma children, children with disabilities and child victims of violence and abuse. To this end, the program focused on reducing disparities in access to quality services for marginalized children, fostering cross-sectoral cooperation, promoting inclusion, tolerance, and respect for multiculturalism and diversity among the various segments of the population. The key program priorities included young child well-being, education and early learning, prevention of and response to violence against children, social protection, and child rights monitoring. According to the results framework, in the field of Social Protection, by end of 2020 UNICEF should have contributed to increased number of girls, boys and their families benefiting from integrated and child-sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation and social exclusion.

Context and Background

UNICEF has been continuously highlighting child poverty in the political agenda in North Macedonia and voicing out the need for coherent policy response that would overcome the existing challenges within the social protection system underlined in multiple assessments. The detrimental impact of poverty on children's development and life prospects has been well evidenced. Poor and socially excluded children, living in large households and in rural areas of underdeveloped regions, as well as Roma children are at greater risk of remaining isolated, further vulnerable to limited access to education and health care services.¹ Thus poverty goes beyond family income. A UNICEF study has shed light on the multidimensional aspects of child poverty, highlighting that deprivations in education, early childhood development, nutrition, safety, and love and care are among the top contributors to the multidimensional child poverty in the country.²

Based on household income data from the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), North Macedonia is more unequal than its aspirational peers. According to the State Statistical Office,³ the general at-risk-of-poverty rate in 2015, prior the start of implementation of the UNICEF Country Program Document (2016-2020), was 21.5 percent; for children it was 28.6 percent, while most exposed to the risk of poverty were households with two adults and three or more children (52.2 percent). In the pre-pandemic 2019, the poverty rate in the country stood at almost the same level as in 2015 (21.6 percent), but the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children declined slightly to 27.8 percent, and for households with two adults and three or more children it has declined significantly to 44.7 percent. The socio-economic effects of COVID-19 have largely wiped out the gradual improvements,

raising the overall at-risk-of-poverty rate in 2020 to 21.8 percent, for children to 30.3 percent and for households with two adults and three or more children to 45.6 percent.

The initial achievements in addressing child poverty are also based on the thorough transformation of the cash benefits schemes to which UNICEF heavily contributed, in partnership with the World Bank. The Government's comprehensive reform of the social protection and welfare systems aimed to curb high child poverty rates and lift households out of poverty through effective social transfers and support services. In 2017, the new Minister of Labor and Social Policy invited UNICEF and the World Bank to participate in an interdisciplinary work group on developing a new Social Protection Law. This reform involved cooperation with other development partners (European Union, UNDP), which also contributed technical assistance and funding to finalize the major reform of the country's social protection system. UNICEF provided technical assistance and support to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in the drafting of a new Social Protection Law and a major revision of the Child Protection Law, which, among other things, regulate cash benefits, as well as the work of the social welfare workforce.

In October 2019, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Government organized a Regional Conference on Responsive Social Protection Solutions that brought together academics, researchers, practitioners, decision makers and activists to jointly discuss obstacles and solutions for responsive social protection support, resulting in political commitments from decision makers.

In the course of 2019, the new Law on Social Protection was adopted, while the Law on Children Protection was subjected to major amendments. Relevant bylaws continued to be enacted in 2020. These reforms were aimed at improving the scope, coverage and targeting of social assistance. UNICEF had an important role in the policy development processes, not just through participation in the interdisciplinary work group tasked to develop the new Social Protection Law, but also through financing and supporting key analyses, comparative assessments and simulations of potential policy scenarios and budget implications that have informed the reform. The new Law on Social Protection introduced the Guaranteed Minimum Assistance (GMA), replacing the fragmented system of social benefits. Furthermore, it promoted the development of various and flexible social services provided by multiple stakeholders in the communities where children live (such as personal assistants for children with disabilities, respite care, assisted living, foster care, counselling). Another innovation was the introduction of case management aimed to support the delivery of integrated social and child protection services in the Centres for Social Work and promote activation of GMA beneficiaries into work. The case management system at the Centres for Social Work fosters the creation of an integrated registration process for benefits and services, with the Case Manager as the sole focal point, and the adoption of a tailored approach based on the assessed needs of an individual, their family and community. Social services also underwent significant change with the 2019 Social Protection law: a wide new range of community based social services that were previously inexistent were offered (respite care, kinship care, personal assistance, half-way houses, etc.), while several existing services were extended and strengthened (social prevention, rehabilitation and integration, counselling).

The amendments of the Law on Children Protection facilitated access to the child allowance for the families with children who have low disposable income and resulted in transformation of the parental allowance through a more balanced distribution of the financial resources within the one-off financial assistance for a new-born child, by progressively increasing the amounts of the allowances for the first, second, and third child. Another novelty was the introduction of the education allowance for school-age children (in primary and secondary schools) coming from families with lower disposable income and for children of recipients of guaranteed minimum assistance, so as to support the parents in the settlement of school costs.

UNICEF supported the Government in the full operationalization of the new social protection system, in particular in the development of protocols and manuals for professionals on case management, adjustment of the terms of reference for social workers in Centres for social work to better reflect the use of case management in practice and delivery of advanced case management training to all social welfare professionals in the country.⁴ UNICEF also partnered with UNDP to make sure that the new case management approach was also introduced in employment Centres and with employment facilitators country wide.⁵

As a result of the social protection system reform, compared to 2016, the number of children benefiting from poverty reduction transfers increased.⁶ Furthermore, the reform significantly increased the overall adequacy of cash benefits, contributing to initial the decrease in the child poverty rates. The services provided by the Centres for social work, the country's main social protection hubs, were improved with the introduction of case management that allowed social workers to have a holistic view of the needs of each of the beneficiaries, greater understanding of compounding vulnerabilities and building of trust between social workers and their beneficiaries.

An initial analysis carried out by the World Bank⁷ in 2022 also suggests that the social policies reform is bearing fruit. The analysis notes that the reforms related to cash benefits are advancing well and can be effective, but their success and sustainability depends on implementation to ensure that all eligible people are reached. Similarly, initial progress is being noted regarding the reforms considering social services, and the case management system in the Centres for social work is considered to offer significant benefits. Nevertheless, it underlines the need for further analysis that would confirm that the reforms are achieving the objectives set and lead to the identification of second order reform priorities.

The Object of the Evaluation

The evaluation intends to evaluate UNICEF North Macedonia contribution to the Social Protection System reform in North Macedonia during 2016-2020. The interventions, subject to the evaluation are part of a broad collaboration of UNICEF with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, as embedded in the in UNICEF country program documents and operationalized through UNICEF own resources and other interventions supported by third parties. The interventions related to the Social Protection System reform are outlined in the 2016-2020 CPD aiming to achieve the following outcome and outputs:

Outcome:	By 2020, an increased number of girls, boys and their families benefit from integrated and child sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion
Output:	Social transfers are adequately planned, delivered, financed, and monitored to reach the most marginalized children
Output:	Improved cross-sectoral coordination and capacities to design, implement and budget for social protection services and programs
Output:	Government budget allocations for child focused programming increased and streamlined

On output level, indicators, targets, and baseline have been established, except for the third output for which an indicator has been developed, but baseline and target will need to be reconstructed.

Purpose, Scope, and Objectives of the Evaluation

This strategic thematic evaluation aims to examine the UNICEF's contribution to the two major changes introduced in the country's social protection system in the period 2016-2020:

- a) reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services,⁸ and
- b) the introduction of case management in the centres for social work.

The purpose of the evaluation encompasses:

- a) fulfilling UNICEF's accountability towards national government and institutions, children and families, donors, and other relevant stakeholders by providing information on the use of resources and achievement of results that are measurable to-date in regard to the reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services, as well as the introduction of case management in the centres for social work.
- b) identifying missing opportunities and remaining challenges to inform/recommend decision-makers on actions to be undertaken in the future for effective and sustainable implementation of the cash benefits schemes and services, as well as the case management in the centres for social work.
- c) generating knowledge and evidence on achievements, lessons learned and recommendations in establishing and maintaining a human/child rights, equity, and gender sensitive approach throughout the social protection reform in North Macedonia.

The scope of the evaluation is defined by:

- a) Level of change: UNICEF initiatives toward policy developments related to the cash benefits schemes and services, as well as introduction of the case management in the centres for social work, including the set of laws, strategies, regulations formulated, and capacities built in respect to social protection system reform.
- b) Theory of change: the evaluation will examine UNICEF results against the activities, outputs and outcomes as outlined in the Country Program Document (CPD) and other related documents, based on reconstructed theory of change.
- c) Implementation time-period: UNICEF initiatives undertaken during the period 2016-2020.
- d) Evaluation criteria used to guide the evaluation thematically: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and initial impact (to the extent possible given the relatively short timeframe after the reform).

The specific objectives of the evaluation are to⁹:

- ~~a) Identify the progress made so far in the implementation of the social protection reform subject to this evaluation, and overall contribution of UNICEF to the reform.~~
- b) Assess against UNICEF programmatic commitments and overall progress of the reform the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and to the extent possible progress toward the impact of the UNICEF contributions to the reform of the cash benefits schemes and services, and the introduction of the case management in the centres for social work.
- c) Identify the extent to which cross-cutting strategies such as human-rights based approach, results-based management, analysis of child vulnerability and gender equity have contributed and have been mainstreamed in the interventions and reform's processes.
- d) Identify lessons learned and make recommendations for interventions' adjustments required to improve and accelerate the effective and sustainable implementation of the cash benefits schemes and services, as well as social work case management in the next years to ensure that children and families are cared for and supported.

The evaluation has both summative and formative purpose. With the policy framework component being at place to date, the evaluation will tend to take the summative approach. However, whilst the reform has embarked in 2019 in an important stage of policy implementation, the formative approach to evaluation will be handy to identify what could be mitigated in this regard, and the indication of the current bottlenecks may be associated with recommendations towards policy improvements. Users of the evaluation will be:

Audience of the evaluation	Intended use of the evaluation
Primary audience	
UNICEF North Macedonia Country Office	UNICEF will use the evaluation to inform UNICEF programming related to social protection including better plan for the implementation of the Country Program; improve partnerships with the government, particularly the development and review of workplans. UNICEF will draw upon the findings of the evaluation to adjust its advocacy approaches to influence government policies, strategies, and funding priorities related to child-sensitive social protection, child poverty measurement and analysis and more equitable public finance for children.
Ministry of Labor and Social Policy,	The evaluation will guide UNICEF's government counterparts to make strategic adjustments in key policies, including areas where collaboration can be strengthened, as well as support and inform the design of new Government programs related to social protection
Centres for Social Work, Institute of Social Affairs	The evaluation will inform UNICEF and the national counterparts on areas where collaboration needs to be strengthened to ensure effective implementation of the social protection reform and relevant inter sectoral coordination.
Implementing partners from civil society and other development partners such as other UN entities, including the World Bank	Changes/modifications in the advocacy approaches by UNICEF and civil society leading toward the implementation of a responsive social protection system

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation will be first validated internally and with the key stakeholders through the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG). The evaluation report will be placed in the public domain – together with a management response to follow up on recommendations.

The purpose of the ERG will be to facilitate the participation of relevant stakeholders in the design and scope of the evaluation, raising awareness of the different information needs, providing information and quality assurance throughout the process and in supporting the dissemination of the evaluation results. The ERG is expected to provide feedback during the evaluation process and on the deliverables, comment on the evaluation approach and methods and facilitate access to data and information. The Reference Group members will be expected to:

- Be a sounding board for feedback during the evaluation.
- Enable access to key informants during the evaluation process.
- Participate in an inception report presentation.
- Review and comment on inception report
- Participate in the presentation of evaluation preliminary findings.
- Participate in follow-up interviews with evaluators as relevant.
- Review and comment on draft evaluation report
- Review and comment on final evaluation report

Evaluation Framework/Questions

The evaluation framework is shaped along the lines of the DAC¹⁰ criteria, and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) standards¹¹ to which UNICEF adheres, and the evaluation is expected to respond to the following evaluation questions:

Relevance:

1. How relevant were the Government social protection policies and programs to the needs of the children and their families, especially to the most vulnerable children?

2. To what extent do the intended outcome and the relevant outputs address the priorities identified in the national strategic documents relevant for social protection of children including the National Strategy to Reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion (2010-2020) and the Employment and Social Reform Program 2020?

Coherence:

3. To what extent social protection programs for children are implemented in coherence with other governmental sectoral policies?
4. Has there been any duplication of efforts among UNICEF's own interventions and interventions delivered by other organizations or entities in contributing to the outcomes?

Effectiveness:

5. Have the UNICEF supported programs and interventions contributed to reducing bottlenecks in ensuring effective coverage of children and their families? To what extent capacity-building activities supported by UNICEF contributed to effective implementation of the social protection reform interventions?
6. To what extent has UNICEF contributed to creating an enabling environment (institutional, political, and legislative context) for social protection conducive to effective coverage of poor and vulnerable children?
7. To what extent are the existing social protection benefits for children and their families adequate and equity focused? Are there any gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection of children and their families?

Efficiency:

8. Were UNICEF program budgets and resources (human, financial and technical) adequately used for addressing priority bottlenecks?
9. Which social protection programs for children and their families have been the most efficient in meeting the needs of the children (by program type, by target population, by inequities)?

Sustainability:

10. Are legal, institutional/administrative, and financial mechanisms established to ensure monitoring and evaluation as well as sustainability of the results (policies, strategies, services)?
11. Are the mechanisms used to finance social protection spending consistent with the objectives of the programs they are financing? What are the potentials for expanding the existing benefits or introduce new ones?

Impact:

12. Are there early indications that the reforms of family and child focused benefits and reformed social services have contributed to social inclusion of children and their families?
13. What positive/negative, intended, or unintended outcomes have the interventions contributed to so far?

Cross-cutting issues:

14. To what extent have the interventions contributed to gender equality, non-discrimination, and disability inclusiveness?

Evaluation questions will be further refined by the evaluation team during the inception phase and in consultation with the Evaluation Reference Group – to focus on the questions that, if well answered, have the greatest potential to impact on policies, strategies, and future programming.

Methodology, Ethical Considerations and Limitations

The evaluation methodology will be guided by the Evaluation Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group¹² (UNEG), as well as in line with UNICEF's Evaluation Policy¹³, UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluations and Data Collection and Analysis¹⁴ and UNICEF's reporting standards.

The detailed methodology will be fully designed by the evaluation team as part of the inception phase (report). The methodology should aim to utilize the best mix of data gathering tools to yield the most reliable and valid answers to the evaluation questions and generate maximum learning within the limits of resources and availability of data.

In order to serve its purpose, the evaluation may apply contribution analysis, and have a utilization focused approach, including, but not limited to: mapping of situation and contextual analyses, barriers and bottlenecks; structured desk analysis of policy documents and legislative frameworks; reconstruction of the Theory of Change; analysis of UNICEF output and outcome reports, including the achievement of the targets; in-depth interviews and focus groups.

Sampling criteria for participants in the evaluation will be proposed by the evaluation team in the inception report. The evaluation will assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and initial impact of the UNICEF's interventions based on the reconstructed Theory of Change and the indicators used for monitoring performance and attainment of estimated results as defined in the CPD.

A core evaluation framework, containing criteria of analysis, will be developed for the evaluation questions at the inception phase (report), against which data will be gathered and analyzed. Evaluation questions outlined in the TOR are expected to be reformulated, regrouped, and streamlined based on the logic model reflected by the reconstructed Theory of change and will be assigned to specific evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact).

Methods for ensuring validity and reliability at analysis stage will include Triangulation – to confirm and validate results reached by different methods.

Complementarity - to explain and understand findings obtained by one method by applying a second. Interrogation - where diverging results emerge from the application of different methods – these will need to be interrogated to either reconcile, or explain, the differences apparent.

The methodology will include the following elements and stages:

- a) **Desk Review** of existing documentation, evaluation reports, all relevant UNICEF program documents, research, and studies; laws, government strategies and policy documents, primary and secondary data reports; initial validation of resources and final definition of the scope for the evaluation
- b) Based on the desk review, the evaluation team will develop an **Inception Report** that includes:
 - ✓ A reconstructed Theory of Change, based on the available information in the Think Piece accompanying the preparation of the 2016-2020 Country Program
 - ✓ A summary of initial findings against the evaluation questions derived from the desk review.
 - ✓ Recommended methodological approach to this assignment, which takes into account the difference in the sector, approaches and development/maturity of the programs, including elements of both formative and summative evaluation approaches.
 - ✓ Data collection and analysis instruments, and the identification of any ethical considerations, if relevant
 - ✓ Refined evaluation questions, responding to the specificities of the context and supported by detailed evaluation matrix.
 - ✓ Propose any necessary revisions in the budget for the evaluation.
- c) **Country mission(s)** – The evaluation team will meet with the Evaluation Reference Group, gather additional evidence, conduct key informant interviews, including with key stakeholders and partners, organize focus groups, draft, and present initial findings before the end of the mission.
- d) **Evaluation Report** - The evaluation team will develop an analytical report that summarizes evidence gathered during the desk review and the data collection, drawing higher level conclusions, identifying promising practices and important lessons learned.

The draft evaluation report will be presented to UNICEF Country Office as a first step in validating the findings and conclusions and refining the recommendations so that they are both strategic and useful. Subsequently, the report will be presented to the Evaluation Reference Group for the same purposes.

The methodology must be agreed upon between UNICEF and the evaluators, with consultation of relevant counterparts, prior to the start of the evaluation.

In addition to the elements required in the Inception Report listed above, UNICEF will identify an initial list of the key stakeholders to be met by the evaluation team; nevertheless, during the inception and fieldwork phase, team members will be able to reach out to additional stakeholders and informants, within available resources and time.

To facilitate the evaluation process, UNICEF will assist with the organization of meetings with the relevant government authorities, development partners, institutions, key stakeholders, and beneficiaries. UNICEF will be responsible for preparing and coordinating the full agenda of the evaluation in consultation with partners and stakeholders.

Human Rights and Ethical Considerations:

The evaluation should be guided by principles of the Results-Based Management and Human Rights Based Approaches to programming and evaluation. The entire process and deliverables of the evaluation should be sensitive to gender equity, and human rights aspects, mostly child rights. The evaluation team will commit to fully adhering to the required ethical principles/standards for data collection, as specified in the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluations and Data Collection and Analysis¹⁵.

Ethical approval by UNICEF Ethical Review Board may be required for the inception report, in case data collection will involve sensitive questions or have vulnerable categories of population, including children as participants in the evaluation.

The evaluation team will ensure to exercise independent judgement and operate in an impartial and unbiased manner. The final report should be credible, based on reliable data and observations, and provide a comprehensive and balanced presentation of the evidence. During data collection, any sensitive issues, or concerns, including conflicts of interest, will be raised with UNICEF as soon as they are identified. During data collection, attention will be paid to ensure that the evaluation process is ethical, by ensuring to:

- a) Identify the need for and securing necessary approval.
- b) Avoid any harm to participants and respect full confidentiality. The privacy and safety of respondents should be a priority. Respondent participation should be voluntary, without undue burden, free from any duress, consensual and furnished with written consent where possible. For the safety and security of the evaluation team, the necessary training and on-the-ground support will be provided by UNICEF in North Macedonia (if needed), to avoid any issues of safety.
- c) Respect respondents' dignity, vulnerabilities, and cultural sensitivities. Development and use of data collection instruments should be performed to take into account the variances in ethnicities, gender, disability, age and other variables like socio-economic categories of those engaged in any form during the implementation of the evaluation.
- d) Select fairly and in a representative manner the respondents. The evaluation team should define and document the criteria for selections of any participants in the evaluation.

Limitations to the evaluation.

At this stage, several limitations have been identified, as described below. Additional limitations are expected to be identified by the evaluation team at the inception phase.

- a) A clear and comprehensive theory of change linking results with UNICEF's contribution over the years is missing. In addition, there is a scarcity of indicators, including baseline and target data that address specifically the social protection reform.

- b) The desk review will be dependent on explicit evidence contained in planning and reporting documents of UNICEF and Government of North Macedonia, including the disaggregated data.
- c) The effects of COVID-19 on household income and the temporary social protection response measures may distort the analysis of the initial effects of the social protection reform.

To address some of these limitations, the evaluation will use information provided through the existing documentation and evaluation reports and validate key determinants of inequity and trends at outcome level.

In close collaboration with UNICEF, main counterparts, and based on preliminary desk review, the Theory of Change is to be retro-actively re-constructed, including baselines and targets where needed. In case of persistent information gaps, a more qualitative appraisal will be used, applying contribution analysis at different levels. A mixed-method approach will be utilized to make use of available qualitative and quantitative sources and ensure cross-checking/triangulation of information.

Please refer to Annex A for a preliminary list of the documents available, as well as a stakeholder list in Annex B. At the next stage the evaluation approach will be further narrowed down, examining all program interventions and their impact, including UNICEF's specific role. The evaluation team will assess whether collecting disaggregated data is feasible given the data limitations.

Expected Deliverables, Timeframe, Responsibilities and Reporting Requirements

Expected deliverables:

Evaluation Deliverable	Deadlines	Indicative # of working days
1. Kick-off meeting for the evaluation	One week after start of the contract	1
2. Desk Review for the Inception Report	Six weeks after the kick-off meeting (draft Inception Report to be submitted)	10
3. Inception Report ¹⁶ (draft and final version; approx. 20 pages excluding annexes)		12
4. Discussion of the draft Inception Report with the Evaluation Reference Group	Two weeks after preliminary approval of Inception Report	1
5. Additional desk review, data collection and analysis	Eight weeks after the approval of the Inception Report	35
6. Draft Evaluation Report [30-35 pages, excluding the Executive Summary (max. 5 pages) and annexes]	Eight weeks after the finalization of the data collection and analysis	35
7. Final Evaluation Report ¹⁷ (including iterations for feedback)	Four weeks after approval of the Draft Evaluation Report	7
8. Validation workshop with the Evaluation Reference Group	Two weeks after the preliminary approval of the Final Evaluation Report	2
Total		103

Responsibilities

The evaluation is commissioned and will be managed by UNICEF Country Office in North Macedonia. The evaluation team will report to the UNICEF Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist. UNICEF has the responsibility to manage and support the evaluation and provide overall quality assurance to the process and deliverables, as well as develop an explicit communication strategy for the evaluation, including the dissemination plan and expected use of findings for advocacy. Support to the evaluation team will include regular communication, feedback, and discussion on the progress of the assignment. UNICEF will be responsible for sharing and collecting feedback in due time on the

deliverables. The Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will foster/enable the participation of relevant stakeholders (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Centres for Social Work, Ministry of Finance, other relevant government institutions, representatives of civil society organizations working in the area of the evaluation theme, other development partners providing support in the area of social protection system and experts) in the design and scope of the evaluation, to raise awareness of the different information needs, to provide information quality assurance throughout the process and support the dissemination of the evaluation results.

The evaluation team will be responsible to undertake all agreed tasks in a timely manner and delivering quality results as per those specified in this TOR. The evaluation team leader will be responsible to guide and coordinate the work of other team members.

Reporting requirements

- a) From the beginning of the assignment, the evaluation team and UNICEF Child Rights Monitoring Specialist will agree on monthly updated workplan to keep up to date with the process of evaluation implementation.
- b) Deliverables/Reports to be submitted to UNICEF according to the timelines agreed during the inception phase based on the tentative timeframe explained above in this TOR.
- c) Once the documents are prepared and delivered, UNICEF shall hold the Intellectual property right of the documents and the related materials.
- d) The structure of the Inception Report (max. 25 pages) should encompass (at least) the following components/chapters: Introduction; Context/Object of the Evaluation; Evaluation Objectives and Scope; Theory of Change; Stakeholders Analysis; Evaluation Framework with a detailed matrix (questions, data sources, judgement criteria, etc.); Methodology (evaluation approach, methods for data collection and analysis, limitations and ethical considerations); Preliminary findings from the desk review (list of documents reviewed and planned to be reviewed); Workplan, including detailed field work with responsibilities and timelines; Proposed structure of the Final Evaluation Report; Annexes (draft instruments for data collection).
- e) The structure of the Final Evaluation Report (max. 35-40 pages excluding Executive Summary and Annexes) should be guided by the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards¹⁸.

All documents produced should be child-sensitive, and in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other legal documents on human rights. All deliverables will be submitted in English, the content of which should be well structured, coherent and evidence based.

Report writing, terminology, publication and citation guidelines of UNICEF should be followed as outlined in Global Evaluation Report Oversight System (GEROS).¹⁹ Necessary guidelines will be provided by UNICEF North Macedonia. In addition, UNICEF North Macedonia will contribute to the review of the inception report, the draft and final reports to ensure they meet UNICEF's quality assurance and ethical standards. UNICEF North Macedonia will also provide technical advice and support to the evaluation process.

Evaluation Ethics

The evaluation should follow UN Evaluation Group Norms and Standards²⁰ – including ensuring that the planned evaluation fully addresses any ethical issues. The consultants should also adhere to UNICEF's Evaluation Policy²¹ and to UNICEF Reporting Standards²². Evaluation team members will sign a no conflict-of-interest attestation.

Location, Duration and Budget

- a) Country mission trips are expected as per indicative schedule outlined in this TOR.

- b) All travel plans, and duration of the stay in the country will be based on the agreed implementation plan, updated on monthly basis by the UNICEF Child Rights Monitoring Specialist and the evaluation team.
- c) The evaluation team is responsible for the international and local travel arrangements, including travel insurance and accommodation. Travel days are not included as working days.
- d) Office space during country mission, if/when needed, will be provided by UNICEF.

The exact dates for starting and ending the contract will be specified upon contract award.

- a) Tentative starting period: End of December 2022
- b) Foreseen ending period: September 2023

Qualifications and specialized knowledge/experience requirements

The evaluation is expected to be carried out by an evaluation company with experience in evaluations, research, studies, data collection and reporting. The evaluation team should be comprised as a mixture of at least one international and one or more national members. All team members should have substantive expertise in leading or conducting evaluations and should not have any conflict of interest with respect to UNICEF and/or national programs and activities in support of social protection reform.

The evaluation team is expected to include members who together form an appropriate balance of expertise and practical knowledge in the following areas:

- Social Policy
- Social protection/Social assistance
- Public Planning and Finance

The **team leader** will be responsible for managing the evaluation and delivering the final reports, as well as for communication with UNICEF and counterparts, the final presentation of the results. The team leader should be involved in all phases of the evaluation, coordinating inputs for all the deliverables, including participation in some of the data collection processes and presentation of the results. Other team members will be responsible, inter alia, for the evaluation design, desk review, data collection, quality control, analysis of some sections of the report, implementation, and logistics.

Required Qualifications:

- Advanced university degree and/or academic background in Social Sciences, Economics, Public Policy, Political Science, or a related field.
- At least 10 years of proven record in managing project/program evaluations in areas relevant to social protection and child wellbeing.
- Extensive experience in designing evaluations, conducting qualitative analysis and surveys, data analysis and report writing.
- Proven background and extensive professional experience in social protection issues
- Ability to work within the international and multicultural environment.
- Very good communication and presentation skills with government and community members
- High analytical and conceptual skills and ability.
- Good knowledge of computer applications.
- Fluency in written and spoken English.

Roles and responsibilities for all team members

1. All team members are requested to refer attentively to the documentation made available, including the TOR, context information and information on and preparatory analysis of UNICEF's interventions.

2. All team members are requested to familiarize themselves with UNICEF's global normative products in the substantive areas for which they are responsible. These are available on the UNICEF website www.unicef.org.
3. Complementary to the evaluation TOR, the evaluation team leader will prepare a number of orienting documents and tools (including an evaluation matrix) in discussion with the evaluation team. These documents should be read by all team members and will be used as a framework for guiding the questions to be asked and data to be gathered during the evaluation.
4. All team members will contribute to concisely written inception report and draft evaluation report.

Roles and Responsibility – Team Leader

The Team Leader has the overall responsibility for the **Evaluation of UNICEF Interventions Supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia** looking at the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and initial impact of UNICEF's key interventions. Specifically, the tasks of the Team Leader include:

- Guide the extensive desk review of existing information on the context, national policies and priorities and UNICEF's work, including all relevant program and project documents and reports, previous studies, research, and evaluations.
- Develop and provide detailed methodological guidance for the team and coaching them in the tools and approach to be used for data gathering and analysis.
- Facilitate meetings/interviews with national counterparts and implementing partners.
- Provide guidance in preparing evaluation deliverables.
- Follow the methodology described in the TOR, prepare checklists as appropriate and consult with the team members as necessary on methodological issues.
- Coordinate with the evaluation team to consolidate inputs from them and ensure timely delivery of evaluation products.
- Manage the evaluation work plan, respecting deadlines for specific activities and inputs described in the work plan.
- Maintain a high level of communication with the other team members.
- Conduct interviews with a range of key stakeholders and informants.
- Visit accessible field sites and interview field staff and ultimate beneficiaries, as appropriate and feasible.
- Assess UNICEF's work government and other partners' contribution and comparative advantage in the context of existing policies, plans and emerging issues.
- Contribute to the team's analysis and discussion of evaluation questions and issues common to the whole team.
- Lead the consolidation of the teams' inputs for the debriefing session(s) and in the presentation of the draft findings to stakeholders.
- Submit the Inception Report upon completion of the Desk Review phase, the Draft and Final evaluation reports (ERs) and the power point presentation on the main findings and recommendations emerging from the evaluation.

ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE – EVALUATION REFERENCE GROUP

Evaluation of UNICEF Interventions Supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia

Background

The overall goal of the previous UNICEF Country Programme Document (2016-2020) for North Macedonia was to support Government efforts in advancing the realization of children's rights, with special attention paid to the most marginalized: Roma children, children with disabilities and child victims of violence and abuse. To this end, the programme focused on reducing disparities in access to quality services for marginalized children, fostering cross-sectoral cooperation, promoting inclusion, tolerance, and respect for multiculturalism and diversity among the various segments of the population. The key programme priorities included young child well-being, education and early learning, prevention of and response to violence against children, social protection, and child rights monitoring. According to the results framework, in the field of Social Protection, by end of 2020 UNICEF should have contributed to increased number of girls, boys and their families benefiting from integrated and child-sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation and social exclusion.

An initial analysis carried out by the World Bank¹ in 2022 also suggests that the social policies reform is bearing fruit. The analysis notes that the reforms related to cash benefits are advancing well and can be effective, but their success and sustainability depends on implementation to ensure that all eligible people are reached. Similarly, initial progress is being noted regarding the reforms considering social services, and the case management system in the centres for social work is considered to offer significant benefits. Nevertheless, it underlines the need for further analysis that would confirm that the reforms are achieving the objectives set and lead to the identification of second order reform priorities.

Evaluation purpose and objectives

The evaluation has both summative and formative purpose. With the policy framework component being at place to date, the evaluation will tend to take the summative approach. However, whilst the reform has embarked in 2019 in an important stage of policy implementation, the formative approach to evaluation will be handy to identify what could be mitigated in this regard, and the indication of the current bottlenecks may be associated with recommendations towards policy improvements.

This strategic thematic evaluation aims to examine the UNICEF's contribution to the two major changes introduced in the country's social protection system in the period 2016-2020:

- a) reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services,² and
- b) the introduction of case management in the centres for social work.

The purpose of the evaluation encompasses:

- a) fulfilling UNICEF's accountability towards national government and institutions, children and families, donors, and other relevant stakeholders by providing information on the use of resources and achievement of results that are measurable to-date in regard to the reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services, as well as the introduction of case management in the centres for social work.

¹ World Bank (2022). North Macedonia: Social Protection Situational Analysis

² Given the resource constraints for conducting the evaluation, it should have more in-depth focus on the reform of the cash benefits system and place less emphasis on the reform of services.

- b) identifying missing opportunities and remaining challenges to inform/recommend decision-makers on actions to be undertaken in the future for effective and sustainable implementation of the cash benefits schemes and services, as well as the case management in the centres for social work.
- c) generating knowledge and evidence on achievements, lessons learned and recommendations in establishing and maintaining a human/child rights, equity, and gender sensitive approach throughout the social protection reform in North Macedonia.

The scope of the evaluation is defined by:

- a) Level of change: UNICEF initiatives toward policy developments related to the cash benefits schemes and services, as well as introduction of the case management in the centres for socialwork, including the set of laws, strategies, regulations formulated, and capacities built in respect to social protection system reform.
- b) Theory of change: the evaluation will examine UNICEF results against the activities, outputs and outcomes as outlined in the Country Program Document (CPD) and other related documents, based on reconstructed theory of change.
- c) Implementation time-period: UNICEF initiatives undertaken during the period 2016-2020.
- d) Evaluation criteria used to guide the evaluation thematically: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and initial impact (to the extent possible given the relatively short timeframe after the reform).

The specific objectives of the evaluation are to³:

- a) Identify the progress made so far in the implementation of the social protection reform subject to this evaluation, and overall contribution of UNICEF to the reform.
- b) Assess against UNICEF programmatic commitments and overall progress of the reform the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and to the extent possible progress toward the impact of the UNICEF contributions to the reform of the cash benefits schemes and services, and the introduction of the case management in the centres for socialwork.
- c) Identify the extent to which cross-cutting strategies such as human-rights based approach, results-based management, analysis of child vulnerability and gender equity have contributed and have been mainstreamed in the interventions and reform's processes.
- d) Identify lessons learned and make recommendations for interventions' adjustments required to improve and accelerate the effective and sustainable implementation of the cash benefits schemes and services, as well as social work case management in the next years to ensure that children and families are cared for and supported.

Evaluation management

The evaluation will be managed by the UNICEF Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, who will be responsible for the day-to-day oversight and management of the evaluation and for the management of the evaluation budget. The evaluation manager will ensure the quality and independence of the evaluation and guarantee its alignment with UNEG Norms and Standards and Ethical Guidelines and other relevant procedures, provide quality assurance on the relevance of the evaluation findings and conclusions, and the implement ability of recommendations, and contribute to the dissemination of the evaluation findings and follow-up on the management response. The evaluation manager will work in collaboration with programme sections of UNICEF North Macedonia, as well as the UNICEF

³ The objectives are formulated to address the 6 OECD/DAC standard evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. [revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf \(oecd.org\)](#)

regional evaluation team. Additional quality assurance will be provided by the external quality assurance facility set up by the ECA Regional Office.

An Evaluation Reference Group will be established to guide and oversee the implementation of the evaluation, providing expert advice as needed. The ERG will include external experts and representatives of the key stakeholders but will be chaired or co-chaired by the UNICEF Office. The ERG is expected to provide feedback during the evaluation process and on the deliverables; comment on the evaluation approach and methods and facilitate access to data and information.

Composition and function of the joint Evaluation Reference Group

The purpose of the ERG will be to facilitate the participation of relevant stakeholders in the design and scope of the evaluation, raising awareness of the different information needs, providing information and quality assurance throughout the process and in supporting the dissemination of the evaluation results.

The process aims to ensure participation of stakeholders at all stages, with a particular emphasis on rights holders and their representatives. Data collection and analysis for the programme includes conducting consultations and interviews with stakeholders, including with representatives of relevant national and local government institutions, CSOs, UN agencies, beneficiaries of the programme and donor partners. The participation of key stakeholders to inform this evaluation is key to ensure to gather relevant inputs to inform this entire process.

The inputs of ERG are expected to strengthen the quality and credibility of the evaluation. The Reference Group members will be expected to:

- Be a sounding board for feedback during the evaluation.
- Enable access to key informants during the evaluation process.
- Participate in an inception report presentation.
- Review and comment on inception report.
- Participate in the presentation of evaluation preliminary findings.
- Participate in follow-up interviews with evaluators as relevant.
- Review and comment on draft evaluation report.
- Review and comment on final evaluation report.

ANNEX 3: REVIEW OF THE CHANGES OF THE RESULTS CHAIN OVER THE REFERENCE PERIOD OF THE EVALUATION

Table 1: Changes in Outputs and Indicators over the period under evaluation

CPD	2018 indicator table	GD_08 Indicators Report Macedonia 2016-2021	TOR
Outcome: By end of 2020, an increased number of girls, boys and their families benefit from integrated and child- sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion.	By end of 2020, an increased number of girls, boys and their families benefit from integrated and child- sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion.	Indicator 1 (CPD)106: % of boys and girls identified as having a disability using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health – Children and Youth (ICF-CY) assessment Baseline (2014): 0% Target (2020): 90%, with equal gender and ethnic distribution.	By 2020, an increased number of girls, boys and their families benefit from integrated and child sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion.
		Standard Indicator (Indicator report 2018) - Number of children living in poverty according to (a) International extreme poverty line; (b) National monetary poverty lines or (c) National multidimensional poverty lines. Baseline (2016): 28.6 Target (2020): 25	
		(Indicator report 2018) % of children receiving child benefits. Baseline (2013): 3.8 Target (2020): 10	
		(Indicator report 2018) % of children receiving child allowance. Baseline (2013): 1% Target (2020): 6%	
Output 1: Social services and transfers are adequately planned, delivered, financed, and monitored to reach the most marginalized children	Social services and transfers are adequately planned, delivered, financed, and monitored to reach the most marginalized children	Standard Indicator - 1.2 National government measurement of child poverty using monetary measures. Baseline (2016): yes Target (2020): yes	Social transfers are adequately planned, delivered, financed, and monitored to reach the most marginalized children
		Standard Indicator - Cash transfers: Cash transfer system DESIGNED including expanding coverage and improving inclusion of children (e.g., design,	

¹⁰⁶ Only one added

		targeting, beneficiary selection, cash delivery and overall financing) Baseline (2017): no Target (2020): yes	
		New law on social protection in line with international standards developed and adopted. Baseline (2017): no Target (2020): yes	
		Number of children covered by government cash transfer programs. Baseline (2014): 33540 Target (2020): 40000	
Output 2: Improved cross-sectoral coordination and capacities to design, implement and budget for social protection policies and programs.	Improved cross- sectoral coordination and capacities to design, implement and budget for social protection policies and programs.	Standard Indicator - 2.8 M and E: Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are used to follow up on social protection delivery/system. Baseline (2015): no Target (2020): yes	Improved cross-sectoral coordination and capacities to design, implement and budget for social protection services and programs
Output 3: Centres for Social Work, ISA and NGOs have capacity to strengthen the resilience of children and families, including Roma and CWD	The capacities of professionals to conduct disability assessment based on ICF-CY are strengthened.	Standard Indicator - 2.11 Other social protection programs ARE adapted to address child poverty and deprivation (such as access to affordable childcare, health insurance etc.). Baseline (2016): no Target (2020): yes	Assumed that this was merged into Output 2
No	Output 4: Refugees and Migrants boys and girls and other emergency affected populations supported (not included in CPD).	No indicators	No
No	Output 5: Government budget allocations for child focused	Standard Indicator - 3.2 Evidence generated on budgets and their linkages to child outcomes to	Government budget allocations for child focused programming increased and streamlined

	programming increased and streamlined (not included in CPD)	improve budget allocations/expenditure for children. Baseline (2016): initiating. Target (2020): advanced	
No	Output 6: Programmatic outreach to vulnerable communities, including in emergency preparedness and response (COVID) (not included in CPD)	No indicators	No
Output (AR 2016/17): Strengthened Resilience of Marginalized children and families, including Roma and children with disabilities		No	No
Output (AR 2016/17): Refugees and migrant boys and girls are protected from the winter harsh conditions		No	NO

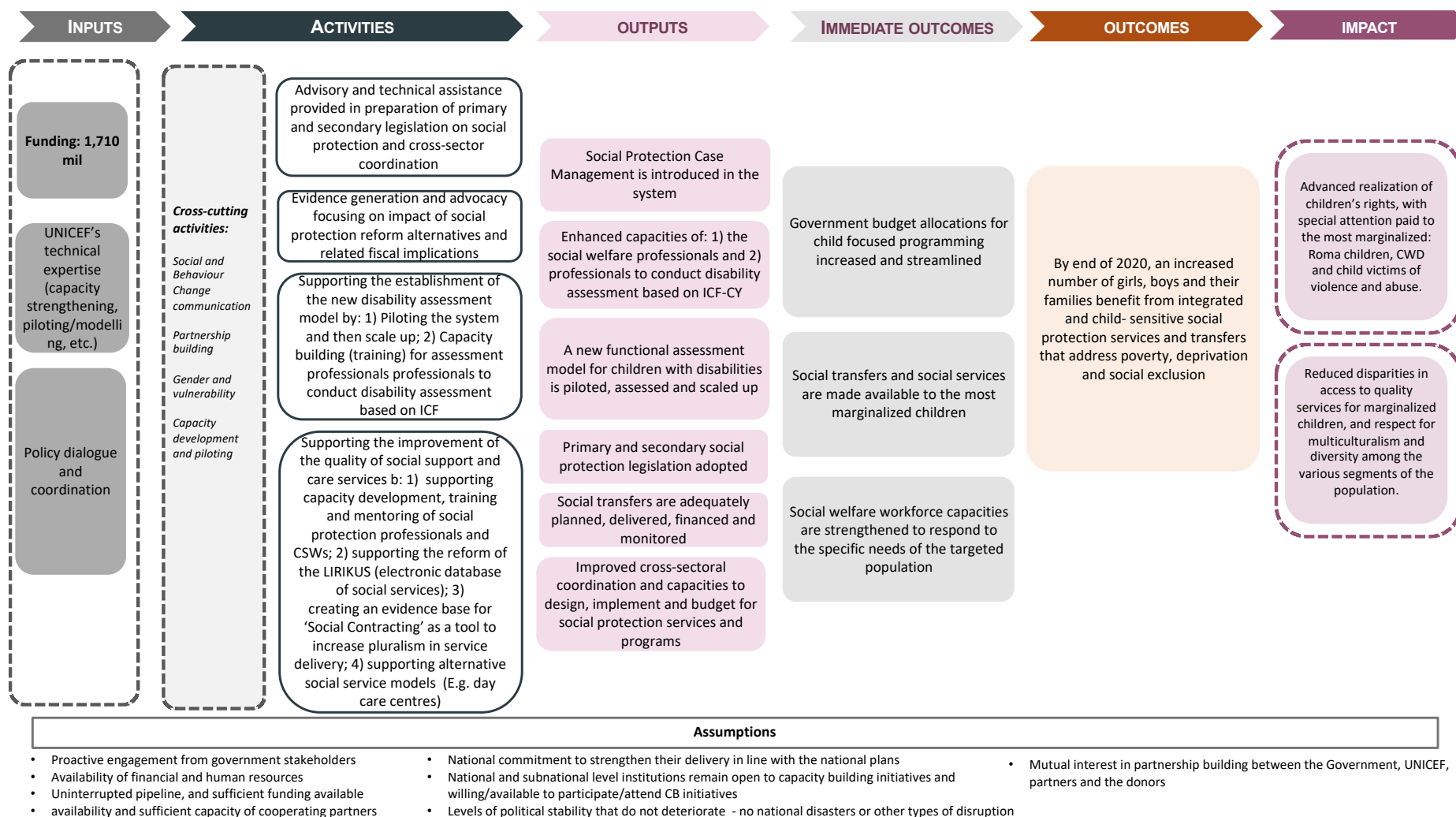
Table 2: Changes in the social protection outcome area made within the framework of the Light Strategic Review in 2018

Current results 2016 – 2020	Action	Proposed 'new' results 2018 - 2020	Explanation	Relevant regional and standard Indicators and flagship commitments per sector ¹⁰⁷
Outcome 4: By end of 2020, an increased number of girls, boys and their families benefit from integrated and child-sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion.				<p>(Reg) Percentage of children living in poverty in all its dimensions.</p> <p>(Reg) Number of countries with nationally owned measurement and reporting on child poverty.</p> <p>(Reg) Number of social workers per 100,000 population</p> <p>(Std) Number of children living in poverty according to (a) International extreme poverty line; (b) National monetary poverty lines or (c) National multidimensional poverty lines</p>
Output 4.1: Social services and transfers are adequately planned, delivered, financed, and monitored to reach the most marginalized children	KEEP - rephrase	Output 4.1 Social transfers are adequately planned, delivered, financed, and monitored to reach the most marginalized children	Deleting "services" for clarity in this output. Work on services is now included with more focus and clarity under the next output (4.2) under this same outcome.	<p>(Std) National government measurement of child poverty using monetary measures.</p> <p>(Std) Proportion of children covered by government cash transfer programs (number of children and % of total)</p>
Output 4.2: Improved cross-sectorial coordination and capacities to design, implement and budget for social protection policies and programs	KEEP - rephrase	Output 4.2 Improved cross-sectorial coordination and capacities to design, implement and budget for social protection services and programs	Again, strong work on-going – just changing "policies" to services to better reflect focus of cooperation.	(Std) Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are used to follow up on social protection delivery/system

¹⁰⁷ Key: "Reg" – Regional Flagship Indicator; "Std" = Global Standard Indicator; "CS" = country specific indicator

Output 4.3: CSWs, ISA and NGOs have capacity to strengthen the resilience of children and families, including Roma and children with disabilities	KEEP	Output 4.3 CSWs, ISA and NGOs have capacity to strengthen the resilience of children and families, including Roma and children with disabilities	Work on-going	(Std) Other social protection programs ARE adapted to address child poverty and deprivation (such as access to affordable childcare, health insurance etc.).
Emergency (2016) Output 4.4 Refugees and Migrants boys and girls are protected from the winter harsh conditions	DELETE		Developed for emergency response action in 2016-2017. No longer relevant.	
	NEW	Output 4.4 Government budget allocations for child focused programming increased and streamlined.	New and dynamic dialogue and action on public finance for children, budget transparency, budget allocations for children	(Std) Public spending on social protection from domestic resources as a proportion of national budget

ANNEX 4: RECONSTRUCTED INTERVENTION LOGIC OF UNICEF'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOCIAL PROTECTION REFORM IN NORTH MACEDONIA



ANNEX 5. LIST OF CONSULTED STAKEHOLDERS

UNICEF Staff	
Patricia Bongiovanni	UNICEF Representative
Aleksander Nikolov	Social Protection Specialist
Olimpija Markovska	Child Protection Specialist
Louisa Lippi	Social Protection Specialist, UNICEF ECARO
Arthur Ayvazov	UNICEF Deputy Representative in North Macedonia
Government	
Mila Carovska	(former) Minister of MoLSP
Sanela Skrijelj	(former) Chief of cabinet - MoLSP
Dushan Tomsic	MoLSP
Sofia Spasevska	MoLSP
Drita Aslani	MoLSP
Natasha Maneska	Counsellor, Department of Public Affairs, Unit for social, child and health protection
Natasa Stanojevik	MoLSP
Aneta Stojanoska	MoLSP
Elvis Memeti	Prime Minister's office - Roma Coordinator
Daniela Stanojkovska	Institute for Social Affairs
Pavlina Kostovska Grujoska	Psychologist, Case Worker, Agency for Employment
UN	
Rossana Dudziak	UN Coordinator
Suzana Ahmeti Janic	UNDP
Marija Trifunovska	
Zhaklina Geshtakovska- Aleksovska	UNFPA
Donors	
Bojana Naceva	World Bank
Elizabeta Kunovska	SSIP Project
Natasa Tasovska-Stojanovska	SSIP Project
Biljana Stramsak	SSIP Project
Svetlana Zdravkovsk	GIZ
Lisa Pfieffe	
Nafi Saracini	EU
NGOs	
Suzana Tuneva Paunovska	Red Cross North Macedonia
Natasha Pavikjevikj- Stojmenovska	Association of Social Workers of Macedonia
Blagica Petreski	Finance think, Skopje
Glorija Vasileva	Secretary of the Red Cross Strumica
Zaneta Organdjjeva	Social Worker/ Red Cross Strumica
Beti Tolevska	Director, KHAM, Delcevo
Anita Conovska	KHAM, Delcevo
Sara Jasharovska	KHAM, Delcevo
Iva Mladenovska	Secretary of the Red Cross Kumanovo
Djane Kreshova	President, Women Forum, Tetovo
Goce Kocevski	Programe director, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, Skopje
Dushica Nofitoska	Lawyer, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, Skopje
Margarita Gulevska	Executive Director, Open the Windows, Skopje
Local Level	
Skopje	
Biljana Nevcheva	Intermunicipal Centre for Social Work Skopje - Butel Municipality
Strumica	
Verica Mandak	Special Education/Day Care Centre Strumica

Zvonko Angelov	Social Worker and Case Worker, Centre of Social Work
Frosina Vaskova	Social Worker and Case Worker, Centre of Social Work
Toni Milushev	Head of the Local Economic Development Sector at Municipality of Strumica
Teodora Gorgieva	Associate at the local Economic Development Department, Municipality of Strumica
<i>Delcevo</i>	
BlagojStojmenovski	Director, Social Worker, Centre of Social Work
Aleksandra Trajanovska	Psychologist and Case Worker, Centre of Social Work
Irena Dimitrovska Angelovska	Social Worker and Case Worker, Centre of Social Work
Suzana Petrovska	Social Worker, Advisor for Employment, Human Resources Department, Municipality of Delcevo
<i>Kumanovo</i>	
Aleksandra Arsovska	Social Worker, Director, Centre of Social Work
Elena Petrusevska	Social Worker, Centre of Social Work
Elizabeta Angelovska	Social Worker, Centre of Social Work
Aleksandar Krstevski	Head of the Sector for culture, sport, social, child and health protection, Municipality of Kumanovo
Tanja Stefanovska	Social worker, Unit for social, child and health protection, Municipality of Kumanovo
<i>Tetovo</i>	
Marijalsaevska Ristovska	Social worker, Director, Centre of Social Work
Magdalena Veselinova	Social worker case worker, Centre of Social Work
Aleksandra Angjelkovska	Social worker case worker, Centre of Social Work
Snezana Novakovska	Unit for social and child protection, Municipality of Tetovo
Vesna Avramovska	Social Worker, Unit for social and child protection, Municipality of Tetovo
<i>Skopje</i>	
Biljana Kacarska Nevcheva	Social Worker, Centre of Social Work, (Gazi Baba)
Natasha Maneska	Counsellor, City of Skopje, Department of Public Affairs, Unit for social, child and health protection
<i>Dibra</i>	
Kreshnik Pacuku	Director of the CSW
<i>Particants in FGD Kavadarci</i>	
Nadica Ristoska Lazarov	Special educator/ Defektolog
Snezana Mladenova	Social Worker

ANNEX 6: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

KII- Interview Guide UNICEF Representatives

This guide shall serve as basis for interviews and discussions with Key informants.

We are an evaluation team commissioned to carry out the evaluation of UNICEF interventions supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia. The evaluation assesses UNICEF's performance and contribution to social protection sector reform in North Macedonia. The evaluation will focus mainly on the two major changes introduced in the country's social protection system in the period 2016-2020: a) reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services, and b) the introduction of case management in the Centres for social work. The findings and lessons learned of the evaluation will be used to improve UNICEF's intervention of the implementation of the cash benefits schemes and services as well as social work case management in the next years to ensure that children and families are cared for and supported.

We are asking you to participate in the evaluation because you are in a position to contribute a relevant and valuable perspective on the functioning of UNICEF's Social protection interventions. If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by members of the evaluation team for approximately 1 hour.

Participation is voluntary: Your participation in the interview is voluntary. You can withdraw from the interview after it has begun, for any reason, with no penalty. Participating or not in the interview will not affect the benefits to the organizations or your engagement with UNICEF.

Risks and benefits: This review is designed to help improve UNICEF's Social protection interventions by learning from the perspectives of everyone involved. You may not benefit personally from being in this research review. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to [_____].

Confidentiality: The reports from this and the other meetings will collect and summarize the views and opinions of participants without connecting them to specific individuals and without using names at any time. Any report of this research will be presented in a way that makes it as difficult as possible for anyone to determine the identity of individuals participating in the evaluation.

If you have any questions, now or at any time in the future, you may call _____

Are you willing to be part of this discussion? (verbal response only requested)

Respondent: _____

Title and Function: _____

Interviewer Name: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Evaluation Questions and Sub-Questions	Interview Questions ¹⁰⁸
0. GENERAL Questions - What have been the most noted results, successes, challenges of UNICEF's Social Protection work?	
0.1 Role	1. What is your current position at UNICEF and in what ways have you interacted with SP?
0.2 Results	2. Thinking back during the previous phase of the SP interventions (2016-2020), what changes have you seen in the SP system as a result of UNICEF's SP interventions ?
0.3 Strengths and weaknesses	3. What do you see SP as being particularly good at in this intervention? 4. What do you see SP as being particularly weak at in this intervention?
1. RELEVANCE	
1.1. How relevant were UNICEF's interventions to the needs of the children and their families, especially to the most vulnerable children?	5. To what extent the objectives and results of the SP were aligned with identified needs of children and their families? 6. Did this intervention remain appropriate throughout changes in context (i.e., COVID-19)? a. Did the intervention focus on the right things? b. Were there any gaps/significant needs not addressed yet? 7. What adjustments needed to be made, if any, to SP to keep it relevant to the changing needs of its target population? 8. Thinking about the different types of support provided by UNICEF's Social protection interventions during 2016-2022, (e.g., cash benefits schemes, case management in the Centres for social work, etc.) - How significant and relevant were these various types of interventions, if at all, for meeting the needs of vulnerable children?
1.2. To what extent did UNICEF's intended outcome and the relevant outputs address the priorities identified in the national strategic documents relevant for social protection of children including the National Strategy to Reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion (2010-2020) and the Employment and Social Reform Programme 2020?	9. To what extent were UNICEF's Social protection interventions in line with North Macedonia government and national priorities ? a. To what extent did UNICEF's envisaged results match the needs outlined in government policies, strategies, and plans? 10. To what extent were SP's interventions in line with the National Strategy to reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion and the Employment and Social Reform Programme? 11. Were SP's implementation strategies relevant to the context in North Macedonia? If not, why were they not relevant?
2. COHERENCE	
2.1. To what extent were UNICEF's Social protection interventions for children implemented in	12. To what extent did UNICEF's Social protection interventions coordinate with and build on synergies with Education, Child protection, and Health programmes?

¹⁰⁸ Not all questions can be asked in all interviews. Different sections will need to be prioritized from different stakeholders.

coherence with other UNICEF's CPD intervention areas?	<p>a. What are some good examples that you have seen of successful inter-sector synergy with UNICEF's CPD interventions?</p> <p>b. What may be some key barriers to better inter-sectoral coordination and strategic synergy?</p> <p>13. How did SP adjust its focus to ensure coherence?</p>
2.2. Has there been any duplication of efforts among UNICEF's own interventions and interventions delivered by other organizations or entities in contributing to the outcomes?	<p>14. To what extent did UNICEF actively participate and promote coordination mechanisms with development partners and other UN agencies to avoid overlaps and leverage contributions?</p> <p>a. Do you have any examples of synergies with other agencies and partners?</p> <p>b. What have been some key barriers to better coordination and strategic synergy with other actors?</p>
3. EFFECTIVENESS	
3.1 Have UNICEF's Social protection interventions contributed to reducing bottlenecks and to creating an enabling environment (institutional, political and legislative context) for social protection coverage of poor and vulnerable children and their families?	<p>15. What were the key UNICEF's Social protection interventions' results achieved under the programme priorities?</p> <p>16. To what extent, if at all, did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to reducing bottlenecks to effective coverage of children and their families?</p> <p>17. To what extent, if at all, did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to provision of accessible and quality Day care Centre services?</p> <p>18. What were the driving factors that promoted implementation of UNICEF's Social protection interventions? What were the hindering factors affecting implementation of UNICEF's Social protection interventions?</p> <p>19. To what extent do you assess results of UNICEF's Social protection interventions as having been achieved and contributing to overall positive change in North Macedonia? Can you please provide some examples?</p>
3.2 To what extent capacity-building activities supported by UNICEF contributed to effective implementation of the social protection reform interventions?	<p>20. To what extent do you see the different MLSP stakeholders increased capacity to design and implement an integrated social protection framework with appropriate systems and operations?</p> <p>21. To what extent do you see the relevant MLSP stakeholders increased capacity to establish and test the disability assessment procedures and service delivery based on ICF norms?</p> <p>22. To what extent do you see social service providers increased capacity to provide quality and accessible services to the most vulnerable groups (Day care Centres)? Can you please provide some examples?</p>
3.3 To what extent have UNICEF interventions contributed to adequacy and equity focus of the existing social protection	<p>23. To what extent did UNICEF's Social protection interventions effectively contribute to ensuring that the SP services were equitable and adequate for children and their families?</p>

benefits for children and their families?	
3.4 To what extent are the existing social protection benefits for children and their families adequate and equity focused? Are there any gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection of children and their families?	24. Are the existing social protection benefits for children and families adequate and equitable? Can you provide some examples? Were there any gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection?
4.0 EFFICIENCY	
3.1 Were UNICEF's Social protection interventions budgets and resources (human, financial and technical) adequately used for addressing priority bottlenecks?	<p>25. How would you assess the operational, human, and financial resources within UNICEF's Social protection interventions? To what degree are they sufficient to ensure adequate implementation of the activities in the context, including during the pandemic?</p> <p>26. To what extent were planned activities and outputs delivered within the intended timeframe?</p> <p>a. What effect did any significant delays have on the results of UNICEF's Social protection interventions?</p> <p>27. To what extent were planned activities and outputs efficient and appropriate to context requirements?</p> <p>a. Were there particular types of planned activities that struggled with timeliness or efficiency more than others? Which ones?</p>
3.2 Which UNICEF's social protection programs for children and their families have been the most efficient in meeting the needs of the children (by program type, by target population, by inequities)?	<p>28. How much did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to enhancing UNICEF's efficiency in terms of:</p> <p>a. enhancing evidence base on child poverty.</p> <p>b. achieving CO annual social protection target</p> <p>c. reducing transaction costs,</p> <p>d. leveraging investments in provision of services to the children,</p> <p>e. resource mobilization efforts and partnership arrangements?</p> <p>29. What specific interventions or activities under SP would you characterize as more efficient than others? What contributed to these interventions being more efficient than others?</p>
4. SUSTAINABILITY	
4.1. Are legal, institutional/administrative, and financial mechanisms established to ensure monitoring and evaluation as well as sustainability of the	<p>30. How sound were the design and implementation of the Social Protection interventions in North Macedonia?? Does the design and implementation contribute to the sustainability of the SP initiatives?</p> <p>a. Can you offer any examples in institutional capacity (local and national) for sustainability</p>

results (policies, strategies, services)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Can you offer any examples in Partners (CSW, Day care Centres, etc.) capacity for sustainability c. Can you offer any examples in monitoring, evaluation and data management capacity for sustainability d. Can you offer any examples in Resourcing (allocations of national budgets and/or donor resources) capacity for sustainability <p>31. Which models and initiatives have the greatest amount of priority from the North Macedonian Institutions?</p> <p>32. Which models and initiatives have the least amount of priority from North Macedonian Institutions?</p> <p>33. Which of the models and initiatives do you see as most scale-able to the North Macedonia context? Why or why not?</p>
4.2 To what extent are the mechanisms for financing social protection spending which were supported by UNICEF consistent with the objectives of the programs they are financing? What are the potentials for expanding the existing benefits or introduce new ones?	<p>34. What are some of the comparative evidence of change in Government's Legislative and policy framework in the social sector prior and post UNICEF's Social protection interventions implementation?</p> <p>35. In terms of sustaining UNICEF's Social protection interventions' results long term, is there any evidence of consistency of planning and budgeting mechanism against the SP programs they are financing?</p>
5. IMPACT	
5.1. Are there early indications that the reforms of family and child focused benefits and reformed social services have contributed to social inclusion of children and their families?	<p>36. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the changes in terms of achievement of integrated and sustainable social protection system?</p> <p>37. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the capacity of the government to improve social protection coverage for all citizens, in particular the most vulnerable, across North Macedonia? Could you please provide some examples?</p> <p>38. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the improvement of social services, in particular Day care Centres across North Macedonia?</p> <p>39. What are some examples of main results achieved by the SP interventions and most salient success stories?</p> <p>40. Why these activities were successful/what were the enabling factors?</p>
5.2 What positive/negative, intended, or unintended outcomes have UNICEF's interventions contributed to so far?	<p>41. What have been some important unintended consequences from SP Interventions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. If there were any unintended negative outcomes, which were the three most important ones? How were they handled?

	b. If there were any unintended positive outcomes, which were the three most important ones? How were they handled?
42. CROSS- CUTTING ISSUES	
a. To what extent have UNICEF's interventions contributed to gender equality, non-discrimination, and disability inclusiveness?	<p>43. How have Gender, disability, or equity issues been integrated into the implementation of the social protection interventions? What could be done to better integrate these issues?</p> <p>a. Could you provide some examples how UNICEF SP intervention has maintained strong adherence to the principles of accessibility, non-discrimination, and inclusiveness?</p>

KII- Interview Guide- NATIONAL LEVEL INSTITUTIONS

This guide shall serve as basis for interviews and discussions with Key informants.

We are an evaluation team commissioned to carry out the evaluation of UNICEF interventions supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia. The evaluation assesses UNICEF's performance and contribution to the social protection sector reform in North Macedonia. The evaluation will focus mainly on the two major changes introduced in the country's social protection system in the period 2016-2020: a) reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services, and b) the introduction of case management in the Centres for social work. The findings and lessons learned of the evaluation will be used to improve UNICEF's intervention of the implementation of the cash benefits schemes and services as well as social work case management in the next years to ensure that children and families are cared for and supported.

We are asking you to participate in the evaluation because you are in a position to contribute a relevant and valuable perspective on the functioning of UNICEF's Social protection interventions. If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by members of the evaluation team for approximately 1 hour.

Participation is voluntary: Your participation in the interview is voluntary. You can withdraw from the interview after it has begun, for any reason, with no penalty. Participating or not in the interview will not affect the benefits to the organizations or communities or your engagement with UNICEF.

Risks and benefits: This review is designed to help improve UNICEF's Social protection interventions by learning from the perspectives of everyone involved. You may not benefit personally from being in this research review. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to [_____].

Confidentiality: The reports from this and the other meetings will collect and summarize the views and opinions of participants without connecting them to specific individuals and without using names at any time. Any report of this research will be presented in a way that makes it as difficult as possible for anyone to determine the identity of individuals participating in the evaluation.

If you have any questions, now or at any time in the future, you may call _____

Are you willing to be part of this discussion? (verbal response only requested)

Respondent: _____

Title and Function: _____

Interviewer Name: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

1. GENERAL	
1.1. Role and connection	1. What is your current position and in what ways have you interacted with UNICEF SP Interventions?
1.2. Results	2. Thinking back to 2016, what changes have you seen in the situation of children in North Macedonia as a result of UNICEF SP interventions?
1.3. Changes	3. What have been some of the key changes in UNICEF's way of working since the beginning (since 2016)? What has stayed the same?
1.4. Strengths and weaknesses	4. What do you see UNICEF as being particularly good at in SP? 5. What do you see UNICEF as being particularly weak at in SP?
2. RELEVANCE	
2.1 How relevant were UNICEF's interventions to the needs of the children and their families, especially to the most vulnerable children?	6. To what extent the objectives and results of the UNICEF's SP were aligned with the national sector priorities and frameworks? 7. Did UNICEF's intervention remain appropriate throughout changes in context (i.e., COVID-19)? a. Did the intervention focus on the right things? b. Were there any gaps/significant needs not addressed yet?
2.2 To what extent did UNICEF's intended outcome and the relevant outputs address the priorities identified in the national strategic documents relevant for social protection of children including the National Strategy to Reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion (2010-2020) and the Employment and Social Reform Programme 2020?	8. To what extent were SPs interventions in line with North Macedonia Government's priorities ? 9. To what extent were SP's interventions in line with the National Strategy to reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion and the Employment and Social Reform Programme? 10. Were SP's implementation strategies relevant to the context in North Macedonia? If not, why were they not relevant?
3. COHERENCE	
3.1. Has there been any duplication of efforts among UNICEF's own interventions and interventions delivered by other organizations or	11. To what extent did UNICEF actively participate and promote coordination mechanisms with the government stakeholders and partners to avoid overlaps and leverage contributions? a. Do you have any examples of synergies with other agencies and partners?

entities in contributing to the outcomes?	12. Have you encountered any projects implemented by other donors/partners on the same subject? Do you have an example of successful synergies?
4. EFFECTIVENESS	
4.1 Have UNICEF's Social protection interventions contributed to reducing bottlenecks and to creating an enabling environment (institutional, political and legislative context) for social protection coverage of poor and vulnerable children and their families?	<p>13. To what extent, if at all, did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to reducing bottlenecks to effective coverage of children and their families?</p> <p>14. To what extent, if at all, did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to provision of accessible and quality Day care Centre services?</p> <p>15. What were the driving factors that promoted implementation of UNICEF's Social protection interventions? What were the hindering factors affecting implementation of UNICEF's Social protection interventions?</p> <p>16. To what extent do you assess results of UNICEF's Social protection interventions as having been achieved and contributing to overall positive change in North Macedonia?</p> <p>17. To what extent the COVID-19 affected the achievement of intended results contributing to/reversing the expected impact of UNICEF's Social protection interventions?</p>
4.2 To what extent capacity-building activities supported by UNICEF contributed to effective implementation of the social protection reform interventions?	<p>18. How did UNICEF's SP contribute to strengthening the government capacity to design and implement an integrated social protection framework with appropriate systems and operations?</p> <p>19. How did UNICEF's SP contribute to strengthening the government capacity to provide accessible and quality social services – Day care Centres?</p> <p>20. How did UNICEF's SP contribute to the disability assessment procedures and service delivery based on ICF norms?</p>
4.3 To what extent have UNICEF interventions contributed to adequacy and equity focus of the existing social protection benefits for children and their families?	21. To what extent did UNICEF's Social protection interventions effectively contribute to ensuring that the SP services were equitable and adequate for children and their families?
4.4 To what extent are the existing social protection benefits for children and their families adequate and equity focused? Are there any gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection of children and their families?	<p>22. Are the existing social protection benefits for children and families adequate and equitable? Can you provide some examples?</p> <p>23. Were there any gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection?</p>
5. EFFICIENCY	
5.1 Were UNICEF's Social protection interventions budgets and resources	24. Were the available financial, material, and human resources adequate to meet the set objectives, including in times of the pandemic?

(human, financial and technical) adequately used for addressing priority bottlenecks?	
5.2 Which UNICEF's Social protection interventions for children and their families have been the most efficient in meeting the needs of the children (by intervention type, by target population, by inequities)?	25. What specific interventions or activities under SP would you characterize as more efficient than others? What contributed to these interventions being more efficient than others?
6 SUSTAINABILITY	
Are legal, institutional/administrative, and financial mechanisms established to ensure monitoring and evaluation as well as sustainability of the results (policies, strategies, services)?	26. In your opinion, were the design and implementation of the Social Protection interventions in North Macedonia sound? 27. What was the envisioned sustainability in the short and long term? What can promote sustainability in the short and long term? 28. What were some of concrete changes in national policies, regulations, and plans that can sustain achieved SP results?
7 IMPACT	
7.1 Are there early indications that the reforms of family and child focused benefits and reformed social services have contributed to social inclusion of children and their families?	29. How have vulnerable groups , including women, children and persons with disabilities benefited (directly and indirectly) from the UNICEF SP interventions 30. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the changes in terms of achievement of integrated and sustainable social protection system? 31. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the capacity of the government to improve social protection coverage for all citizens, in particular the most vulnerable, across North Macedonia? 32. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the improvement of social services, in particular Day care Centres across North Macedonia?
7.2 What positive/negative, intended, or unintended outcomes have UNICEF's interventions contributed to so far?	33. What have been some important unintended consequences from SP Interventions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. If there were any unintended negative outcomes, which were the three most important ones? How were they handled? b. If there were any unintended positive outcomes, which were the three most important ones? How were they handled?
8 CROSS- CUTTING ISSUES	
8.1 To what extent have UNICEF's interventions	34. To what extent the UNICEF's SP design, implementation, and monitoring have been responsive to the critical bottlenecks for

<p>contributed to gender equality, non-discrimination, and disability inclusiveness?</p>	<p>inclusion of persons with disability, gender quality and non-discrimination?</p> <p>a. Could you provide some examples how UNICEF SP intervention has maintained strong adherence to the principles of accessibility, non-discrimination, and inclusiveness?</p>
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KII- Interview Guide- LOCAL LEVEL INSTITUTIONS, SERVICE PROVIDERS

This guide shall serve as basis for interviews and discussions with Key informants.

We are an evaluation team commissioned to carry out the evaluation of UNICEF interventions supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia. The evaluation assesses UNICEF's performance and contribution to the social protection sector reform in North Macedonia. The evaluation will focus mainly on the two major changes introduced in the country's social protection system in the period 2016-2020: a) reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services, and b) the introduction of case management in the Centres for social work. The findings and lessons learned of the evaluation will be used to improve UNICEF's intervention of the implementation of the cash benefits schemes and services as well as social work case management in the next years to ensure that children and families are cared for and supported.

We are asking you to participate in the evaluation because you are in a position to contribute a relevant and valuable perspective on the functioning of UNICEF's Social protection interventions. If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by members of the evaluation team for approximately 1 hour.

Participation is voluntary: Your participation in the interview is voluntary. You can withdraw from the interview after it has begun, for any reason, with no penalty. Participating or not in the interview will not affect the benefits to the organizations or your engagement with UNICEF.

Risks and benefits: This review is designed to help improve UNICEF's Social protection interventions by learning from the perspectives of everyone involved. You may not benefit personally from being in this research review. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to [_____].

Confidentiality: The reports from this and the other meetings will collect and summarize the views and opinions of participants without connecting them to specific individuals and without using names at any time. Any report of this research will be presented in a way that makes it as difficult as possible for anyone to determine the identity of individuals participating in the evaluation.

If you have any questions, now or at any time in the future, you may call _____

Are you willing to be part of this discussion? (verbal response only requested)

Respondent: _____

Title and Function: _____

Interviewer Name: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

1. GENERAL	
1.1. Role and connection	1. What is your current position and in what ways have you interacted with UNICEF SP Interventions?
1.2. Results	2. Thinking back to 2016, what changes have you seen in the situation of children in North Macedonia as a result of UNICEF SP interventions?
1.3. Changes	3. What have been some of the key changes in UNICEF's way of working since the beginning (since 2016)? What has stayed the same?
1.4. Strengths and weaknesses	4. What do you see UNICEF as being particularly good at in SP? 5. What do you see UNICEF as being particularly weak at in SP?
2. RELEVANCE	
2.1. How relevant were UNICEF's interventions to the needs of the children and their families, especially to the most vulnerable children?	6. To what extent the objectives and results of the UNICEF's SP were aligned with identified needs of children and their families? 7. Did UNICEF's interventions remain appropriate throughout changes in context (i.e., COVID-19)? 8. Did UNICEF's Social protection interventions respond to your institutions'/ beneficiaries' needs? What was missing?
2.2. To what extent did UNICEF's intended outcome and the relevant outputs address the priorities identified in the national strategic documents relevant for social protection of children including the National Strategy to Reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion (2010-2020) and the Employment and Social Reform Programme 2020?	9. To what extent were UNICEF's Social protection interventions in line with North Macedonia Government's priorities ? 10. To what extent were SP's interventions in line with the National Strategy to reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion and the Employment and Social Reform Programme?
3. COHERENCE	
3.1. Has there been any duplication of efforts among UNICEF's own interventions and interventions delivered by other organizations or entities in contributing to the outcomes?	11. Have you encountered any projects implemented by other donors/partners on the same subject? Do you have an example of successful synergies?
4. EFFECTIVENESS	
4.1 Have UNICEF's Social protection interventions contributed to reducing bottlenecks and to creating an enabling environment (institutional, political and legislative context) for social	12. To what extent, if at all, did SP contribute to reducing bottlenecks to effective coverage of children and their families? 13. To what extent, if at all, did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to provision of accessible and quality Day care Centre services?

protection coverage of poor and vulnerable children and their families?	<p>14. What were the driving factors that promoted implementation of UNICEF's Social protection interventions? What were the hindering factors affecting implementation of UNICEF's Social protection interventions?</p> <p>15. To what extent do you assess results of UNICEF's Social protection interventions as having been achieved and contributing to overall positive change in North Macedonia?</p> <p>16. To what extent the COVID-19 affected the achievement of intended results contributing to/reversing the expected impact of the SP?</p>
4.2 To what extent capacity-building activities supported by UNICEF contributed to effective implementation of the social protection reform interventions?	<p>17. To what extent did UNICEF's intervention help increase your institution's capacity to design and implement an integrated social protection framework with appropriate systems and operations?</p> <p>18. To what extent UNICEF's intervention help increase your institution's capacity to establish and test the disability assessment procedures and service delivery based on ICF norms?</p> <p>19. To what extent, if at all, did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to institutional capacity for provision of accessible and quality Day care Centre services?</p>
4.3 To what extent have UNICEF interventions contributed to adequacy and equity focus of the existing social protection benefits for children and their families?	20. To what extent did UNICEF's Social protection interventions effectively contribute to ensuring that the SP services were equitable and adequate for children and their families?
4.4 To what extent are the existing social protection benefits for children and their families adequate and equity focused? Are there any gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection of children and their families?	<p>21. Are the existing social protection benefits for children and families adequate and equitable? Can you provide some examples?</p> <p>22. Were there any gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection?</p>
5. EFFICIENCY	
5.1 Were UNICEF's Social protection interventions budgets and resources (human, financial and technical) adequately used for addressing priority bottlenecks?	23. In your opinion, did UNICEF implement efficiently the activities in which you engaged in terms of time management, accuracy, quality? What was missing
5.2 Which UNICEF's Social protection interventions for children and their families have been the most efficient in meeting the needs of the children (by program type, by target population, by inequities)?	<p>24. Can you offer some examples on specific activities under SP support interventions implemented by UNICEF that were very efficient?</p> <p>25. How does UNICEF's support compare with support implemented by other development partners? What is the added value? What could UNICEF change?</p>

6. SUSTAINABILITY	
Are legal, institutional/administrative, and financial mechanisms established to ensure monitoring and evaluation as well as sustainability of the results (policies, strategies, services)?	<p>26. In your opinion, were the design and implementation of the Social Protection interventions in North Macedonia sound?</p> <p>27. What was the envisioned sustainability in the short and long term? What can promote sustainability in the short and long term?</p> <p>28. What were some of the concrete changes in national policies, regulations, and plans that can sustain achieved SP results?</p>
7. IMPACT	
7.1. Are there early indications that the reforms of family and child focused benefits and reformed social services have contributed to social inclusion of children and their families?	<p>29. How have vulnerable groups, including women, children and persons with disabilities benefited (directly and indirectly) from the SP?</p> <p>30. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the changes in terms of achievement of integrated and sustainable social protection system?</p> <p>31. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the capacity of the government to improve social protection coverage for all citizens, in particular the most vulnerable, across North Macedonia?</p> <p>32. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the improvement of social services, in particular Day care Centres across North Macedonia?</p>
7.3 What positive/negative, intended, or unintended outcomes have UNICEF's interventions contributed to so far?	<p>33. What have been some important unintended consequences from SP Interventions?</p> <p>a. If there were any unintended negative outcomes, which were the three most important ones? How were they handled?</p> <p>b. If there were any unintended positive outcomes, which were the three most important ones? How were they handled?</p>
8. CROSS- CUTTING ISSUES	
8.1. To what extent have UNICEF's interventions contributed to gender equality, non-discrimination and disability inclusiveness?	<p>34. To what extent the UNICEF's SP design, implementation, and monitoring have been responsive to the critical bottlenecks for inclusion of persons with disability, gender quality and non-discrimination?</p> <p>c. Could you provide some examples how UNICEF SP intervention has maintained strong adherence to the principles of accessibility, non-discrimination, and inclusiveness?</p>

KII- Interview Guide- CSOs

This guide shall serve as basis for interviews and discussions with Key informants.

We are an evaluation team commissioned to carry out the evaluation of UNICEF interventions supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia. The evaluation assesses UNICEF's performance and contribution to the social protection sector reform in North Macedonia. The evaluation will focus mainly on the two major changes introduced in the country's social protection system in the period 2016-2020: a) reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services, and b) the introduction of case management in the Centres for social work. The findings and lessons learned of the evaluation will be used to improve UNICEF's intervention of the implementation of the cash benefits schemes and services as well as social work case management in the next years to ensure that children and families are cared for and supported.

We are asking you to participate in the evaluation because you are in a position to contribute a relevant and valuable perspective on the functioning of UNICEF's Social protection interventions. If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by members of the evaluation team for approximately 1 hour.

Participation is voluntary: Your participation in the interview is voluntary. You can withdraw from the interview after it has begun, for any reason, with no penalty. Participating or not in the interview will not affect the benefits to the organizations or communities or your engagement with UNICEF.

Risks and benefits: This review is designed to help improve UNICEF's Social protection interventions by learning from the perspectives of everyone involved. You may not benefit personally from being in this research review. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to [_____].

Confidentiality: The reports from this and the other meetings will collect and summarize the views and opinions of participants without connecting them to specific individuals and without using names at any time. Any report of this research will be presented in a way that makes it as difficult as possible for anyone to determine the identity of individuals participating in the evaluation.

If you have any questions, now or at any time in the future, you may call _____

Are you willing to be part of this discussion? (verbal response only requested)

Respondent: _____

Title and Function: _____

Interviewer Name: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

1. GENERAL	
1.5. Role and connection	1. What is your current position and in what ways have you interacted with UNICEF SP Interventions?
1.6. Results	2. Thinking back to 2016, what changes have you seen in the situation of children in North Macedonia as a result of UNICEF SP interventions?
1.7. Changes	3. What have been some of the key changes in UNICEF's way of working since the beginning (since 2016)? What has stayed the same?
1.8. Strengths and weaknesses	4. What do you see UNICEF as being particularly good at in SP? 5. What do you see UNICEF as being particularly weak at in SP?
2. RELEVANCE	
2.3 How relevant were UNICEF's interventions to the needs of the children and their families, especially to the most vulnerable children?	6. To what extent the objectives and results of the UNICEF's SP were aligned with the national sector priorities and frameworks? 7. Did UNICEF's intervention remain appropriate throughout changes in context (i.e., COVID-19)? a. Did the intervention focus on the right things? b. Were there any gaps/significant needs not addressed yet?
2.4 To what extent did UNICEF's intended outcome and the relevant outputs address the priorities identified in the national strategic documents relevant for social protection of children including the National Strategy to Reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion (2010-2020) and the Employment and Social Reform Programme 2020?	8. To what extent were SPs interventions in line with North Macedonia Government's priorities ? 9. To what extent were SP's interventions in line with the National Strategy to reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion and the Employment and Social Reform Programme? 10. Were SP's implementation strategies relevant to the context in North Macedonia? If not, why were they not relevant?
3. COHERENCE	
3.1. Has there been any duplication of efforts among UNICEF's own interventions and interventions delivered by other organizations or entities in contributing to the outcomes?	11. To what extent did UNICEF actively participate and promote coordination mechanisms with the government stakeholders and partners to avoid overlaps and leverage contributions? a. Do you have any examples of synergies with other agencies and partners? 12. Have you encountered any projects implemented by other donors/partners on the same subject? Do you have an example of successful synergies?
4. EFFECTIVENESS	
4.5 Have UNICEF's Social protection interventions contributed to reducing bottlenecks and to creating an enabling environment (institutional, political and legislative context) for social protection coverage of poor	13. To what extent, if at all, did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to reducing bottlenecks to effective coverage of children and their families? 14. To what extent, if at all, did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to provision of accessible and quality Day care Centre services? 15. What were the driving factors that promoted implementation of UNICEF's Social protection interventions? What were the hindering

and vulnerable children and their families?	<p>factors affecting implementation of UNICEF's Social protection interventions?</p> <p>16. To what extent do you assess results of UNICEF's Social protection interventions as having been achieved and contributing to overall positive change in North Macedonia?</p> <p>17. To what extent the COVID-19 affected the achievement of intended results contributing to/reversing the expected impact of UNICEF's Social protection interventions?</p>
4.6 To what extent capacity-building activities supported by UNICEF contributed to effective implementation of the social protection reform interventions?	<p>18. How did UNICEF's SP contribute to strengthen the government capacity to design and implement an integrated social protection framework with appropriate systems and operations?</p> <p>19. How did UNICEF's SP contribute to the disability assessment procedures and service delivery based on ICF norms?</p> <p>20. To what extent, if at all, did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to increased institutional capacity for provision of accessible and quality Day care Centre services?</p>
4.7 To what extent have UNICEF interventions contributed to adequacy and equity focus of the existing social protection benefits for children and their families?	<p>21. To what extent did UNICEF's Social protection interventions effectively contribute to ensuring that the SP services were equitable and adequate for children and their families?</p>
4.8 To what extent are the existing social protection benefits for children and their families adequate and equity focused? Are there any gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection of children and their families?	<p>22. Are the existing social protection benefits for children and families adequate and equitable? Can you provide some examples?</p> <p>23. Were there any gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection?</p>
5. EFFICIENCY	
8.2 Were UNICEF's Social protection interventions budgets and resources (human, financial and technical) adequately used for addressing priority bottlenecks?	<p>24. Were the available financial, material and human resources adequate to meet the set objectives, including in times of the pandemic</p>
8.3 Which UNICEF's Social protection interventions for children and their families have been the most efficient in meeting the needs of the children (by intervention type, by target population, by inequities)?	<p>25. What specific interventions or activities under SP would you characterize as more efficient than others? What contributed to these interventions being more efficient than others?</p>

9 SUSTAINABILITY	
Are legal, institutional/administrative and financial mechanisms established to ensure monitoring and evaluation as well as sustainability of the results (policies, strategies, services)?	<p>26. In your opinion, were the design and implementation of the Social Protection interventions in North Macedonia sound?</p> <p>27. What was the envisioned sustainability in the short and long term? What can promote sustainability in the short and long term?</p> <p>28. What were some of concrete changes in national policies, regulations, and plans that can sustain achieved SP results?</p>
10 IMPACT	
10.1 Are there early indications that the reforms of family and child focused benefits and reformed social services have contributed to social inclusion of children and their families?	<p>29. How have vulnerable groups, including women, children and persons with disabilities benefited (directly and indirectly) from the JP? UNICE</p> <p>30. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the changes in terms of achievement of integrated and sustainable social protection system?</p> <p>31. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the capacity of the government to improve social protection coverage for all citizens, in particular the most vulnerable, across North Macedonia?</p> <p>32. To what extent have UNICEF's social protection interventions contributed to the improvement of social services, in particular Day care Centres across North Macedonia?</p>
7.4 What positive/negative, intended, or unintended outcomes have UNICEF's interventions contributed to so far?	<p>33. What have been some important unintended consequences from SP Interventions?</p> <p>a. If there were any unintended negative outcomes, which were the three most important ones? How were they handled?</p> <p>b. If there were any unintended positive outcomes, which were the three most important ones? How were they handled?</p>
11 CROSS- CUTTING ISSUES	
11.1 To what extent have UNICEF's interventions contributed to gender equality, non-discrimination, and disability inclusiveness?	<p>34. To what extent the UNICEF's SP design, implementation, and monitoring have been responsive to the critical bottlenecks for inclusion of persons with disability, gender quality and non-discrimination?</p> <p>a. Could you provide some examples how UNICEF SP intervention has maintained strong adherence to the principles of accessibility, non-discrimination, and inclusiveness?</p>

KII- Focus Group Discussions- Local and Community Level

This guide shall serve as basis for interviews and discussions with FGD participants.

We are an evaluation team commissioned to carry out the evaluation of UNICEF interventions supporting the Social Protection Reform in North Macedonia. The evaluation assesses UNICEF's performance and contribution to the social protection sector reform in North Macedonia. The evaluation will focus mainly on the two major changes introduced in the country's social protection system in the period 2016-2020: a) reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services, and b) the introduction of case management in the Centres for social work. The findings and lessons learned of the evaluation will be used to improve UNICEF's intervention of the implementation of the cash benefits schemes and services as well as social work case management in the next years to ensure that children and families are cared for and supported.

We are asking you to participate in the evaluation because you are in a position to contribute a relevant and valuable perspective on the functioning of UNICEF's Social protection interventions. If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by members of the evaluation team for approximately 1 hour.

Participation is voluntary: Your participation in the interview is voluntary. You can withdraw from the interview after it has begun, for any reason, with no penalty. Participating or not in the interview will not affect the benefits to the organizations or your engagement with UNICEF.

Risks and benefits: This review is designed to help improve UNICEF's Social protection interventions by learning from the perspectives of everyone involved. You may not benefit personally from being in this research review. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to [_____].

Confidentiality: The reports from this and the other meetings will collect and summarize the views and opinions of participants without connecting them to specific individuals and without using names at any time. Any report of this research will be presented in a way that makes it as difficult as possible for anyone to determine the identity of individuals participating in the evaluation.

If you have any questions, now or at any time in the future, you may call _____

Are you willing to be part of this discussion? (verbal response only requested)

Respondent: _____

Title and Function: _____

Interviewer Name: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

by other organizations or entities in contributing to the outcomes?	
3 EFFECTIVENESS	
8.2. Have the UNICEF supported programs and interventions contributed to reducing bottlenecks and to creating an enabling environment (institutional, political and legislative context) for social protection coverage of poor and vulnerable children and their families?	6. To what extent, if at all, did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to reducing bottlenecks to effective coverage of children and their families? 7. To what extent, if at all, did UNICEF's Social protection interventions contribute to provision of accessible and quality Day care Centre services? 8. What were the driving factors that promoted implementation of UNICEF's Social protection interventions? What were the hindering factors affecting implementation of UNICEF's Social protection interventions?
8.3. To what extent capacity-building activities supported by UNICEF contributed to effective implementation of the social protection reform interventions?	9. You might be aware that the CSW have received training from UNICEF/ISA, have you noticed any changes in the way they are working? What type of changes if any have you seen? 10. Have you noticed any changes in the establishment of the disability assessment procedures? 11. Do you use Day care Centre services? If yes, how would you assess their work? What is good? What could be better?
8.4. To what extent have UNICEF interventions contributed to adequacy and equity focus of the existing social protection benefits for children and their families? Are there any gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection of children and their families?	12. What do you think are the main challenges/gaps in ensuring that the SP services are equitable and adequate?
4 EFFICIENCY	
4.1. Which UNICEF's Social protection interventions for children and their families have been the most efficient in meeting the needs of the children (by program type, by target population, by inequities)?	13. Which SP initiative was most effective in addressing your needs/improving the SP system to better targeting and services?
5. SUSTAINABILITY	
Are legal, institutional/administrative and financial mechanisms established to ensure monitoring and evaluation as well as sustainability of	14. Thinking about SP services and benefits, what would be the area that could benefit from further reform going forward?

the results (policies, strategies, services)?	
6. IMPACT	
6.1. Are there early indications that the reforms of family and child focused benefits and reformed social services have contributed to social inclusion of children and their families?	15. Thinking back to the SP interventions (pre and post reform), what, if anything, has changed in the SP? 16. What has changed, if anything, in the lives of your community as a result of the SP? 17. Have there been children and vulnerable groups in your community who were not able to access SP services and benefits (Cash scheme benefits, day care Centres etc.)

ONLINE SURVEY FOR CENTRES OF SOCIAL WORK (CSW)

Dear Madam/Sir,

This online survey is carried out as part of the Evaluation of *UNICEF interventions supporting the social protection reform in North Macedonia*, implemented by an independent team of consultants from The KonTerra Group.

The evaluation is looking at UNICEF's work to support social protection reform in North Macedonia from 2016-2020. More specifically, the team is looking at UNICEF's contributions to two major changes introduced since 2019: 1) reform of the social protection cash benefits schemes and services; and 2) the introduction of case management in the Centres for social work.

This online survey will collect the views and experiences of personnel working in the Centres for Social Work (CSW) on these social protection reforms, including their relevance, effectiveness, and impact.

Your responses will allow us to better understand the needs among vulnerable households and the quality of the reformed social protection programs so far. Your responses will also help us identify lessons and ways for further improving the social protection system in future.

This online survey should not take more than **30 minutes** to complete. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time or answer only some of the questions.

The information we receive through the survey will be used only for the purposes of the evaluation and will not be shared with any third parties.

Please note that any responses you give will be **confidential** so please feel free to respond freely and honestly. Your name will not appear in the evaluation report and your individual responses will not be shared with UNICEF. All data provided will be held securely and kept confidential, and no internet IP address will be kept or tracked.

Kindly complete the online survey by XX 2023 so that your opinion will be included in the evaluation. The CSWs are critical for the project, so it is important that we hear your opinion in the evaluation.

The final page of the online survey contains a "Submit" button. By clicking on this button, you agree to your participation in the survey, and you submit your responses.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this evaluation in general, or this online survey, your **contact person** is:

Erisa Pereira, Evaluation Project Manager, E-mail: epereira@konerragroup.net

If you know anyone else who is interested in taking the online survey, but did not receive a personalized invitation, please contact Ms. Pereira at the above email and she will get in contact with those potential respondents.

We greatly appreciate your contribution to this evaluation. Your response is important for helping to improve UNICEF'S work in social protection in North Macedonia.

The Evaluation Team

Q1. **[all]** Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other/ prefer not to say
-
- Q2. **[all]** To what extent are you familiar with the reforms of social protection system in the period of 2016-2020?
- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all.
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar
-
- Q3. **[all]** To what extent are you familiar with UNICEF and its activities?
- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all.
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar
-
- Q4. **[all]** Has your CSW benefited from UNICEF's support to the introduction of the case management?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
-

A. Relevance and Coherence

Q5. To what extent do the reformed cash benefits for social and child protection (guaranteed minimum assistance – GMA and child allowance - CA) respond to the needs of the most vulnerable children and their families?

	To great extent	To some extent.	Not at all. Please, explain why?	I don't know/Not familiar
Guaranteed Minimum Assistance				
Child Allowance				

Q6. To what extent has the introduction of case management in CSWs responded to the needs of CSWs in terms of creating efficiencies and facilitating the internal processes in CSW?

- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all. Please, explain why? _____
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q7. To what extent has UNICEF's support to the introduction of case management relevant for better organization of the work in your CSW?

- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all. Please, explain why? _____
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q8. To what extent have the actual measured implemented under the social and child protection reform from 2019 adequately operationalized priorities identified in the national strategic documents?

- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all. Please, explain why? _____
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q9. To what extent was the social and child protection reform from 2019 implemented in coherence with other governmental sectoral policies?

- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all. Please, explain why? _____
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar

B. Effectiveness and Efficiency

Case management and CSW operations

Q10. To the extent to which you are familiar with the introduction of the case management system in CSWs, to what extent has the UNICEF support to the introduction of case management in CSWs contributed to more efficient processing of cases?

- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all. Please, explain why? _____
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q11. What are the main changes that you have observed in your CSW since the introduction of the case management?

- ☐ More effective support directed to clients.
- ☐ Improved communication between the case worker and the clients.
- ☐ Better organization of intra-institutional capacities.
- ☐ Other. Please identify other changes _____.
- ☐ No changes in particular. My CSW continued to function as before.
- ☐ My CSW did not benefit from case management introduction.

Q12. To what extent did capacity-building activities supported by UNICEF contribute to effective implementation of the social protection reform interventions?

☐ To great extent.

☐ To some extent.

☐ Not at all. Please, explain why? _____

☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q13. In your view, what are the main missing elements that UNICEF should consider going forward with support to case management in CSWs?

☐ Trainings related to coordination, monitoring and evaluation of client's specific needs.

☐ Support for use of digital case management tools and software.

☐ Mentoring of CSWs to adequately apply case management tools and software

☐ More concrete guidelines to operationalize case management

☐ Other trainings for CSW staff (please, list some of trainings that would be useful): _____

☐ Other. Please identify _____

Q14. Has the enrolment for the guaranteed minimum income (GMA) and child allowance (CA) increase after June 2019 in your CSW, in comparison to the previous year (2018)?

☐ Yes, for both GMA and CA

☐ Only for GMA

☐ Only for CA

☐ No, pls elaborate the reasons: _____

Wider social protection reform results

Q15. Thinking about the wider social protection reform – what have been the main results that helped reduce bottlenecks in ensuring effective coverage of children and their families?

	Achieved visible results	Made progress some	There are outstanding issues	I'm not sure/not familiar with this reform
Result 1: Increased access to GMA and CA among single parent households				
Result 2: Access to CA by GMA beneficiaries				
Result 3: Improved access to social services at the local level				
Other, pls add:				

Q16. To what extent has the social protection reform contributed to reducing bottlenecks in ensuring effective coverage of children and their families?

☐ To great extent.

☐ To some extent.

- ☐ Not at all. Please, explain why? _____
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Cash benefits

Q17. In your opinion, which **social protection cash benefits** for children and their families have been the **most efficient** in meeting the needs of the vulnerable children?

	Totally efficient	Efficient	Somewhat efficient but need further improvements	Inefficient, need substantial improvements	I'm not sure/not familiar with this reform
GMA					
CA					
Special child allowance					
Educational allowance					
Other, pls list: _____					

Q18. To what extent has UNICEF contributed to the government efforts to improve the targeting and coverage of children and their families with social protection cash benefits?

- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all. Please, explain why? _____
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q19. To what extent has the social protection reform process enabled the system to maintain the provision of the reformed social protection cash benefits?

- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all. Please, explain why? _____
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q20. What are some of the key challenges related to sustainability of the reformed social protection cash benefits? (you can choose more than one answer):

- ☐ Low activation of beneficiaries
- ☐ Intra-agency cooperation
- ☐ Low take up
- ☐ Lack of effectiveness (low amounts)
- ☐ Other _____

Q21. What are some of the key challenges related to the implementation of the reformed cash benefits (i.e., GMA, CA)? (you can choose more than one answer):

- ☐ Burdensome administrative procedures
- ☐ Gap between application and payment of cash benefits

- ☐ Low inter-operability of the electronic system for benefits and services
- ☐ Other _____

Q22. How could UNICEF help? (you can choose more than one answer):

- ☐ Trainings
- ☐ Digital registries
- ☐ Technical equipment
- ☐ Support of opening more day care Centres for children
- ☐ Other _____

Social services

Q23. In your opinion, which **social services** for children and their families have been the **most efficient** in meeting the needs of the vulnerable children? (you can choose more services)

- ☐ information and referral services;
- ☐ professional assistance and support services;
- ☐ counselling services;
- ☐ services in the home;
- ☐ community services and
- ☐ day care Centres
- ☐ supported living
- ☐ other _____

Q24. What is your opinion of the services provided in the Day Care Centres for meeting the needs of the vulnerable children?

	I fully agree	I agree to some extent	I don't agree	I don't know/not familiar
Day Care Centres provide relevant and appropriate set of services to the most vulnerable children.				
Day Care Centres provide effective services to the most vulnerable children.				
Day Care Centres take into account and address appropriately specific needs of the most vulnerable children with disability				
Day Care Centres provide adequate alternative to				

institutionalization of children with disability				
Day Care Centres have sufficient capacities and tools to function on their own				
Day Care Centres still encounter obstacles to provide relevant and effective services to the most vulnerable children.				

Q25. To what extent has UNICEF contributed to the introduction and functioning of the Day care Centres?

☐ To great extent.

☐ To some extent.

☐ Not at all. Please, explain why? _____

☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q26. In your opinion, which **social services** for children and their families **would need further improvements** to be able to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children? you can choose more services).

☐ information and referral services;

☐ professional assistance and support services;

☐ counselling services;

☐ services in the home;

☐ community services and

☐ day care Centres

☐ supported living

☐ other _____

Q27. To what extent has the social protection reform process enabled the system to maintain the provision of Day care Centres' services (in terms of financial allocations, institutionalization, staff)

☐ To great extent.

☐ To some extent.

☐ Not at all. Please, explain why? _____

☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q28. What are some of the key challenges related to sustainability of the Day care Centres' services? (you can choose more than one answer):

☐ Financial allocations

☐ Human resources

☐ Lack of trainings

☐ Other. Please, elaborate: _____

D. Sustainability and Impact

Q29. What institutional/administrative mechanisms have been introduced/used in your CSW to ensure monitoring and evaluation of the reformed social protection cash benefits and social services? (you can choose more answers):

- ☐ Ensuring services are implemented in accordance with the Personal Plan.
- ☐ Ensuring personal plan is updated and service arrangements with providers are modified or terminated when a client's needs or status has changed.
- ☐ Follow up actions
- ☐ Case conferences
- ☐ Monthly/Quarterly/Annual evaluation of cases
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other _____

Q30. In what ways could the CSW's monitoring and evaluation processes and procedures be improved? (you can choose more than one answer):

- ☐ Adoption of national agreed indicators for monitoring and evaluation of case processes and procedures
- ☐ Follow up actions
- ☐ Case conferences
- ☐ Monthly/Quarterly/Annual evaluation of cases
- ☐ No improvements needed
- ☐ Other _____

Q31. What are the main positive outcomes of the social protection reform from 2019 on the most vulnerable children and their families that you have observed through your work? (you can choose more than one answer):

- ☐ Improved access to cash benefits
- ☐ Increase in social service provision
- ☐ Increased value of cash benefits
- ☐ Possibility of combined use of cash benefits
- ☐ Better targeting
- ☐ More equal treatment between different households in risk
- ☐ More efficient procedures for application
- ☐ Other _____

Q32. Which category of vulnerable households and children (i.e., number of household members, ethnicity, economic status, location of living, etc.) have benefited most from the social protection reform from 2019? (you can choose more than one answer):

- ☐ Children from single parent households
- ☐ Children from low-income households that are in primary or secondary education
- ☐ Disabled children
- ☐ Children with unemployed parents
- ☐ Children from households with three and more children
- ☐ Children without parents and parental care
- ☐ Children in foster care
- ☐ Other _____

Q33. What are the main shortcomings (or negative outcomes) of the social protection reform from 2019 on the most vulnerable children and their families that you have observed through your work?

- ☐ Low amount of benefits
- ☐ Lack of (separate) child allowance for every child in the family
- ☐ Lack of child-tailored social services
- ☐ Other _____

Q34. Where there any vulnerable categories of households and children (i.e., number of household members, ethnicity, economic status, location of living, etc.) that have been negatively impacted from the social protection reform in 2019?

- ☐ Children from single parent households
- ☐ Children from low-income households that are in primary or secondary education
- ☐ Disabled children
- ☐ Children with unemployed parents
- ☐ Children from households with three and more children
- ☐ Children without parents and parental care
- ☐ Children in foster care
- ☐ Other _____

Q35. What impacts have you observed for the most vulnerable groups in your community as a result of reformed social protection system?

	More inclusion in local community	Better access to services (education, health facilities, etc.)	Improved living conditions as a result of access to social benefits	Better understanding of rights	The groups are more empowered and resilient thanks to access to reformed social services	Community is more aware of needs and rights of this group	Community is more inclusive of this group	Local service providers (school, health institution, CSW, police, CSOs) have stronger cooperation and referral on issues of this group
Children from single parent households								
Children from low-income households that are in primary or								

secondary education								
Disabled children								
Children with unemployed parents								
Children from households with three and more children								
Children without parents and parental care								
Children in foster care								
Other groups								

Q36. To what extent is the reformed social protection system now effective to provide adequate targeting and coverage of the most vulnerable?

☐ To great extent.

☐ To some extent. What is missing? Please, elaborate: _____

☐ Not at all. What is missing? Please, elaborate: _____

☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q37. What are the two main challenges for ensuring adequate social protection of the most vulnerable children and their families in North Macedonia? *(please select two that are most important in your view)*

- ☐ Poverty, unemployment, or low income
- ☐ Lack of affordable housing
- ☐ Chronic health conditions or lack of access to healthcare
- ☐ Lack of access to social protection benefits
- ☐ Lack of access to social services
- ☐ Political instability

- ☐ Other, please add: _____

E. Cross-cutting issues

Q38. In your opinion, to what extent has the social protection reform from 2019 contributed to gender equality?

- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all.
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q39. In your opinion, to what extent has the social protection reform from 2019 contributed in some way to non-discrimination?

- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all.
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Q40. In your opinion, to what extent has the social protection reform from 2019 contributed in some way to disability inclusiveness?

- ☐ To great extent.
- ☐ To some extent.
- ☐ Not at all.
- ☐ I don't know/Not familiar

Thank you!

ANNEX 7: ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY FOR CSWS

The online survey was carried out as part of the Evaluation of UNICEF interventions supporting the social protection reform in North Macedonia. The survey collected the views and experiences of personnel working in the Centres for Social Work (CSW) on social protection reforms, including their relevance, effectiveness, and impact.

A total of 30 respondents completed the survey, out of which 26 women (92.86%) and 2 men (7.14%), and 2 did not answer the question. Figure 1 below shows the gender distribution of the respondents.

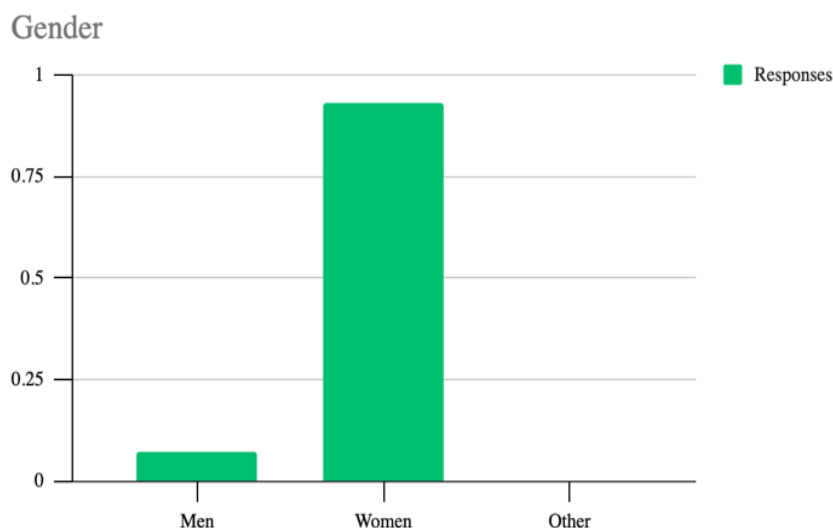


Figure 1. Gender distribution of survey respondents.

Out of the 30 CSW respondents, 38.46% declared that their CSW benefited from UNICEFs support to the introduction of case management, whereas the remaining 61.54% declared that their CSW did not benefit from the support provided by UNICEF.

All the respondents were familiar with the reforms of the social protection system during 2016-2020, with a total of 77.78% of participants responding they were familiar to a great extent, whereas 22.22% to some extent, can be seen in Figure 2 below.

When it comes to familiarity with UNICEF program and its activities, 14.81% responded they were familiar to a great extent, 59.26% to some extent, 7.41% were not at all informed and the remaining 18.52% declared they did not know, or had no familiarity with the program, as seen in Figure 3 below.

To what extent are you familiar with the reforms of social protection system in the period of 2016-2020?

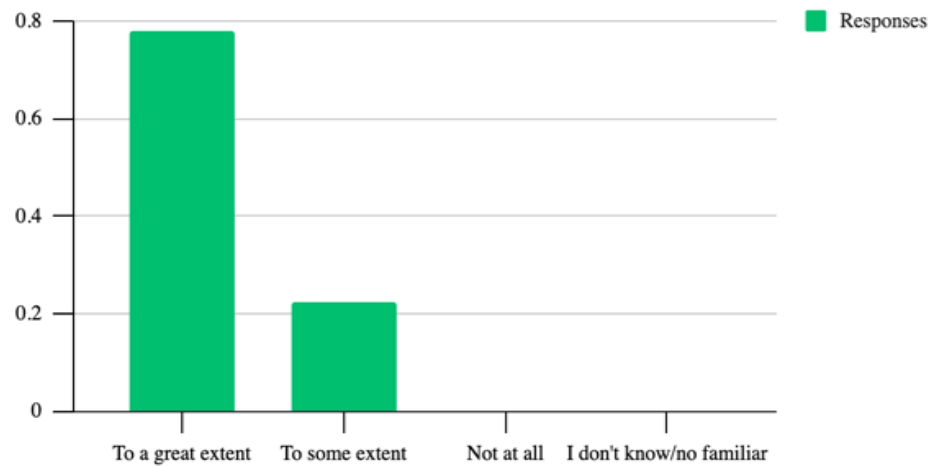


Figure 2. Familiarity with SP reform

To what extent are you familiar with UNICEF and its activities?

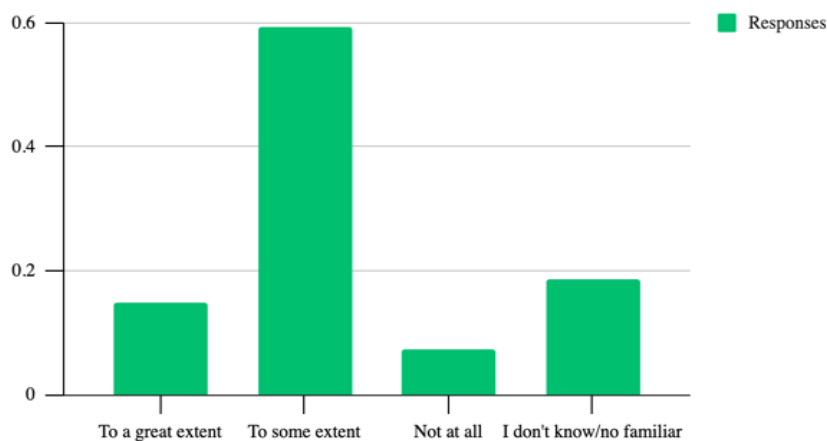


Figure 3. Familiarity with UNICEF activities.

In terms of relevance, the survey inquired into the extent to which the reformed cash benefits for social and child protection (guaranteed minimum assistance – GMA and child allowance - CA) responded to the needs of the most vulnerable children and their families. Table 1 below outlines the answers of the respondents in terms of the extent of relevance.

	To great extent	To some extent.	Not at all.	Not familiar
Guaranteed Minimum Assistance	34.62%	57.69%	7.69%	0.00%
Child Allowance	20.00%	60.00%	20.00%	0.00%
Educational Allowance	25.00%	66.67%	8.33%	0.00%

Table 1. Responsiveness of reformed benefits to the needs of vulnerable populations

Most of the respondents (64%) believe that the measures implemented are in line with the national strategic documents, whereas 36% responded they did not know. When it comes to the introduction of case management in CSWs responded to the needs of CSWs in terms of creating efficiencies and facilitating the internal processes in CSW. A total of 65.39% believed that this intervention was relevant to the needs of the CSW (11.54% to a great extent; 53.85% to some extent) whereas the remaining 34.62% declared that they did not know or would not be familiar with this. In terms of the relevance of UNICEF's support to the introduction of CM, there was a different view. Only 36% of the respondents agreed that to some extent this support was relevant, whereas the remaining 64% agreed that it was not at all relevant or they declared they are not familiar with the support of UNICEF in this process.

In terms of coherence, 48% of respondents, believed that the social and child protection reform from 2019 are implemented in coherence with other governmental sectoral policies, whereas 44% responded that they are not families, and 8% believed they were not coherent. Figure 4 below outlines the answers of the respondents on coherence. One respondent outlined that overall, there is no good coordination for the implementation of sector policies.

To what extent was the social and child protection reform from 2019 implemented in coherence with other governmental sector...

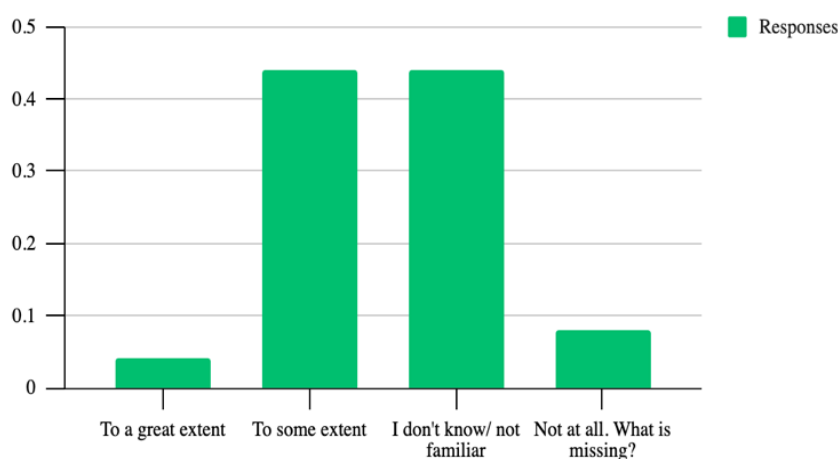


Figure 4. Coherence of SP reform with governmental sectoral policies.

As far as effectiveness and efficiency are concerned, the survey gathered perceptions of respondents in terms of case management and CSW operations, wider social protection reform results, cash

benefits, and social services. In terms of case management and CSW operations, respondents were asked about their opinions regarding the contribution case management in CSW had to a more efficient processing of cases. 56% of respondents agreed that it contributed to a great or certain extent to the efficiency of case processing, whereas the others responded they were not familiar with this. When asked what is missing, two respondents replied that “somehow teamwork lost its meaning” and “the process is absolutely inefficient”- without providing any further insight for the matter. Figure 4 summarizes respondents' views on the matter.

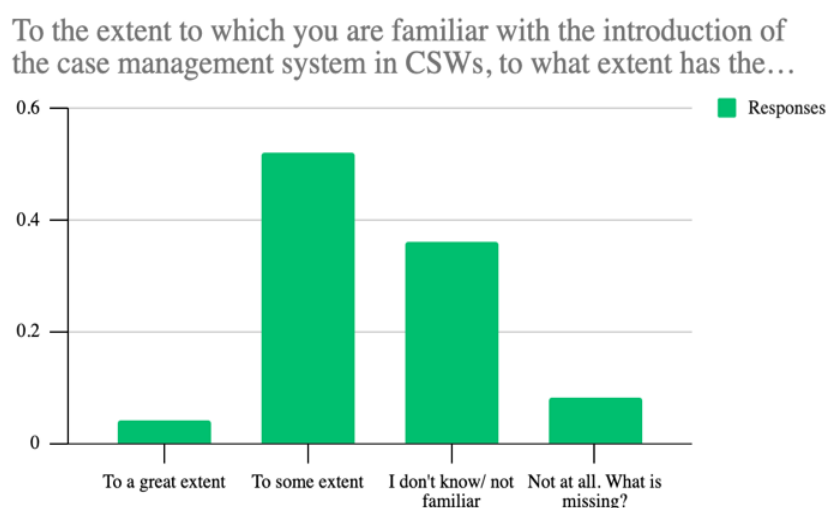


Figure 5. Contribution of CM in the efficiency of processing cases.

When asked what were the main changes they observed in their CSW since the introduction of case management, 8.33% said more effective support directed to clients; 20.83% improved communication between the caseworker and the clients; 4.17% better organization of intra-institutional capacities, 8.33% no changes, and 37.50% responded that their CSW did not benefit from case management introduction. The remaining 20.83% voiced open concerns regarding poor organization for case management, fragile interpersonal relations due to unequal distribution of work, lack of support from management, continuation of prioritization of rights at the expense of services, etc. A majority of 62.50% of respondents agreed that the capacity building activities supported by UNICEF contributed to effective implementation of the social protection reform interventions. The main missing elements they identified that UNICEF should consider going forward with support to case management in CSW are presented in Table 2 below. Finally, in terms of case management and CSW operations, respondents largely agreed that GMA and CA increased after June 2019 (64.22%).

Trainings related to coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of client's specific needs	30.43%
Support for use of digital case management tools and software	13.04%
Mentoring of CSWs to adequately apply case management tools and software	13.04%
More concrete guidelines to operationalize case management	39.13%
Other trainings for CSW staff	4.35%

Table 2. Missing elements UNICEF should consider looking forward

On wider social protection reform results, 8.70% of respondents agreed that SP reform contributed to a large extent to reducing bottlenecks in ensuring effective coverage of children and their families, 56.52% agreed that it contributed to some extent and 34.78% responded that they did not know. When looking at the main results that helped reduce bottlenecks in ensuring effective coverage for children and families, respondents assessed increased access to GMA and CA among single parent households, access to CA by GMA beneficiaries, increased support for families with children through the introduction of an educational supplement, and improved access to social services at the local level. Results are presented in Figure 6 below.

Thinking about the wider social protection reform – what have been the main results that helped reduce bottlenecks in ensuring effective coverage of children and their families?

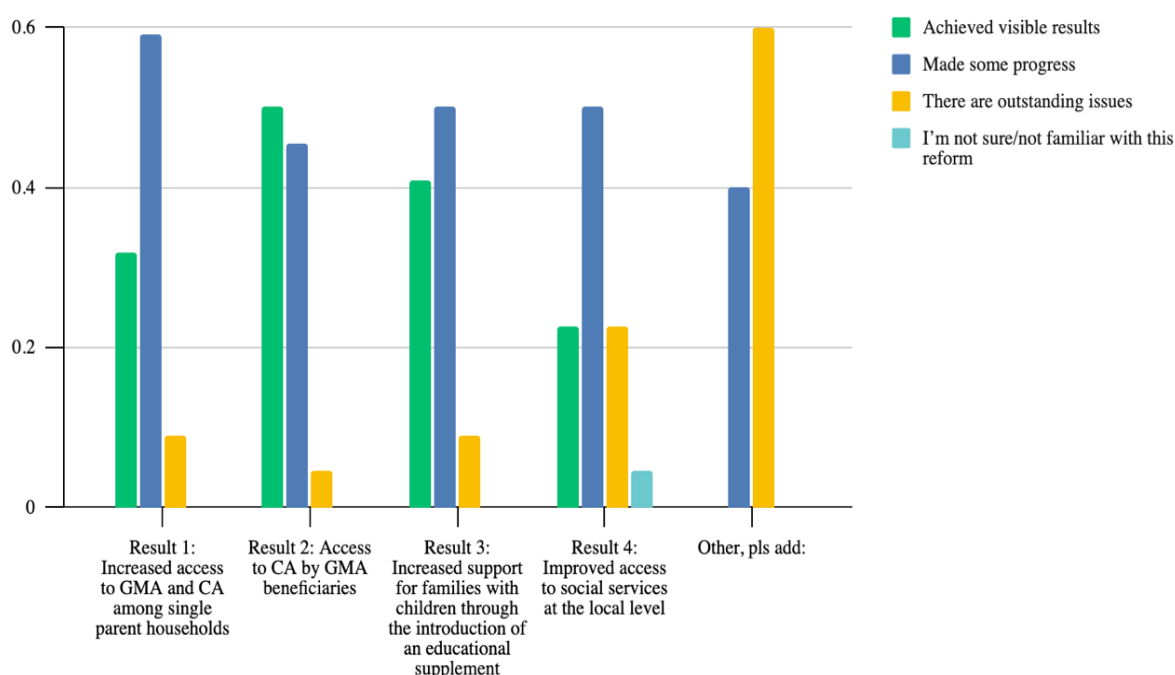


Figure 6. Main results that helped reduce bottlenecks

On the efficiency of SP cash benefits, for meeting the needs of the vulnerable children, the assessment of respondents is provided in Table 3 below:

	Totally efficient	Efficient	Somewhat efficient but need further improvements	Inefficient, need substantial improvements	I'm not sure/not familiar with this reform
GMA	25.00%	40.00%	30.00%	5.00%	0.00%
CA	19.05%	14.29%	52.38%	14.29%	0.00%
Special child allowance	20.00%	30.00%	40.00%	10.00%	0.00%

Educational allowance	28.57%	33.33%	33.33%	4.76%	0.00%
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Table 3. Efficiency of cash benefits

Furthermore, 68.19% of respondents agreed that UNICEF contributed to the government efforts to improve the targeting and coverage of children and their families with social protection cash benefits, whereas the others (31.82%) responded they were not familiar with this. On the extent to which the SP reform process enabled the system to maintain the provision of the reformed social protection cash benefits, 77.27% of responded positively, whereas 22.73% declared they are not familiar. The main challenges they identified related to the sustainability and implementation of the reformed cash benefits are presented in Table 4 and Table 5 below. They agreed that UNICEF can support this process through trainings (80%), digital registries (45%), technical equipment (45%), and opening of new DCCs (25%).

Low activation of beneficiaries	54.55%
Intra-agency cooperation	31.82%
Low take-up	13.64%
Lack of effectiveness	36.36%

Table 4. Challenges for the sustainability of cash benefits

Burdensome administrative procedures	70.00%
Gap between application and payment of cash benefits	5.00%
Low inter-operability of the electronic system for benefits and services	35.00%

Table 5. Challenges for the implementation of cash benefits

When identifying which social services for children and their families have been the most efficient in meeting the needs of vulnerable children, respondents agreed to the following extent. They were also asked which of these services would need further improvements to be able to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children. The perspectives on the matter are summarized in Table 6 below.

Social services	Most efficient	Need improvement
Information and referral services	54.55%	40.91%
Professional assistance and support services	54.55%	68.18%
Counselling services	68.18%	31.82%
Services in the home	18.18%	22.73%
Community services	18.18%	31.82%
Day care Centres	36.36%	13.64%
Supported living	27.27%	36.36%
Other	0.00%	0.00%

Table 6. Most efficient social services and need for improvement

In terms of the Day Care Centres, survey participants agreed to some extent that UNICEF contributed to the introduction and functioning of the DCCs (36.36%), however 63.64% replied that were not familiar with UNICEFs contribution in this aspect. The respondents were asked to provide their perspective on the services provided in the DCCs. Their answers are portrayed in Figure 7 below. They identified financial allocations (63.64%), human resources (54.55%), lack of trainings (59.09%) as the key challenges related to sustainability of the Day Care Centres' services.

What is your opinion of the services provided in the Day Care Centers for meeting the needs of the vulnerable children?

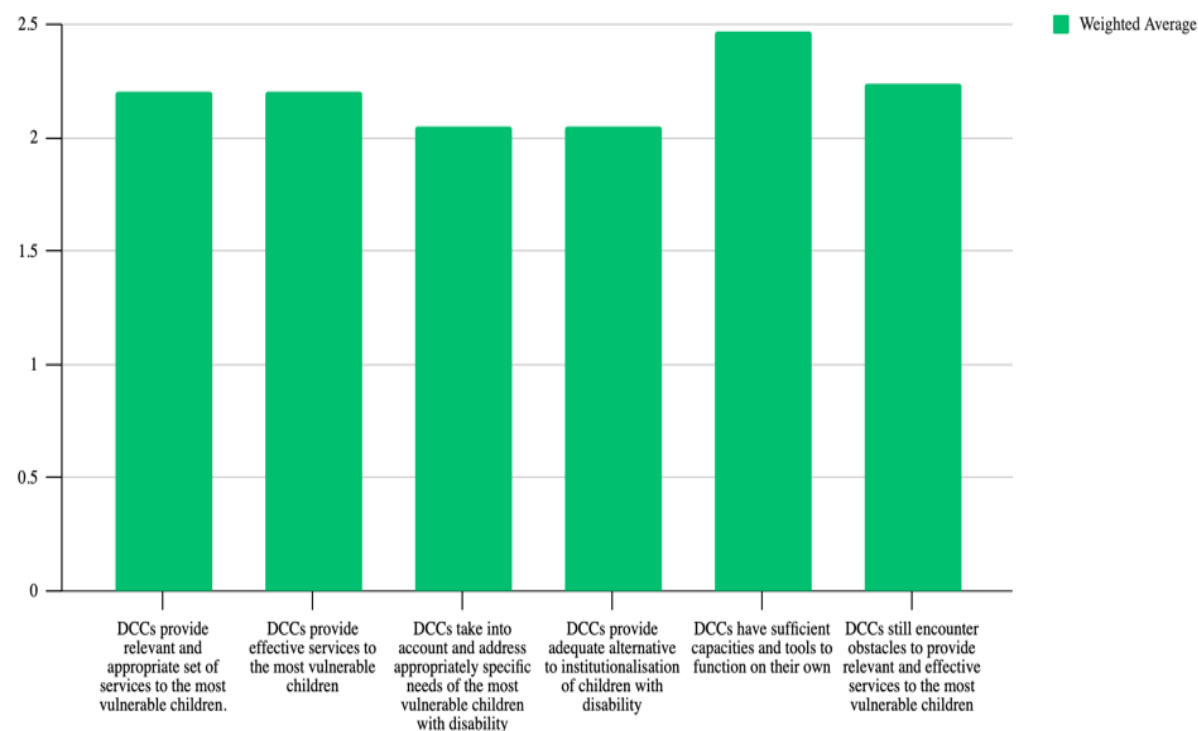


Figure 7. Respondents' opinions on the services provided in DCCs

Regarding the sustainability and impact of SP reform, participants were initially asked to identify what institutional/administrative mechanisms have been introduced/used in your CSW to ensure monitoring and evaluation of the reformed social protection cash benefits and social service. According to the collected responses, 47.37% agreed it was ensuring services are implemented in accordance with the Personal Plan; 31.58% ensuring personal plan is updated and service arrangements with providers are modified or terminated when a client's needs or status has changed; 31.58% follow-up actions; 15.79% case conferences, and 31.58% monthly/quarterly/annual evaluation of case. However, 21.05% responded that no mechanisms were used for this matter. When asked how could the CSW's monitoring and evaluation processes and procedures be improved, the respondents agreed to the following:

Adoption of national agreed indicators for monitoring and evaluation of case processes and procedures	63.16%
Follow up actions	42.11%
Case conferences	36.84%
Monthly/Quarterly/Annual evaluation of cases	15.79%
No improvements needed	5.26%

Table 7. Ways in which M&E processes and procedures can be improved

The respondents agreed that the main positive outcomes of the SP reform that they observed through their work were improved access to cash benefits (31.58%), increase in social service provision (42.11%), increased value of cash benefits (68.42%), possibility of combined use of cash benefits (52.63%), better targeting (5.26%), more equal treatment between different households in risk (10.53%), more efficient procedures for application (5.26%). The main shortcomings they identified as per their observations through their work were low amount of benefits (36.84%), lack of (separate) child allowance for every child in the family (15.79%), and lack of child-tailored social services (47.37%). Respondents were also inquired as to which categories of vulnerable households and children benefited most and which were negatively impacted by the reform. The answers are found in table 8 below.

Categories of vulnerable households and children	Benefited most	Impacted negatively
Children from single parent households	26.32%	5.88%
Children from low-income households that are in primary or secondary education	63.16%	17.65%
Disabled children	52.63%	5.88%
Children with unemployed parents	26.32%	0.00%
Children from households with three and more children	10.53%	35.29%
Children without parents and parental care	36.84%	11.76%
Children in foster care	42.11%	5.88%

Table 8. Categories that have benefited most and have been impacted negatively most

Figure 8 below outlines the main impacts the respondents have observed for the most vulnerable groups in your community because of reformed social protection system. As it can be observed from the figure the biggest impact is seen in the improved living conditions because of access to social benefits and increased empowerment and resilience of the groups thanks to access to reformed social services. These impacts are considered most for children in alternative care and children from low-income families.

What impacts have you observed for the most vulnerable groups in your community as a result of reformed social protection system?

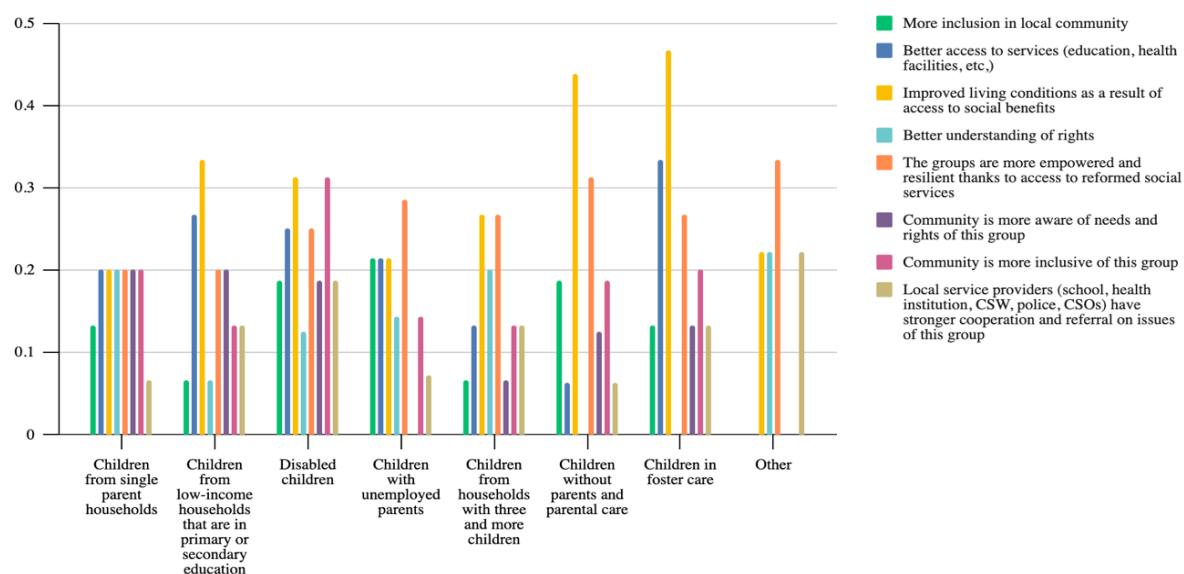


Figure 8. Impacts have you observed for the most vulnerable groups

The main challenges for ensuring adequate SP for the most vulnerable are considered poverty, unemployment, or low income (94.74%), chronic health conditions or lack of access to healthcare (36.84%), lack of access to social protection benefits (26.32%), lack of access to social services (10.53%) and political instability (10.53%).

Lastly, in terms of the extent to which SP reform contributed to cross-cutting issues, the respondents provided the following insights (Table 9).

	To great extent	To some extent.	Not at all.	Not familiar
Contribution to gender equality	31.58%	47.37%	15.79%	5.26%
Contribution to non-discrimination	26.32%	52.63%	15.79%	5.26%
Contribution to disability inclusiveness	26.32%	52.63%	21.05%	0.00%

Table 9. Contribution to cross-cutting issues

ANNEX 8: IMPACT AS MEASURED BY UNICEF INDICATORS

CPD	2018 indicator table	GD_08 Indicators Report Macedonia 2016-2021	Overview of achievement
Outcome: By end of 2020, an increased number of girls, boys and their families benefit from integrated and child-sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion.	By end of 2020, an increased number of girls, boys and their families benefit from integrated and child-sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion.	Indicator 1 (CPD)109: % of boys and girls identified as having a disability using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health – Children and Youth (ICF-CY) assessment Baseline (2014): 0 Target (2020): 90	Target fully achieved: Following the 2015 legislative amendments introducing functional disability assessment based on the (ICF), UNICEF supported the Government in operationalization of the ICF approaches in North Macedonia. Based on the lessons learned, the government, with support of UNICEF, organized three regional ICF centres with multi-disciplinary teams to work with children and their families to jointly plan a future in which the child can thrive.
		Standard Indicator (Indicator report 2018) - Number of children living in poverty according to (a) International extreme poverty line; (b) National monetary poverty lines or (c) National multidimensional poverty lines Baseline (2016): 28.6 Target (2020): 25	Target partially achieved: The combined effect of improved coverage and increased value of social and child protection benefits for vulnerable families and children, resulted in the decrease of at risk of poverty rate among children. With the support of UNICEF, the country's fragmented and dysfunctional cash benefit schemes were consolidated and overhauled. By the end of 2019, the number of children benefiting from poverty reduction benefits increased by some 4 times. Also, the overall adequacy of cash benefits doubled, which coupled with other measures is expected to decrease the staggering child poverty rates in the near future
		(Indicator report 2018) % of children receiving child benefits Baseline (2013): 3.8 Target (2020): 10	Targets fully achieved As a result of the thorough transformation of the cash benefits schemes to which UNICEF heavily contributed, in partnership with the World Bank, the number of children benefiting from poverty reduction benefits continued to grow as outreach and coverage increased. Also, the overall adequacy of cash benefits doubled.

¹⁰⁹Only one added

		(Indicator report 2018) % of children receiving child allowance Baseline (2013): 1% Target (2020): 6%	The government replaced the fragmented system of social benefits with a more unified Guaranteed Minimum Allowance, for which the benefit is higher, and more people are eligible, resulting in a significant increase of the number of children benefiting from social transfers. For example, the number of children benefiting from child allowances increased from approximately 3,500 in 2018 to 27,156 in 2019 and some 4,128 children started benefiting from a new educational allowance in 2019.
Output 1: Social services and transfers are adequately planned, delivered, financed, and monitored to reach the most marginalized children	Social services and transfers are adequately planned, delivered, financed, and monitored to reach the most marginalized children	Standard Indicator - 1.2 National government measurement of child poverty using monetary measures Baseline (2016): yes Target (2020): yes	Targets fully achieved The government replaced the fragmented system of social benefits with a more unified Guaranteed Minimum Allowance, for which the benefit is higher, and more people are eligible, resulting in a significant increase of the number of children benefiting from social transfers. Supported by UNICEF, the Parliament of North Macedonia adopted legislation to enforce reform in the country's social protection and social welfare systems, focused on consolidating the cash benefit system and making sure that child benefits have increased coverage and adequacy, but also introducing new social support and care services and tools to manage social welfare's system response to the growing needs of vulnerable parts of the population. Additionally, a wide array of new and improved social support and care services (such as personal assistants for children with disabilities, respite care, assisted living, foster care, counselling, etc.) were introduced in the communities where children in need live.
		Standard Indicator - Cash transfers: Cash transfer system DESIGNED including expanding coverage and improving inclusion of children (e.g design, targeting, beneficiary selection, cash delivery and overall financing) Baseline (2017): no Target (2020): yes	
		New law on social protection in line with international standards developed and adopted Baseline (2017): no	Target fully achieved UNICEF provided technical assistance and support to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in the drafting of a new Social Protection Law and a major revision of the Child Protection Law, which, among other things, regulate cash benefits, as well as the work of the social welfare workforce, in line with international standards

		Target (2020): yes	
		Number of children covered by government cash transfer programmes Baseline (2014): 33540 Target (2020): 40000	Target fully achieved UNICEF supported the government in assessing the performance of the current cash transfer programs, identifying reform options as well as fiscal space. Programs were identified that were not reaching the poor and were mainly targeting households in the higher income quintiles. These were replaced with programs that mainly target households with children living in poverty
Output 2: Improved cross-sectoral coordination and capacities to design, implement and budget for social protection policies and programmes	Improved cross-sectoral coordination and capacities to design, implement and budget for social protection policies and programmes	Standard Indicator - 2.8 M and E: Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are used to follow up on social protection delivery/system Baseline (2015): no Target (2020): yes	Capacities of institutions in the social protection system remain weak, steps were taken to improve this situation. Centres for Social Work, the country's main social protection hubs, were strengthened by re-qualifying their workforce and by employing new social workers and other professional staff. UNICEF continued to work with government in further developing the capacities of all social welfare professionals in the field of social work case management.
Output 3: Centres for Social Work, ISA and NGOs have capacity to strengthen the resilience of children and families, including Roma and CWD	The capacities of professionals to conduct disability assessment based on ICF-CY are strengthened	Standard Indicator - 2.11 Other social protection programmes ARE adapted to address child poverty and deprivation (such as access to affordable childcare, health insurance etc) Baseline (2016): no Target (2020): yes	Target fully achieved: In 2019, UNICEF worked with partners from Government and civil society to develop and pilot a new model of disability assessment that is human rights based and draws from the best international standards and practices in this field. UNICEF's support was directed to training and supporting professionals in all social sectors (social protection, health, education, child protection) to build their skills to apply disability assessment based on ICF in 2018. UNICEF also piloted the disability assessment based on the ICF in Skopje, to inform full-scale national implementation by the three key ministries (Education, Health and Labour and Social Policy).
No	Output 5: Government	Standard Indicator - 3.2 Evidence generated on	Target partially achieved:

	budget allocations for child focused programming increased and streamlined (not included in CPD)	budgets and their linkages to child outcomes to improve budget allocations/expenditure for children Baseline (2016): initiating Target (2020): advanced	This output was added under this outcome in late 2018, following the mid-term review of the country program. As such, aside preparatory work and internal capacity building, no significant funding was secured to support the implementation of specific activities under this output. In 2020, UNICEF strengthened its work in this field by supporting the efforts of the government in increasing public investment for children, through budget expenditure analysis and the publication of budget briefs for child-related social sectors.
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Source: UNICEF Outcomes/Outputs and Indicator status by Region/Business Area- October 2022

ANNEX 9: OVERVIEW OF CASH BENEFITS' COVERAGE

Beneficiaries and Funds for Social and Child Protection Cash Benefits for Vulnerable Families with Children, 2017-2022												
Indicators	2017			2018	2019		2020		2021		2022	
	Beneficiaries	Amount (MKD)	Beneficiaries	Amount (MKD)	Beneficiaries	Amount (MKD)	Beneficiaries	Amount (MKD)	Beneficiaries	Amount (MKD)	Beneficiaries	Amount (MKD)
Guaranteed minimum assistance (introduced in 2019)	-	-	-	-	25 79 5	161,43 5,297	277 45	214,32 9,237	345 98	264,20 1,297	364 99	277,18 9,572
Reformed Child allowance (linked to the GMA)	-	-	-	-	10 88 0	15,076, 939	178 50	31,321, 073	210 16	33,630, 957	218 51	35,034, 645
Child Allowance	429 1	8,607,4 54	31 07	5,559,7 99	47 0	2,710,0 68	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parental allowance for third child	3	50,172	3	50,172	3	50,172	2	33,448	3	50,172	2	33,448
One of financial assistance for new-born (first and second child)	469	2,393,1 09	60 6	3,095,4 89	50 4	2,553,6 53	831	10,746, 354	987	12,831, 701	720	9,360,1 11
One-off financial assistance and in-kind support	282	1,395,1 50	41 6	1,884,6 95	41 9	1,890,0 18	477	1,977,6 85	443	2,262,5 35	447	2,242,5 77
Foster care	325	3,226,2 46	36 2	3,619,6 42	40 1	3,934,2 38	6	74,940	-	-	-	-
Reformed foster care	-	-	-	-	-	-	275	5,805,6 02	317	6,370,1 19	339	7,922,2 36
Health Protection	-	-	43 63	7,403,0 53	52 11	9,396,2 60	462 0	8,859,3 12	448 7	9,215,7 56	428 7	9,301,2 60
Educational allowance	-	-	31 78	10,394, 000	-	-	237 61	60,306, 605	272 50	72,877, 016	300 85	84,623, 790
Education allowance for persons who had status of children without parents and parental care	193	4,428,0 00	16 3	3,971,7 07	16 6	3,926,7 36	118	2,790,7 40	121	3,051,8 02	116	2,977,0 78
Financial allowance for shortened working hours due to care of a disabled child	89	443,84 3	11 4	574,70 3	12 1	943,11 5	199	1,704,0 12	214	2,057,4 54	249	2,673,4 33
Financial assistance 18-26 (pre-reform)	94	426,16 2	10 6	472,61 4	8	52,465	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social housing for young people who had status of children without parents and parental care	14	78,284	18	100,45 3	17	111,41 5	20	117,66 7	21	131,35 3	23	151,50 3
Permanent assistance for retired foster carers	20	160,00 0	20	162,24 0	19	157,30 0	123	1,234,3 11	142	1,189,8 84	160	1,385,1 12
Disability Allowance	102 16	62,052, 397	10 80 7	66,242, 324	11 13 8	68,864, 178	107 67	66,813, 926	100 62	62,683, 834	982 5	64,662, 383
Special Allowance	660 2	33,407, 583	65 85	33,437, 277	65 86	38,461, 722	657 7	37,595, 432	631 8	37,010, 341	640 8	39,149, 521
Permanent financial assistance (until 2019)	651 6	33,346, 688	66 89	36,493, 497	64 3	3,255,0 67	15	77,786	1	6,118	1	6,118
Parental allowance for third child	240 78	226,83 0,915	27 19 2	257,44 3,045	29 23 2	281,28 5,252	283 75	271,25 6,986	261 00	227,07 3,702	234 25	218,28 7,287
Parental allowance for fourth child	799	10,055, 454	79 6	9,938,3 94	79 5	9,884,7 73	787	9,926,6 88	780	9,423,3 30	761	9,236,0 34

Beneficiaries and Funds for Social and Child Protection Cash Benefits for Vulnerable Families with Children, 2017-2022												
Indicators	2017		2018	2019		2020		2021		2022		
	Beneficiaries	Amount (MKD)		Beneficiaries	Amount (MKD)	Beneficiaries	Amount (MKD)	Beneficiaries	Amount (MKD)	Beneficiaries	Amount (MKD)	
Social financial assistance (discontinued from 2019)	266 68	80,576, 994	24 57 4	76,924, 715	10 70	7,042,9 30	1	35,153	-	-	-	-
Energy subsidies (merged with GMA since 2019)	364 9	5,260,2 10	56 08	9,280,9 14	61 00	10,044, 925	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	201 734	472,73 8,661	94 70 7	527,04 8,733	99 57 8	621,07 6,523	122 549	725,00 6,957	132 860	744,06 7,371	135 198	764,23 6,108

Source: MLSP

ANNEX 10: EVALUATION MATRIX

# Evaluation Question	Judgement	Indicators	Sources of Information	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
Relevance					
EQ 1.	How relevant were UNICEF's interventions to the needs of the children and their families, especially to the most vulnerable children?	<p>1.1 Evidence and examples of conducted needs assessments and situational analyses of children in North Macedonia and their use in informing the design and implementation of UNICEF's social protection interventions within the reference period.</p> <p>1.2 Outputs and outcomes of UNICEF's social protection interventions are responsive to observed critical bottlenecks for the realization of rights and meeting the needs of the main vulnerable groups– in terms of the enabling environment (policies, legislation, institutional mechanisms, and measures), and supply and quality of services.</p> <p>1.3 Perceptions of stakeholders on the relevance of measures included within UNICEF's social protection interventions with the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups and its evolution over time.</p>	<p>UNICEF's CPD, UNICEF's social protection support interventions documentations, Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data</p> <p>National development policy, legislative and strategy documents</p> <p>Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks.</p> <p>Data collected through:</p> <p>KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows:</p> <p>Government at central and subnational level</p>	<p>Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison.</p> <p>Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>Online survey</p>	<p>Document review of existing studies identifying main challenges in North Macedonia</p> <p>Document review identifying analyses pertaining government capacity gaps and bottlenecks in provision of social protection services and UNICEF's interventions.</p> <p>Comparative analysis of main statistical data and UNICEF's programming documents</p> <p>Document review and comparative analysis of UNICEF's documentation, National Strategies and Plans</p> <p>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</p> <p>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</p> <p>Quantitative data analysis of online survey</p> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis</p>

			UNICEF CO+RO, donors, and development Partners Community groups (community leaders, partners, social service providers)		
EQ 2	To what extent do UNICEF's intended outcomes and the relevant outputs address the priorities identified in the national strategic documents relevant for social protection of children including the National Strategy to Reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion	<p>2.1 Degree to which the objectives and results of UNICEF's Social Protection interventions were aligned with national social sector priorities and frameworks.</p> <p>2.2 Evidence of alignment and contribution of UNICEF's social protection interventions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the National Strategy to Reduce Poverty and Social Inclusion (2010-2020), and the Employment and Social Reform Programme 2020 <p>2.3 Degree of matching between UNICEF's envisaged results of support to 1) the case management in social services, 2) the support to disability assessment, 3) quality of social services and 4) evidence generation on public investment in children</p>	UNICEF's CPD, social protection support interventions documentation, Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data National development policy, legislative and strategy documents Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks. Data collected through: KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows:	<p>Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison.</p> <p>Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>Online survey</p>	<p>Document review of existing studies identifying main challenges in North Macedonia</p> <p>Document review identifying analyses pertaining government capacity gaps and bottlenecks in provision of social protection services and UNICEF's interventions.</p> <p>Comparative analysis of main statistical data and UNICEF's programming documents</p> <p>Document review and comparative analysis of UNICEF's documentation, National Strategies and Plans</p> <p>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</p> <p>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</p>

	(2010-2020) and the Employment and Social Reform Programme 2020?	and reduction of child poverty, with national objectives and needs as outlined in government policies, strategies, and plans. 2.4 Perception of government officials on the degree of alignment of UNICEF's support to social protection reform interventions with national policies, strategies, and plans, as well as capacity gaps and bottlenecks	Government at central and subnational level UNICEF CO+RO, donors, and development Partners		Quantitative data analysis of online survey Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis Contribution analysis
COHERENCE					
EQ 3.	To what extent are UNICEF's social protection programs for children implemented in coherence with other UNICEF's CPD intervention areas?	3.1 Internal coherence between social protection interventions (e.g., Support to legislation development, piloting of social services, capacity strengthening of professionals, etc.) 3.2 Degrees of interactions/synergies and mutual leverage between the social protection support interventions areas and UNICEF's child protection, education, health portfolios;	UNICEF's CPD, social protection interventions documentation, reports on implementation of other UNICEF's portfolios; Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data National development policy,	Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison. Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions	Document review identifying iterative themes and comparison between UNICEF's and other development partners' documentation. Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis

			<p>legislative and strategy documents</p> <p>Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks.</p> <p>Data collected through:</p> <p>KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows:</p> <p>UNICEF CO+RO, donors, key government stakeholders</p>		
EQ 4.	Has there been any duplication of efforts among UNICEF's own interventions and interventions delivered by other organizations	4.1 Degree to which UNICEF effectively coordinated with other UN agencies, donors, and development partners to avoid overlaps, leverage contributions and catalyze contributions to social protection reform.	UNICEF's CPD, social protection support interventions documentation, Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data National development policy, legislative and strategy documents	<p>Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison.</p> <p>Semi-Structured Interviews and</p>	<p>Document review identifying iterative themes and comparison between UNICEF's and other development partners' documentation.</p> <p>Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders</p> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data</p>

	or entities in contributing to the outcomes?		Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks. Data collected through: KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows: Government at central and subnational level UNICEF CO+RO, donors, and development Partners.	group discussions Online survey	types according to principles of iterative analysis
EFFECTIVENESS					
EQ 5.	Have the UNICEF supported programs and interventions contributed to reducing bottlenecks and to creating an enabling	5.1 Evidence from pre-existing and quantitative data regarding sufficient achievement of intended outputs and outcomes when it comes to reducing bottlenecks to effective coverage of children and their families, i.e.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislative solutions Costed policies 	UNICEF's CPD, social protection interventions documentation, reports on implementation of other UNICEF's portfolios; Annual management plans, Progress and	Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison. Semi-Structured Interviews and	Document review of existing studies identifying main challenges in North Macedonia Document review identifying analyses pertaining government capacity gaps and bottlenecks in provision of social protection services and UNICEF's interventions. Policy analysis

	environment (institutional, political, and legislative context) for social protection coverage of poor and vulnerable children and their families?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional mechanisms (CSW, disability assessments) • Social services • Stakeholder perceptions regarding results as having been achieved and contributing to overall positive change in North Macedonia • Degree and type of drivers that promoted SP support interventions implementation. • Degree and type of hindering factors affecting SP support interventions implementation 	Performance reports, indicator data National development policy, legislative and strategy documents Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks. Data collected through: KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows: UNICEF CO+RO, donors, key government stakeholders Community groups (community leaders, partners, social service providers)	group discussions Field observations Online survey	<p>Comparative analysis of main statistical data and UNICEF's programming documents</p> <p>ToC analysis and contribution analysis tracing activities to results. Qualitative Iterative Data Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis</p>
EQ 6.	To what extent capacity-building activities supported by UNICEF	6.1 Degree of change in government's capacity to design of an integrated social protection framework with appropriate administrative systems and operations	UNICEF's CPD, social protection interventions documentation, reports on implementation of other UNICEF's	Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison.	<p>Document review of existing studies identifying main challenges in North Macedonia</p> <p>Document review identifying analyses pertaining government capacity gaps and bottlenecks in provision of social</p>

	<p>contributed to effective implementation of the social protection reform interventions?</p>	<p>6.2 Degree of change in terms of delivery of effective, tailored-to-needs social protection to every citizen of North Macedonia</p> <p>6.3 Degree of government capacity to establish and test the disability assessment procedures and service delivery design based on ICF norms.</p> <p>6.4 Degree of social service providers to provide quality and accessible services to the most vulnerable groups</p>	<p>portfolios; Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data</p> <p>National development policy, legislative and strategy documents</p> <p>Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks.</p> <p>Data collected through:</p> <p>KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows:</p> <p>UNICEF CO+RO, donors, key government stakeholders</p> <p>Community groups (community leaders, partners, social service providers)</p>	<p>Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>Online survey</p>	<p>protection services and UNICEF's interventions.</p> <p>Policy analysis</p> <p>Comparative analysis of reform processes prior to 2016 and 2022/23</p> <p>ToC analysis and contribution analysis</p> <p>Qualitative Iterative Data Analysis</p> <p>Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis</p>
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EQ 7.	To what extent have UNICEF interventions contributed to adequacy and equity focus of the existing social protection benefits for children and their families?	7.1 Evidence of UNICEF's contribution to the adequacy and equity focus of the existing social protection benefits for children and their families.	UNICEF's CPD, social protection interventions documentation, reports on implementation of other UNICEF's portfolios; Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data National development policy, legislative and strategy documents Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks. Data collected through: KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows: UNICEF CO+RO, donors, key government stakeholders	Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison. Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions Field observations Online survey	Document review of existing studies identifying main challenges in North Macedonia Document review identifying analyses pertaining government capacity gaps and bottlenecks in provision of social protection services and UNICEF's interventions. Policy analysis Comparative analysis of reform processes prior to 2016 and 2022/23 ToC analysis and contribution analysis Qualitative Iterative Data Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis
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			Community groups (community leaders, partners, social service providers).		
7a.	To what extent are the existing social protection benefits for children and their families adequate and equity focused? Are there any gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection of children and their families?	7a.1 Evidence and examples of a) adequacy and b) equity of existing social protection benefits for children and their families 7a.2 Evidence and examples of outstanding gaps in the system relative to the drivers of demand for social protection of children and their families	documentation, reports on implementation of other UNICEF's portfolios; Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data National development policy, legislative and strategy documents Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks. Data collected through: KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows:	Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison. Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions Field observations Online survey	Document review of existing studies identifying main challenges in North Macedonia Document review identifying analyses pertaining government capacity gaps and bottlenecks in provision of social protection services and UNICEF's interventions. Policy analysis Comparative analysis of reform processes prior to 2016 and 2022/23 ToC analysis and contribution analysis Qualitative Iterative Data Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis

			UNICEF CO+RO, donors, key government stakeholders Community groups (community leaders, partners, social service providers)		
EFFICIENCY					
EQ 8.	Were UNICEF program budgets and resources (human, financial and technical) adequately used for addressing priority bottlenecks?	<p>8.1 Degree of adequacy of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgets • Material • Human resources <p>vis-à-vis the volume of tasks carried out</p> <p>8.2 Proportion of UNICEF's social protection interventions that demonstrate implementation on schedule and per planned budget.</p> <p>8.3 Stakeholder perceptions that the implementation of activities was sufficiently timely, efficient and appropriate to context requirements.</p>	UNICEF's CPD, social protection interventions documentation, reports on implementation of other UNICEF's portfolios; Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data National development policy, legislative and strategy documents Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development	<p>Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison.</p> <p>Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions Field observations Online survey</p>	Qualitative Iterative Data Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis

			partners, government or think tanks. Data collected through: KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows: UNICEF CO+RO, donors, key government stakeholders		
EQ 9.	Which UNICEF's social protection programs for children and their families have been the most efficient in meeting the needs of the children (by program type, by target population, by inequities)?	9.1 Evidence and examples of UNICEF's social protection intervention(s) that demonstrated efficiency in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhancing evidence base on child poverty • achieving CO annual social protection target • reducing transaction costs, • leveraging investments in provision of services to the children, • resource mobilization efforts and partnership arrangements, 9.2 Stakeholder perceptions that the implementation of	UNICEF's CPD, social protection support interventions documentation, Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data National development policy, legislative and strategy documents Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks. Data collected through:	Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison. Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions Field observations Online survey	Qualitative Iterative Data Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis

		specific activities have been more efficient in comparison to others in the palette of UNICEF's social protection support interventions.	KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows: Government at central and subnational level UNICEF CO+RO, donors and development Partners Community groups (community leaders, partners, social service providers)		
SUSTAINABILITY					
EQ 10.	Are legal, institutional/administrative and financial mechanisms established to ensure monitoring and evaluation as well as sustainability of the results (policies, strategies, services)?	10.1 The design, implementation and monitoring processes and mechanisms that are established across the social protection system in North Macedonia are sound. 10.2 Evidence and examples of adopted strategies and policies that provide foundations for equitable and adequate social protection of the most vulnerable. 10.3 Evidence and examples of institutionalized mechanisms, financial allocations and adequate human resources that	UNICEF's CPD, social protection support interventions documentation, Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data National development policy, legislative and strategy documents Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development	Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison. Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions Field observations Online survey	Document review of existing studies identifying main challenges in North Macedonia Document review identifying analyses pertaining to government capacity gaps and bottlenecks in provision of social protection services and UNICEF's interventions. Policy analysis Comparative analysis of reform processes prior to 2016 and 2022/23

		enable sustainable provision of social services.	partners, government or think tanks. Data collected through: KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows: Government at central and subnational level UNICEF CO+RO, donors		ToC analysis and contribution analysis Qualitative Iterative Data Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis
EQ 11.	To what extent are the mechanisms for financing social protection spending which were supported by UNICEF consistent with the objectives of the programs they are financing? What are the potentials for	11.1 Comparative evidence of change in Government's Legislative and policy framework in the social sector prior and post SP support interventions implementation 11.2 Evidence and examples of consistency of planning and budgeting mechanisms and practices with the objectives of the social protection programs they are financing. 11.3 Perceptions that UNICEF has facilitated consistency between the mechanisms for financing social protection spending with the objectives of the social protection programs	UNICEF's CPD, social protection support interventions documentation, Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data National development policy, legislative and strategy documents Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development	Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison. Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions Field observations Online survey	Document review of existing studies identifying main challenges in North Macedonia Document review identifying analyses pertaining to government capacity gaps and bottlenecks in provision of social protection services and UNICEF's interventions. Policy analysis Comparative analysis of reform processes prior to 2016 and 2022/23 ToC analysis and contribution analysis Qualitative Iterative Data Analysis

	expanding the existing benefits or introduce new ones?		partners, government or think tanks. Data collected through: KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows: Government at central and subnational level UNICEF CO+RO, donors and development Partners Community groups (community leaders, partners, social service providers)		Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis
IMPACT					
EQ 12.	Are there early indications that the reforms of family and child focused benefits and reformed social services have	12.1 Evidence from pre-existing and quantitative data regarding progress towards achievement of intended outcomes and overall goals of the UNICEF's CPD 12.2 Degree of contribution to the changes in terms of achievement of integrated and	UNICEF's CPD, social protection support interventions documentation, Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data	Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison. Semi-Structured Interviews and	Document review of existing studies identifying main challenges in North Macedonia Document review identifying analyses pertaining government capacity gaps and bottlenecks in provision of social protection services and UNICEF's interventions.

	contributed to social inclusion of children and their families?	sustainable social protection system 12.3 Observable change in terms of initial capacity of the government to improve social protection coverage for all children, in particular the most vulnerable, across North Macedonia 12.4 Examples of main results achieved by the SP and most salient success stories.	National development policy, legislative and strategy documents Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks. Data collected through: KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows: Government at central and subnational level UNICEF CO+RO, donors, and development Partners Community groups (community leaders, partners, social service providers)	group discussions Field observations Online survey	Policy analysis Comparative analysis of reform processes prior to 2016 and 2022/23 ToC analysis and contribution analysis Qualitative Iterative Data Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis
EQ 13.	What positive/negative, intended,	13.1 Examples of unexpected positive results of the SP support interventions.	UNICEF's CPD, social protection support intervention	Document Review to identify themes	Document review of existing studies identifying main challenges in North Macedonia

	or unintended outcomes have UNICEF's interventions contributed to so far?	13.2 Examples of unintended negative results. 13.3 Evidence of strategies to mitigate potential risks.	documentation, Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data National development policy, legislative and strategy documents Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks. Data collected through: KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows: Government at central and subnational level UNICEF CO+RO, donors and development Partners Community groups (community leaders, partners, social service providers)	among documentation sources for comparison. Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions Field observations Online survey	Document review identifying analyses pertaining to government capacity gaps and bottlenecks in provision of social protection services and UNICEF's interventions. Policy analysis Comparative analysis of reform processes prior to 2016 and 2022/23 ToC analysis and contribution analysis Qualitative Iterative Data Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis
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CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES					
EQ 14.	To what extent have UNICEF's interventions contributed to gender equality, non-discrimination, and disability inclusiveness?	<p>14.1 Objectives and results of UNICEF's social protection interventions are responsive to observed critical bottlenecks for inclusion of persons with disabilities, gender equality and non-discrimination.</p> <p>14.2 Evidence that UNICEF maintained strong adherence to principles of accessibility, non-discrimination, participation, and inclusiveness of persons with disabilities, gender equality</p>	<p>UNICEF's CPD, social protection support interventions documentation, Annual management plans, Progress and Performance reports, indicator data National development policy, legislative and strategy documents</p> <p>Studies and analytical reports produced by UNICEF or other development partners, government or think tanks.</p> <p>Data collected through: KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders as follows: Government at central and subnational level UNICEF CO+RO, donors, and development Partners Community groups (community leaders, partners, social service providers)</p>	<p>Document Review to identify themes among documentation sources for comparison.</p> <p>Semi-Structured Interviews and group discussions</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>Online survey</p>	Qualitative Iterative Data Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis

ANNEX 11: BIBLIOGRAPHY

Background:

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2. State Statistical Office 2020, Social Welfare Data 2016-2020
3. State Statistical Office, 2015 News Release: Laeken Poverty Indicators in 2015
4. UN 2020 UN CCA Report 2020
5. UNICEF 2015, CPD 2016-2020
6. UNICEF 2015, North Macedonia CPD 2016-2020
7. UNICEF 2015, Social Monitor Advocacy Brief, Regional Office
8. UNICEF 2015, Social Monitor Findings and Recommendations, Regional Office
9. UNICEF 2016, RAM reporting
10. UNICEF 2018, Analytical Review
11. UNICEF 2018, List of Participants Working Group Meeting 2018
12. UNICEF 2018, Planned Outcomes-Outputs-Indicators by Region and Business Area
13. UNICEF 2018, Social Protection Reform Presentation
14. UNICEF 2018, SRM Content Sessions
15. UNICEF 2018, Strategic Reflection
16. UNICEF 2018, UNICEF Revised Policy 2018
17. UNICEF 2018, UNICEF Skopje Strategic Reflection Final Report
18. UNICEF 2018, UNICEF Skopje-results and proposals-20 August 2018-with indicators
19. UNICEF 2019, Integrated Social Protection Systems: Review of Different Approaches in UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Region (ECAR)
20. UNICEF 2020, Multidimensional Child Poverty in North Macedonia
21. UNICEF 2020, North Macedonia CPD 2021-2025
22. UNICEF 2020, Programme Strategy Note 2021-2025
23. UNICEF 2020, Situation Analysis North Macedonia 2020
24. UNICEF 2021, Indicators Report 2016-2021
25. UNICEF 2022, Annual Report 2021
26. UNICEF 2022, Outcome Output Report 2021
27. World Bank 2022, North Macedonia: Social Protection Situational Analysis

Social Protection sector related publications

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