

## Evaluation Management Response Document

**Region:** ECAR

**Office:** North Macedonia

**Evaluation Year:** 2023

**Evaluation Title:** Evaluation of UNICEF interventions supporting the social protection reform

**Person In Charge For Follow Up to Management Response:** Aleksandar Nikolov

### Overall response to evaluation

All tasks were performed, the quality of the deliverables has met the specifications in the TOR, as well as the ethical standards and principles. There was a delay in the collection phase due to unavailability of data from the State Statistical Office, which was solved, but did affect the duration of the contract. The evaluation team was responsive to the feedback to improve the quality of the deliverables and has addressed comments, thus improving the quality of work. Overall, the evaluation was conducted in close consultation with the country office. The evaluation provided a useful perspective of programme beneficiaries, government counterparts and civil society organizations. To improve the operationalization of the recommendations, for each strategic and generic recommendation, operational recommendations were developed.

### Planned Use of the Evaluation

This evaluation was commissioned by the UNICEF North Macedonia Country Office at the end of 2022. The evaluation process, especially the data collection phase extended for longer period than planned. This evaluation's primary limitation was the lack of reliable or consistent data related to children recipients of social protection benefits from before and during the period of this evaluation. Social protection and child protection sections in the country office contributed to the development of this management response. As presented below, the office developed management response actions to twelve relevant recommendations where UNICEF is identified as responsible party for addressing them, out of 14 recommendations in the report. UNICEF will be working with the government and other partners in taking forward the recommendations to strengthen the implementation of programs and policies related to improvement of the social protection reform. The evaluation findings and recommendations relevant for the Government will be also used in the office programming and advocacy efforts in relevant sections in the upcoming 24 months.

### Recommendations and Actions

No.	Recommendations/Actions	Responsible Section (Action)	Responsible Person Name (Action)	Expected Completion (Action)	Mgt Response / Implementation Stage	Reason/Action Taken
1	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 1: Strategic Recommendation: Support evidence-based decision making and oversight of reform of social protection to help the government reduce discrimination in social protection and improve equal treatment within the child benefit system. Priority: HIGH Responsible party: UNICEF Operational Recommendation 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.				Partially Agree	
1.0	Evidence generation to support policy making and resource allocation in social protection.	Social Protection	Aleksandar Nikolov	12/31/2025	Completed	Conducting an analysis to assess options for reforming cash benefits relevant for reducing child poverty - with a view to expanding coverage and adequacy - and microsimulations to evaluate potential impacts and fiscal implications - draft report prepared and discussed with institutions. Microsimulations analysis conducted based on the latest data from SILC2023 and potential scenarios presented to the decision-makers at the Ministry of Social Policy, Demographics and Youth.
2	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 1: Strategic Recommendation: Support evidence-based decision making and oversight of reform of social protection to help the government reduce discrimination in social protection and improve equal treatment within the child benefit system. Priority: HIGH Responsible party: UNICEF Operational Recommendation 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.				Partially Agree	

2.0	Strengthen the capacities of the State Statistical Office to provide timely and comprehensive data on social protection needs and effects of policy measures	Social Protection; CRM	Aleksandar Nikolov	12/31/2025	Completed	Activities for strengthening the capacities included in the AWP with the State Statistical Office for 2025. Capacity-building activities held at the beginning of November. SSO relevant staff input included in providing policy recommendations to the Ministry related to calculations of the child benefits based on data released by the SSO.
3	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 2: Strategic Recommendation: 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 Operational Recommendation 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 maximized in favour of holistic approaches to child rights protection.				Agree	
3.0	UNICEF will put forward recommendations on how to integrate services/mechanisms of support in child guarantee packages per beneficiary group, including defined priority groups of vulnerable children, institutional responsibilities, costing and funding.	Social Protection	Aleksandar Nikolov	12/31/2024	Completed	Selected contractor to support the analysis; commenced data collection (January 2024); Data collection completed; Initial draft report received and draft recommendations were discussed with sectoral institutions and civil society (July 2024); Verification meetings with sectoral institutions held (Feb-March 2025); Event to present the findings and discuss policy proposals held (May 2025); ECG Summary prepared (October 2025)
3.0	UNICEF will provide technical assistance for development of community-based services for children and families experiencing adversity, in pilot municipalities with enabling environment, using the minimum package of services model, and where possible, the European Child Guarantee mechanism.	Child Protection	Olimpija Markovska	12/31/2025	Completed	Preparatory actions undertaken, including the analysis for introduction of the European Child Guarantee, and concept note developed and submitted to the EUD for consideration. Consultants for developing the NAP on ECG selected and activities rolled out in mid-November 2025.
4	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3: Strategic Recommendation: 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 Operational Recommendation 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.				Agree	

4.0	Provide technical assistance and support the Government related to revising beneficiary co-funding approaches in relation to social protection services	Social Protection	Aleksandar Nikolov	12/31/2025	Completed	ToR developed and published for an individual contractor to assist the effort to revising beneficiary co-funding approaches in relation to social protection services (July 2025). Report in final stage and ready to be presented and discussed with the Ministry of Social Policy, Demographics and Youth (October 2025)
5	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3: Strategic Recommendation: 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 Operational Recommendation 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.				Agree	
5.0	Provide technical assistance to the MoLSP to improve the adequacy of the child allowance	Social Protection	Aleksandar Nikolov	12/31/2025	Completed	Conducting an analysis to assess options for reforming cash benefits relevant for reducing child poverty - including the child allowance - with a view to expanding coverage and adequacy - and microsimulations to evaluate potential impacts and fiscal implications - draft report prepared and discussed with institutions (July 2025). Microsimulations analysis conducted based on the latest data from SILC2023 and potential scenarios presented to the decision-makers at the Ministry of Social Policy, Demographics and Youth.
6	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3: Strategic Recommendation: 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 Operational Recommendation 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.				Partially Agree	

6.0	Provide technical assistance to the MoLSP and MoF to identify fiscal space for expansion of social protection spending and improving its effectiveness	Social Protection	Aleksandar Nikolov	12/31/2025	Completed	Commenced analysis for introduction of the European Child Guarantee in the country; commenced analysis of beneficiary co-funding approaches in relation to social protection services; ToR developed and published for an individual contractor to assist the further effort to revising beneficiary co-funding approaches in relation to social protection services (July 2025); Conducting an analysis to assess options for reforming cash benefits relevant for reducing child poverty - and microsimulations to evaluate potential impacts and fiscal implications - draft report prepared and discussed with institutions (July 2025). Microsimulations analysis conducted based on the latest data from SILC2023 and potential scenarios presented to the decision-makers at the Ministry of Social Policy, Demographics and Youth.
7	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3: Strategic Recommendation: 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 Operational Recommendation 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.				Disagree	
8	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3: Strategic Recommendation: 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 Operational Recommendation 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				Disagree	
9	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 4: Strategic Recommendation: 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 Operational Recommendation 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.				Agree	

9.0	UNICEF will continue to advocate and build capacity for consistent and adequate implementation of the case management approach	Social Protection	Aleksandar Nikolov	12/31/2025	Completed	Completed functional analysis of model CSWs with recommendations for amending the internal organization and job descriptions; prepared proposal for amending the Social Protection Law in the segment of case management; provided technical assistance in drafting a by-law on case management; Advanced module on case management for social work professionals made available on their digital learning platform (July 2024)
10	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 4: Strategic Recommendation: 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 Operational Recommendation 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.				Partially Agree	
10.0	Provide technical assistance for the adaptation of the training modules and mentorship programmes on case management in order to reflect legal changes and best practices.	Social Protection; Child Protection	Aleksandar Nikolov	12/31/2025	Completed	Advanced module on case management for social work professionals made available on their digital learning platform. (January 2024)
11	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 6: Strategic Recommendation: 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 Operational Recommendation 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.				Agree	
11.0	Development of monitoring frameworks of the CO programmes to improve and unify data collection across programs and also to monitor the achievements of the relevant indicators.	CRM	Marija Nashoku	12/31/2025	Completed	The monitoring framework is in the process of design - the first phase is to develop monitoring framework for conducted capacity-development activities of each sector. Reorganization of the folders for each sectors undertaken to compile all data from each sector in a single folder. Developed two tools for collecting uniformed data for specific indicators based on program implementation including disaggregation of data.
12	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 7: Strategic Recommendation: 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. Operational Recommendation 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.				Partially Agree	

12.0	Advocate and provide technical assistance for developing intersectoral cooperation in service provision.	Child Protection; Social Protection	Olimpija Markovska	12/31/2025	Completed	Developed concept on early childhood intervention; Mapping of mental health and psycho-social support services; commenced analysis for introduction of the European Child Guarantee in the country.
13	Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 8: Strategic Recommendation: 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. Operational Recommendation 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.				Partially Agree	
13.0	Conduct functional analysis of CSWs to propose and advocate improvements in their organizational setup, resource allocation and workforce capacity, in order to improve case management integration and overall performance.	Social Protection	Aleksandar Nikolov	12/31/2024	Completed	Completed functional analysis of model CSWs with recommendations for amending the internal organization and job descriptions; prepared proposal for amending the Social Protection Law in the segment of case management and workforce structure; provided technical assistance in drafting a by-law on case management;