

Evaluation of the Programme on Prevention of Violence and Bullying in Schools – Steps Together Supported by UNICEF Bulgaria Country Office, 2019-2022

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ACRONYMS

ASA	Agency for Social Analyses
CAC	Child Advocacy Centre
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPD	Child Protection Department
CO	Country Office
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ECD/E	Early Childhood Development and Education
ERB	Ethical Review Board
EU	European Union
EVAC	Ending Violence Against Children
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEROS	Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GoB	Government of Bulgaria
HBSC	Health Behaviour among School-aged Children
HDI	Human Development Index
ID	Identification
ICESC	International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
ProDoc	Project Document
SACP	State Agency for Child Protection
SAPI	Social Activities and Practices Institute
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollar
VAC	Violence Against Children

UNICEF's Programme on Prevention of Violence and Bullying in School – Steps Together

In 2019, an Expert Group was established in MES to develop a **whole school programme**¹ for a **safe environment**² to prevent violence in schools. A whole school approach as one where, “well-being and mental health are everyone’s business, with genuine engagement across the enter community, including school staff, students, parents, local authorities and external services. The approach involves multiple components, including early identification and intervention, staff well-being and development, and skills-based work for students, but above all it adopts a positive and universal focus on well-being.”³

The Programme on Prevention of Violence and Bullying in Schools – Steps Together Programme (hereinafter referred to as the Programme) was implemented in cooperation with MES in five pilot schools – Sofia, Teteven, Iskar, Kustendil and Zavet - for three school years, 2019-2022. The first school year, 2019-2020, was a preparatory year, and the second and third school years, 2020-2022, were for Programme implementation. School selection was completed in two phases. First, 13 schools were pre-selected using a questionnaire. Second, discussions were held with school staff, students and parents to explore their willingness, readiness and motivation to join the Steps Together Programme. The five pilot schools selected were very different in terms of geographic location, size, resources and capacities.

Evaluation Rationale and Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation of the Programme was forward-looking to lead to improvements of the structure, implementation and quality of the Steps Together Programme, and eventually to ensure its national scale-up and sustainability through its legal and administrative institutionalization and status budgeting.

The Programme was established with UNICEF support in five schools in five different regions – Iskar, Kustendil, Sofia, Teteven and Zavet. The aim was to

understand why and to what extent intended and unintended results were achieved and to analyse implications of the results.⁴

The primary expected users of this evaluation will be UNICEF CO and the MES, along with the pilot schools and schools who are interested in implementing the Programme in the future. Other users of this evaluation may include the ASA, MLSP and SACP. This evaluation will also be of interest to partner UN agencies and international financial institutions and donors that contribute to UNICEF results and wider UN system commitments, intended outcomes and efforts on the realization of children’s rights and wider human rights commitments, including promoting gender equality and ending violence against women and girls.

Evaluation Scope

The evaluation focused on five pilot schools – Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet – and covered the period of September 2019 to June 2022. The evaluation included perspectives and views of all relevant partners and stakeholders, including UNICEF CO personnel and school mentors, MES staff, members of the Roditeli (Parents) Association, and pilot school staff (i.e., school principals, school psychologists, pedagogical counsellors, teachers), students and parents who participated in and benefited from the Programme.

Evaluation Objectives

In keeping with the TOR, the main objectives of this evaluation were to:

- Assess and evaluate the Programme and its implementation, along with its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability, and, to the extent possible, its impact on teachers, students and parents.
- Assess the Programme’s equity and child rights perspective, both in terms of the capacities to reach out to and deliver support for prevention of violence and bullying in schools and ensure an environment of safe schools.

¹ A whole school approach is based upon a social-ecological model to address school violence and bullying.

² A safe environment is characterized by a positive social and psychological climate at school and requires fostering a caring, respectful, inclusive and supportive culture at school. A school having a positive climate is hospitable and its students and teachers try their best to behave in the best possible way. Being part of such a setting positively

affects students’ sense of belonging to the school; see Steps Together Programme Document.

³ National Children’s Bureau. Whole school approach. Retrieved on 2 June 2022 from: [Whole school approach \(ncb.org.uk\)](https://www.ncb.org.uk/whole-school-approach)

⁴ *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*, United Nations Evaluation Group, 2017, p. 10

- Identify the enablers and challenges for institutionalizing and scaling up the Programme nationally.
- Examine integration of the Programme into school life and management in the five pilot schools.
- Examine the impact of the Programme in schools and the *Mechanism for countering bullying and violence in schools*.
- Provide recommendations for the process of institutionalizing and scaling up of the Programme nationally and actions that need to be taken to ensure quality and sustainable implementation of the Programme in the future.

Evaluation Criteria and Questions

Evaluation evidence was assessed using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) criteria⁵ of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, as well as partnerships and cooperation.

Evaluation Methodology

To ensure the evaluation approach was as thorough and reliable as possible, a mixed methods evaluation approach was developed to ensure systematic collection of data and information related to each of the evaluation criteria and questions. The primary sources of data and information was qualitative in nature.

Evaluation methods were in keeping with the TOR for this consultancy and the Inception Report. These included:

- Desk review
- Inception phase consultations
- Site visits and sample
- Key information interviews (KIIs)
 - UNICEF CO interviews
 - National partner interviews
 - School staff interviews
- Focus group discussions (FGDs)
 - FGDs with teachers
 - FGDs with students
 - FGDs with parents
- Review of administrative data
- Validation of findings

Evaluation Sites and Samples

The evaluation was conducted in each of the five pilots schools – Sofia, Tetevan, Iskar, Kustendil and Zavet – and with the Parents Association and UNICEF and MES staff in Sofia.

The sample included an estimated 126 respondents, of which 29.4 percent were high school teachers, 23.8 percent were middle school teachers and 12.7 percent were primary school teachers. In addition, 19.8 percent were members of the coordination councils and 5.6 percent were principals and/or deputy principals. Only 4.8 percent of respondent were UNICEF mentors, 2.4 percent were UNICEF CO staff and 1.6 percent were members of the MES.

A total of 143 students participated in 17 FGDs. The majority of students were middle school (35.7 percent) and high school students (44.0 percent), whereas fewer were primary school students (20.3 percent). Among the 143 students who participated in FGDs, 43 were male (30.1 percent) and 100 were female (69.9 percent).

In addition, a total of 61 parents participated in 9 FGDs. The majority of parents who participate in FGDs were female (93 percent); only four parents were fathers.

KEY FINDINGS

Coherence

The Programme was designed and implemented to support schools in their efforts to implement the *Mechanism of Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institutions of the Preschool and School Education System*, which offers a policy framework for prevention and intervention against school violence and bullying, and which aims to assist educational institutions in their efforts to create a safe education environment. The Programme focused on providing each of the five pilot schools and their staff with capacity building, technical assistance and tools to implement the *Mechanism*.

Relevance

The Programme is also squarely aligned with UNICEF's Country Programme 2018-2022, which focuses on supporting Bulgaria in its efforts to enable all children and adolescents in the country, including the most disadvantaged, to enjoy their rights and to

⁵ Retrieved from:

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluationdevelopmentassistance.htm>

develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society. The realization of the right of every child to live free from violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices is a cross-cutting element throughout the Country Programme, which is in line with Bulgaria's national priorities (i.e., National Development Programme Bulgaria 2030) and regional priorities identified in the Europe 2030 Strategy⁶, European Commission Recommendation "Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage"⁷, and the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021 and 2022-2027)⁸, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁹ and UNICEF's Global Strategic Framework 2018-2021 and 2022-2025.¹⁰

UNICEF's support to develop the Programme has been in line with the needs of schools, as evidenced by school staff's recognition that the Programme is relevant. In general, school staff appreciated the support provided by mentors to build their capacities to understand school violence and bullying, and to implement good practices for developing a whole school approach that will help to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying, and to create a safe school environment. This is despite the fact that pilot schools were unable to fully implement the Programme in its entirety in the two-year period.

Moreover, the Programme was evidence-based, modeled after a similar programme, entitled 'For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools' (SEES), which was designed and implemented in Croatia with full support from UNICEF Croatia from 2003-2011.¹¹ The SEES Programme focused on prevention of peer violence and bullying for a safe and enabling environment in schools. To support the SEES Programme, UNICEF Croatia developed a handbook for teachers, school associates and principals involved in the development of the SEES Programme that was published in 2015 by UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. UNICEF maintained that the Steps Together Programme Handbook was

adapted to reflect the Bulgarian context and needs of schools, such as including a component on engaging students and parents.

UNICEF and MES would benefit from reviewing and revising the Programme's programme document to include a proper ToC and to strengthen the RMF, and to align the ToC and RMF with a clearly developed programme goal and related outcomes, outputs and activities.¹² The lack of a proper ToC may have hindered the Programme; thus, any desire to scale-up the Programme should occur with a review and revision of the ToC and RMF.

On average, respondents ranked the Programme as an 8.4 on a 10-point scale (1=not important to 10=very important). More specifically, representatives from MES (mean=9.5) and principals/deputy principals (mean=9.3) were most likely to report the Programme was very important to preventing school violence and bullying. This was followed by UNICEF staff (mean=8.7), coordination council members (mean=8.6) and UNICEF mentors (mean=8.4). In comparison, middle school teachers (mean=7.8), high school teachers (mean=7.7) and primary school teachers (mean=7.6) were less likely to rank the Programme as very important to preventing school violence and bullying. In terms of region, school staff from Iskar (mean=9.6) were most likely to report the Programme was very important to preventing school violence and bullying, followed by school staff from Kustendil (mean=8.9) and Teteven (mean=8.6), whereas school staff from Sofia (mean=7.9) and Zavet (mean=7.7) were less likely to rank the Programme as very important to preventing school violence and bullying.

Effectiveness

Most pilot schools described their school as having a safe environment, yet recognized they have occasional problems with aggression and bullying. Some school staff tried to be more proactive and use

⁶ A Sustainable Europe by 2030. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [A Sustainable Europe by 2030 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/1000000/attachment/data/1000000/16809f03eb.pdf)

⁷ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [European Commission Recommendation: Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage – 20 February 2013 | Save the Children's Resource Centre](https://ec.europa.eu/education/press/2013/02/20130220_en.htm)

⁸ Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [16809f03eb \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/0900406b/0/0/0/0/16809f03eb.pdf); The new Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) adopted by the Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe Portal, 24 February 2022. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [The new Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2022-2027\) adopted by the Committee of Ministers - Newsroom on Children's Rights \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/0900406b/0/0/0/0/16809f03eb.pdf)

⁹ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [The Sustainable Development Agenda - United Nations Sustainable Development](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/indicators/2030/)

¹⁰ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 | UNICEF](https://www.unicef.org/strategy/2018-2021) and [UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025 | UNICEF](https://www.unicef.org/strategy/2022-2025).

¹¹ UNICEF (2015). *Programme Handbook. Prevention of peer violence – For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools*. UNICEF Regional Office for the Central and Eastern Europe and its Commonwealth and independent State: Geneva, Switzerland.

¹² The ToC included detailed indicators for monitoring outcomes and outputs

prevention-related activities from the Programme Handbook as a means to prevent school violence and bullying, and they felt their efforts were paying off because they started to receive fewer alerts or tip-offs from parents and colleagues.

The Programme included a number of practices to prevent school violence and bullying. Some of these practices were more successful and readily accepted by school staff. For instance, peer-to-peer initiatives, such as the peace makers, was well received by pilot schools. Coordination councils saw the peace makers initiative as innovative and fairly easy to implement. The restorative justice approach, however, which was meant to be a cornerstone of the Programme, was more difficult for school staff to understand and implement. This, in part, is because the educational system has a long-held tradition of imposing punitive sanctions on students who violate school's rules, which is in contrast to the concept of restorative justice.

On average, respondents ranked the Programme's capacity building activities as a 7.6 on a 10-point scale. (1=not effective to 10=very effective). More specifically, school principals and coordination council members from Iskar (mean=9.8), Teteven (mean=9.3) and Kustendil (mean=9.2) ranked the capacity building trainings as very effective, whereas those from Sofia (mean=6.3) were less likely to rank the capacity building trainings as very effective.

Mentors and school staff felt that teachers, students and parents benefited, to varying degrees, from the Programme. At the time that the evaluation was conducted, most pilot schools were in the early stages of introducing students to the Programme because implementation was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and teachers were still learning how to teach the Programme's curriculum to students. In addition, teachers faced difficulties when it came to finding time to integrate the Programme's curriculum into their teaching. The number of courses that form teachers could use to teach the Programme's curriculum was limited each semester

Many students, particularly at the middle and high school levels, thought the Programme had no impact on changing students behaviours, particularly the behaviours of students who are aggressive and bullying. There were, however, some students who thought that the Programme helped to reduce some conflicts among students, but more so among students who were not known troublemakers and do not have a reputation of being aggressive or bullying. High school students seemed to be less interested in the Programme because they perceived the content and materials to be more appropriate for younger

students, except for students who were involved in the peace makers initiative.

School staff had a difficult time in seeing the benefits of the Programme for parents because it was difficult for them to engage parents in the Programme, including to identify one or two parents who were willing to serve on the coordination council. FGDs with parents with children in primary, middle and high school grades revealed that most parents were not fully aware of the Programme, nor did they understand the Programme and its content. Nevertheless, many parents believed that a Programme focused on creating a safe school environment and preventing school violence and bullying is very important, but they want it to be substantive and to have a real impact.

Impact

As part of the Programme, UNICEF mentors received capacity building from UNICEF; after which, mentors delivered capacity building trainings and provided technical assistance to school staff in the pilot schools to implement the Programme. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of these trainings were delivered online in two- to three-hour training sessions; which was different from what was originally planned (i.e., face-to-face trainings). This was a challenge for everyone involved in the Programme, as they were not accustomed to delivering or receiving capacity building training online, and school staff were overwhelmed by online teaching and distance learning, which was leading to burnout.

The majority of respondents were satisfied, at least to some degree, with the Programme. On average, respondents ranked their level of satisfaction with the Programme as an 8.7 on a 10-point scale (1=not satisfied to 10=very satisfied). More specifically, school staff from Iskar (mean=10.0) and Kustendil (mean=9.3) were most likely to report being very satisfied with the Programme, followed by school staff from Sofia (mean=8.1) and Teteven (mean=8.0), whereas school staff from Zavet (mean=7.3) were least likely to be very satisfied with the Programme.

Programme implementation was negatively impacted by challenges and barriers, including: difficulties finding time and space to teach the Programme's curriculum; teacher did not feel comfortable and/or confident teaching the Programme's curriculum; not all teachers were motivated to implement the Programme; school staff faced challenges engaging and communicating with parents; and many teachers held negative attitudes toward parents and expressed an 'us against them' mentality.

Efficiency

This evaluation was unable to evaluate the Programme's efficiency in terms of measuring how economically resources and inputs (i.e., funds, expertise, time) were converted into results, nor could it determine if there would have been a more cost-effective way to achieve results. UNICEF put a notable amount of time and resources into planning, implementation and coordination of the Programme. From start to finish, with the support of mentors, UNICEF tried to tailor implementation strategies to each of the five pilot schools - Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet. Despite all of these efforts, there was still room for improvement.

UNICEF was able to adapt and change to meet the needs of each of the pilot schools, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic significantly influenced the Programme's implementation and made engaging school staff and students much more difficult as teachers were struggling to teach online and students' were having a difficult time with distance learning.

UNICEF had a monitoring and reporting approach to support Programme management. UNICEF had a monitoring and reporting approach for Programme management, that was aligned with the RMF. In general, the focus was on documenting progress made toward implementing activities, and pre-defined indicators. Monitoring reports and documents were predominately in Bulgarian, however, the mid-terms assessment that covered the period of September 2019-2021 was shared with the lead evaluator. UNICEF also invested in Programme oversight, including baseline and endline studies, but these were qualitative in nature and scope. Although there is room for improvement, however, when it comes to the monitoring and reporting framework for this Programme,

This evaluation found that there has been significant progress made in some of the pilot schools and their staff recognize the importance of the Programme

Sustainability

There is limited evidence that the Programme will be sustainable after only two-years of implementation. Moreover, there are challenges and barriers to Programme implementation that need to be address

for the Programme to be sustainable. This includes revisions and enhancement to Programme-related materials and strengthening of the capacities of school personnel to implement the Programme and a whole of school approach, in cooperation with students and parents, and ongoing support of the mentors.

LESSONS LEARNED

There were several lessons learned to consider if there are plans going forward to scale-up the Programme, and could be relevant in other countries where there are plans to implement school-based programmes focused on preventing school violence and bullying. Lessons learned include:

- For the Programme to be properly and effectively implemented, school principals need to be committed to the Programme and the whole school approach to Programme implementation. In keeping, school principals need to serve as role models to school staff and communicate and demonstrate their commitment to the Programme, and ensure that all school staff are capacitated to implement the Programme.
- School principals need to delegate some responsibilities for coordination and implementation of the Programme to school staff, particularly coordination councils and teachers who are committed to the Programme.¹³ The Programme's success depends, in part, on coordination councils willingness to implement the Programme and apply the *Mechanism*.
- In Bulgaria, educational institutions and school staff are slow to change their approaches to engaging with and teaching students, and addressing anti-social and behavioural problems of students; thus, efforts to 'win the hearts and minds' of school staff to implement the Programme requires significant capacity building and technical assistance, a demonstration of results, and proper allocations of time in weekly teaching schedules.
- The majority of school staff need to be properly capacitated and mentored to implement the Programme and to work together as a team to implement the Programme as a whole school approach. A whole school approach will increase the responsibility and engagement of all school

¹³ During the finalization of this evaluation report, the UNICEF Programme Coordinator stressed that it depends on the leadership style of the school principal. In the Programme, mentors observed in some pilot schools school principals over delegated Programme responsibilities of

the school principal to a few active and experienced teachers who were also engaged in other school programmes; as a result, these teachers soon burnt out or shifted their focus away from the Programme and only to implementing their formal duties.

staff in the Programme, including school principals, coordination councils, psychologists and teachers, as well as students and parents. Schools need school staff who are willing to champion the Programme.

- School staff need to work with students of all grades, including those who are well-behaved and perform well in school, and those who tend to act aggressively and bully other students and teachers, to create a safe school environment and to prevent school violence and bullying.
- Both school staff and parents need capacity building and technical assistance to learn how to work together to ensure school environments are safe, and to prevent and address school violence and bullying. This requires breaking down the 'us versus them' mentality held by school staff, and strengthening partnerships and collaboration among school staff and parents.
- Programme Handbooks need to be age- and grade-specific to ensure that the curriculum and activities are relevant to students of all grades and ages. To accomplish this, Programme curriculum needs to advance with each grade and be transformative in ways that promotes social and emotional learning, and action for change to end school violence and bullying.
- Mentors need to exist outside of the school and not be subordinate to the school principals. By being outside of the school, mentors are able to take an independent perspective and provide recommendations and guidance, without being constrained or influenced by school principals. By being independent, mentors could ensure that school staff have a safe space to discuss challenges or issues that they are facing in the classroom and/or with particular students and colleagues, with confidence that the discussions will be held in confidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are aligned with findings, conclusions and lessons learned from this evaluation, and were discussed with UNICEF CO and MES staff, as well as school staff during data collection in the field. Recommendations have also been guided by good practices identified during previous efforts to implement and evaluate school- and curriculum-based initiatives aimed at preventing and responding to violence and bullying in schools. .

1. UNICEF should support MES and the Expert Group to review and revise the *Mechanism of*

Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institutions of the Preschool and School Education System to strengthen the *Mechanism* and their implementation.

2. UNICEF should support the MES and the Expert Group to review and revise Steps Together Programme materials.
3. UNICEF and MES should consider developing a full-package of 'how-to videos' for school staff on how to roll out various components of the Programme.
4. UNICEF and MES should work together to develop a ToC and new RMF for the Steps Together Programme.
5. UNICEF and MES should continue to support the pilot schools in their efforts to implement the Steps Together Programme for an additional two-years, particularly the pilot schools that are committed to strengthening their capacities to implement the Programme properly and effectively.
6. UNICEF and MES should develop a plan to ensure the sustainability of mentors as a component of the Steps Together Programme.
7. UNICEF and MES should develop a plan for a phased scale-up of the Steps Together Programme to all schools in Bulgaria, with a model that aims to roll out the Programme to schools that have school principals and at least 50-60 percent of school staff who are committed to implementing the Programme.
8. MES should consider setting up a Step Together Programme Training Camp for School Staff that engages school principals, coordination councils, school psychologists and teachers.
9. MES should develop a community of practice of school staff engaged in implementing the Steps Together Programme to strengthen their capacities and commitment to implement the Steps Together Programme, and to learn from each other.
10. UNICEF and MES should integrate into the Steps Together Programme approaches for school staff to work with at-risk and high-risk students with behavioral problems and provide individualized intervention plans that serve to help the student understand the harm they are causing to other students and the disruptive environment they are creating in the school.
11. MES should develop a plan to phase-in and make mandatory the Steps Together Programme curriculum in primary, middle and high schools.
12. Conduct a costing for the scale-up of the Steps Together Programme.

1. BACKGROUND

1. The purpose of this evaluation of the Programme on Prevention of Violence and Bullying in School – Steps Together (hereinafter referred to as the Steps Together Programme) was forward-looking to lead to improvements of the structure, implementation and quality of the Steps Together Programme, and eventually to ensure its national scale-up and sustainability through its legal and administrative institutionalization and status budgeting. The Steps Together Programme was implemented in five pilot schools in Bulgaria – Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet. The Steps Together Programme was implemented with no external donor funding, but was funded by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Education and Sciences (MES) at a cost of BGN 487,490, of which BGN 427,490 was UNICEF’s contribution. At the time of this evaluation, Programme implemented had ended.
2. The target audience, including primary expected users of this evaluation will be UNICEF CO and the MES, along with the pilot schools and schools who are interested in implementing the Programme in the future. Other users of this evaluation may include the ASA, MLSP and SACP. This evaluation will also be of interest to partner UN agencies and international financial institutions and donors that contribute to UNICEF results and wider UN system commitments, intended outcomes and efforts on the realization of children’s rights and wider human rights commitments, including promoting gender equality and ending violence against women and girls.
3. The design of this evaluation was guided by the Terms of Reference (TOR) and programme documents, and the *Revised Evaluation Policy of UNICEF*¹⁴, *Evaluation Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)*¹⁵, *UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards and Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis*¹⁶ and *UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standards*.¹⁷

1.1. Country Context

4. Bulgaria has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 2007; nevertheless, Bulgaria still strives to catch up with EU standards in socio-economic development and cohesion.¹⁸ According to the World Bank, Bulgaria is an upper-middle income country¹⁹ with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD 69.89 billion in 2020.²⁰ Over the past decade, Bulgaria has achieved significant economic growth from a GDP of USD 13.2 billion in 2000 to USD 69.89 billion in 2020, including a 3.6 percent annual increase in GDP from 2017 to 2019. In 2020, however, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, Bulgaria experienced a 4.4 percent annual decrease in GDP from 2019.²¹ In 2022, the National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria reported an annual GDP growth of 4.5 percent and a monthly inflation rate of 2.5 percent.²²
5. In 2019, the World Bank reported that Bulgaria’s income per capita is 47 percent of the EU average; the lowest in the EU.²³ Poverty measured by the upper-middle income line of USD 5.5 per day (in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms) has decline from 5 percent in 2015 to 2 percent in 2019.²⁴ The World Bank projects that productivity will need to grow by at least 4 percent per year over the next 25 years if Bulgaria is to catch up to average EU incomes levels and boost shared prosperity.²⁵

¹⁴ UNICEF (2018). *Revised Evaluation Policy of UNICEF*. UNICEF: New York, NY, USA. Retrieved on 30 May 2022 from: [Revised Policy 2018 \(Interactive\).pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)

¹⁵ UNICEF (2016). *Evaluation Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group*. UNEG: New York, NY, USA. Retrieved on 30 May 2022 from: [UNEG Norms Standards for Evaluation WEB.pdf \(betterevaluation.org\)](#)

¹⁶ UNICEF (2021). *UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis*. UNICEF: New York, NY USA. Retrieved on 30 May 2022 from: [Branded Procedure Template \(unicef.org\)](#)

¹⁷ UNICEF (2017). *UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards*. UNICEF: New York, NY, USA. Retrieved on 30 May 2022 from: [UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards | UNICEF Evaluation in UNICEF](#)

¹⁸ UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

¹⁹ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [World Bank Country and Lending Groups – World Bank Data Help Desk](#)

²⁰ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [GDP \(current US\\$\) - Bulgaria | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

²¹ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [Bulgaria | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

²² Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [Home | National statistical institute \(nsi.bg\)](#)

²³ The World Bank in Bulgaria Country Snapshot, April 2019. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [BulgariaSnapshotSpring2019.pdf \(worldbank.org\)](#)

²⁴ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [Poverty gap at \\$5.50 a day \(2011 PPP\) \(%\) - Bulgaria | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

²⁵ The World Bank in Bulgaria Country Snapshot, April 2019. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [BulgariaSnapshotSpring2019.pdf \(worldbank.org\)](#)

6. In 2022, Bulgaria's population was estimated at 6,838,973.²⁶ In 2020, it was estimated that 17.5 percent were children aged 0-17.²⁷ According to most recent population census data (2011), the main ethnic group is Bulgarian (84.8 percent); ethnic minority groups include Turkish (8.8 percent) and Roma (4.9 percent).²⁸ A key challenge in Bulgaria is the disparity between the Bulgarian ethnic group and Turkish and Roma ethnic groups.²⁹ In 2017, the Roma ethnic group was five times more likely to live in poverty (77.2 percent), compared to the Bulgarian ethnic group (15.7 percent). Risk of poverty is influenced by education, regardless of ethnic group, but the Roma ethnic group is more likely to be poor with a primary or no education (73.2 percent). The Roma ethnic group is also more likely to be unemployed (39.9 percent) and to be working poor (25.9 percent), compared to working poor in the Turkish ethnic group (25.7 percent) and Bulgarian ethnic group (20.1 percent).³⁰ Indigence rates or serious material deprivation are also highest among the Roma ethnic group (81.0 percent), compared to the Turkish ethnic group (36.9 percent) and Bulgarian ethnic group (23.7 percent).³¹
7. In 2020, Bulgaria's multidimensional poverty rate was 32.1 percent (down from 49.2 percent in 2010).³² That same year, the multidimensional poverty rate for children aged 0-17 was 32.8 percent (down from 49.8 percent in 2010).³³ In 2017, it was estimated that 37.9 percent of children aged 0-17 in Bulgaria were at-risk of living in poverty before social transfers, and this was reduced to 29.2 percent after social transfers; social transfers have helped to reduce the percentage of children living in poverty.³⁴ Child poverty is linked to family separation and poor health and development outcomes, as well as low levels of academic achievement and under employment.³⁵ The most vulnerable and marginalized children include children living in poor households, female-headed households, and large families with more than three children. Among the most vulnerable and marginalized are children those who belong to Roma and Turkish ethnic groups, and migrant and refugee families, as well as unaccompanied and separated children, and children living in residential institutions.³⁶ Fighting against child poverty is a national priority, but implementation requires an integrated approach and multi-sectoral policies, along with financial support (e.g., housing benefits, child benefits or tax relief for families).³⁷
8. The *Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2020 Statistical Update*³⁸ presents Human Development Index (HDI) values³⁹ for 189 countries and territories with the most recent data for 2019. **Table 1** compares 1990 and 2019 HDI values⁴⁰ for Bulgaria.⁴¹ Scores for the three HDI dimension indices are aggregated into a composite index using a geometric mean and a ranking provided.⁴² In 2019, Bulgaria was classified as being 'very high' on the HDI, positioning at 56 out of 189 countries and territories. Between 1990 and 2019, Bulgaria's HDI value increased from 0.708 to 0.816, an increase of 15.3 percent. Bulgaria has made progress on each of the HDI indicators. In particular, from 1990 to 2019, Bulgaria's life expectancy at birth increased by 3.8 years, mean

²⁶ Retrieved on 17 June 2022 from: [Home | National statistical institute \(nsi.bg\)](https://www.nsi.bg/)

²⁷ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/wp2019-1/)

²⁸ UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

²⁹ UNICEF (2017). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [Multidimensional poverty headcount ratio \(% of total population\) - Bulgaria | Data \(worldbank.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/SD/SH.UOVS.DS?locations=BG).

³³ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [Multidimensional poverty headcount ratio, children \(% of population ages 0-17\) - Bulgaria | Data \(worldbank.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/SD/SH.UOVS.DS?locations=BG)

³⁴ UNICEF (2017). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria..

³⁵ UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ UNICEF (2017). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

³⁸ Retrieved 25 November 2019 from: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update>

³⁹ The HDI is a composite index focused on three basic dimensions of human development: the ability to lead a long and healthy life, measured by life expectancy at birth; the ability to acquire knowledge, measured by mean year of schooling and expected years of school; and the ability to achieve a decent standard of living, measured by gross national income per capita. The scores for the three HDI dimension indices are aggregated into a composite index using a geometric mean and a ranking provided; see UNDP (2020). *Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2020 Statistical Update*. UNDP: New York, NY, USA.

⁴⁰ The HDI was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone.

⁴¹ The Human Development Report Office uses data from international data agencies with the mandate, resources and expertise to collect national data on specific indicators. For a list of international data providers; see *Human Development Report 2020. The New Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene – Bulgari*. UNDP. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [BGR.pdf \(undp.org\)](https://hdr.undp.org/).

⁴² Ibid, 2020.

years of schooling increased by 2.5 years, and expected years of schooling increased by 2.3 years.⁴³ Bulgaria's GNI per capita also increased by about 108.5 percent from 1990 to 2019.⁴⁴

Table 1. Bulgaria Human Development Index Indicators				
Human Development Index	Bulgaria		European Union	Very High HDI
	1990	2019	2019	2019
HDI Value	0.708	0.816	0.911	0.898
Life expectancy at birth (SDG 3)	71.3	75.1	81.4	79.6
Expected years of schooling (SDG 4.3)	12.1	14.4	16.8	16.3
Mean years of schooling (SDG 4.6)	8.9	11.4	12.1	12.2
National income per capita (2011 PPP\$) (SDG 8.5)	11,189	23,325	44,635	44,566

Source: Human Development Report 2020. *The New Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene – Bulgari*. UNDP. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [BGR.pdf \(undp.org\)](#).

9. To measure human development more comprehensively, the *Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2020 Statistical Update* presents the Gender Development Index (GDI), which compares female and male achievements on HDI values, and the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which highlights women's empowerment as it relates to reproductive health, education, political representation and the labour market.⁴⁵ The GDI is calculated for 167 countries. In 2019, the female GDI value for Bulgaria is 0.813, in contrast to 0.817 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 0.995, placing it into Group 1 of countries with high equality in GDI achievements. In addition, Bulgaria has a GII value of 0.206, ranking it 48 out of 162 countries.⁴⁶
10. Bulgaria has ratified core international human rights conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC), as well as the Millennium Declaration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a signatory, the Government of Bulgaria (GoB) has prioritized improving access to and quality of health, education, child protection and social services for children and families in need, including social inclusion of persons with disabilities.
11. Since ratifying the CRC in 1991, Bulgaria has made significant progress in ensuring compliance of its legal and policy frameworks to protect children from violence and abuse. After the adoption of the Child Protection Act in 2000, Bulgaria developed a national child protection system in keeping with international standards and practices. Corporal punishment is prohibited under the Child Protection Act, the Family Code (2009) and the Pre-school and School Education Act (2015). In 2017, the Council of Ministers adopted a National Programme on Prevention of Violence Against and Abuse of Children.⁴⁷
12. In recent years, there has been increased knowledge generation as to nature, extent and dynamics of violence against children (VAC) in Bulgaria. Such knowledge has contributed to the development of prevention programmes, referral mechanisms and provision of services for child victims of violence and abuse. Steps have also been taken to raise awareness and build the capacities of professionals from across sectors (education, health, social work, police and justice) to identify and respond to VAC, and to monitor and inspect systems of child protection and social service provision to vulnerable children and their families.⁴⁸

⁴³ Ibid, 2020.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 2020.

⁴⁵ Human Development Report 2020. *The New Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene – Bulgari*. UNDP. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [BGR.pdf \(undp.org\)](#).

⁴⁶ As it relates to the GII dimension indices, 25.8 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women in Bulgaria. In addition, 94.4 percent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education, compared to 96.4 percent of adult males. Also, female labour force participation is 49.2 percent, compared to 62.0 percent for men. Also, for every 100,000 live births, 10 women die from pregnancy-related causes, and the adolescent birth rate is 3995 births per 1,000 women of aged 15-19; Ibid, 2020.

⁴⁷ UNICEF (2017). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria; UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

⁴⁸ UNICEF (2017). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

13. Children's issues have remained high on the national policy agenda and significant progress has been achieved in key areas with support from UNICEF and other partners. In particular, progress has made in early childhood development and education (ECD/E), and education in general, child protection and access to justice for children, including improvements to the juvenile justice system, and deinstitutionalization of children from state-run residential institutions.⁴⁹ In recent years, Bulgaria has increasingly provided technical assistance to other countries in the region for advancing child rights, by sharing knowledge and experiences through horizontal cooperation.⁵⁰ Still, however, negative trends in child and adolescent health, well-being and behaviours exist in Bulgaria, including early pregnancies and abortions, adolescent mental health problems and engagement in risky behaviours which undermines the realization of a healthy transition into adulthood.⁵¹
14. As it relates to child protection, Bulgaria has achieved progress in moving away from the inherited system of placing vulnerable children in state-run residential institutions to developing a system of foster care and family-type homes of children in need of alternative care.⁵² Bulgaria has been a leader in comparison to other countries in the region for their work to deinstitutionalize children.⁵³ Still, however, Bulgaria struggles with coordination of multi-sectoral responses to children in need of protection and building the capacities of professionals at local and regional levels to assess and respond to the needs of vulnerable children and their families, including child victims of violence.⁵⁴ In addition, weak enforcement and implementation of otherwise good child protection policies, and inadequate budgeting and monitoring of multi-sectoral programmes have served as a barrier in Bulgaria.⁵⁵ There is also a lack of disaggregated administrative data on vulnerable children and child victims of violence and abuse.⁵⁶
15. At the societal level, Bulgaria has a weak child rights culture and discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices that contribute to disparities and social exclusion that impact children nationwide. This contributes to Bulgaria having among the lowest social indicators for children in the EU.⁵⁷
16. UNICEF's agenda has been to assist Bulgaria to ensure that all children, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, to enjoy their rights and develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society which is respectful of their voices.⁵⁸ This agenda is in line with Bulgaria's national priorities as identified in the National Strategy for the Child (2008-2018)⁵⁹, National Development Programme Bulgaria 2030⁶⁰, National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Promotion of Social Inclusion (2021)⁶¹, National Strategy on Roma Integration (2012-2020)⁶², National Strategy for Vision of Deinstitutionalization (2012-2025), National Health Strategy (2015-2020), National Program for Improving Maternal and Child Health (2014-2020), and National Strategy for Reducing Early School Leavers (2018-2020)⁶³. UNICEF's Country Programme 2018-2022 is also aligned with the Europe 2030 Strategy⁶⁴, European Commission Recommendation "Investing in Children:

⁴⁹ UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

⁵⁰ UNICEF Draft Country Programme Document, 12-15 September 2017.

⁵¹ UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

⁵² Ibid; See also, Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda for Children in the CEE/CIS Region - Independent Multi-Country Evaluation of a Child's Rights to a Supportive and Caring Environment, May 2015

⁵³ UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022; See also, Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda for Children in the CEE/CIS Region - Independent Multi-Country Evaluation of a Child's Rights to a Supportive and Caring Environment, May 2015

⁵⁴ UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ In 2019, Bulgaria's National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030 was withdrawn following disinformation campaigns and protests in Sofia. Bulgaria's National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030 withdrawn following disinformation campaigns, *Eurochild*, 9 June 2019. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [Bulgaria's National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030 withdrawn following disinformation campaigns – Eurochild](#)

⁶⁰ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [National Development Programme, Bulgaria 2030 – DI2 Platform](#)

⁶¹ A National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Promotion of Social Inclusion. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR REDUCTION OF POVERTY AND PROMOTION OF SOCIAL INCLUSION HAS BEEN APPROVED \(government.bg\)](#)

⁶² Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [Рамкова програма за интегриране на ромите в българското общество \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁶³ Bulgarian Government has adopted a Plan for Reducing Early School Leavers, Social Policy. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [Bulgarian Government has adopted a Plan for Reducing Early School Leavers | socialpolicy.gr](#)

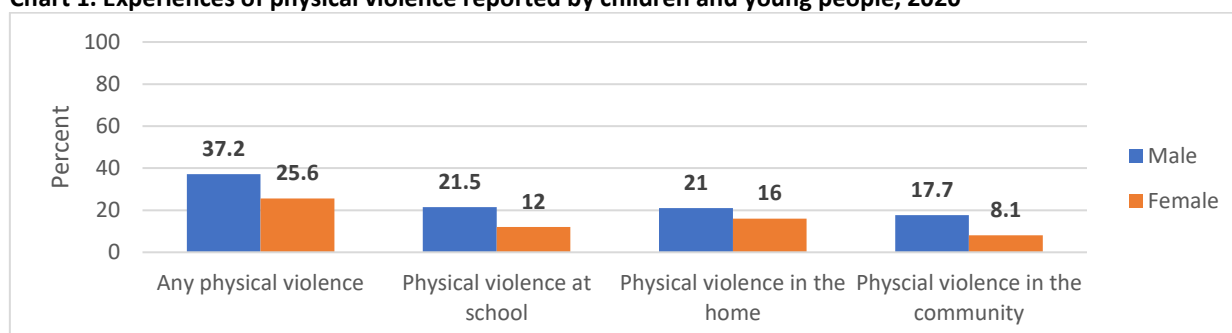
⁶⁴ A Sustainable Europe by 2030. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [A Sustainable Europe by 2030 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage”⁶⁵, and the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021 and 2022-2027)⁶⁶, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁶⁷ and UNICEF’s Global Strategic Framework 2018-2021 and 2022-2025.⁶⁸

1.2. Violence Against Children in Bulgaria

17. Protection of children from all forms of violence is a fundamental right enshrined in the CRC and is included as a specific target in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In particular, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 16.2 aims to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children; this target gives renewed impetus towards the realization of the rights of every child to live free from fear, neglect, abuse and exploitation. In addition, SDG Target 5.2 aims to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.⁶⁹
18. VAC continues to be a serious problem in Bulgaria.⁷⁰ VAC includes emotional, physical and sexual abuse, and neglect and exploitation. It occurs in homes and families, educational settings, care and justice systems, and public spaces.
19. In 2019, UNICEF supported a study on VAC in Bulgaria, which revealed that one in three children aged 13-17 and young people aged 18-24 experienced physical violence as a child, and physical violence was commonly experienced at home and in schools and the community. Boys were more likely to experience physical violence in the home than girls (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Experiences of physical violence reported by children and young people, 2020



Source: UNICEF & Carom International (2020). *Study on Violence against Children in Bulgaria – Volume 1: Prevalence of violence against children and related knowledge, attitudes and practices among children and adults in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia Bulgaria, p. 34.

20. Parents were the most common perpetrators of physical violence in the home. In fact, 40 percent of parents/caregiver reported using physical violence as a form of discipline in the last year and about 5 percent reported using severe physical punishment. Although mothers and fathers were equally like to use physical violence against the child in the home, fathers were more likely to inflict serious injury. In comparison, physical violence that occurred at school and in the community was most often committed by other students or children.⁷¹
21. School violence and peer-on-peer violence are also problems in Bulgaria. In 2019, UNICEF-supported research found that 17 percent of children aged 13-17 and young people aged 18-24 experienced physical violence at

⁶⁵ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [European Commission Recommendation: Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage – 20 February 2013 | Save the Children’s Resource Centre](#)

⁶⁶ Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021). Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [16809f03eb \(coe.int\)](#); The new Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) adopted by the Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe Portal, 24 February 2022. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [The new Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2022-2027\) adopted by the Committee of Ministers - Newsroom on Children’s Rights \(coe.int\)](#)

⁶⁷ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [The Sustainable Development Agenda - United Nations Sustainable Development](#)

⁶⁸ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 | UNICEF](#) and [UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025 | UNICEF](#).

⁶⁹ Retrieved on 1 June 2022 from: [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development \(un.org\)](#)

⁷⁰ UNICEF (2017). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

⁷¹ UNICEF & Coram International (2020). *Study on Violence against Children in Bulgaria, Volume 1: Prevalence of VAC and related knowledge, attitudes and practices among children and adults in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria

school. Boys were more likely to experience physical violence at school than girls. More than one in four or 25 percent of children and young people who experienced physical violence at school reported they suffered physical injuries, including bruising and bleeding. Children and young people also reported experiencing emotional violence in school; in particular, 35 percent of children and young people reported being subjected to humiliation and/or insults at school. In schools, other students were the most common perpetrators of physical and emotional violence.⁷² In addition, 'other adults' in and around the school (e.g., parents of other children), but not adults working at the school. Fewer than 5 percent of children and young people reported being subject to physical violence by their teacher.⁷³

22. Along with previous research, this study demonstrates that corporal punishment is widely used in Bulgaria, particularly in the home and family setting, and is widely accepted as a means to discipline and control children.⁷⁴ In fact, in 2020, 29 percent of respondents agree that 'smacking a child is sometimes for their own good' and 18 percent of respondents neither agreed or disagreed with this statement.⁷⁵ Given the social norms supportive of corporal punishment, there is a reluctance among state authorities to interfere in private family matters, and VAC is generally perceived as a private family matter; as a result, most incidents of VAC go unreported and undocumented.⁷⁶
23. There is clear evidence that violence harms children's physical and mental health and development, including their ability to learn and build relationships with others, and to become fully functional adults and parents. More specifically, school violence and bullying, and unsafe and insecure school environments are reasons for children's poor attendance, school performance, and dropout from school. Individuals who drop out of school are more likely to have negative outcomes that limit opportunities for children to achieve their full potential in life and socio-economic success in adulthood.⁷⁷
24. To address school violence and bullying, in April 2017, the MES initiated the development of a multi-sectoral action plan which aimed to prevent violence and create safe environments in schools. This plan included the development of a *Mechanism of Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institution of the Preschool and School Education System* which was put forth by MES; this is the only education-based policy on VAC. The Mechanism includes provisions of psychologists and pedagogical counsellors, targeted trainings for teachers, and the introduction of classroom and afterschool activities for prevention of violence. This initiative highlights the fact that the MES understands that addressing school violence and bullying requires implementing a coherent and purposeful policy that is shared and implemented by all key stakeholders in the education sector.
25. In keeping with the Mechanism, each school, including preschools, are obligated to: establish a Coordination Council, which is responsible for planning, monitoring and coordinating efforts to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying; assess and analyse the situation of school violence and bullying in an effort to educate the school community on issues of school violence and bullying, and the measures taken to prevent and respond to such incidents; and plan and update school-wide and class-based prevention and intervention

⁷² UNICEF & Coram International (2020). *Study on Violence against Children in Bulgaria, Volume 1: Prevalence of VAC and related knowledge, attitudes and practices among children and adults in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria

⁷³ In comparison, the 2014 HBSC Survey found that peer bullying impacts children nationwide. More specifically, 17 percent of students were victims of cyber-bullying (offensive chat messaging, Facebook posts and creation of websites) and 14 percent of students had insulting or inappropriate images of them published on the internet. About 6 percent of students aged 11-15 were exposed to cyber-bullying more than twice a month. Among the 43 countries where the HBSC Survey was administered, students in Bulgaria were among the top ten countries to be affected by school bullying; as a result, many children did not feel protected in school; see UNICEF (2017). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria; UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022; Health Behaviour in School-aged Children – HBSC, Institute for Population and Human Studies, BAS, HBSC, 2014; UNICEF Together against violence in schools. Retrieved on 1 June 2022 from: [Together against violence in schools | UNICEF](#).

⁷⁴ UNICEF (2017). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria; *Health-Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC)*. Institute for Population and Human Studies, 2014; UNICEF My Voice Matters. Retrieved on 1 June 2022 from: [My voice matters | UNICEF](#); *Attitudes for the rights to protection from corporal punishment in Bulgaria*, National Network for Children, 2018.

⁷⁵ UNICEF & Coram International (2020). *Study on Violence against Children in Bulgaria, Volume 1: Prevalence of VAC and related knowledge, attitudes and practices among children and adults in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

⁷⁶ UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

⁷⁷ Lansford, J.E., K.A. Dodge, G.S. Pettit & J.E. Bates (2017). A Public Health Perspective on School Dropout and Adult Outcomes: A Prospective Study of Risk and Protective Factors from Age 5 to 27. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Vol. 58, No 6, pp. 652-658.

activities. To further address school violence and bullying, steps were taken to review and revise the State Standard on Inclusive Education.

26. Despite the existence of a unified framework that lays the foundation for safe schools, it appears that educational institutions need more support to effectively implement ending violence against children (EVAC) initiatives. Some of the weaknesses with the MES approach to addressing school violence and bullying are that students have not been viewed as active or equal participants in efforts to improve school safety, the roles of parents have not been clearly defined and need to be strengthened, and pedagogues need support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities related to preventing school violence and bullying. To address this and support implementation of the *Mechanism of Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institution of the Preschool and School Education System*, in 2019, UNICEF, in partnership with MES, initiated the development and implementation of the Programme on Prevention of Violence and Bullying in Schools – Steps Together Programme (the Programme). The Steps Together Programme was self-funded by UNICEF and MES.

1.3. Child Protection System in Bulgaria

27. UNICEF's analyses of VAC and the child protection system in Bulgaria⁷⁸ has identified weak institutional capacities for detecting and reporting incidents of VAC, as well as weak multi-sectoral and inter-institution cooperation in the handling of VAC cases. In recent years, national policy and coordination mechanisms for responding to VAC have improved; yet a very small number of VAC cases are handled by multi-disciplinary teams. Quality coordinated, multi-sectoral responses are not systematically available across the country and the effectiveness of interventions have yet to be documented.⁷⁹
28. In the social service sector there is also a lack of capacity among professional responsible for responding to VAC and other child protection-related issues. Professionals lack the knowledge and skills needed to recognize the signs and negative consequences of VAC, and to effectively support child victims of violence. As a result, only the most severe incidents and forms of VAC are typically registered by authorities; whereas most incidents of VAC go unreported and undocumented. Thus, Bulgaria has very low prosecution and conviction rates for perpetration of VAC.⁸⁰ In addition, lack of public awareness as to the negative consequences and long-term effect of violence on children hampers national strategies to end VAC.⁸¹
29. Research has found that training sessions for social workers are typically done on an ad hoc basis (e.g., as part of a project funded by the EU or an NGO project), but are not part of the formal system of training for social workers. Moreover, social workers have a heavy workload, with no clear process for prioritizing cases, and lack the resources needed to do their jobs; this contributes to a high level of workplace stress. In addition, social workers have a large volume of paperwork that is required as part of monitoring and inspections; this is coupled with inefficiencies in the sectors information management system.⁸² This situation is further compounded by low salaries and a lack of supervision, which contributed to high rates of turnover.⁸³
30. Research and evaluations have also found that Child Protection Departments face difficulties when it comes to organization inter-agency and cross-sectoral coordination (multi-disciplinary coordination), which is needed in child protection cases.⁸⁴ Although social workers recognized that there was good cooperation among social

⁷⁸ UNICEF (2014). *Determinants Analysis and Theory of Change on Addressing Violence Against Children in Bulgaria*, UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

⁷⁹ UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

⁸⁰ UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The child protection system in Bulgaria need an integrated information management system that will improve monitoring, reporting and evaluation of child protection cases, and will improve case management and linkages among different child protection departments and sectors; see UNICEF & Coram International (2020). *Study on Violence against Children in Bulgaria, Volume 1: Prevalence of VAC and related knowledge, attitudes and practices among children and adults in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

⁸³ Haarr, R. (2020). *Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centres Supported by UNICEF Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria; UNICEF & Coram International (2020). *Study on Violence against Children in Bulgaria, Volume 1: Prevalence of VAC and related knowledge, attitudes and practices among children and adults in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

⁸⁴ Haarr, R. (2020). *Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centres Supported by UNICEF Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria; UNICEF & Coram International (2020). *Study on Violence against Children in Bulgaria, Volume 1: Prevalence of VAC and related knowledge, attitudes and practices among children and adults in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

workers, municipal authorities, and police authorities, it was more difficult to secure the engagement of education and health professionals, and justice officials in child protection cases. The lack of cooperation of health professionals in child protection cases was particularly evident in the relatively low rate of referrals (46 percent) from the health sector to social workers, which is particularly concerning given the high proportion of children who experience physical violence across settings. Given the lack of formal multi-disciplinary coordination in child protection cases, informal networks have been established to strengthen coordination and cooperation across agencies in child protection cases.⁸⁵

31. Developing a roadmap for changing social norms related to corporal punishment, gender-based violence (GBV), and child marriage, coupled with strengthening processes and practices for preventing and responding to VAC and GBV, including child marriage, has been a priority of the GoB, and development partners, such as UNICEF.⁸⁶
32. In 2016, the UN Committee for the Rights of Children expressed in its Concluding Observations to Bulgaria concerns with prevailing social norms that domestic violence is a private matter and that there are insufficient services for children who have experienced violence. In recent years, prevailing social norms in Bulgaria have challenged the advancement of reforms related to women and children's rights, including the draft National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030 and the national child helpline.
33. In 2015, UNICEF partnered with two NGOs to establish Child Advocacy Centres (CACs), known nationally as Zona ZaKрила. The Centres were established to work with child victims and witnesses of violence and crimes, particularly children who experienced sexual and/or physical violence, domestic violence, school violence and community violence.⁸⁷ Modeled after best practices identified in Child and Youth Advocacy Centres in Canada, the CACs were designed to utilize an integrated, multi-sectoral approach to provide coordinated and integrated services. The Centres are often described as a 'one-stop shop' where child victims and witnesses of violence and crimes can receive consultations and services, including legal aid, psychological support, social support, assistance with medical examinations, and child-sensitive forensic interviews and hearings. Staff working in CACs are trained and qualified to provide child-centred approaches and to advocate for the best interests of the child, and to take into consideration the child's safety and welfare.⁸⁸
34. CACs provide case management in close cooperation with child protection departments, police, prosecutors and courts. Such an integrated, multi-sectoral approach aims to improve inter-sectoral communication and cooperation in the best interests of the child, and to reduce inefficiencies, duplications and omissions in service provision for child victims and witnesses of violence and crimes. The Centre aims to improve linkages among community providers of therapeutic services to guarantee that child victims and witnesses receive protection, support and gain redress.⁸⁹
35. In 2020, there were three CACs in Bulgaria. The first Centre was opened in Montana in September 2015, the second was opened in Sofia in October 2015, and the third was opened in Shumen in January 2016. Each of the CACs were licensed by the Agency of Social Analyses (ASA) in October 2016. The CACs in Montana and Shumen cover the entire areas of their respective regions, whereas the Centre in Sofia covers the metropolitan area. Still, however, each Centre have responded to notifications outside of their coverage areas.⁹⁰
36. Financed, in part by UNICEF Bulgaria, the CACs provide a 24/7 response to incidents of VAC. The Centres in Montana and Shumen are managed by Social Activities and Practices Institute (SAPI), whereas the Centre in Sofia is managed by Animus Association Foundation. These are two of the largest and most experienced NGOs in Bulgaria, with over 20 years of experience working on issues of violence and trauma. The two NGOs regularly cooperate with one another and exchange methodologies, good practices and documents/reports in an effort to equip their staff with the knowledge and skills needed to carry out effective case management and risk assessments, and to monitor and review children's progress, and to evaluate the needs of children and their families.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Haarr, R. (2020). *Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centres Supported by UNICEF Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria; UNICEF & Coram International (2020). *Study on Violence against Children in Bulgaria, Volume 1: Prevalence of VAC and related knowledge, attitudes and practices among children and adults in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria

⁸⁶ Ibid; See also, UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. Strategy Note for the Country Programme, 2018-2022.

⁸⁷ Haarr, R. (2020). *Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centres Supported by UNICEF Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 2020.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 2020.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 2020.

⁹¹ Ibid, 2020.

37. CACs have facilities and staff who have been trained to interview children in a child-sensitive manner. Services offered are individualized and guided by findings from needs assessments conducted for each child and their parents/caregivers. Each Centre is equipped with child friendly spaces specially equipped with video and sound recording systems for evidential video interviewing of child victims and witnesses, and for their participation in legal proceedings.⁹²
38. In 2020, UNICEF conducted an external evaluation of the CACs. The evaluation concluded that CACs are able to deliver quality integrated services, which has been relevant to the national priorities and needs of the government. It is quality integrated service delivery that benefits children and families the most. As CACs successfully support children and families, the number of referrals made to CACs by institutions/agencies and self-referrals to CACs has significantly and steadily increased from 2015 to 2019; in keeping, the number of children and parents who received psycho-social support, therapeutic treatment, crisis intervention and legal services from CACs has steadily increased.⁹³
39. The evaluation also found that CACs work with lawyers who provide free legal services to children and their families, which has improved access to justice for children who experience violence and crimes, including improved access to justice for vulnerable and marginalized children. CACs also prepare children for involvement in litigation when they have been witnesses or victims of violence and crimes, and they accompany children and parents to court proceedings as their cases proceed through the justice system.⁹⁴
40. CACs were also able to improve cooperation and coordination across sectors and professionals (e.g., teachers, social workers, police officers, prosecutors and judges) in keeping with the best interests of the child. Despite the fact that CACs are not a state-regulated bodies and do not have coordination mechanism powers (this is the responsibility of Child Protection Department (CPDs)), CACs were able to establish good relations with professionals across sectors to support inter-agency coordination to support child victims of violence and crimes, and their families.⁹⁵
41. CACs are able to contribute to long-term positive changes in children's well-being and recovery because they provide long-term services, especially in serious cases of violence where children show negative effects and symptoms related to the violence and victimization. Both children and parents reported the CACs helped to make positive changes or improvements in their lives.⁹⁶

1.4. Educational System in Bulgaria

42. In Bulgaria, education is compulsory from 5-16 years of age. Compulsory public education is free which means that education services, facilities for training and state exams are free of charge. Textbooks for students from grades I to VII are also free, as are textbooks on special subjects for students with sensory disabilities up to XII grade and educational materials on general subjects printed in Braille. Since 2006, children from grades I to IV receive breakfast free of charge.⁹⁷
43. Over the past decade, the GoB has undertaken reforms to the educational system. In 2015, the GoB adopted and enacted a new Preschool and School Education Act, which introduced for the first-time inclusive education in all kindergartens and schools, and differentiated the types of support for children with disabilities and vulnerable children at-risk of dropping out of school early. The MES has also carried out a number of activities to increase access to education and to improve the integration of ethnic minority children, in an effort to reduce dropout rates and improve the literacy and numeracy. This included adopting strategic documents, such as the National Strategy for Reducing Early School Leaving (2013-2020), National Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (2015-2020), National Strategy for Lifelong Learning (2014-2020), National Strategy for Improving and Promoting Literacy (2014-2020).⁹⁸

⁹² Haarr, R. (2020). *Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centres Supported by UNICEF Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria

⁹³ Ibid, 2020.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 2020.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 2020.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 2020.

⁹⁷ UNICEF (2017). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 2017.

44. In Bulgaria, there are notable disparities across schools in respect to the quality of school facilities. In 2017, it was documented that in many small schools, there are still no internal toilets, which makes their use difficult. Underfunding for school infrastructure impedes the maintenance of all schools, as well as the provision of technical resources, technology and laboratories. Some of the smaller schools also lack adequate heating during the winter months. Options for extracurricular activities for students are also very limited in rural schools and in some urban districts where the existing infrastructure for play and entertainment is underdeveloped. Many schools are still without gyms or any other facilities that could encourage physical activities and interest in sports among students.⁹⁹
45. The MES is responsible for ensuring children's safety in schools and developing school policies and programmes that aim to prevent violence and bullying in schools. In keeping, the MES sits on the National Council on the Prevention of Violence and cooperates with SACP and NGOs to develop projects to prevent VAC in schools. As part of their activities for addressing VAC, MES have established the *Mechanism for Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institutions of the Pre-school and School Education System*. The Mechanism outlines a standard approach for the prevention of violence and bullying in schools, and intervention that aim to create safe school environments. In keeping with the Mechanism, school are expected to develop a school policy for prevention and response to violence and bullying in schools, and a Coordination Council consisting of teachers, students and parents. The Coordination Council is charged with planning, monitoring and assessing efforts of dealing with violence and bullying in school.¹⁰⁰
46. Despite the key role that educators play in identifying and responding to cases of VAC, research has found that school staff are less likely than other professionals (with the exception of healthcare workers) to say that they would definitely report situations involving children at risk of violence, abuse or neglect. In fact, only 17 percent of school staff identified a child who was at-risk of violence, abuse or neglect during six-month period prior to the study. It is notable that education professionals were least able to identify markers of VAC, compared to other professionals, and generally viewed VAC, particularly child sexual abuse, as not a serious issue.
47. Although the majority of school staff viewed physical punishment as unacceptable, about one in six educators thought that hitting or smacking children was an acceptable form of discipline; this finding indicates a need for greater awareness-raising of the negative consequences of corporal punishment on children, and greater support for school staff to use methods of non-violent and positive discipline, and to communicate more effectively with the parents of students.
48. Child protection officials have expressed concern that schools rarely report or refer situations of VAC or child protection. Low reporting and referrals by schools is most likely due to the fact that school staff lack the knowledge and awareness needed to identify incidents of VAC and the referral and reporting mechanisms that are in place. In addition, school staff face challenges when it comes to working with parents, and they believe that parents do not trust schools and will not cooperate in cases of school violence or bullying. This is regardless of the fact that the majority of schools have policies and procedures related to reporting incidents of VAC and child protection. The main barrier identified by teachers was a lack of training and guidance for both teachers and schools counsellors. In fact, kindergarten and secondary school teachers were least likely to be trained on VAC. So, while a mechanism to report school violence and bullying exists, many teachers expressed concern that the mechanisms are not utilized and are essentially ineffective at preventing and responding to school violence and bullying.

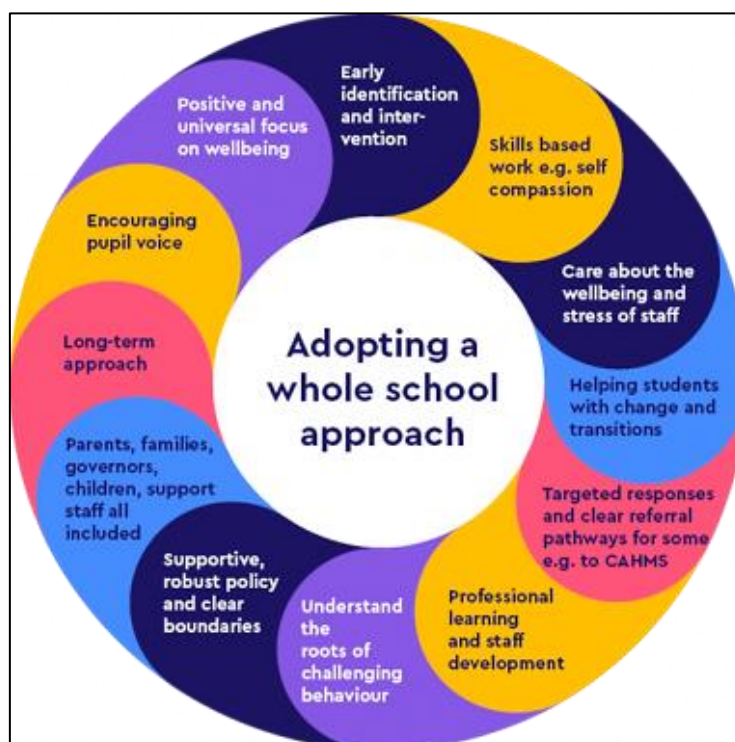
2. PROGRAMME ON PREVENTIONS OF VIOLENCE AND BULLYING IN SCHOOLS – STEPS TOGETHER

49. UNICEF's Country Programme 2018-2022 has focused on supporting Bulgaria in its efforts to enable all children and adolescents in the country, including the most disadvantaged, to enjoy their rights and to develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society. The realization of the right of every child to live free from violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices is a cross-cutting element throughout the Country Programme.

⁹⁹ UNICEF (2017). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

¹⁰⁰ UNICEF & Coram International (2020). *Study on Violence against Children in Bulgaria, Volume 2: Capacity of the institutions responsible for the prevention, identification and response to VACA in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria

50. In 2019, an Expert Group was established in MES to develop a **whole school programme**¹⁰¹ for a **safe environment**¹⁰² to prevent violence in schools. A whole school approach as one where, “well-being and mental health are everyone’s business, with genuine engagement across the enter community, including school staff, students, parents, local authorities and external services. The approach involves multiple components, including early identification and intervention, staff well-being and development, and skills-based work for students, but above all it adopts a positive and universal focus on well-being.”¹⁰³



Source: National Children’s Bureau. Whole school approach. Retrieved on 2 June 2022 from: [Whole school approach \(ncb.org.uk\)](https://www.ncb.org.uk/whole-school-approach)

51. As it related to the Programme on Prevention of Violence and Bullying in Schools – Steps Together, a whole school approach is focused on establishing a safe school environment that prevents the emergence and exacerbation of cases of violence or bullying, with a focus on reaching out to and involving all participants in school life, including school staff, students and parents. This approach has been multi-faceted, including:¹⁰⁴

- Emphasis is placed on the school’s policies, curriculum (e.g., introduction of social and emotional learning) and changes to the schools social setting and amendments to its rules.
- Participation of all members of the school community is promoted.
- All teachers are responsible for prevention and management of cases of bullying in school, even if the students involved are not their direct responsibility.
- All students and all classes are engaged, not just the few students who are ‘at-risk’.
- Activities aimed at preventing violence and bullying are integrated in the school curriculum and strategies, and (in)formal interaction between teachers and their students, parents and other school staff.

52. The Programme on Prevention of Violence and Bullying in Schools – Steps Together Programme was envisaged as a joint effort between UNICEF and MES. Other key stakeholders include the five pilot schools – Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet – where the Steps Together Programme was implemented.¹⁰⁵ Other key stakeholders include local CPDs managed by the ASA, as well as the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) and the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP), although they were not engaged in Programme implementation.

53. The stakeholder analysis identifies the duty-bearers as UNICEF Bulgaria and MES. As mentioned above, the Steps Together Programme was envisaged as a joint effort between UNICEF and MES. Rights-holders include intended and unintended beneficiaries of the Programme, which includes school staff, students and parents. School staff are considered right-holders because they lacked the knowledge, attitudes and practices needed

¹⁰¹ A whole school approach is based upon a social-ecological model to address school violence and bullying.

¹⁰² A safe environment is characterized by a positive social and psychological climate at school and requires fostering a caring, respectful, inclusive and supportive culture at school. A school having a positive climate is hospitable and its students and teachers try their best to behave in the best possible way. Being part of such a setting positively affects students’ sense of belonging to the school; see Steps Together Programme Document.

¹⁰³ National Children’s Bureau. Whole school approach. Retrieved on 2 June 2022 from: [Whole school approach \(ncb.org.uk\)](https://www.ncb.org.uk/whole-school-approach)

¹⁰⁴ Steps Together Programme Document.

¹⁰⁵ UNICEF funded implementing partners (e.g., training organizations and mentors) to deliver trainings and to support schools; whereas MES funded schools directly for pre-agreed activities. UNICEF and MES co-funded different elements of the Steps Together Programme; this Programme was not funded by a donor.

to implement the Steps Together Programme, so they were direct beneficiaries of the Programme (Annex G: Stakeholder Analysis and Section 2.1 for a further description of the stakeholders in this Programme).

54. The aim of the Steps Together Programme was to raise awareness, commitment and capacity of the entire school community to prevent and tackle school violence and bullying. In keeping, the **goal** of the Steps Together Programme was to create a safe school environment to prevent violence and bullying at school, and the three broad **objectives**, including:¹⁰⁶
 - a. To support and foster school attitudes based on mutual respect, equal dignity and justice
 - b. To promote well-informed and competent participation on the part of all members of a school community
 - c. To employ a whole school approach by supporting school-based activities at all levels
55. The Steps Together Programme Document (ProDoc) did not include a clear or well-developed ToC, but did include a Results Monitoring Framework (RMF) with defined outcomes, activities and indicators (Annex P). The RMF did attempt to highlight how programme activities were envisaged to contribute to results of the programme.¹⁰⁷
56. In keeping, UNICEF Bulgaria envisions that an effort to tackle the problem of school violence would require a whole school approach and responses at multiple levels, including working with individuals (i.e., school staff, students and parents), groups (i.e., classes), schools and communities.
57. In keeping with the ProDoc, the components of the Programme include:
 - a. Increased awareness and enhanced sensitivity and willingness of school commitment to work on the problems of violence and bullying.
 - b. Increased management capacities of school principals and coordination councils to apply the whole school approach to prevent school violence and bullying.
 - c. Increased capacities and support of teaching staff to cope with their roles and functions related to preventing violence and bullying.
 - d. Increased capacities and work with students to prevent school violence and bullying.
 - e. Parental involvement in the process of creating a safe school environment to prevent violence and bullying.
 - f. Development of the school community and its engagement to establish a safe environment.
 - g. An engaged local community to establish a safe school environment.
58. The Steps Together Programme is meant to regulate the long-term objectives relevant to establishing a safe environment and prevention violence and bullying. Protection of children from all forms of violence, which is a fundamental right enshrined in the CRC, and included as a specific target in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In particular, SDG Target 16.2 aims to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. In addition, SDG Target 5.2 aims to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.¹⁰⁸

2.1. Programme Implementation in Five Pilot Schools

59. To support the implementation of the *Mechanism of Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institution of the Preschool and School Education System*, UNICEF, in partnership with MES, implemented the Programme on Prevention of Violence and Bullying in Schools – Step Together Programme.
60. The Steps Together Programme was implemented in five pilot schools – Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet - over the course of three school years, 2019-2022. The first school year, 2019-2020, was a preparatory year, and the second and third school years, 2020-2022, were for Programme implementation. School selection was completed in two phases. First, 13 schools were pre-selected using a questionnaire. Second, discussions were held with school staff, students and parents to explore their willingness, readiness and motivation to join the Steps Together Programme. Each school signed a decision by the pedagogical team to join the Steps Together Programme.

¹⁰⁶ UNICEF (2017). *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Bulgaria*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

¹⁰⁷ The ToC included detailed indicators for monitoring outcomes and outputs

¹⁰⁸ Retrieved on 1 June 2022 from: [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/)

61. The five pilot schools engaged in the Steps Together Programme were obliged to:
- Sign an Agreement for participation in the Steps Together Programme and perform activities within the framework of the Programme, under said Agreement.
 - Designate a Coordination Council for the purpose of the Steps Together Programme.
 - Participate in a baseline assessment of the situation of school violence and bullying [at the school level] prior to beginning Programme activities, as well as during Programme implementation and at the end of the Programme.
 - Introduce class activities in the school's education plan/curriculum and conduct a number of classes sufficient to cover the eight topics on preventing violence and bullying, promoting mental health and personal development within the framework of the Steps Together Programme (for each class of students).
 - Provide for the participation of Coordination Council members, teaching and non-teaching staff and student volunteers in training activities under the Steps Together Programme (about six days).
 - Introduce and apply methods to prevent and respond to violence and bullying, such as: peer support groups, conflict mediation and restoration of values, as necessary.
 - Work jointly with parents on a regular basis (a minimum of four topical meetings per school year) and involve parents in school life through various activities and by setting up a feedback system for parents to use.
 - Partner and exchange information and practices with other schools and organisations working on preventing and responding to VAC, personal development and the promotion of mental health.
 - Identify a space on school property that can be repurposed, and cooperate in the process of repurposing and maintaining the space so that it can be used to implement the goal of the Steps Together Programme. This could mean setting up and outfitting a relaxation area or a stress-free area for teachers and/or students, or outfitting a meeting room where various meetings and seminars can be conducted.
 - Conduct active communication on a bilateral basis with representatives of the Programme's management from UNICEF and MES, and other participants in the initiative (each month).
 - Participate actively in working meetings to plan, coordinate, assess and raise awareness about actions under the Steps Together Programme (each month).
 - Plan and implement a school policy on preventing and responding to violence and ensure mechanisms suitable for said implementation.
 - Participate in mid-term evaluation of the Programme's implementation and an external evaluation of the Programme (i.e., the evaluation being conducted at this time).
62. **Table 2** shows the number of classes and students engaged in the Steps Together Programme by region and type of school – primary school (grades 1-4), middle schools (grades 5-7) and high schools (grades 8-12). In total, an estimated 121-124 classes were engaged in the Programme, of which 21.5 percent were students in primary schools, 27.3 percent were in middle schools and 51.2 percent were in high schools. In addition, 2,963 students were engaged in the Programme, of which 21.7 percent were primary school students, 26.1 percent were middle schools students and 52.2 percent were high school students.

Table 2. Number of classes and students in pilot schools by region and type of school					
Region	Number	Elementary Education		Secondary Education	Total
		Primary School	Middle School	High School	
Iskar	No. classes	6	5	7	18
	No. students	124	92	131	347
Kustendil	No. classes	0	6	19	25
	No. students	0	156	472	628
Sofia	No. classes	16	11	20	47
	No. students	415	271	603	1,289
Teteven	No. classes	0	8	11	19
	No. students	0	185	230	415
Zavet	No. classes	4-6	3-4	5	12-15
	No. students	105	69	110	284
Total No. Classes		26-28 ^a (21.5%)	33-34 ^a (27.3%)	62 (51.2%)	121-124 (100.0%)
Total No. Students		644 (21.7%)	773 (26.1%)	1,546 (52.2%)	2,963 (100.0%)

^a Percentage is based upon the lowest number in the range; Source: UNICEF Bulgaria, 2022.

63. **Table 3** shows the number of teachers engaged in the Steps Programme by region and type of school. In total, 238 teachers were engaged in the Programme, of which 26.5 percent were teachers in primary schools and 73.5 percent were in middle and high schools. Teachers who teach in middle schools and high schools are typically one in the same.

Table 3. Number of teachers in pilot schools by region and type of school				
Region	Elementary Education		Secondary Education	Total
	Primary School	Middle School	High School	
Iskar	18	15		33
Kustendil	0	46		46
Sofia	34	66		100
Teteven	0	33		33
Zavet	11	15		26
Total No. Teachers	63 (26.5%)	175 (73.5%)		238 (100.0%)

Note: Teachers at middle and high schools are typically the same; **Source:** UNICEF Bulgaria, 2022.

64. Evidence and knowledge generated through implementation of different components of the Steps Together Programme are being used to inform the national policy framework on violence prevention and child protection in the education sector, and will support development of training packages and modules on the topic.

2.2. Mid-Term Evaluation of the Steps Together Programme

65. UNICEF established a process to monitor and assess expected results. For instance, in September 2021, UNICEF led a mid-term evaluation of the Steps Together Programme. The mid-term evaluation revealed that from September 2020 to September 2021, during the first year of Programme implementation, a solid foundation was laid both organizationally and methodologically to support the Programme's implementation in the five pilot schools. Activities accomplished in first year included:
- An entrance survey in each of the five pilot schools which was focused on the school environment and situations of violence and bullying.
 - UNICEF CO conducted workshops and trained school staff from the five pilot schools, particularly homeroom teachers and educators, who showed an interest in supporting the Steps Together Programme. This work continued into the second year of Programme implementation as well.
 - A process was set up with school mentors who would regularly monitor progress, receive feedback from participants and provide support to Coordination Councils and teachers.
 - School Coordination Councils became more involved in their role as Programme coordinating bodies in each of the pilot schools.
 - Work with parents was introduced, trainings were conducted to support community work and parent-teacher conferences were conducted in each of the pilot schools.
 - Pedagogical specialists were given support to overcome stress and occupational burnout.
66. In the second year of the Programme (2021-2022), the focus was on strengthening programme implementation in the five pilot schools. The second year included:
- Operationalize the mechanism for counteracting violence and bullying in the institutions in the system of pre-school and school education, as this was among the goals of the Programme.
 - Completion of trainings for homeroom teachers and educators, and delivery of refresher trainings.
 - Conduct workshops on all of the topics in the guide and practices of completing monitoring tools, including the facilitators' logbook and monitoring table, and gathering feedback from the pupils.
 - Formation of peace maker groups, and adoption of plans and activities for these groups.
 - Include Programme activities in annual plans and the guide for student activities.
 - Strengthen Coordination Councils, which would become a permanent body responsible for creating a secure school community and preventing school violence and bullying. This included delegating more tasks to the Coordination Council and encouraging involvement of male school staff, along with students and parents.
 - School mentors provided methodological support to schools and conducted workshops on student activities.

67. Recommendations in connection with filling in the facilitator's logbook and feedback from the workshops in which the student participated and the training in which teachers participated included:
 - a. Plans were adopted by school for working with parents and monitoring such plans at regular meetings of the Roditeli (Parents) Association.
 - b. Introduction of supervision and intervision and strengthening the recovery approach.
 - c. Conduct an exit survey to identify any changes in the current state of the school environment and situations of school violence and bullying.
68. The mid-term evaluation resulted in three recommendations, including: 1) people should be reminded that for monitoring purposes, filling in the facilitator's logbook should take place after finishing workshops; and 2) homeroom teachers should be encouraged, when they remind middle school and high school students to provide feedback, including what they like most and least about the Steps Together Programme, and what they have learned; and 3) encourage school staff at the primary level to work with parents to provide feedback.

3. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

3.1. Evaluation Purpose

69. The purpose of this evaluation of the Programme is to lead to improvements of the structure, implementation and quality of the Programme, and eventually to ensure its national scale-up and sustainability through its legal and administrative institutionalization and status budgeting. The Programme was established with UNICEF support in five schools in five different regions – Iskar, Kustendil, Sofia, Teteven and Zavet. The aim was to understand why and to what extent intended and unintended results were achieved and to analyse implications of the results.¹⁰⁹
70. The target audience, including primary expected users of this evaluation will be UNICEF CO and the MES, along with the pilot schools and schools who are interested in implementing the Programme in the future. Other users of this evaluation may include the ASA, MLSP and SACP. This evaluation will also be of interest to partner UN agencies and international financial institutions and donors that contribute to UNICEF results and wider UN system commitments, intended outcomes and efforts on the realization of children's rights and wider human rights commitments, including promoting gender equality and ending violence against women and girls.

3.2. Evaluation Objectives

71. The main objectives of this evaluation were to:
 - a. Assess and evaluate the Programme and its implementation, along with its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability, and, to the extent possible, its impact on teachers, students and parents.
 - b. Assess the Programme's equity and child rights perspective, both in terms of the capacities to reach out to and deliver support for prevention of violence and bullying in schools and ensure an environment of safe schools.
 - c. Identify the enablers and challenges for institutionalizing and scaling up the Programme nationally.
 - d. Examine integration of the Programme into school life and management in the five pilot schools.
 - e. Examine the impact of the Programme in schools and the *Mechanism for Countering Bullying and Violence in Schools*.
 - f. Provide recommendations for the process of institutionalizing and scaling up of the Programme nationally and actions that need to be taken to ensure quality and sustainable implementation of the Programme in the future.

3.3. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

72. Evaluation evidence was assessed using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) criteria¹¹⁰ of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, as well as partnerships and cooperation. In the early stages of evaluation design, in consultation with both the UNICEF Country Office (CO) and Regional Office (CO), the Lead Evaluator narrowed

¹⁰⁹ *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*, United Nations Evaluation Group, 2017, p. 10

¹¹⁰ Retrieved from: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

the focus of the evaluation questions and realigned them with evaluation criteria to ensure evaluability and depth of analysis and findings; in keeping evaluation questions were grouped into key questions and sub-questions. At the inception phase, it was decided that the evaluation should focus on the key questions.

73. Evaluation questions related to coherence included:

- a. Key Questions:
 - To what extent the Steps Together Programme supported the operationalization of the mechanism for countering bullying and violence in the institutions in the system of preschool and school education in the pilot schools?
- b. Sub-questions:
 - To what extent the Steps Together Programme was implemented in coherence with other programmes and interventions by UNICEF and MES, and carried out at national or regional levels in a manner that added value, while avoiding duplication of effort? Was there any duplication of effort?
 - Was the Steps Together Programme coordinated with school policies and violence prevention practices were established in pilot schools to encourage synergies and avoid overlap? Were there any overlap of efforts?

74. Evaluation questions related to relevance included:

- a. Key Questions:
 - To what extent the Steps Together Programme's objectives, strategies and activities are relevant and aligned with government priorities, policies and reform agendas related to prevention and response to VAC, specifically school violence and bullying?
 - To what extent the Steps Together Programme's approaches are evidence-based and correspond with, and address the actual needs of the whole school community – school staff, students and parents – in the pilot schools?
 - To what extent the Steps Together Programme's design and activities are appropriate for achieving the intended results and outcomes?
- b. Sub-questions:
 - To what extent is the Steps Together Programme integrated into school life and school management in the pilot schools?
 - To what extent was the Steps Together Programme able to adapt to changes, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to remain relevant?
 - Has the Steps Together Programme design and implementation been aligned with CRC principles (i.e., best interests of the child, non-discrimination, right to life and participation), gender mainstreaming and human rights-based approaches to programming? Did the Steps Together Programme contribute to gender-specific approaches?

75. Evaluation questions related to effectiveness included:

- 80. Key Questions:
 - Has the Steps Together Programme achieved the planned objectives? To what extent the objectives are realistic?
 - To what extent target groups have been reached? Did the Steps Together Programme manage to reach the whole school community in the pilot schools?
 - What factors affected the effectiveness of the Steps Together Programme and its impact on target groups, including the most vulnerable groups?
- 81. Sub-questions:
 - What are the key benefits for school staff, students and parents who participated in the Steps Together Programme? Are different groups, including the most vulnerable, benefiting to the same extent from the Steps Together Programme?
 - What factors were crucial to achieve the Steps Together Programme's objectives in the pilot schools?
 - Has the Steps Together Programme provided any additional (unintended) significant contributions to or effects on target groups, including on vulnerable families and children?
 - How effective were the capacity building activities targeting school staff and parents?

- What is the level of satisfaction of school staff, students and parents who benefit from the Steps Together Programme? What are their views for improving the Programme?

76. Evaluation questions related to impact included:

- a. Key Questions:
 - What impact has the Steps Together Programme had after two years of piloting? Are there any differences in impact among the five pilot schools?
 - To what extent did the Steps Together Programme contribute to capacity building of schools to support long-term positive changes in schools and reductions in level of violence and bullying in the pilot schools?
 - To what extent and in which areas the Steps Together Programme had significant impact? Are there any sub-group differences?
 - What factors favorably or adversely affected the impact of the Steps Together Programme on school staff, students and parents, including the most vulnerable?
- b. Sub-questions:
 - What are the transformative effects/potential of the Steps Together Programme in terms influencing school norms, school environment, levels of violence and bullying, and target groups' well-being, human rights and gender equality?
 - What worked and did not work to reduce inequities? What are the reasons for this?
 - To what extent did the Steps Together Programme contribute to increasing the demand for implementing a whole school approach to preventing violence and bullying in schools? Are there any differences in the impact in five pilot schools?
 - To what extent the Steps Together Programme is recognized by target groups in the five pilot schools?

77. Evaluation questions related to efficiency included:

- a. Key Questions:
 - How well the Steps Together Programme and its implementation was planned and managed?
- b. Sub-questions:
 - To what extent the available funds and expertise were used to implement the Steps Together Programme in the most efficient manner?
 - Would there have been a more cost-effective way to achieve the expected results?
 - To what extent data collection and monitoring activities performed by UNICEF and MES informed and contributed to improving implementation of Programme activities and achievement of results?

78. Evaluation questions related to sustainability included:

- a. Key Questions:
 - To what extent has UNICEF and MES been able to support pilot schools to ensure ownership of the Steps Together Programme?
 - What are the key factors that can positively or negatively influence the institutionalization and long-term financial sustainability of the Steps Together Programme?
- b. Sub-questions
 - Were the legal, institutional and financial mechanisms beneficial to ensure sustainability of the Steps Together Programme?
 - What specific recommendations could be given that would contribute to sustainability of the Steps Together Programme?
 - How sustainable are the results achieved in the five pilot schools?
 - Are there any steps planned or steps taken to ensuring sustainability and scale-up of the Steps Together Programme at the national level?

79. Evaluation questions related to partnerships and cooperation included:

- a. Key Questions:
 - To what extent have partnerships been sought and established, and synergies created to support the work of the Steps Together Programme?

- b. Sub-questions
 - Were efficient cooperation arrangements established between schools and local and national authorities?
 - Have any new partners emerged that were not initially identified?

3.4. Evaluation Scope

80. The evaluation focused on the five pilot schools – Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet – and covered the period of September 2019 to June 2022. The evaluation included perspectives and views of all relevant partners and stakeholders, including UNICEF CO personnel and school mentors, MES staff, members of the Roditeli (Parents) Association, and pilot school staff (i.e., school principals, school psychologists, pedagogical counsellors, teachers), students and parents who participated in and benefited from the Programme.
81. This evaluation also took into consideration challenges faced implementing the Programme during the COVID-19 global pandemic, which had a significant impact on implementation of planned activities. National measures taken to contain the spread of COVID-19 created enormous pressure on the capacities of schools to educate students. During the pandemic, face-to-face teaching and learning had to be replaced with online distance education and learning. The COVID-19 response became the main priority and captured most of the attention and capacities of state institutions. In light of this situation, the evaluation was sensitive to how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced and shaped Programme implementation, and led to the need to adapt and adjust to imposed restrictions and measures aimed at stopping the spread of COVID-19. Moreover, the global pandemic was ongoing at the time of the evaluation, although restrictions had been lifted.
82. Human and child rights-based and equity-based approaches guided the evaluation and data collection. Particular attention was paid to exploring human rights as the goal of the programme; taking into account the needs of school staff, students and parents. Attention was also paid to equity dimensions of the intervention. For UNICEF, equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias or favoritism. Equity-based evaluations provide assessments of what works and what does not work to reduce inequity, and highlights intended and unintended results for the most vulnerable groups, as well as inequalities in outcomes for vulnerable children and families. To the extent possible, access to quality support and outcomes for different subgroups of vulnerable children and families were explored in this evaluation, and the groups least reached will be identified.

4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

83. To ensure the evaluation approach was as thorough and reliable as possible, a mixed methods evaluation approach was developed to ensure systematic collection of data and information related to each of the evaluation criteria and questions. The primary sources of data and information was qualitative in nature.
84. The evaluation methods and data collection tools were developed for this evaluation were guided by the TOR and a preliminary desk review with input from the UNICEF CO. UNICEF helped to ensure that data collection tools were sufficient to meet the evaluation criteria.
85. During the inception phase, in consultation with both the UNICEF Country Office (CO) and Regional Office (CO), the Lead Evaluator narrowed the focus of the evaluation questions to key questions, which also required narrowing the evaluation matrix to focus on the key questions. During the evaluation, particularly during the data analysis and report writing phases, only the 15 key questions were focused on as agreed with UNICEF CO and RO, so the sub-questions were removed from the evaluation matrix (Annex F: Evaluation Matrix).
86. At the inception phase, the evaluation matrix included a total of 30 indicators related to the 15 key evaluation questions, of which 21 were qualitative indicators and 9 were quantitative indicators. During the data analysis and report writing phases, the evaluation matrix was slightly revised to include 34 indicators related to the 15 key questions, including 27 qualitative indicators and 9 quantitative indicators (two indicators that were both qualitative and quantitative indicators). Minor modifications to the indicators were made because during the inception phase only five programme documents were available for review, which made it difficult to draft indicators. During the data collection and analysis phases, the evaluation team came to better understand the Programme and data that were available. The minor modifications that were made to the indicators were done

to strength the evaluator's ability to effectively answer the evaluation questions and present the findings (see Annex Table F2 for an explanation of modifications made to indicators).

87. It was beneficial that majority of evaluation indicators were qualitative in nature given the complex nature of implementing a school-based programme during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were temporarily closed and learning shifted to online platforms, and people worked from home because of lockdown and social distancing measures. Qualitative indicators allowed the valuation team to fully understand how the programme was designed and implemented during the pandemic, and evolved and changed from the way it was originally envisioned to adapt to the needs of each of the pilot schools and their staff during the pandemic. Qualitative indicators allowed the evaluation team to more accurately understand and evaluation Programme implementation process, outcomes and challenges faced, among others. Unlike quantitative indicators, qualitative indicators do not strictly involve enumeration, which allows them to capture a much broader picture and nuisances related to the Programme's coherence, relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability. Ultimately, the indicators in the Evaluation Matrix enabled the evaluation team to get closer to project participants to understand more authentically their experiences in and with the Programme, and from different perspectives and vantage points. Coupled with the evaluation methods and data collection tools, the qualitative indicators allowed for a comprehensive, fair and unbiased evaluation of the Programme.

4.1. Desk Review

88. The evaluation began with a desk review of five relevant background documents¹¹¹ shared by UNICEF CO staff, including programme documents, a baseline and assessment report, relevant mechanisms or guidelines, and data related to the numbers of teachers, classes and students in each of the pilot schools. The desk review also included a review of other documents and reports on child protection and violence against children in Bulgaria, and recent Country Programme Documents (Annex A: References). Monitoring reports and documents were not shared with the evaluation team (and were only available in Bulgarian).
89. The desk review informed the development of the Inception Report which defined the evaluation purpose, scope and objectives, described the evaluation methods and ethical review process, and included the evaluation matrix, data collection tools and other relevant documentation to ensure that all questions and measures were related to the evaluation criteria and related questions. UNICEF CO staff were consulted to ensure programme documents were properly understood in terms of merit and use, and were used to inform the Inception Report. The Inception Report received a 'highly satisfactory' ranking during the quality assurance review.
90. The desk review was an important part of the evaluation. During the evaluation and finalization of the report, upon request from the lead evaluator, five additional documents was provided by the UNICEF CO to support the desk review¹¹², and was incorporated into the final evaluation report. Desk review materials were limited in number, but those that were available to the evaluation team were used, when appropriate, to draw triangulate findings and draw conclusions.

4.2. Inception Phase Consultations

91. Evaluations are typically characterized by extensive team engagement throughout the evaluation period, coupled with independent field assessments, data collection and analysis, and generation of findings and

¹¹¹ At the beginning of the evaluation, UNICEF CO provided several programme documents in English for the desk review. These included: 1) Steps Together Program Document with RMF; 2) internal assessment covering the period of September 2019 to September 2021; 3) *Mechanism of Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institution of the Preschool and School Education System*; 4) summary baseline report (executive summary) for the Steps Together Programme that described the different types of school violence and bullying; and 5) Excel spreadsheet of the number of teachers, classes and students from each of the pilot schools. The endline report for the Steps Together Programme was made available in English to the evaluator after the evaluation was completed and during the finalization of the report.

¹¹² During the evaluation, upon request of the lead evaluator, the UNICEF CO also provided: 1) a summary calendar of all capacity building trainings organized under the aegis of the Programme for school directors, coordination councils, mentors, teachers and school psychologists for the period of September 2020 to June 2022; 2) basic budget information for the Programme; 3) the SEES Programme Handbook for Prevention of Peer Violence for a Safe and Enable Environment in Schools, which was published by UNICEF Croatia in 2015, and was available in English; 4) summary of the endline report; and 5) UNICEF reporting on programme-related indicators.

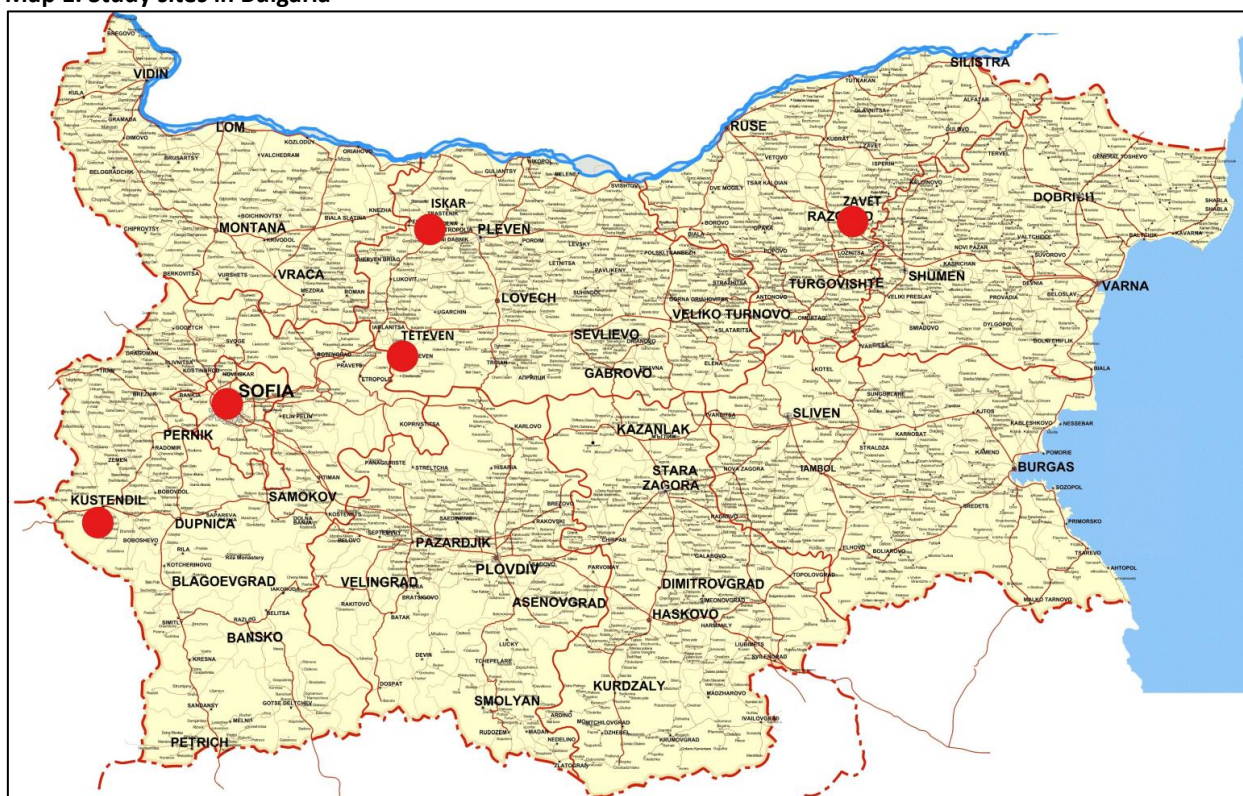
conclusions by the evaluation team to ensure independence and open discussion. Thus, UNICEF CO staff were involved in this process, including planning for the evaluation, determination of the evaluation methods and data collection tools, selection of sites to visit and key informants to interview, coordination and scheduling of interviews across each of the sites, and finalization of the Inception Report and Evaluation Report

92. During the inception phase, prior to beginning the evaluation and data collection in the field, several consultations with UNICEF CO staff occurred via Zoom. The focus was on planning for the evaluation, developing the evaluation methodology and data collection tools, and planning for the mission trip to conduct data collection in the field.

4.3. Study Sites

93. The evaluation did not aim to represent the entire country, but was conducted in Sofia (the capital city), Iskar, Kustendil, Teteven and Zavet (**Map 1**). The five cities/towns where UNICEF supported piloting the Programme, and where UNICEF and MES were located. Each of the five cities and towns where the pilot schools were located varied in population and demographics. Site visits and data collection in the field was conducted over a one-month period from 27 June to 23 July 2022. The International Consultant and National Expert conducted the evaluation simultaneously with different national partners, school staff, students and parents.

Map 1. Study sites in Bulgaria



94. In the study sites, a cross-section of duty-bearers and rights-holders were sampled. This included: UNICEF CO staff and school mentors; MES staff; members of the Roditeli (Parents) Association; school staff from each of the five pilot schools (i.e., principal, deputy principal, members of the Coordination Council, pedagogical counsellors, school psychologists and teachers); and students and parents from the pilot schools. A purposeful sampling approach was used to interview individuals who had knowledge of and/or experience with the Programme.

4.4. Data Collection Methods

4.4.1. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

95. A purposive sampling approach was used. In many cases more than one person was identified as a relevant contact in each of the different organizations, ministry and pilot schools. Given this reality, the evaluation approach involved conducting a combination of one-on-one and small group interviews. Small group interviews included two to four persons. Participation in KIIs was voluntary and those who participated were guaranteed confidentiality.
96. One-on-one interviews were conducted in those situations where there was one person in an organization, ministry and/or school that needed to be interviewed and/or in situations where a senior official/representative needed to be interviewed. One-on-one interviews were used in situations where individuals had an area of specialization and/or expertise that required a one-on-one interview. One-on-one interviews were also conducted if an interviewee requested.
97. Small group interviews of two to four persons were utilized when interviews need to be conducted with staff of the same rank in the ministry and schools, and school staff who worked together as a team (e.g., Coordination Councils). Small group interviews allowed for some degree of synergy and discussion on questions which allowed for more depth and perspective by groups from the same organization, ministry and school. Small group interviews allowed the evaluators to maximize their contact with a wide range of individuals from organizations, ministries and schools, identified as partners and key stakeholders by the UNICEF CO.
98. KIIs were conducted by the International Consultant and National Expert. To maximize coverage and inclusion of national partners and key stakeholders, the evaluators conducted most interviews separately. All interviews were conducted in the language of preference to interviewees. Most interviews were conducted in Bulgarian; however, some interviewees preferred to conduct the interview in English. The International Consultant worked with an interpreter in the field to conduct interviews in Bulgarian; UNICEF CO provide the interpreter.

4.4.1.1. UNICEF Interviews

99. An important component of this evaluation approach was to interview UNICEF CO staff and school mentors with working knowledge of UNICEF's support to establish and implement the Programme in the five pilot schools. One-on-one interviews were conducted with each of these individuals.
100. A structured interview questionnaire was used to guide interviews with UNICEF CO staff and school mentors (Annex I: UNICEF and MES Interview Questionnaire). The interview questionnaire included questions related to each of the evaluation criteria and questions. Questions were designed to capture historical perspective to the degree to which respondents had a historical perspective of UNICEF's support to the Programme. On average, interviews with UNICEF CO staff took about 1.5 hours to complete and were conducted in English.

4.4.1.2. National Partner Interviews

101. Another important component of this evaluation was to interview national partners, particularly MES staff and members of the Roditeli (Parents) Association, who had working knowledge of UNICEF's support to establish and implement the Programme in the five pilot schools. UNICEF CO staff identified two MES staff and two members of the Roditeli (Parents) Association who were interviewed; small group interviews were conducted with each in Sofia.
102. A structured interview questionnaire was used to guide these interviews (Annex I: UNICEF and National Partner Interview Questionnaire). The interview questionnaire included questions focused specifically on the evaluation criteria and questions. Questions were designed to capture historical perspective to the degree to which respondents had a historical perspective of UNICEF's support to the Programme. On average, interviews with national partners will take about one hour to complete.

4.4.1.3. Pilot School Staff Interviews

103. School staff from the five pilot schools who had working knowledge of UNICEF's support to establish and implement the Programme were interviewed. In each pilot school, the goal was to interview the principal and/or deputy principal, members of the Coordination Council, pedagogical counsellors and school psychologists. In addition, teachers who were actively involved in implementing the Programme were invited to participate in a one-on-one or small group interview, with the aim of gathering more detailed information from what was gathered during FGDs with school staff.
104. UNICEF notified each of the five pilot schools about the dates for the evaluation site visit and provided guidance as to which school staff the evaluators should interview. Still, however, participation will be voluntary.
105. A structured interview questionnaire was used to guide the interviews with school staff (Annex J: School Staff Interview Questionnaire). The interview questionnaire includes questions focused specifically on the evaluation criteria and questions. Questions were designed to capture historical perspective to the degree to which respondent's had a historical perspective of the Programme. On average, interviews with school staff take about 1.5 hours to complete.

4.4.2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

106. FGDs were conducted with separate groups of teachers, students and parents in four of the five pilot schools. Teachers invited to participate in the FGDs were those who engaged in the Programme and delivered programme activities to students and/or parents. In addition, students and parents who were beneficiaries of the Programme in four of the five pilot schools were invited to participate in the evaluation. A purposive sampling approach was used to determine which teachers, students and parents were invited to participate in FGDs.
107. Separate FGDs were conducted with teachers, students and parents. FGDs with students were further divided by age groupings of primary, middle and high school. School staff were asked to help organize the FGDs of teachers, students and parents by inviting them to come and participate in an FGD with the evaluators on a particular day and time.
108. FGDs with teachers were to be conducted by the International Consultant, whereas FGDs with students and parents were to be conducted by the National Expert. All FGDs were conducted in Bulgarian. The International Consultant worked with an interpreter in the field to conduct FGDs in Bulgarian; UNICEF CO will provide the interpreter and additional assistance for translation of some key information.

4.4.2.1. FGDs with Teachers

109. FGDs were conducted with teachers in four of the five pilot schools, excluding the pilot school in Zavet. A total of 10 FGDs were conducted with teachers in the four pilot schools (**Table 4**). More specifically, in Iskar and Sofia, three FGDs were conducted with teachers, including one FGD with primary school teachers and two FGDs with middle and high school teachers. In Teteven and Kustendil, two FGDs were conducted with teachers, including two FGDs with middle and high school teachers. The pilot schools in Teteven and Kustendil did not include primary schools. FGDs were not conducted with teachers at the pilot school in Zavet; instead, online interviews were conducted by the National Expert with teachers.

Table 4. Number of FGDs with teachers in pilot schools by region and type of school				
Region	Elementary Education		Secondary Education	Total
	Primary School	Middle School	High School	
Iskar	1	2		3
Kustendil	0	2		2
Sofia	1	2		3
Teteven	0	2		2
Zavet	1 (interview online)	3 (interview online)		0
Total No. FGDs	2	8		10

Note: Teachers at middle and high school levels are typically the same.

110. The *Teachers' FGD Guides* was developed to focus on the evaluation criteria and questions (Annex K: Teachers' FGD Guide). Informed consent was obtained from teachers who participated in the FGDs (Annex N: Consent Form for Parents/Guardians). Informed consent forms were collected prior to beginning the FGD. All teachers were informed about the purpose of the evaluation and that their confidentiality was ensured. They were also informed that the FGD will be audio-recorded with their consent. Each FGD take about one hour, sometimes longer.

111. In each school, school principals and coordination councils were asked to help identify teachers who were willing and able to participate in a FGD. The pre-selection criteria and guidance provided to schools was to identify teachers who participated in the Programme. FGDs with teachers took place in the school for purposes of teachers' comfort and well-being.

4.4.2.2. FGDs with Students

112. FGDs were conducted with students in four of the five pilot schools. A total of 17 FGDs were conducted with students in the four pilot schools (**Table 5**). In Iskar and Sofia, FGDs were conducted with students, including one FGD with primary school students and two FGDs with middle and high school students. In primary schools, only children in grades 3 and 4 (aged 9-10 years) were invited to participate in a FGD. In Teteven and Kustendil, four FGDs were conducted with students, including two FGDs middle school students and two FGDs with high school students. The pilot schools in Teteven and Kustendil did not include primary schools. Schools were instructed to make sure that students invited to participate in FGDs were from different grades and classes. FGDs were not conducted with students at the pilot school in Zavet for the aforementioned reasons.

Table 5. Number of classes and students in pilot schools by region and type of school					
Region	Number	Elementary Education		Secondary Education	Total
		Primary School ^a	Middle School	High School	
Iskar	No. classes	1	2	2	5
Kustendil	No. classes	0	2	2	4
Sofia	No. classes	1	2	2	5
Teteven	No. classes	0	2	2	4
Zavet	No. classes	0	0	0	0
Total No. FGDs		2	8	8	18

^a In primary schools, only students in grades 3-4 (aged 9-10) will be invited to participate.

113. The *Students' FGD Guide* was developed to focus on six thematic areas (Annex M: Students' FGD Guide):

- Familiarity with the Steps Together Programme
- How the Programme and activities were relevant to the school and them and their peers
- What impact Programme activities had on the school and them and their peers
- What they like best about the Programme and its activities
- What they did not like or would change or improve with the Programme
- What more they would like to do as part of the Programme

114. The FGD facilitator had prior experience conducting FGDs and interview with children, and used visualization techniques involving drawing and colouring to engage students to express themselves and to talk about the Programme.¹¹³

115. In advance of the FGD, parental informed consent was obtained from parents of students who participated in the FGDs (Annex L: Parental Consent Form for Children's Participation). Parental consent forms were collected prior to beginning the FGD. Each student was also asked to give verbal informed assent to participate using a standard script prior to starting the interview (Annex M: Children's Focus Group Discussion Guide). They were

¹¹³ These drawings and colouring were included in the first couple of FGD notes prepared by the National Expert; however, such drawings and colourings were not included thereafter, so the Lead Evaluator is not sure how they were used in the FGDs with students. The National Expert was not engaged in writing or finalizing the evaluation report, so more clarity cannot be provided by the Lead Evaluator who was the author of the report.

also informed about the purpose of the evaluation and that their confidentiality was ensured. Students were also informed that the FGD would be audio-recorded with their consent. Each FGD will take about one hour.

116. In each school, school principals and/or coordination councils were asked to identify students who were willing and able to participate in a FGD with the National Expert. The pre-selection criteria and guidance provided to schools was to identify students who were in grades 3-12 (aged 9-17) and had participated in the Programme, and are confident to participate in a FGD. Schools were instructed by UNICEF that the evaluation team did not want schools to select children who were disadvantaged or specifically vulnerable, or known to have experienced school violence or bullying.

117. FGDs with students took place in the schools for purposes of parents/caregivers and children's comfort and well-being. The evaluator at no point or time asked children about their personal experiences of violence or victimization, rather the focus of the FGD was on the Programme. No students became upset during the FGDs, but the evaluation team had protocols for how to handle situations if a student became upset during a FGD (i.e., to take a break so that the National Expert could talk with the child and engage a trusted adult at the school to support the child, such as a member of the coordination council or a trusted teacher who is present at the school at the time of the FGD).

118. At the end of all FGDs, students who participated were provided with a child-friendly leaflet that was prepared by UNICEF and schools, and distributed in the past as part of the Programme. Separate leaflets were prepared for each school, as the information for services in each region were different, except for the National Helpline for Children 116 111. The National Expert also read the following statement to all participants:

Disadvantaged children – Children under the age of 18 who come from homes that lack basic resources or conditions (e.g., standard housing, medical and educational facilities) believed to be necessary for an equal position in society. Disadvantaged children are more likely to attend poor-quality schools that lack the necessary resource to provide studies with adequate education.

Vulnerable children – Children under the age of 18 whose safety or psychosocial or physical well-being or development is at-risk due to inadequate care, protection or access to essential resources or services.

- a. *"Thank you for your cooperation. I know that some of these questions were personal and may have made you feel sad or upset. I am going to give you a leaflet with phone numbers of some places that you can contact in case you would like to speak with someone. You can reach out at any time and these services are free. We would suggest that you keep this leaflet somewhere safe where no one else will be able to find it. I can also directly link you to a school staff member who can provide some help and support. Would you like for me to do this for you?"*

4.4.2.3. FGDs with Parents/Guardians

119. FGDs were conducted with parents in four of the five pilot schools. A total of 10 FGDs were conducted with parents in the four-pilot school (**Table 6**). More specifically, in Iskar and Sofia, three FGDs were conducted with parents, including one FGD with parents of primary school students, one FGD with parents of middle school students and one FGD with parents of high school students. In Teteven and Kustendil, two FGDs were conducted with parents, including one FGD with parents of middle school students and one FGD with parents of high school students. The pilot schools in Teteven and Kustendil did not include primary schools. FGDs were not conducted with parents at the pilot school in Zavet.

Table 6. Number of classes and parents in pilot schools by region and type of school					
Region	Number	Elementary Education		Secondary Education	Total
		Primary School	Middle School	High School	
Iskar	No. classes	1	1	1	3
Kustendil	No. classes	0	1	1	2
Sofia	No. classes	1	1	1	3
Teteven	No. classes	0	1	1	2
Zavet	No. classes	0	0	0	0
Total No. FGDs		2	4	4	10

120. The *Parents' FGD Guide* was developed to focus on six thematic areas (Annex O: Parents FGD Guide):

- Familiarity with the Steps Together Programme
- How the Programme and activities were relevant to the school and parents and students
- What impact Programme activities had on the school and students
- What they like best about the Programme and its activities
- What they *did not* like or would change or improve with the Programme
- What more they would like to see as part of the Programme
-

121. Informed consent was obtained from parents who participated in FGDs (Annex N: Consent Form for Parents/Guardians). Informed consent forms were collected prior to beginning the FGD. All parents were informed about the purpose of the evaluation and that their confidentiality would be ensured. They were also informed that the FGD would be audio-recorded with their consent. Each FGD will take about one hour.

122. In each school, school principals and/or coordination councils were asked to help identify parents who were willing and able to participate in a FGD with the national research. The pre-selection criteria and guidance provided to schools was to identify parents of students who participated in the Programme in the primary, middle and high schools. Some students identified parents who were also teachers in the schools; however, once this was realized this approach of selecting parents was quickly rectified.

123. FGDs with parents took place in the school for purposes of parents' comfort and well-being. The evaluator at no point or time asked parents to speak publicly about their child's personal experiences with school violence or bullying, rather the focus of the FGD was on the Programme.

124. At the end of all FGDs, parents who participated were provided with a leaflet that was prepared by UNICEF and the schools, and distributed in the past as part of the Programme. Separate leaflets were prepared for each school, as the information for services in each region were different, except for the National Helpline for Children 116 111. The National Expert also read the following statement to all participants:

- "Thank you for your cooperation. I know that some of these questions were personal and may have made you feel sad or upset. I am going to give you a leaflet with phone numbers of some places that you can contact in case you would like to speak with someone. You can reach out at any time and these services are free. We would suggest that you keep this leaflet somewhere safe where no one else will be able to find it. I can also directly link you to a school staff member who can provide some help and support. Would you like for me to do this for you?"*

4.5. Sample

125. In total, this evaluation had 330 respondents or participants, including UNICEF staff and mentors, MES staff, schools staff, students and teachers. **Table 7** provides summary information about the sample of respondents, including UNICEF CO staff and mentors, MES staff and school staff. The sample included an estimated 126 respondents, of which 29.4 percent were high school teachers, 23.8 percent were middle school teachers and 12.7 percent were primary school teachers. In addition, 19.8 percent were members of the coordination councils and 5.6 percent were principals and/or deputy principals. Only 4.8 percent of respondent were UNICEF mentors, 2.4 percent were UNICEF CO staff and 1.6 percent were members of the MES. Nearly all respondents in Table 7 were female (91.3 percent); only 8.7 percent of respondent (n=11) were male.

Table 7. Sample of school staff, UNICEF staff and mentors, and MES staff by region and sex

Type of Respondent	Total Sample N=126	
	n	%
UNICEF CO staff	3	2.4
UNICEF mentors	6	4.8
MES	2	1.6
Principal/Deputy Princ.	7	5.6
Coordination Council	25	19.8
Primary School Teacher	16	12.7
Middle School Teacher	30	23.8
High School Teacher	37	29.4
Region		
Iskar	20	15.9
Kustendil	37	29.4
Sofia	37	29.4
Teteven	22	17.5
Zavet	10	7.9
Sex		
Female	115	91.3
Male	11	8.7

126. **Table 8** shows the sample of students and parents by region and grade levels (i.e., primary, middle and high school grades). A total of 143

students participated in 17 FGDs. The majority of students were middle school (35.7 percent) and high school students (44.0 percent), whereas fewer were primary school students (20.3 percent). Among the 143 students who participated in FGDs, 43 were male (30.1 percent) and 100 were female (69.9 percent) (**Table 9**).

127. In addition, a total of 61 parents participated in 9 FGDs. The majority of parents who participate in FGDs were female (93 percent); only four parents were fathers (**Table 9**). Fewer parents were engaged from the pilot school in Kustendil because the FGD was conducted online. No FGDs were conducted with parents from the pilot school in Iskar.

Table 9. Sex of students and parents sampled

	n	%
Students	143	100.0%
Female	100	69.9
Male	43	30.1
Parents	61	100.0%
Mothers	57	93.0
Fathers	4	7.0

Table 8. Sample of parents and students by region and grade level

Type of Respondent	Total Sample		Iskar	Kustendil	Sofia	Teteven
	n	%	n	n	n	n
Students	143	100.0	44	13	58	28
Primary school students	29	20.3	12	n/a	17	n/a
Middle school students	51	35.7	17	3	17	14
High school student	63	44.0	15	10	24	14
Parents	61	100.0	25	4	20	12
Primary school parents	22	36.0	8	n/a	14	n/a
Middle school parents	25	41.0	10	2	6	7
High school parent	14	23.0	7	2	0	5

4.6. Stakeholder Participation and Triangulation

128. The evaluators used a participatory approach that recognized national partners, key stakeholders and beneficiaries as important and active participants who contributed to the production of knowledge and understanding of the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability of the Steps Together Programme. In keeping, the evaluation team set out to collaborate with all national partners, key stakeholders and beneficiaries, including UNICEF CO management and staff. As part of the participatory approach, UNICEF CO staff oversaw the evaluation design and report writing processes, and guided and managed data collection in the field. In addition, national partners, key stakeholders and beneficiaries participate in the data collection process and asked to share their perspectives of and experiences with the Steps Together Programme.

129. Triangulation was also an important part of the evaluation approach to ensure not only the credibility of information and data collected, but also to allow diverse perspectives and experiences to be captured. Triangulation involved triangulating perspectives and experiences of UNICEF CO staff and mentors, MES staff, school staff (including school principals, coordination councils, psychologists and teachers, and specifically teachers of primary, middle and high schools), students (including primary, middle and high school students)

and parents (including parents of primary, middle and high school students). Each of these target groups saw and experienced the Programme from different vantage points. The International Consultation/Evaluation Lead undertook analysis and interpretation of data collected in the field as an opportunity to allow the diverse perspectives and experiences captured through triangulation to come to the forefront and to reveal the full influence of UNICEF's initiative to establish and support the Programme in the five pilot schools.

130. Triangulation allowed for a critical examination and analysis of information gathered and the synthesis of data in an objective manner. If contradictory information was obtained from stakeholders, effort was made to understand the reasons for such information, including sector and institution/agency differences in perspectives and experiences.¹¹⁴

4.7. Ethical Review

131. UNICEF CO sent the Inception Report for an external ethical review to ensure effective processes and accountability for ethical oversight, and to ensure that human subjects protections, including the protection of and respect for human and child rights, were incorporated into the evaluation methodology and data collection processes in keeping with *UNICEF Procedures for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis*.¹¹⁵

132. The ethical review was conducted by an external Ethics Review Board (ERB). The ERB was responsible for reviewing the evaluation methodology and data collection to ensure the following requirements were satisfied:
- Proposed evaluation approach is methodologically sound and designed to minimize risk to human subjects (participants).
 - Human subjects are not placed at undue risk, and any risks are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
 - Special protections are provided to special populations, including children.
 - Human subject's participation in the evaluation is voluntary.
 - Informed consent is sought from each human subject or the subject's legally authorized representative prior to their participation in the evaluation.
 - Informed assent is sought from children prior to their participation in the evaluation.
 - Relevant protection protocols are in place to ensure human subjects' protections and safety
 - Human subjects' safety, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity when possible, are maximized.
 - Data collection and analysis does not result in violations of confidentiality and/or anonymity

133. ERB reviewers paid attention to the following written elements of this Inception Report:
- Informed consent forms or guidelines
 - Protocols for the protection of subjects' safety
 - Protocols for the protection of subjects' identities
 - Protocols for the protection of collected data
 - Interview questionnaires and other data collection instruments, human subject recruitment plans, and any parts of the evaluation approach that are relevant to human subject protections.

134. ERB approval was obtained on 27 June 2022 (HML IRB Review #578BULG22). HML IRB is authorized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Research Protections (IRB#1211, IORG #850, FWO #1102).

4.8. Ethical Considerations

135. The evaluation followed *UNEG Norms and Standards and Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations*.¹¹⁶ In keeping, the evaluation was "conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment, for human rights and gender equality, and for the 'do not harm' principle for humanitarian assistance."¹¹⁷ In keeping with *UNICEF Procedures on Ethical Standards in Research,*

¹¹⁴ *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*. United Nations Evaluation Group, 2017.

¹¹⁵ *UNICEF Procedures for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis*, 2015. Document Number: CF/PD/DRP/2015-001

¹¹⁶ Retrieved from: <http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp> and <http://www.unevaluation.org/ethicalguidelines>

¹¹⁷ *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*. United Nations Evaluation Group, 2017, p. 11.

*Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis*¹¹⁸ principles of respect, beneficence, justice, integrating and accountability were integrated into the methodology, data collection and ethical procedures, and informed day-to-day decision-making during data collection in the field and as part of the data analysis and report writing process (**Box 1**).

Box 1. Five principles that informed evidence generation in this evaluation

1. **Respect** – This principle involves engaging with all stakeholders in a way that honours their dignity, well-being, participation and personal agency, and acknowledges any limitations of agency. This evaluation will be responsiveness to respondent’s sex/gender, age, background, ethnicity and ability, among others characteristics.
2. **Beneficence** – This principle means striving to do good for people while minimizing harms arising from evidence generation. This evaluation weighs the harms and benefits of data collection. Data collected will be purpose-driven (directly informed by the activity or benefit), proportional (only collecting what is required) and protective of children’s rights.
3. **Justice** – The principle of justice requires that consideration is given to those who benefit and those who carries the burden of evidence-generation, and the broader equity of the project, its implementation and outcomes. This evaluation will be “people-centric”, which means the needs, interests and expectations of people, including school staff, student and their parents/guardians will be prioritized by the evaluation team.
4. **Integrity** – This principle necessitates the active adherence to moral values and professional standards, which are essential for all evidence that is commissioned or undertaken.
5. **Accountability** – Is the obligation to be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken, and to be responsible for honoring commitments, without qualification or exception, as well as to report potential or actual harms observed through the appropriate channels. The principle includes accountability to relevant populations. This principle will be followed in keeping with the process of ethical review and international ethical standards of research and evaluation, including human subjects protections.

Source: *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*. United Nations Evaluation Group, 2017, p. 21.

136. In addition, the evaluation was conducted in an independent manner, with key elements of impartiality, objectivity, professional integrity and absence of bias at all stages of the evaluation process. Credibility was established as evaluation findings and recommendations were informed by and grounded in the use of the best available qualitative and quantitative data and analysis to meet organizational needs for learning and accountability.¹¹⁹

137. Special measures were put in place to ensure the evaluation process was ethical and that participants could openly provide information and express their opinions in confidence. Sources of information were protected and only known to the evaluators. In keeping with *UNEG Ethical Guidelines*, specific attention was paid to issues related to harm and benefits, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and exercising commitment to avoid conflicts of interest in all aspects of the evaluation, thereby “upholding the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility, honesty, integrity and accountability.”¹²⁰ Data was protected and coded so as to ensure anonymity.

138. All participants will be informed of the context and purpose of the evaluation, and guaranteed confidentiality. To ensure confidentiality, all interviewees were assigned a unique identification (ID) number at the time of the interview by the interviewer, and reassigned a new ID number at the time of data input by the International Consultant. In the evaluation report, only ID numbers are used to identify and differentiate among respondents. ID numbers and generic categories (e.g., school staff, students, parents) were used to identify and differentiate respondents.

¹¹⁸ UNICEF (2021). *UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis*. UNICEF: New York, NY USA. Retrieved on 30 May 2022 from: [Branded Procedure Template \(unicef.org\)](https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/Branded-Procedure-Template)

¹¹⁹ *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*. United Nations Evaluation Group, 2017.

¹²⁰ *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*. United Nations Evaluation Group, 2017, p. 21.

139. All interviews were saved in files with only the identification numbers assigned to them to further ensure confidentiality and stored in a password protected file.
140. Qualitative data are presented in the report in a manner that ensures anonymity and confidentiality, to ensure that respondents cannot be identified, particularly in the case of beneficiaries. This is especially important as it relates to beneficiaries to reduce the risk that their participation would impact their experiences in their schools. Still, however, the evaluators cannot fully guarantee that participation in this evaluation could have some negative effects.
141. The International Consultant/Lead Evaluator did not audio-record any interviews; rather, verbatim interview notes were typed directly into Word on a laptop by the International Consultant/Lead Evaluator during the interviews and cleaned immediately thereafter for accuracy. The International Consultant/Lead Evaluator has the skills needed to record verbatim interview notes in this manner, which is more efficient and just as effective as audio-recording interviews.
142. The National Expert audio-recorded some FGDs with the approval of participants, and took verbatim in other FGDs. All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and translated into English by the National Expert. The English version of all transcribed interviews were sent to the International Consultant/Lead Evaluator for analysis. UNICEF CO ensured that all audio-recordings were erased/deleted following completion of this evaluation.
143. All participants were informed of the context and purpose of the evaluation, after which they were asked to give informed consent to participate in the evaluation. They were informed of their rights as voluntary participants in the evaluation, including the right to confidentiality and that all data would be coded to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. UNICEF included in the Informed Consent Form a paragraph in accordance with Bulgaria's Child Protection Act¹²¹ regarding mandated reporting in the event that a child discloses risk or abuse unprompted by the interview. Participants were also informed that they had the right to decline participation in the evaluation without penalty, and could end their participation at any time and/or skip questions without penalty.
144. Universally recognized values and principles of human rights, gender equality and do no harm were integrated into all stages of this evaluation and respected by the evaluators.¹²²

4.9. Mitigation of Risk

145. Minimizing the risks of procedures incorporated several complementary components, including:
- Evaluation methodology provided sufficient detail to demonstrate how each data element contributed to the analysis plan to eliminate all unnecessary procedures and to minimize the risk of procedures
 - If children or other vulnerable groups were to become upset during a FGD, the FGD would be stopped and a school staff member would be invited to console and talk with the child.
 - Minimum data necessary for the evaluation was collected
 - Minimum number of identifiers were collected
 - Performed only procedures that were necessary to achieve the evaluation purpose and objectives
 - Took steps to ensure confidentiality to minimize risk to human subjects
 - Data were coded to conceal identifiers
 - Stored data was secured so that confidentiality of the subjects was preserved

4.10. Evaluation Team

146. This external evaluation was conducted by two consultants, including: Dr. Robin Haarr, International Consultant/Lead Evaluator, from the United States; and Ms. Dessislava Ilieva, National Expert, from Sofia, Bulgaria. Both the Lead Evaluator and National Expert have extensive experience conducting evaluations and

¹²¹ Article 7 (1) (amend. SG 120/02; suppl., SG 36/03 amend; SG 38/06) – A person who knows that a child needs protection shall oblige immediately to inform the directorate of the State Agency for Child Protection or the Ministry of Interior. (2) The same obligation shall have also each person to whom this has become known in connection with the profession or the activity exercised by him even if it is bound with professional secret.

¹²² *Norms and Standards for Evaluation. United Nations Evaluation Group, 2017, p. 12.*

interviewing children. The Inception Report, including the evaluation approach and data collection tools were developed by the Lead Evaluator, in consultation with UNICEF CO. UNICEF reviewed and approved the evaluation approach and data collection tools prior to beginning the evaluation (Annex D: Work Plan).

147. The evaluation was conducted between May and October 2022, with data collection in the field during the period of 27 June to 23 July 2022 (Annex E: Draft Itinerary for Data Collection in the Field). Prior to beginning data collection in the field, the Lead Evaluator provided guidance to the National Expert on the methodology, data collection tools and ethical procedures. The National Expert was responsible for reviewing the Inception Report to familiarize herself with the methodology, sampling framework, data collection tools, consent forms and ethical procedures.

148. Following data collection in the field, data analysis and report writing was led by the Lead Evaluator. In addition, finalization of the evaluation report was carried out by the Lead Evaluator, following review and feedback from UNICEF CO and MES. The evaluation report was validated in a validation meeting with UNICEF CO and MES.

149. The Lead Evaluator was responsible for managing and leading the evaluation team, including: designing the evaluation methodology and tools; data collection and analysis; drafting and finalizing the Inception and Evaluation Reports; and presenting the Evaluation Report at the validation meeting.

150. Specific tasks for the International Consultant included:

- a. Desk review of all relevant programme documents and reports, previous studies and research, and other relevant documents
- b. Develop and provide methodological guidance for the team with regard to methodology and data collection tools development, and defining the overall direction of data analysis and quality assurance
- c. Manage the evaluation workplan
- d. Maintain coordination and communication with UNICEF CO
- e. Lead evaluation planning and implementation processes
- f. Lead and undertake the data collection in the field, with support from the National Expert
- g. Lead data analysis and report writing
- h. Lead presentation of evaluation findings and recommendations to UNICEF CO and MES

151. Specific tasks for the National Expert included:

- a. Desk review of all relevant programme documents and reports, previous studies and research, and other relevant documents.
- b. Implementation of the agreed upon evaluation methodology, data collection tools and ethical guidelines/procedures as spelled out in the Inception Report, in cooperation with the International Consultant.
- c. Implement the agreed upon evaluation work plan and field visit schedule, in cooperation with the International Consultant.
- d. Maintain regular communication and coordination with the International Consultant and UNICEF CO
- e. Undertake the data collection in the field, as spelled out in the Inception Report, in cooperation with the International Consultant.
- f. Participate in the validation meeting.

4.11. Data Management and Analysis

152. Data were coded and analyzed using grounded theory.¹²³ Grounded theory allowed data collection and analysis to occur simultaneously, strengthening both the quality of data and analysis. As data collection and analysis progressed, and preliminary findings began to emerge, the evaluators were able to identify and explore emerging themes, such as results achieved, lessons learned, challenges encountered and adjustments made.

153. All data from interviews and FGDs were saved in Word files. The National Expert and Lead Evaluator were responsible for managing their own interview and FGD notes in Word. Verbatim transcribed and translated FGD notes in English were sent to the Lead Evaluator for data analysis. All data were stored in a password protected files and computers.

¹²³ Glaser, B. & A. Strauss (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Sociology Press: Mill Valley, CA, USA.

154. KIIs and FGDs conducted by the evaluation team generated more than 550 pages of interview and FGD data. These data were extremely important to this evaluation, as they represented the voices of the ‘duty-bearer’ and ‘rights-holders’, and revealed their perspectives of and experiences with the Programme, and insights into how the Programme was implemented in each of the school. The plethora of data also allowed the lead evaluator to triangulate findings by type of respondents (UNICEF CO staff, mentors, MES staff, school staff, students and parents) and schools (e.g., primary, middle and high school), and where possible, data were triangulated with information garnered from the desk review.
155. Qualitative data from open-ended questions, where were the majority, were coded based upon themes and sub-themes, and analyzed for patterns by the lead evaluator, in keeping with the evaluation criteria and questions. Quantitative data collected from several close-ended questions (scale questions) were coded and input into SPSS by the lead evaluator, and analysed using analysis of means. Both the qualitative and quantitative data allowed for an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the Programme and its coherence, relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability, and lack thereof. This includes progress made toward expected outcomes. The Lead Evaluator lead all of the qualitative and quantitative data analysis.
156. Data analysis focused on answering the key evaluation questions related to relevance, coherence, impact, effectiveness and sustainability. Interview and FGD data also provided a more comprehensive understanding the Programme, including from the perspectives of school staff, students and parents, as well as d school mentors, UNICEF CO staff and MES. Data were also analyzed to understand similarities and differences in Programme implementation and results among the five pilot schools, and challenges and bottlenecks faced and overcome by the schools.
157. The Lead Evaluator lead the report writing process. Reports were prepared according to the *UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standards*¹²⁴, as per the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS).

4.12. Evaluation Limitations and Mitigation Measures

158. There were several limitations that hindered the evaluation process. Most notable were:
- An evaluability assessment with all the partners was not conducted.
 - Mitigation measure:* Despite the lack of an evaluability assessment and some data gaps there was available information to conduct a summative and formative evaluation.
 - Not all programme implementation and monitoring documents and reports were made available to the evaluation team, nor were they available in English.
 - Mitigation measure:* UNICEF was asked to extract data from Programme monitoring documents that were not made available to the evaluation team to report on RMF indicators (Annex Q: UNICER Reporting on Programme-Related Indicators).
 - The evaluation did not aim to represent the entire country or all schools in the country.
 - Mitigation measure:* The focus was on the five pilot schools in Iskar, Kustendil, Sofia, Teteven and Zavet where UNICEF supported piloting the Programme, and where UNICEF and MES are located.
 - There were limitations as to the lack of administrative data on school violence and bullying in Bulgaria, even in the five pilot schools.
 - Mitigation measure:* This constrained an analysis of the impact of Programme; there was no way for the evaluation team to mitigate this risk.
 - The school year ended at the end of June 2022, which served as a challenge to the evaluation team because data collection the field occurred during the one-month period of 27 June to 23 July 2022.
 - Mitigation measure:* All steps were taken to mitigate this risk by working in cooperation with UNICEF and each of the pilot schools to organize site visits and the coordination and participation of school staff, students and parents, based upon their availability.
159. There were no apparent biases that arose during the evaluation.

¹²⁴ UNICEF (2017). *UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards*. UNICEF: New York, NY, USA.

160. As it related to meeting safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, at the time of this evaluation the Government of Bulgaria did not have any restrictions or protocols related to COVID-19 as Bulgaria was officially in the green zone. There were no face mask or social distancing requirements.

5. EVALUATION FINDINGS

161. Findings are presented by each of the evaluation criteria related to coherence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Findings are presented so that readers know the characteristics of respondents quoted throughout the findings section. Respondents are identified as school staff, teachers, students and parents. School personnel include school principals and deputy principals, school psychologists and members of the school coordination council. A unique number associated with each respondent is also provided; this makes it clear which respondents are quoted throughout the findings section. More than one unique number may be associated with a quote because there were sometimes two to four people in a small group interview and all respondents agreed with the statement or perspective, so they were also recognized as associated with the quote. Region is also identified for each respondent.

5.1. Coherence

5.1.1. To what extent the Steps Together Programme supported the operationalization of the mechanism for countering bullying and violence in the institutions in the pilot schools?

162. The Programme was squarely aligned with the national priorities of the Government, particularly MES. Prior to developing the Programme, MES recognized that school violence and bullying was an issue that needed to be addressed through prevention and intervention. In 2016 and 2017, MES reported more than 8,000 cases of violence and bullying in schools, of which 4,500 involved physical and verbal aggression. On average, there were an estimated 30 incidents of school violence per day.¹²⁵ MES was also documenting an increase in online peer bullying; in 2016, online bullying comprised 38 percent of all cases of school violence (up from 25 percent in 2010).¹²⁶

163. In 2019, an Expert Group was established in the MES to develop a whole school approach for creating a safe environment in schools and to prevent school violence and bullying. In response, UNICEF-supported MES to develop and pilot this Programme to support schools in their efforts to implement the *Mechanism of Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institutions of the Preschool and School Education System* and to support MES's policy on inclusive education.

164. The *Mechanism* offers a policy framework for prevention and intervention against school violence and bullying, which aims to assist educational institutions in their efforts to create a safe education environment. The *Mechanism* includes the development of a system of measures for achieving a safe education environment, which includes establishing school-based coordination council's responsible for planning, monitoring and assessment of efforts to cope with school violence and bullying. In each school, the coordination council should be headed by a vice-principal and/or another teaching specialist designated by the school director, with membership of a school psychologist and/or pedagogical counsellor, teachers, children and parents. Coordination councils are responsible for preparing and implementing a plan of prevention and intervention against school violence and bullying. The action plan should include prevention activities at the institutional (school community) level, as well as at the classroom (group) level (e.g., educational activities, child-centered and peer-support approaches), and to work with parents.

165. After the *Mechanism* was established and introduced, it became apparent that schools needed capacity building, technical assistance and tools to implement the *Mechanism*. In response, UNICEF and MES jointly developed the Steps Together Programme that offers a whole school approach to creating a safe school environment that would help to prevent school violence and bullying, and choose to pilot the Programme in five schools as a three-year comprehensive programme. The plan was that lessons learned from the three-year pilot project would lead to good practices that could be used to inform the next steps and scale-up the Programme in all schools across Bulgaria.

¹²⁵ Together against violence in schools. Retrieved on 30 August 2022 from: [Together against violence in schools | UNICEF](#)

¹²⁶ Ibid.

166. In the pilot schools, coordination councils recognized that the Programme made it easier to recognize violence and helped to make members of the coordination councils more aware of the *Mechanism*. Coordination council members also pointed out that the Programme's methodology provides them with better approaches to resolving school violence and bullying. There were some coordination council members who thought that the Programme is actually better than the official *Mechanism*. Some respondents even felt that the MES needs to reform the *Mechanism* to align with the Steps Together Programme to be more meaningful.

5.2. Relevance

5.2.1. To what extent the Steps Together Programme's objectives, strategies and activities are relevant and aligned with government priorities, policies and reform agendas related to prevention and response to VAC, specifically school violence and bullying?

167. The Steps Together Programme is aligned with UNICEF's Country Programme 2018-2022, which focuses on supporting Bulgaria in its efforts to enable all children and adolescents, including the most disadvantaged, to enjoy their rights and to develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society. The realization of the right of every child to live free from violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices is a cross-cutting element in UNICEF's Country Programme. The Programme is also in line with Bulgaria's national priorities as identified in the National Development Programme Bulgaria 2030 and regional priorities identified in the Europe 2030 Strategy¹²⁷, European Commission Recommendation "Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage"¹²⁸, and the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021 and 2022-2027).¹²⁹ The Programme is also aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹³⁰ and UNICEF's Global Strategic Framework 2018-2021 and 2022-2025.¹³¹

5.2.2. To what extent the Steps Together Programme's approaches are evidence-based and correspond with, and address the actual needs of the whole school community – school staff, students and parents – in the pilot schools?

168. The Steps Together Programme was evidence-based and modeled after a similar programme, entitled 'For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools' (SEES), which was designed and implemented in Croatia with full support from UNICEF Croatia from 2003-2011.¹³² The SEES Programme focused on prevention of peer violence and bullying for a safe and enabling environment in schools. To support the SEES Programme, UNICEF Croatia developed a handbook for teachers, school associates and principals involved in the development of the SEES Programme that was. In 2015, the Handbook was published by UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and has served as an evidence-based model for other schools in the region.

169. UNICEF adapted the SEES Programme Handbook to the national context of Bulgaria to support the development and implementation of Bulgaria's Steps Together Programme. UNICEF contracted a national consultant to adapt the SEES Programme Handbook to the national context of Bulgaria. The Handbook developed to support Bulgaria's Programme was an abridged version of the SEES Programme Handbook, but was aligned with the SEES Programme Handbook developed by UNICEF Croatia. It was beneficial that the SEES Programme Handbooks was remarkably similar to was needed in Bulgaria to implement the Steps Together Programme.

170. From December 2020 to January 2021, UNICEF organized a series of trainings for mentors and pilot school staff on the Steps Together Programme, but also engaged the author of the UNICEF Croatia SEES Programme Handbook, in an effort to develop support for the Steps Together Programme and the Programme's approach

¹²⁷ A Sustainable Europe by 2030. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [A Sustainable Europe by 2030 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹²⁸ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [European Commission Recommendation: Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage – 20 February 2013](#) | Save the Children's Resource Centre

¹²⁹ Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [16809f03eb \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/e/children/strategy/strategy_en.asp); The new Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) adopted by the Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe Portal, 24 February 2022. Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [The new Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2022-2027\) adopted by the Committee of Ministers - Newsroom on Children's Rights \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/e/children/strategy/strategy_en.asp)

¹³⁰ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [The Sustainable Development Agenda - United Nations Sustainable Development](#)

¹³¹ Retrieved on 31 May 2022 from: [UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 | UNICEF and UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025 | UNICEF.](#)

¹³² UNICEF (2015). *Programme Handbook. Prevention of peer violence – For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools*. UNICEF Regional Office for the Central and Eastern Europe and its Commonwealth and independent State: Geneva, Switzerland.

to establishing a safe school environment and to prevent school violence and bullying (see Annex Q for information about the number of trainings conducted and number of school staff reached by these trainings)..

171. UNICEF's support to develop the Programme has been in line with the needs of schools in Bulgaria, which had problems with violence and bullying. In fact, the Programme corresponded with and addressed the actual needs of the whole school community and made possible their ability to implement the *Mechanism of Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institutions of the Preschool and School Education System*.

172. To address the actual needs of the schools, UNICEF assigned a mentor to each of the pilot schools to build their capacities and provide them with technical assistance when it came to implementing the Programme.¹³³ Each mentor was capacitated by UNICEF to provide school staff with capacity building and technical assistance to implement the Programme. In the first year of the programme, the five mentors included three women and two men; in the second year, there were four female and one male mentors. Each of the pilot schools found their mentors to be extremely helpful. Pilot schools typically had weekly and/or monthly online sessions with their mentors which they found to be remarkably helpful because it was a new environment and new way of working with a whole school approach to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying. See Annex Q for basic data on the numbers of trainings conducted related to each activity and outcomes, with some disaggregation by sex and school.

173. School staff recognized and appreciated the support provided by mentors. Some school staff felt that the talks they had with their mentors was an opportunity to share their concerns and challenges. In this way, the Programme had a positive impact on teachers and in relation to their work with students, which had a positive change on school life and management. When asked, 'What if the mentor was not there to support you?' Coordination councils members explained, "It would have been more chaotic and we would not have felt confident that we could have these accomplishments with the students. Maybe we would not have been that strict in terms of implementing the programme."¹³⁴

"One of the best things was the interaction with our mentor; we received a lot of support from our mentor. Almost every week we had online sessions and once a month had a meeting of everyone from the Coordination Council . . . This was a valuable experience for me . . . I would definitely continue applying this programme. It was very successful with the regular parents meetings, as I applied the plan of the Parents Association. It was a very inspiring experience for everyone including the parents and myself." (60, Coordination Council)

174. School principals also recognized that the support provided by mentors helped them to better understand their role and how they can address and overcome challenges encountered with students and parents, and specific actions to take when violence and/or bullying occurs. In addition, when teachers were faced with challenges and had a specific case, they were assisted by the mentors. When school principals were asked, 'What if the mentor was not there to support you?' They explained that "it would have been different if we didn't have a mentor because the system suffers from a very serious deficit."¹³⁵ Thus, school principals appreciated the support, advice and guidance that they received from mentors, such as helping them to see and understand problems or issues with students and parents from a different perspective.

175. Middle school teachers also appreciated being able to talk with the mentor when they had a difficult situation. They would discuss the difficult situation with the mentor and the mentor would provide them advice and guidance on how to handle the situation, including specific approaches that they could take to address the situation. In general, coordination councils met with their mentors at least once a month. Likewise, high school teachers also appreciated that mentors enabled them to enrich their experience and to see things from a different perspective.

176. UNICEF mentors found that school staff typically lack the capacities to intervene and respond to incidents of school violence and bullying, so the Programme offered school staff with opportunities to learn how to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying in schools in ways that were evidence-based and benefited the

¹³³ The pilot school was eventually provided with two mentors given the size of the school.

¹³⁴ 90-97, Coordination Council

¹³⁵ 88, 89, School Principal/Deputy Principal

whole school. Another mentor described the Programme as relevant because there is no other programme of this type in schools in Bulgaria, and schools need to be more aware of what is violence and bullying, and to be able to recognize the different forms of violence and bullying. Some teachers even liked the Programme because it offers students a toolkit to recognize bullying and violent behaviour, and to know how to ask for help and to speak out about school violence and bullying.

"I was impressed with the enthusiasm that my students put into learning to work in a team, listen to each other and learn from each other's viewpoints, and as a result of long discussions, when they have already agreed on the rules, I can see how happy they are with the achievement . . . Now that they already have the ground rules in place they feel more confident in a safe environment, this may be due to the rules and all the discussion about the environment." (Teachers)

177. Ultimately, school staff described the Programme as relevant because everyone was engaged, including teachers, students and parents. They felt that everyone in the school was working together to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying, in ways that had not been done before, and this was a notable achievement for everyone in the schools. In each of the pilot schools, teachers felt that the Programme was applicable and relevant to the youngest and middle school students; in part, because Programme materials helped teachers to encourage children to open up and share their emotions and pains. They recognized that the Programme was especially useful because it was based upon empathy, which is important to relationships among children, and they felt that children benefited significantly from learning how to recognize their own emotions, as well as those of others.

178. In Kustendil, school staff felt that the programme helped to create a more united school community and to improve relations between school staff and students, as well as with parents. Form teachers did their best to follow and implement the Programme's steps as designed through workshops with students and events with informal communications and role play; this helped students to better know and understand each other. Teachers recognized, however, that when they first started implementing the Programme that children were not very responsive, but over time students became more interactive and were able to share their common viewpoints.

"The most meaningful aspect of the whole school approach has been that students and teachers opened up a different space to discuss not only studies . . . [and] students saw their teachers in a different light, as a human being." (137, Mentor)

5.2.3. To what extent the Steps Together Programme's design and activities are appropriate for achieving the intended results and outcomes?

179. As evidenced by the findings in this report, the Steps Together Programme's design and activities were appropriate for achieving the intended results and outcomes. In fact, the Steps Together Programme Document (ProDoc) had a RMF with defined outcomes, activities, and indicators (Annex P: Steps Together Programme RMF). The RMF was ambitious and included a remarkable number of outcomes to which UNICEF and MES were focused on accomplishing. There were 32 outcomes identified in the RFM, including 10 outcomes planned for the 2019-2020 school year (i.e., preparation stage preceding full implementation of the Programme), 22 outcomes planned for the 2020-2021 school year (i.e., Year 1 of the full implementation of the Programme) and one outcome planned for 2021-2022 school year (i.e., Year 2 of the full implementation of the Programme). The RMF also included an ambitious list of 36 activities that were envisaged to contribute to the Programme's outcomes.¹³⁶ For the 32 outcomes and 36 activities there were 52 indicators, of which 37 were quantitative indicators (e.g., number of meetings, number of volunteers) and 15 action indicators (e.g., decision taken at a teachers council, decision of the coordination council reached). The indicators evidence the number of activities and actions, but did little to demonstrate evidence results or progress made toward the 32 different outcomes (Annex Q: UNICEF Reporting on Programme-Related Indicators).

180. The RMF for the Steps Together Programme was largely activities driven. Although the Programme was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF and MES were able to accomplish most of the planned activities within the timeframe planned (2019-2022), although it was a challenge. UNICEF Programme staff and mentors

¹³⁶ The ToC included detailed indicators for monitoring outcomes and outputs

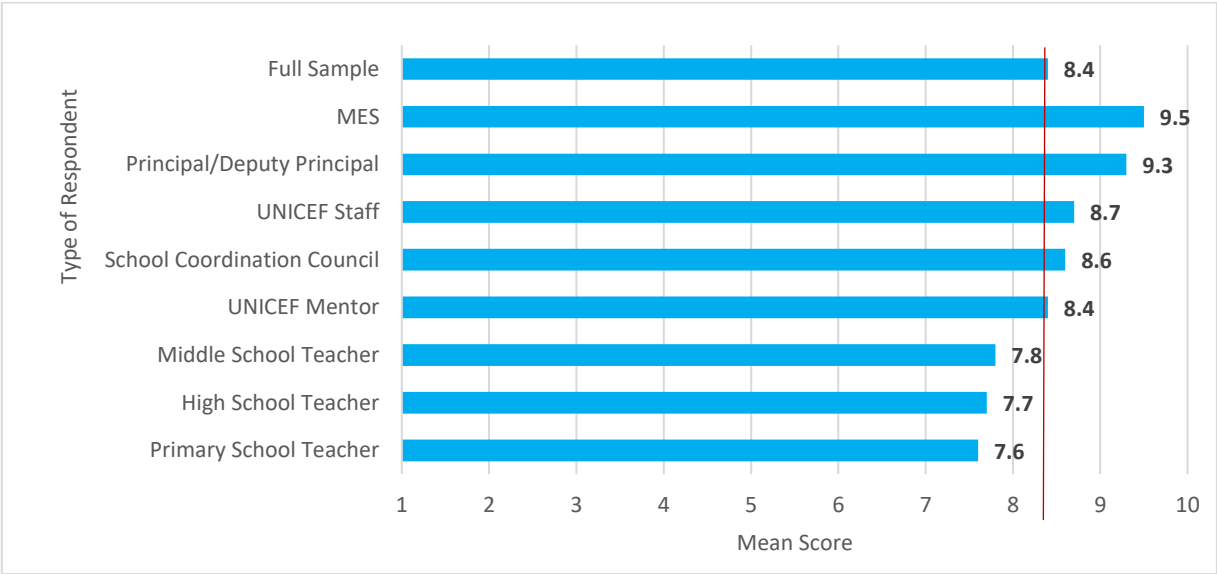
worked tirelessly to ensure the Programme was a success, and worked closely with MES and schools to pivot and adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic.

181. The Programme lacked a clear and comprehensive ToC, but this did not hinder the work or achievements of UNICEF or MES to successfully implement the Programme. If, however, UNICEF plans to continue to invest in the Programme to support MES to scale up the Programme to all schools in Bulgaria, UNICEF and MES would benefit from working together to develop a clear and comprehensive ToC for the Programme. For instance, a ToC with clearly identified components and a causal chain of high-level changes, along with intermediate changes will help to guide the way forward for both UNICEF and MES. A well-developed ToC will also help to support the change process and key priorities, and would help to identify assumptions, risks and bottlenecks that may hinder progress toward planned changes and change strategies, and would need to be mitigated (Annex S: Model for Development of a Theory of Change).

5.2.4. To what extent is the Steps Together Programme integrated into school life and management in the pilot schools?

182. In each of the pilot schools, the Programme was integrated into school life and management to varying degrees. In an effort to document this, respondents were asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 10 (1=not important to 10=very important), how important the Programme has been to preventing school violence and bullying. **Chart 2** shows that the majority of respondents thought the Programme was very important to preventing school violence and bullying. **On average, the full sample of respondents ranked the Programme as an 8.4 on a 10-point scale.** More specifically, representatives from MES (mean=9.5) and principals/deputy principals (mean=9.3) were most likely to report the Programme as very important to preventing school violence and bullying. This was followed by UNICEF staff (mean=8.7), coordination council members (mean=8.6) and UNICEF mentors (mean=8.4). In comparison, middle school teachers (mean=7.8), high school teachers (mean=7.7) and primary school teachers (mean=7.6) were less likely to rank the Programme as very important to preventing school violence and bullying.

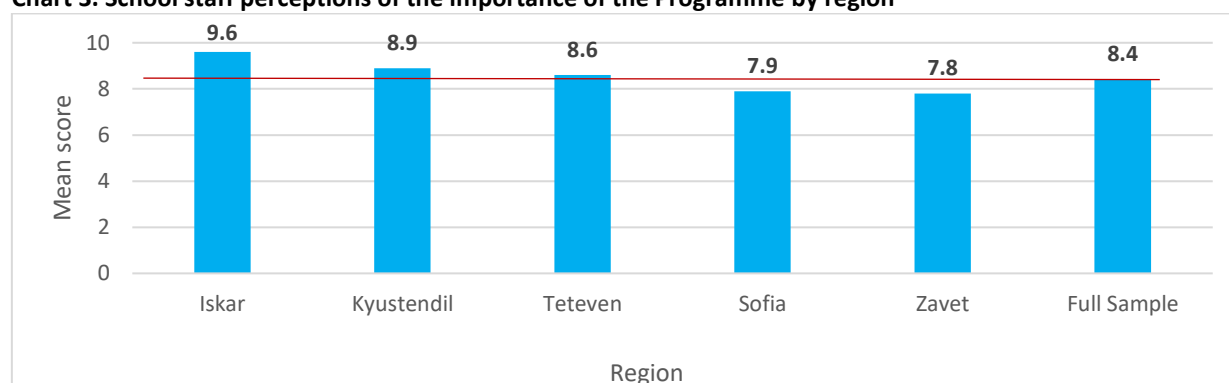
Chart 2. Importance of the Programme to preventing school violence and bullying by type of respondent



Note: 1=Not Important to 10=Very Important

183. **Chart 3** shows mean differences in school staff’s perceptions of the importance of the Programme to prevent school violence and bullying by region. School staff included principals/deputy principals, coordination council members and teachers. On average, the full sample of school staff ranked the Programme as an 8.4 on a 10-point scale. More specifically, school staff from Iskar (mean=9.6) were most likely to report the Programme was very important to preventing school violence and bullying, followed by school staff from Kustendil (mean=8.9) and Teteven (mean=8.6), whereas school staff from Sofia (mean=7.9) and Zavet (mean=7.7) were less likely to rank the Programme as very important to preventing school violence and bullying.

Chart 3. School staff perceptions of the importance of the Programme by region



Note: 1=Not Important to 10=Very Important. Mean scores are based only on responses of school staff, including principals/deputy principals, members of School Coordination Councils and teacher.

184. Respondents were asked why they gave the Programme a particular ranking; responses varied among UNICEF mentors and school staff. For instance, UNICEF mentors saw that the Programme fits very well with the needs of schools and gives school staff concrete ways and opportunities to deal with school violence and bullying. Similarly, mentors recognized that although not all teachers in the pilot schools were engaging in the Programme, they found that those who were engaged recognized that the Programme was important.

185. Some mentors ranked the Programme an 8 on a 10-point scale because while they recognized that the Programme was implemented in systematic way and integrated into school life and management, even school violence and bullying, they also understood that teachers are mandated to teach many topics, leaving them little time for the Programme's curriculum. Some mentors also felt that the Programme needed some adjustment to be more efficient; in other words, the preparatory process should be longer because teachers need more capacity building to implement the Programme.

"I believe it is a key programme. We should start thinking about these matters as early as possible and be aware that our 1st to 3rd graders will go to a middle school where the level of aggression is much higher, so we need to start planning ahead of time." (Primary Teacher)

186. In comparison, school staff who ranked the Programme a 10 on a 10-point scale felt that the Programme had made a huge difference, particularly when they compared the past to the present. When asked to identify tangible differences from before and after implementation of the Programme, one respondent explained,

a. *"There is a more united spirit across the school . . . Diminishing or deleting the dividing line that existed between the teacher and the student. Traditionally, we have had a strong dividing line between teachers and students, and now we have a break through and we are pulling it down. They no longer see us as a teacher, but people who they can approach when they need help solving their issues. This is a very important achievement. My parents are even approaching me when they need help, they approach more for feedback when an incident has occurred, they approach me to tell them from my perspective."¹³⁷*

187. There were teachers who appreciated that the Programme helped them, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown to rebuild their students' relationships and to build them back stronger. They recognized that the Programme helped students to rediscover each other and to learn the importance of the school's rules. At the same time, teachers pointed out that they do not have enough time to implement the Programme. Some teachers tried to adjust their other classes to extend the amount of time that they could spend on the Programme, because they recognized that children need more time to learn the lessons and to apply what they learned in the classroom.

188. One coordination council member ranked the Programme an 8 on a 10-point scale because they would have liked to receive more support from the Parents Association. The Parents Association was a recognized organization, given the fact that they conducted a mapping of the collaboration between parents and schools

¹³⁷ Coordination Council

for the MES, and developed a framework for this work which UNICEF incorporated into the Programme. Schools, however, expected practical guidance from the Parents Association, but some schools felt that they did not receive the practical guidance they were expecting, and was tailored more to younger students. Still, however, most coordination council members appreciated support provided by the Parents Association, particularly as it related to the guidance provided on ways to approach and communicate with parents.

"It was indeed a very important programme with respect to prevention of violence. I would say that the level of violence has dropped. It is always reassuring when you have sessions with experts that you develop confidence that you are doing the right things. The groups of peace makers they played an important role. The peace makers are the students who behave themselves; they were the leaders that gave the good examples to students." (Middle School Teachers)

189. School staff who ranked the Programme a 7 on a 10-point scale did so because they felt that more time was needed for the Programme to be fully implemented, and for school staff to notice and feel its impact. Some school staff described the Programme as too ambitious, but they still wanted to continue working with this Programme because they recognized it was important to school life and management, and helped them to think out-of-the-box on preventing and responding to school violence and bullying.

190. It is notable that in some pilot schools, the Programme's implementation was limited by deeply engrained social norms and biases against the poor and ethnic minorities in Bulgaria. Biased attitudes and practices had an impact on the way that school staff perceived the Programme and spoke about their ability to work with students and parents/caregivers, particularly those who were poor and ethnic minority.¹³⁸ As a result, MES needs to do more to integrate inclusivity as part of the Programme.

5.3. Effectiveness

5.3.1. Has the Steps Together Programme achieved the planned objectives? To what extent the objectives are realistic?

191. The Programme did make progress toward its planned objectives of creating a safe school environment and preventing school violence and bullying. One of the cornerstone activities that was embraced by many teachers was the Programme's focus on establishing classroom rules and values, as defined by students. In this activity, teachers guided students to discuss what is a horrible classroom and then contrast that with what is the perfect classroom, and from there they worked together to develop the classes values and rules to ensure the perfect classroom.

192. Classroom rules are supposed to help prevent school violence and bullying; whereas restorative justice was supposed to address the harms done by engaging all of those affected by a student who breaks the rules to come to a common understanding and agreement as to how the harm or wrong doing can be repaired and justice restored or achieved. The restorative justice approach was more difficult for teachers to understand and implement. Although mentors put a notable amount of time and effort into capacitating and supporting the pilot schools to implement a restorative justice approach, this approach was not fully embraced by school staff. This, in part, was because the educational system has a long-held tradition of imposing punitive sanctions on students who violate school's rules, which is in contrast to the concept of restorative justice.

"I have participated in a number of programmes, and I believe it is a novel approach. The aggressive child is given the chance to understand how they have harmed others and they are given a chance to correct their behaviour and choose among several positive steps, and the child is given a chance to deliberate on their negative behaviour and self-evaluate their behaviour." (32, Coordination Council)

¹³⁸ UNICEF's 2022 Steps Together Programme endline study found that ethnicity is an important factor in conflicts. It was reported that both parents and teachers report the disinterest of minority parents as a difficult problem, which is an insurmountable barrier, regardless of efforts on the part of teachers and parents. See *2022 Steps Together Programme Endline Report*, 2022. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria

193. Some of these practices were more successful and more easily accepted by school staff, than others. For instance, peer-to-peer initiatives, such as the peace makers, were well received by the pilot schools. Coordination councils saw the peace makers initiative as innovative and fairly easy to implement. Schools that were able to implement the peace makers initiative thought that the peer-to-peer approach was particularly helpful or beneficial to creating a safe school environment. Three pilot schools implemented the peace makers initiative, however, each school took a different approach. For instance, in Iskar the school engaged 8 middle school students (5 girls and 3 boys); whereas the pilot school in Kustendil engaged about 20 students (16 girls and 4 boys), including 10 middle school students (9 girls and 1 boy) and 10 high school students (7 girls and 3 boys) and 5 teachers. Most important, the peace makers were capacitated by teachers using Programme materials, after which they were engaged in outreach and awareness-raising activities, including peer-on-peer dialogue.

- a. *"We developed the peace makers during the second semester and the peace makers has stirred interest among the students, and many of the peace makers are from the student council and they attended the classes of the form teachers and ran different scenarios [or programme activities with students]. The feedback from the form teachers was that the peace makers are welcome and helpful to the form teachers; therefore, we plan to have more peace makers among the students next year."*¹³⁹

194. Despite efforts to implement the Programme, school staff were well aware that it takes time to change a school's environment. School staff gained knowledge and experience on how to create a safe school environment, and felt better prepared to define classroom rules and values, and to display those, yet they were not as equipped to handle situations when students break the rules or commit acts of school violence or bullying.

195. Some school staff were trying to be more proactive and using prevention-related activities from the Programme as a means to prevent school violence and bullying, versus always being reactive to such incidents, thus, they felt that their efforts were paying off because they started to receive fewer alerts or tip-offs from parents and colleagues. Some teachers also reported that they were more willing to approach students when they saw them arguing, and that they felt more capable to address the issue with students versus letting the argument grow and get out-of-control. Teachers also felt that students act as a kind of corrective check among themselves, and they remedy each other's behaviours.

196. Some school staff also felt that the IKEA coroners that were created under the aegis of the Programme provided different students with the opportunity to sit and communicate among themselves during class breaks, which they thought was conducive to developing friendly relations and a more harmonious school environment. The pilot schools in Kustendil and Iskar had very large IKEA coroners that were located in open areas across from/outside of the school principal's office, in open enclaves in the hallways where there was a lot space, natural light and windows that made the location feel welcoming.

197. Overall, the Programme clearly influenced the environment in each of the pilot schools to varying degrees and offered the whole school community with a different level of understanding of prevention of school violence and bullying. The whole school approach was something new for school staff, so they were not fully sure if it influenced directly the school practice.

198. School staff also recognized that the Programme helped them, to varying degrees, to create a safe school environment, but a lot depended upon the teachers themselves. Some teachers were able to use the tools provided to them under the aegis of the Programme to create a safe environment in their classrooms, whereas other teachers had a more difficult time doing so. The personality of the teacher can shape their willingness to embrace and implement the Programme, which influences the effectiveness of the Programme.

"First and maybe the most important was that teachers accepted that this methodology can bring change, first in their classes and on the school level. It was hard from the beginning, it took time, but at the end somehow school teams realized that this programme changed something and they need more of this." (61, Sofia)

¹³⁹ 88, 89, School Staff

5.3.2. To what extent target groups have been reached? Did the Steps Together Programme manage to reach the whole school community in the pilot schools? What factors affected the effectiveness of the Steps Together Programme and its impact on target groups, including the most vulnerable groups?

199. In each of the pilot schools, the Programme reached the whole school community and benefitted school staff, students and parents. The ways in which the Programme reached the whole school community in the pilot schools and the factors that affected the effectiveness of the Programme and its impact on target groups are described in the subsections that follow.

5.3.2.1. Benefits of the Programme for School Staff

200. School principals felt that teachers benefited from the Programme because teachers learned a lot and applied what they learned in the classes with students, including how to solve different issues. At one pilot school, the school principal pointed out that the support received from the Parents Association was very helpful because working with parents is often difficult for teachers. Some school principals found that the Parents Association offered very good advice and useful recommendations, and workable solutions. They also found the viewpoints of the Parents Association to be relevant because they are active and involved parents, and an experienced and knowledgeable organization. For these reasons, a couple of pilot schools had plans to continue working with the Parents Association. At the same time, however, some school principals felt that the Parents Association could play a greater role in capacitating parents on how to work in partnership with schools to support their child's education; they thought that parents would benefit from professional advice provided by the Parents Association.

"The burnout training was effective. It was a training which allowed us to get an insight into ourselves. We learned things that we were not aware of. This training helped us to become have more confidence in each other and to communicate more among ourselves . . . We received support and appreciation from other colleagues that we have the confidence to do it. Confident that we are not alone on the boat with our own fears, concerns and others. How can we ask student and parents to share their concerns with us if we don't do it?" (90-97, Coordination Council)

201. Coordination councils also thought the Programme benefitted school staff because it provided a chance to exchange experiences and discuss different problems and situations, and possible solutions with mentors. They also appreciated the methodological workshops with mentors because they were organized and timely, and created a space for sharing and building relations, confidence and trust. One coordination council wished that there was a school staff member who would take on such an initiative to organize methodological workshops, even after the Programme ends.

202. Another benefit of the Programme was the Programme's Handbook that school staff received and the interactive teaching approach that they were introduced to; this was a new teaching style in the educational system which relies more heavily upon lecture-based teaching and memory-based learning.

203. Consequently, middle school teachers appreciated that they now methodology for addressing school violence and bullying that they can continue to use in the future. As they explained, *"I didn't have to come with the curriculum or case study myself."*¹⁴⁰ Some middle school teachers felt that the Programme's materials were *"probably super effective for the 5th to 7th grades, but some of the workshops are quite childish."*¹⁴¹ These same primary teachers pointed out that some of the topics focused on were sometime heavy or emotional for students, and required more time. Teachers felt that when they finished a handbook activity that students had to hurry off to another class, without enough time to discuss the activity and their emotions. Thus, teachers pointed out that the duration of one class was not enough to teach the Programme.

204. Some teachers proposed a Steps Together Camp for students because that would give them more time to focus efforts and energy on the Programme, without stealing time from or other programmes. While this idea was intriguing, a Steps Together Camp for students would not promote a whole school approach to preventing

¹⁴⁰ 2-9, Middle School Teachers

¹⁴¹ 2-9, Middle School Teachers

school violence and bullying because it would only involve some teachers and students from the school. Moreover, the students who would participate in such a camp would more than likely be the more privileged students with good academic performance. To ensure a stronger whole school approach to implementing the Programme, the evaluator proposed the idea of a Steps Together Camp for School Staff that would strengthen teacher's capacities to understand the Programme and how to effectively implement the Programme and teach the curriculum to students. This recommendation was introduced to school staff in four of the pilot schools throughout the evaluation to gauge their interest in such an initiative as part of the Programme and for purposes of capacity building.

205. The majority of school staff thought that the Step Together Programme Camp for School Staff was a good idea and expressed interest in the opportunity to attend such a camp to strengthen their knowledge and capacities to implement the Programme and to build a better whole school approach, as well as to network with other schools implementing the Programme. Teachers felt that engaging school directors in the camp, alongside teachers and psychologists, that this would help to strengthen commitments to the Programme throughout the school. Teachers also expressed interest in helping to facilitate sessions so that new schools could learn from the pilot schools.

206. In comparison, high school teachers explained that if the issue of bullying was contained, they could spend more time on teaching and supporting students' learning. However, many high school teachers felt that different activities in the Programme's curriculum were not tailored to high school students and that the role plays and games were based upon stories for little kids, not for high school students.

207. Likewise mentors believed that Programme had many benefits for school staff. Among the benefits were that teachers received a methodology and trainings for implementing a whole school approach to preventing and responding to school violence and bullying, and how to work with the *Mechanism*. Some mentors pointed out that one of the most notable benefits was the opportunity to expand their understanding and ability to distinguish between violence and bullying. Quite often bullying remains invisible to teachers because it occurs between students and in peer groups.

"I am a form teacher and my objective is to control my own class. Being a form teacher, we are trying to apply all possible techniques before getting to the stage of having to apply punishment. We have applied the toolkit to avoid having to punish children. It introduced diversity in the way we work in tackling the issues . . . Speaking for myself I can say it brought teachers closer to the students, they started to share with us when they identified an issue. I felt that in my class and other classes, they started to understand when they share their issues with someone this will have different result and somehow it creates a feeling a community." (2-9, Middle School Teachers)

208. Mentors also felt that school staff benefited from the Programme because they heard firsthand from teachers that the training was useful on a personal and professional level. One mentor highlighted that school staff learned teamwork, which was *"one of the biggest benefits and what they [teachers] really appreciated about the programme."*¹⁴² Mentors also reported that teachers realized that they can let go of the expectations that they alone have to handle school violence and bullying; after which they are open to receive help from their coworkers.

209. One mentor explained that the Programme helped to *"build a community of teachers, something that up to now was not working actively . . . and create spaces where they support each other in a broader group to provide self-help; this turned out to be a very good instrument, it was a welcomed one by management and teachers alike."*¹⁴³ During the workshops and activities, teachers were able to discuss real-life topics and issues with their colleagues in a very different way, which provided them a forum or means to talk openly about school violence and bullying in a more engaging and meaningful way.

¹⁴² 30, 31, Mentor; 317, Mentor

¹⁴³ 39, Mentor

5.3.3. Benefits of the Programme for Students

210. School principals also felt that students benefited from the Programme because they learned to recognize specific forms of behaviours as violence and bullying, that they did not recognize before, and that they learned how to work out the rules together, and to listen to the opinions of their classmates. School principals felt that the Programme helped students to resolve conflicts themselves, and to know to whom to reach out for help. One school director pointed out the Programme helped to create a peaceful atmosphere in the classroom where students feel safe.

211. At the time of the evaluation, most pilot schools were still in the early stages of introducing students to the Programme, because of implementation delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and teachers were still learning how to teach the Programme's curriculum to students. As a result teachers pointed out,

- a. *"There were very interesting topics that were not discussed with the students before, such as what is it that encourages them to use aggression, how would they feel if they were the victim, who are they and why shouldn't they conceal our emotions. There were a number of topics that form the emotional intelligence, such as behavioural aggression and how to respond. We had never discussed them in the school."*¹⁴⁴

212. In pilot schools where the peace makers initiative was implemented, school staff thought that this initiative benefited students by providing them opportunities to be role models and to teach the Programme's curriculum to younger students. FGDs with high school students revealed that some of the peace makers benefited from this initiative. In the Sofia pilot school, peace makers were introduced at the end of the last school year. Peace makers were provided some of the general workshops meant for all students, plus five additional workshops; this was the approach taken in UNICEF's SEES Programme in Croatia. The assumption was that the five additional workshops would capacitate peace makers to have increased social and emotional intelligence and skills to be able to intervene if they witness acts of violence, or at least to report the incident to a teacher or the school psychologist. The goal was that the peace makers would help to establish the trust and confidence among their classmates, and promote violence prevention among their peers.

- a. *"The idea behind the peace makers programme is to have the students help one another, if there were physical forms of violence the peace makers are there to help. They can step in and given advice to the survivors of violence, such as whom to talk to or to help them. In Bulgaria, reaching out to a psychologist or for help is quite stigmatizing. Our society is not open to this advance, so having access to a peacekeeper, someone who can support you and is also equipped to handle the violence and bullying. The peace makers try to help the child in these situations. Peace makers received the training, there are five workshops and they together with the two high school teachers delivered the seminars. We developed this project to crate peace makers out of the 10th and 11th grades, and the 12th graders taught the 9th class for social and emotional learning. The teachers worked with them, but they delivered some of the activities."*¹⁴⁵

213. Mentors recognized that a key to the Programme's success was the engagement of students. They felt that students who participated in the Programme were better able to recognize school violence and bullying, and to express themselves in way that their words do not hurt or harm others. Peace makers were particularly influential among their peers, as they were able to communicate messages of intolerance for violence and bullying. Mentors also felt that students liked the Programme because it provided them opportunities to openly discuss interesting topics and to engage in fun activities and games.¹⁴⁶

214. FGDs with students in each of the pilot schools revealed that to varying degrees some students were exposed to school violence and bullying, as victims and/or witnesses, or heard stories about school violence and bullying in their schools. When talking about school violence they often focused on acts of physical aggression by a

¹⁴⁴ 32, Sofia

¹⁴⁵ 10-15, High School Teachers

¹⁴⁶ These findings are similar to findings from UNICEF's 2022 Steps Together endline study found that students valued programme activities that provided them the opportunity to get to know themselves and other students better, to share without being judged, to listen and communication, to participate in joint activities, to share and recognize their emotions and those of others, and to participate in role plays.

student(s) against other students and teachers, and against school property (e.g., damaging school desk and walls). These were acts of school violence and bullying that occurred in the classroom, school buildings and on school grounds. Students who experienced school violence and/or bullying were typically afraid to speak out or to report their experiences to schools staff.

215. Many students, particularly at the middle and high school levels, thought the Programme had no impact on changing students behaviours, particularly the behaviours of students who were aggressors and bullies. There were, however, some students who thought that the Programme helped to reduce some of the conflicts between students, but more so among students who were not known troublemakers and did not have a reputation of being aggressive or a bully. One student explained, *“For the troublemakers the programme is some nonsense and is nothing serious; they disregard it. They simply do not enter the lessons and get away with it.”*¹⁴⁷ Primary school students were slightly more likely to think the Programme had an impact on relations between students.

216. Some students spoke about establishing classroom rules and values, and defining the consequences of breaking rules; whereas other students did not think the exercise was taken seriously by the teacher who put only a couple of students in charge of creating classroom rules. Other students felt that classroom rules could have been more visibly displayed in the classroom. They said *“maybe the ground rule should be on a bigger board, not they are simply on an A4 sheet of paper.”*¹⁴⁸ Students felt that it is important that teachers bring students back to classroom rules when they are broken.

“I had a classmate who was rude to both students and teachers. He once had a bad mark and he was swearing, verbally attacked the teacher and children. He was quite arrogant; stamping his feet and the teachers told him that he would not remain in the school.” (Middle School Student)

217. No students spoke about the use of restorative justice by schools, rather they described the continued use of a punishment-based system in schools. One student explained that *“the deputy principle announced that some kids (they even announced the names) would be expelled, but did not follow this and nothing happened. The kids became better for a week and once they see that there are no consequences, it becomes evident that this was just a bluff and their behaviour became worse again.”*¹⁴⁹ Given this situation, some students expressed concern that school management and teachers were unable to control aggressive students who bullied other students and teachers in the school.

218. High school students seemed to be less interested in the Programme because they perceived the content of the Programme to be more for younger students; except for high school students who were involved in the peace makers initiative. Students involved in the peace makers initiative looked at the Programme in a different light and thought that without the peace makers they would not have gotten together. Some students thought the peace makers initiative actually helped students to learn to work as a team and provided students with opportunities to get to know other students in their school, both older and younger, which was something that they enjoyed. Some students even expressed a desire to join the peace makers initiative next year, if the Programme continued.¹⁵⁰

5.3.4. Benefits of the Programme for Parents

219. UNICEF outsourced capacity building activities for school staff to strengthen their abilities to work with parents to the Parents Association. UNICEF was unable to engage the Parents Association as initially planned because schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There was also a misunderstanding from the side of schools as to how the Programme would capacitate and support them to work with parents. Schools expected that the

¹⁴⁷ Middle School Students

¹⁴⁸ Middle School Students

¹⁴⁹ Middle School Students

¹⁵⁰ UNICEF’s Programme endline study found that among students sample (sample size unknown) the Programme topics they engaged in the most were focused on Violence (63%), setting rules (42%), how to respond to mistreatment (36%), how bad attitudes occurs (31%), how to recover from bad attitudes (26%), what responsibility they have for their own behaviours (26%), are emotions normal (22%) and what am I (21%).

Programme would actually work with parents directly, but this was not the case, the plan was only to provide capacity building to schools on how to work with parents. One respondent explained, *“This caused a clash of expectations as to what UNICEF was supporting.”*¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, schools managed with the support of the Parents Association to work with parents in a more structured way. The Parents Association worked with schools to create a plan for working with parents and the plans included specific activities.

220. School staff had a difficult time seeing what were the benefits of the Programme for parents because it was difficult for them to engage parents in the Programme, including to identify one or two parents who were willing to serve on the coordination council.¹⁵² From the perspective of school staff, parents are not typically engaged in their students schooling because they are busy and work long hours, or have to commute quite a distance to and from work. Pilot schools did not appear to have a clear approach for systematically communicating with parents about the Programme or engaging parents in the Programme. In an effort to engage more parents, some schools organized sports events, such as a football games that involved teachers, parents and students. Schools also had a difficult time getting parents to come to the school to participate in FGDs for purposes of this evaluation, and for the Programme’s baseline and endline studies.

221. Mentors felt that when it came to engaging parents, schools were often hesitant or lacked confidence when it came to engaging with parents.¹⁵³ It is notable, however, that the pilot school in Iskar worked with mayors in neighboring communities to arrange occasional mobile parent-teacher meetings, which helped to improve communication between parents and teachers, particularly among ethnic minority parents/caregivers of students.

222. FGDs with parents of primary, middle and high school students revealed that most parents were not fully aware of the Programme, nor did they fully understand the Programme. Nevertheless, parents believed that a Programme focused on creating a safe school environment and preventing school violence and bullying was very important, but they want it to be substantive and to have a real impact. Some parents spoke about the aggression and bullying that their child and other children in the school experienced at the hands of schoolmates (peers) and from school staff, including teachers and other staff in the school.

“Absolutely, it is very important to talk about violence, the more there is communication on that topic with children and parents, the less painful situations there will be. Certainly, violence cannot be fully avoided. I know what is going on with our society and I think discussions like this are useful.” (Middle School Parents)

223. Parents wanted more information about the Programme and how to respond to situations of school violence and bullying.¹⁵⁴ One parent explained, *“It seems the school relies on the children to inform us [parents], but children do not share everything.”*¹⁵⁵ Some parents spoke about how they often had to handle situations of peer aggression and bullying themselves by contacting the parents of the child who was causing the problem or going to the school and talking to the school staff person. Parents wanted more opportunities for role plays and participation in Programme-related events, versus just getting a lecture or completing a survey. Some

¹⁵¹ 59, Sofia

¹⁵² This was also a finding in the *Mid-Term Assessment of the Steps Together Programme Implemented Under the Understanding and Cooperation Agreement Between Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria and UNICEF*, September 2019 – September 2021. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria

¹⁵³ This was also a finding in the *Mid-Term Assessment of the Steps Together Programme Implemented Under the Understanding and Cooperation Agreement Between Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria and UNICEF*, September 2019 – September 2021. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

¹⁵⁴ During the finalization of this evaluation report, the UNICEF Programme Coordinator reported that they gave several opportunities for parents to learn about the Programme. For example, in December 2020, UNICEF established an online forum for the exchange of good practices, and in January 2021, UNICEF presented and discussed the results of the baseline research in each of the five pilot schools, which parents were invited to attend. The Programme Coordinator reported they monitored how information for these events was spread to parents and saw that official channels, such as the electronic diary, was used by schools to inform parents, and that some form teachers informed parents through their class channels. Despite these efforts, the Programme Coordinator found that few parents were interested to join the meeting in January 2021 and listen to the findings from the baseline research; therefore, community events were organized to start attracting parents to school life. The Programme Coordinator recognized that efforts to engage parents requires time and trust; this takes much more than two years because there are barriers to communication between teachers and parents. The Programme Coordinator reported that a new culture needs to be created in school to improve communication between teachers and parents, that this will take time.

¹⁵⁵ Primary school parent

parents felt that the educational system is not active enough when it comes to addressing school violence and bullying, and they felt that the Programme had yet to have an impact on ending school violence and bullying in their child's school.

5.4. Impact

5.4.1. What impact has the Steps Together Programme had after two years of piloting? Are there any differences in impact among the five pilot schools?

224. Assessing the Programme's impact after two years of piloting was not really possible, nor was assessing differences in impact among the five pilot schools because the COVID-19 pandemic delayed implementation of the Programme and effected how the Programme was ultimately implemented, which was different from initially planned (as already explained). Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Programme, there was a shorter timeframe for Programme implementation; thus, it is too early to answer evaluation questions related to the impact of the Programme in each of the five pilot schools.

225. Also, given the fact that the Programme was not implemented school-wide in any of the five pilot schools, the impacts are not clear. Respondents spoke about the effectiveness of the Programme, but had few words to say about impact. Moreover, school staff have not wanted to say that there are any notable differences in terms of impact of the Programme on girls versus boys or primary, middle and high school students. School staff in the pilot schools explained, *"We need more time to build the soft skills of our students, they don't have the adequate skills for that and we don't have the time to teach those skill."*¹⁵⁶

5.4.2. To what extent did the Steps Together Programme contribute to capacity building of schools to support long-term positive changes in schools and reductions in level of violence and bullying in pilot schools?

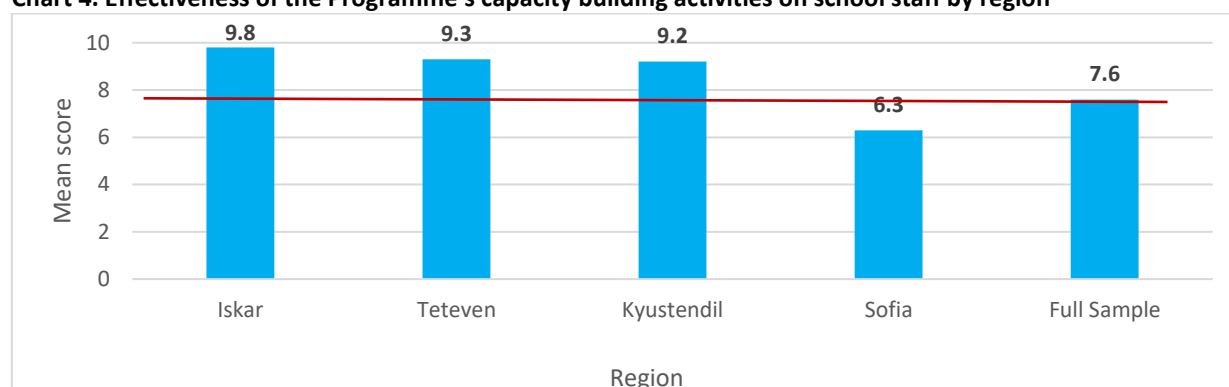
226. As part of the Programme, UNICEF mentors received capacity building trainings from UNICEF, particularly UNICEF mentors. UNICEF mentors delivered capacity building trainings to school staff in the pilot schools to support long-term positive change in the schools, and to contribute to reduced levels of violence and bullying in pilot schools. The capacity building trainings were designed to be delivered in a face-to-face setting to school staff, including principals, coordination council members, school psychologists and teachers; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of these trainings were delivered online in half-day and two- to three-hour training sessions. Training topics included, but were not limited to: peer-to-peer methodologies: establishing values, rules and consequences; restoration approach; improving teacher-parent communication; building a school community; and overcoming professional burnout.¹⁵⁷ Pilot schools were also provided with the opportunity to engage online with the author of the Programme's Handbook, and were presented findings from the Programme's baseline research.

227. To understand how effective the capacity building activities were to school staff who were targeted, school principals, coordination council members and teachers were asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 10 (1=not effective to 10=very effective), how effective were the capacity building activities provided by UNICEF and mentors. **Chart 4** shows that the majority of respondents thought the capacity building activities were effective. On average, the full sample of respondents ranked the programme's capacity building activities as a 7.6 on a 10-point scale. More specifically, school principals and coordination council members from Iskar (mean=9.8), Teteven (mean=9.3) and Kustendil (mean=9.2) ranked the capacity building trainings as very effective, whereas those from Sofia (mean=6.3) were less likely to rank the capacity building trainings as very effective. This, in part, is because school teachers in Sofia were also asked about the effectiveness of the capacity building trainings.

¹⁵⁶ 36, Counsellor

¹⁵⁷ Based a summarized timeline table of UNICEF trainings provided to schools provided to the evaluation team by UNICEF.

Chart 4. Effectiveness of the Programme's capacity building activities on school staff by region



Note: 1=Not Effective to 10=Very Effective. Mean scores are based only on responses of school staff, including principals/deputy principals and members of Coordination Councils. Data for the school in Zavet are not included in Chart 3 because this question was not asked during the interview.

228. Respondents were asked why they gave the capacity building trainings the rank they did. Respondents who ranked the capacity building trainings a 10 on a 10-point scale explained that they found the capacity building trainings to be *“very interesting, exciting and amusing, and time was flowing when we had the trainings.”* The pilot school in Iskar had the opportunity to participate in both online and face-to-face capacity building trainings and they found it much better to have face-to-face trainings.¹⁵⁸ School staff appreciated the trainings, as they provided them the opportunity to learn from the mentors, as well as school staff from the other pilot schools in some trainings/workshops.

229. Among those who ranked the capacity building trainings a 9 on a 10-point scale, they recognized that the mentors were very dedicated and responsible people, who took into consideration the needs of school staff and gave their best to the Programme and schools. At the start of the Programme, some school staff did not know how these workshops would take place given the COVID-19 pandemic, but word spread quickly that the workshops were useful, so from then on school staff attended the workshops; however, the time selected for the workshops was not always the best for teachers and because of the pandemic, teachers were reluctant to take on additional work. School principals explained that had the workshops been face-to-face they would have been more effective.

230. School staff who ranked the capacity building trainings an 8 or 7 on a 10-point scale did so because they appreciated the practical guidance and advice provided by the mentors, and they liked that teachers had the chance to share specific situations and receive professional help from a psychologist. They also appreciated that there were opportunities to discuss specific cases; school staff found this quite useful.

231. Some school staff ranked the capacity building trainings a bit lower because the trainings offered by the Parents Association were not as useful, from their perspectives. One council member explained,

“The most effective trainings were the ones dedicated to communication. How to communicate with students and how to get them involved in the programme, and how to communicate with parents and how to explain to them the benefit of participating in the programme. The trainers themselves drew our attention on the strengths of the programme. Also, creator of the manual delivered the training and the strengths and weaknesses of applying the programme in Croatia.” (32, Counsellor)

a. *“The Parents Association conducted a training and the content and training was really boring, and it was not useful . . . We wanted to have a stronger practical focus, specific case studies and brain storming on the case, [but] it was lecturing in front of the audience. They [Parents Association trainers] were making*

¹⁵⁸ This was also a finding in the *Mid-Term Assessment of the Steps Together Programme Implemented Under the Understanding and Cooperation Agreement Between Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria and UNICEF*, September 2019 – September 2021. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

presentations that were things we were already doing. We gave some feedback . . . Maybe they didn't meet our expectation, what they had planned and our expectation."¹⁵⁹

232. In comparison, other school staff found the trainings offered by the Parents Association to be quite useful because they provided them with ideas on how to prepare for meetings with parents and how to communicate with parents. Surprisingly, not all school staff had the confidence to effectively engage with parents about their child. School principals from one pilot school explained, *"Regrettably, sometimes we work on the basis of old and outdated practices, so it is very important for form teachers to know what they should not do when interacting with parents."*¹⁶⁰

233. Some school staff found that sometimes the presentations were long in the online forum and were not tailored for teachers. School staff did not typically find lecture-based trainings to be very useful; they preferred adult learning models that provide opportunities to be active learners and to share their experiences and learn from others. This is why they focused on capacity building trainings offered by the mentors, which tended to use more engaging and adult learning approaches. They explained, *"We had an excellent mentor who worked well with the teachers and the mentor gave good advice."* Yet, they maintained that there are *"still some deficits, in terms of working with specific cases, particularly more complicated cases with children, as well as communication between teachers and students; there is room for improvement."*¹⁶¹

234. In 2022, UNICEF's Steps Together Programme endline study found that teachers were interested in training, including dealing with occupation stress and burnout, understanding and dealing with challenging students and behaviours, and communication with parents.¹⁶²

235. It is notable that when the evaluation was conducted, it was too early to assess or know whether the capacity building provided to school staff in each of the pilot schools supported long-term positive changes in schools and reductions in level of violence and bullying in pilot schools

5.4.3. To what extent and in which areas the Steps Together Programme had significant impact? Are there any sub-group differences?

236. Although impact could not be assessed at this early stage of Programme implement, effort was made to assess school staff's satisfaction with the Programme, including to what extent and in which areas the Programme had a notable impact. To accomplish this, during the evaluation, all respondents were asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 10 (1=not satisfied to 10=very satisfied), how satisfied they were with the Programme. **Chart 5** shows that the majority of respondents were satisfied, at least to some degree, with the Programme. On average, the full sample of respondents ranked their level of satisfaction with the Programme as an 8.7 on a 10-point scale. More specifically, school staff from Iskar (mean=10.0) and Kustendil (mean=9.3) were most likely to report being very satisfied with the Programme, followed by school staff from Sofia (mean=8.1) and Teteven (mean=8.0), whereas school staff from Zavet (mean=7.3) were least likely to be very satisfied with the Programme.

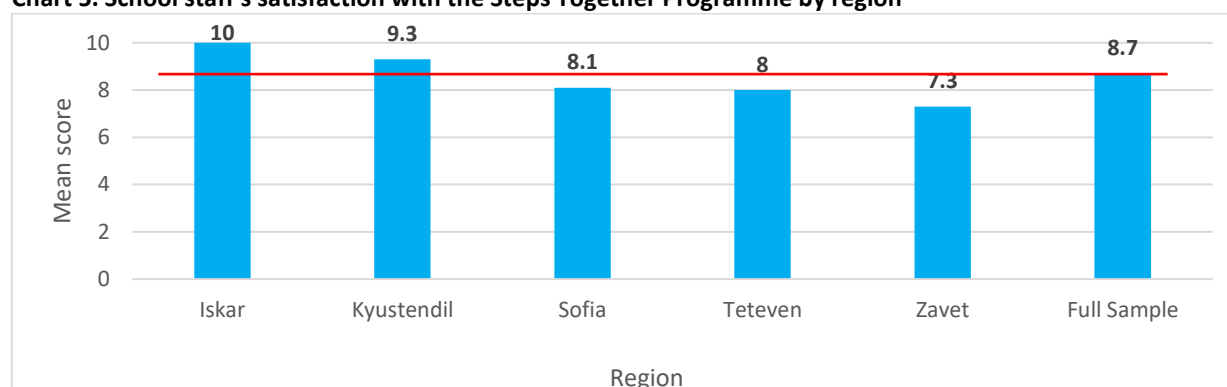
¹⁵⁹ 90-97, Coordination Council

¹⁶⁰ 40, 41, School Principal/Deputy Principal

¹⁶¹ 40, 41, School Principal/Director

¹⁶² Steps Together Programme Endline Report, 2022. UNICEF: Bulgaria, Sofia.

Chart 5. School staff's satisfaction with the Steps Together Programme by region



Note: 1=Not Satisfied to 10=Very Satisfied. Mean scores are based only on responses of school staff, including principals/deputy principals and members of Coordination Councils.

237. School principals and coordination councils were asked how satisfied they were on a 10-point scale with the Programme. Respondents who reported being very satisfied with the Programme (i.e., a 10 on a 10-point scale) explained it was because the Programme managed to adapt to the circumstances and accomplish its objectives, despite the challenges, particularly challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. School staff who were involved in the Programme reported being able to see the strengths of the Programme, but they were not sure that all teachers agreed with them that the Programme was beneficial.

238. Respondents who ranked the Programme a 9 on a 10-point scale reported it was because they found the information provided as part of the Programme, including during the capacity building trainings, was very useful; yet they thought that there was room for improving the Programme, including programme-related materials and capacity building activities, as well as Programme implementation. Respondents who gave the Programme an 8 on a 10-point scale, reported it was because there are school staff, including form teachers, who are either unwilling or reluctant to implement the Programme and to teach the curriculum. School staff also saw that there is still room for improving how schools work with parents, which is a core component of the Programme.

239. School staff who ranked the Programme a 7 on a 10-point scale reported it was because some of the Programme's materials were not fully adopted for students in the 8th graders above. School staff perceived that the foundational content of the Programme was relevant, but found that some of the handbook activities needed to be adapted for older students (e.g., middle and high school students). Other school staff felt that *"it is too early to be able to reap the fruits of the programme, although there is a change and difference."*¹⁶³

240. Finally school staff who ranked the Programme a 6 or 5 on a 10-point scale reported that they gave a lower score because they wished that there would have been less documentation. They complained that they were already overburdened with administrative work, and the Programme just added to that workload. They also recognized that they would not be able to apply or implement all of the components of the Programme, so they were picking and choosing what to implement, and were not implementing the Programme in full as originally intended for the Programme to be effective and to have an impact.

5.4.4. What factors favorably or adversely affected the impact of the Steps Together Programme on school staff, students and parents, including the most vulnerable?

241. Respondents were asked what factors contributed to the success and effectiveness of the Programme in their schools, and what factors adversely affected the impact of the Programme on school staff, student and parents. There were some notable differences across pilot schools that are highlighted below.

242. The pilot school in Kustendil identified numerous factors that contributed to the Programme's success and effectiveness. These included capacity building workshops provided to school staff by UNICEF and the mentor, as well as technical assistance from the mentor. They also recognized that funding for the Programme was beneficial. They explained, *"I am including the funding because some of the activities included financial support."* They identified buy-in and support from the principal as crucial to the success and effectiveness of

¹⁶³ 10-15, High School Teacher

the Programme, and they recognized that the principal fully shared their ideas about developing students' social and emotional competence, which was a component of the Programmes.

243. School staff from the pilot school in Kustendil explained that, *"We were very hard working, persistent and put a lot of effort [into the Programme], and the psychologist was very involved, she acted as a coordinator."* In addition, this same group of teachers identified *"the wish for change . . . because we are aware of the need for change"* as a contributing factor to the Programme's success and effectiveness.
244. The pilot school in Iskar had a difficult time identifying factors that contributed to the success and effectiveness of the Programme; however, some school staff identified the important role of the mentor and the students who participated in the Programme. On the other hand, there was strong sentiment among many teachers that they wanted a stronger focus on the parents and families, particularly those whom they believed did not value education for their children, including poor and ethnic minority families. They were also dissatisfied with the online meetings which were organized during the COVID-19 pandemic and often took place after school hours.
245. The pilot school in Sofia also had a difficult time identifying factors that contributed to the success and effectiveness of the Programme; however, one teacher pointed out that *"we have very good organization because during the monthly meetings of the Coordination Council we knew what had to be done after that and we planned accordingly."* Likewise, other teachers explained, *"I think one of the factors for the success of the programme is that we work well as a team, we exchange experiences and we ask for help. We are investing efforts in making the school a better place. We are also open to work."* They also maintained that classroom rules introduced through the Programme were done so willingly by students and teachers, and that they were eventually able to introduce the peace makers initiative to high school students.
246. In the pilot school in Teteven, factors that contributed to the Programme's success and effectiveness included the buy-in and commitment of the school principal, including her ability to recognize that the Programme as relevant and beneficial to the school. In addition, school staff reported that the Programme's success was due, in part, to the fact that there were a group of teachers who took responsibility to act as coordinators. Some active form teachers were the driving force behind the Programme. Another factor was schools good partnerships with the Parents Association and UNICEF, particularly the mentor. They also identified the importance of team work¹⁶⁴ and the engagement of students, as well as having a well-designed package of Programme materials to support the Programme's implementation.
247. In the pilot school in Zavet, factors that contributed to the Programme's success and effectiveness were attributed largely to particular teachers who were motivated because there were challenges when it came to the school principal's commitment and motivation to implement the Programme. From the mentor's perspective, in this pilot school there is a *"culture that everyone is doing what they are supposed to do, so for teachers not motivated about the programme, they still had to participate in the trainings because they had to do it, and after the trainings they were more convinced about the programme."* Another difference was that this pilot school was not overwhelmed by other programmes, which gave them more space to do something different or new.
248. UNICEF recognized that the key to success in any school that aims to implement the Programme is the commitment and buy-in of the school principal. If school principals do not recognize the Programme's value, the school will not succeed at implementing the Programme because school staff, particularly teachers, will not be supported. School principals can also provide teachers with extra time to ensure that the Programme's curriculum is taught to students, and can motivate teachers to properly implement the Programme in their classrooms and throughout the school.

5.4.4.1. Factors that adversely affected the Programme

249. To assess what factors adversely affected the impact of the Programme on school staff, student and parents, respondents were asked what challenges need to be addressed to improve the Programme and its

¹⁶⁴ In UNICEF's 2022 Steps Together Programme endline study found that only 51% of teachers (sample size unknown) reported that team work at school on problems of violence and bullying was one of the successful activities that they participated in as part of the Programme. See, *Steps Together Programme Endline Report, 2022*. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

implementation. Most notable, school principals identified the challenge of engaging school staff; they were not sure how they could help school staff, particularly teachers, see the benefits of the Programme.

250. In addition, mentors identified challenges finding time and space to teach the Programme's curriculum. Some teachers found the curriculum to be 'heavy' in terms of content; thus, they either did not feel comfortable or confident teaching the Programme's curriculum. Others teachers reported they did not teach the curriculum because they did not have enough time; they needed more class time to share and discuss the subject matter with students.

a. *"I believe the content is extremely rich and interesting. In the beginning, I thought that children would fail the topics, but children got actively involved. Children were extremely capable of getting to know the topic of bullying and violence. We have a good team. I think the problems is more that don't have enough time. I propose to take this issue to the ministry to have more hours in the programme."*¹⁶⁵

251. Teachers also reported that they were not motivated to implement the Programme because they have a lot of 'bureaucratic work' which leaves them burned out and not motivated to implement new initiatives or curriculum, particularly if they are not mandated or required to do so. Another challenge identified by mentors was teachers' lack of knowledge related to child development, which needs to be developed for teachers to be able to talk to children of different ages about the content in the curriculum, and to effectively implement the Programme, particularly since the Programme's curriculum is not age- and grade-specific.

"To address the challenge of burnout, tiredness and lack of motivation, and feeling desperate the teachers, they don't have the capacity to work on the programme. They say it is too much, too long, it is additional work, to make more space for the programme They want money to participate in a project like this because they think that is additional effort. Also, they feel it is not very natural, this kind of workshop with students is not typical for the Bulgarian education system, so they have to make an effort and find the time and space to do it." (30, 31, Mentor)

252. Another challenge related to engaging and cooperating with parents/caregivers, particularly since it is not uncommon for school staff to hold negative attitudes and beliefs about parents. School staff described parents as uncooperative and even accused parents of not caring about their children's education or behaviours. Such resentment of parents was even stronger if the students came from poor and/or ethnic minority families. Teachers need a great deal of capacity building to be able to effectively engage and cooperate with parents, and to eliminate the 'us against them' mentality that is commonly expressed. This is a component of the Programme that needs to be significantly strengthened.¹⁶⁶

253. Another challenge identified by both teachers and mentors was that the Programme Handbook is too childish for middle and high school students. One middle teacher explained, *"We found the case studies in the handbook to be a bit childish, so to say, for children of that age, and some of the students didn't take it seriously because of that."*¹⁶⁷ In addition, the Programme Handbook does not reflect the diversity of experiences of ethnic minorities; thus, it does not speak to or resonate with ethnic minority students in ways that promote inclusivity.

254. Another limitation of the Programme Handbook was that it was modeled after the SEES Programme Handbook that had been developed nearly a decade earlier, so school staff from the pilot schools felt the Programme Handbook's content and activities were a bit outdated and needed to be revised and developed to reflect children and adolescents of today, particularly since there have been many technological and development changes, as well as the COVID-19, that has reshaped the national context and shaped the lives of children and adolescents.

¹⁶⁵ Primary School Students

¹⁶⁶ UNICEF's 2022 Steps Together Programme endline study found that teachers feel that they have not received enough support to work with parents and that they fail to involve parents; teachers feel in constant defensive mode with parents, with no support. In addition, teachers revealed that there are situations in which they do not know how to react, but they must have answers for parents. See *Steps Together Programme Endline Report*, 2022. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

¹⁶⁷ Middle School Teachers

5.5. Efficiency

5.5.1. How well the Steps Together Programme and its implementation was planned and managed?

255. This Programme was implemented with no donor funding; it was funded predominately by UNICEF.¹⁶⁸ Table 10 provides a summary of Programme expenditures. The total cost of the programme was BGN 487,490, of which BGN 427,490 was UNICEF's contribution and BGN 60,000 was MES's contribution (Annex R: Breakdown of Summary Programme Expenditures).

Output	MES Contribution	UNICEF Contribution	Total MES + UNICEF
Design campaign and programme materials and products	0	15,000	15,000
Develop school capacities to apply a whole-school approach	0	17,000	17,000
Capacity building of schools through mentors	0	191,740	191,740
Work with pupils in the prevention of violence and bullying	60,000	3,750	63,750
Parental involvement in the process of creating a safe school environment to prevent violence and bullying	0	72,500	72,500
Development of M&E framework and studies	0	10,000	10,000
Effective and efficiency programme management	0	45,000	45,000
Parents Association involvement of parents in prevention of violence and bullying in schools	0	72,500	72,500
Total Programme Costs	60,000	427,490	487,490

Source: UNICEF, 2022

256. MES and UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the joint implementation of the Programme. In MES, the Directorate of Inclusive Education led the process of Programme implementation. UNICEF put a notable amount of time and resources into planning, implementation and coordination of the Programme. In addition, the MES established a working group to support the Programme's planning and development. Working groups members served as an advisory group, informing the development and implementation of the Programme. The working group had a lot of input as to what the Programme should look like. UNICEF also signed MoUs with each of the pilot schools. From start to finish, with the support of school mentors, UNICEF tried to tailor implementation strategies to each of the five pilot schools. Despite all of these efforts, there was still room for improvement.

257. Initially, the plan was that the Programme would be implemented over a three-year period, but the Programme started late and the design in the working group took longer than expected, and then the Programme was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, UNICEF had to shift their focus and provide schools with support on crisis management to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures, which included the temporary closure of schools and shifting to distance learning, which came with unique challenges.

258. In terms of the Programme, the COVID-19 pandemic forced UNICEF and MES to pivot and develop a more flexible hybrid model for the implementing the Programme. This required tailoring planned capacity building workshops for school staff to be delivered in online platforms. Also, they explored ways of teaching the Programme's curriculum to students in an online platform when schools were closed. This approach came with challenges, which have been described in previous sections.

259. Ultimately, UNICEF learned that two years was not enough time to implement the Programme to the extent that it was able to change the culture in the pilot schools, and to engage all of the school staff, students and parents. Nor was there enough time to really assess the Programme's impact or effectiveness, or to ensure sustainability over time. Schools need a longer period of time to be capacitated to possess the knowledge, attitudes and practices needed to effectively implement the Programme as a whole school approach, and the technical assistance of mentors. Each of the pilot schools would benefit from an additional two years of piloting the Programme.

¹⁶⁸ Conducting a costing analysis was beyond the scope of this evaluation and the evaluation team was not able to conduct cost comparisons. The evaluation team was only provided with summary expenditures data presented in Table 10 and Annex R).

260. Pilot schools were provided with some opportunities to engage with each other and share experiences. The first meeting was a joint online meeting that engaged each of the pilot schools, and there were other online meetings that provided school principals and teachers with opportunities to exchange experiences. During the 2021-2022 school year, another joint meeting of pilot schools was held, mainly involving members the coordination councils. Pilot schools were also provided access to a Facebook page dedicated to the Steps Together Programme where pilot schools could upload photos and information about Programme-related activities and events.

261. There were also opportunities provided for school principals from two schools to communicate more directly with each other. In addition, peace makers and teachers from the pilot school in Sofia were provided the opportunity to travel to Teteven to meet with their peace makers and teachers for an exchange of experiences and ideas. Peace makers were also provided opportunities to engage in online meetings where they become acquainted with the peace makers in the other pilot schools.

262. Mentors highlighted the fact that they were unable to arrange as many meetings and opportunities for cooperation among pilot schools as they had wanted because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

263. Pilot schools would have benefited from having a better community of practice and more exchanges, including separate communities of practice and exchanges for school principals, coordination councils, primary school teachers and middle and high school teachers.

264. In terms of partnership, other than some engagement with the Parents Association to support Programme implementation, UNICEF and pilot schools did not really engage local communities in their efforts to establish safe schools or to prevent school violence and bullying. Teachers at one of the pilot schools reported that this was *“one of the failures, we haven’t involved the local community, particularly leaders in our local community.”*¹⁶⁹ It is notable, however, that UNICEF established a partnership with IKEA to support each of the schools to design and furnish a so-called relaxing space or corner.

265. UNICEF was able to adapt and change to meet the needs of beneficiaries, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, but shifting the Programme’s rollout to an online platform came with a host of challenges that were not envisioned or planned for the Programme was being developed. Thus, in May 2020, a joint online meeting was held and attended by 22 representatives, including at least two representatives from each of the five pilot schools. This online meeting included principals and deputy principals, members of coordination councils, UNICEF and MES. During this online meeting, the situation in the schools was discussed with the programme team and mentors, and a questionnaire was submitted to check the needs of schools. Information gathered from the questionnaire was analysed and bi-lateral meetings were organized with each of the pilot schools and their mentors to adapt Programme activities to the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷⁰ Pilot schools were also provided the opportunity to back out of the initiative if they so desired.

“For me it is hard to say because actually the Implementaiton strategy was one at the beginning and the situation with COVID changed it completely, so it could have been better . . . I think the Implementaiton strategy was built on a lot of flexibility and helped to adapt to the COVID situation and to change the programme in a way. Schools are very different, we talk about different schools and different approaches in every school . . . I see the need for a slower process, and some were demotivated because it was rushing.” (30, 31, Mentors)

266. Ultimately, the COVID-19 pandemic, significantly influenced the Programme’s implementation and made it more difficult to engage school staff and students, as teachers were struggling to teach online and students’ were having a difficult time with distance learning. By the time, children started to return to in-class learning, there were periods in time when COVID-19 forced schools to re-close temporarily and return to online teaching

¹⁶⁹ 69-74, Primary School Teachers

¹⁷⁰ *Mid-Term Assessment of the Steps Together Programme Implemented Under the Understanding and Cooperation Agreement Between Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria and UNICEF*, September 2019 – September 2021. UNICEF: Sofia, Bulgaria.

and distance learning; this continued for more than one-year. This made it more difficult for teachers to remain focused on and committed to the Programme and for students to fully engage in the Programme. Nevertheless, the five pilot schools continued to work with the mentors in an effort to implement the Programme.

- a. *"A large portion of the training and communication took place remotely and online, we had only a few cases when there was direct contact and eye contact with the teachers, this was a challenge because we had to adapt the way we worked and the contents that we had to deliver online. This was difficult for teachers as well because there were periods of entire remote work and others where the classrooms would rotate, this made the delivery of education difficult. It required flexibility on the part of the teachers, this is likely the reason why we had delays in the start of the programme, and these objective difficulties were not as easy to cope with for everyone. There were form teachers that managed to cope with online learning very easily, and they managed to apply elements of the workshops, and there were other form teachers who said it was very difficult for them to engage students in this remote environment."*¹⁷¹

267. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, some school staff were unable to appreciate the benefits of the Programme and did not understand how to implement it in an online platform. In fact, it was difficult to keep both school staff and students engaged and interested online teaching and learning, which made Programme implementing in an online platform difficult. For many school staff, the online capacity building workshops and training offered under the aegis of the Programme were an added burden on top of their online teaching and administrative responsibilities. Too much screen time each day caused many teachers to burnout. This meant that UNICEF mentors had to cut their capacity building trainings short, which meant that Programme-related trainings were not delivered to the full extent as initially envisioned and planned for the Programme.

5.5.2. To what extent data collection and monitoring activities performed by UNICEF and MES informed and contributed to improving implementation of Programme activities and achievement of results?

268. UNICEF had a monitoring and reporting approach to support Programme management. Although the Programme Document did not include a description of the monitoring approach or processes; it did include a Programme Results Monitoring Framework (Annex P: Steps Together Programme RMF). While finalizing this evaluation report, the UNICEF Programme Coordinator explained the monitoring approach or process. As explained, MES, as co-funder of the Programme, provided written instructions on the technical and financial reporting to pilot schools. In addition, MES provided a half-day informational session for school principals and accountants on the implementation of the instructions. Reports were collected on an annual basis from schools by MES. In addition, UNICEF's documentation and monitoring procedures were linked to outcomes, activities and indicators identified in the RMF. Documentation procedures were elaborated by UNICEF and presented to mentors and schools during an informational session. During this session, the UNICEF Programme Coordinator was available to provide additional support during the programme's implementation period. The UNICEF Programme Coordinator was also responsible for collecting and archiving monitoring data and information, and documenting progress and results, such as in the mid-term assessment in September 2021. On a monthly basis, the UNICEF Programme Coordinator informed the mentors in each school of progress made. Mentors all supported the collection of evidences by communication with school coordinators; mentors organized the collection of data at the school level.

"I think the monitoring was meant to make the programme flexible according to what is happening and in some ways it was efficient because we could observe and monitor how they perceive the programme, but what they said in the monitoring documents was not what they were saying and feeling. When meeting in person people are more open and ready to share, and when the meeting is online it is difficult and there is more resistance. The communication suffered online because they [school staff] are not comfortable to answer emails, because they are not so technical." (29, Mentor)

269. For UNICEF it was also a challenge that schools were slow to complete or did not complete monitoring and reporting forms and diaries, as requested by UNICEF; thus, UNICEF had to do a lot of follow up to collect data and information needed for monitoring and reporting. School staff pointed out that they are overburdened

¹⁷¹ 39, Mentor

with teaching and administrative responsibilities, particularly during the pandemic, so they did not have time to complete the monitoring tools. Regardless of these challenges, UNICEF and mentors did attempt to provide schools with feedback, particularly after meetings and trainings, but the feedback was not always addressed by the pilot schools.

270. In general, the focus of monitoring was on documenting progress made toward implementing activities and pre-defined indicators (Annex Q: UNICEF Reporting on Programme-Related Indicators). UNICEF also invested in Programme-related baseline and endline studies¹⁷² and summaries of these reports were translated into English and shared with the Lead Evaluator. These study reports were largely qualitative in nature and scope, with some quantitative data, but they did not explicitly measure Programme-related indicators from the baseline and endline.

271. Programme implementation and monitoring tools and reports were in Bulgarian and were not shared with the evaluation team; however, the mid-term assessment that covered the period of September 2019-2021 was available in English and was shared with the evaluation team, as was an executive summary of the baseline and ending studies (written in Bulgarian and translated into English). Based upon documents reviewed, it was evident that there is room for improvement when it comes to monitoring and reporting, including the need for a clear monitoring and evaluation framework, which should be spelled out in the Programme Document, and more qualitative indicators.

5.6. Sustainability

5.6.1. To what extent has UNICEF and MES been able to support pilot schools to ensure ownership of the Steps Together Programme? What are the key factors that can be positively or negatively influence the institutionalization and long-term financial sustainability of the Steps Together Programme?

272. At this stage, the Programme's sustainability is limited in the pilot schools because there had not been enough time, commitment or buy-in from the majority of school staff to implement the Programme as originally envisioned, as a whole school approach. Moreover, not all school staff felt that they had been capacitated enough to understand how to implement the Programme and teach the curriculum, nor are they provided enough time in the school day and curriculum to do so. These are significant barriers to sustainability.¹⁷³

273. Some teachers may continue to utilize components of the Programme, such as the practice of developing classroom rules and values, and posting them in the classroom, but it is not clear that they will continue to implement any of the other components of the Programme, such as restorative justice or teaching the curriculum in the classroom.

274. Similarly, mentors envisioned that schools may keep three or four activities from the Programme Handbook, such as establishing classroom rules and values, and providing space for discussion, but that was about it. Mentors pointed out that if the Programme's curriculum were part of the required curriculum, it would have a better chance of being sustained over time. One mentor explained that right now the Programme *"cannot be sustainable . . . they [schools] accepted a programme with a beginning and an end, if it is not something from the Ministry, part of their every week programme, I doubt it will be sustained."*¹⁷⁴

275. In general, mentors had their doubts that the Programme will be sustainable. One mentor explained, *"I am not sure we increased the willingness, I have my doubts that after the programme ends that they will start to function like they ordinarily do. Maybe some teachers will continue to use the instruments, but I have my doubts."*¹⁷⁵ Mentors felt that school staff need more structured time to implement the Programme, as two years was not enough time.

¹⁷² The baseline study was conducted between October and December 2020, and it is not clear from the endline report as to when the endline study was conducted; thus, the length of time between the baseline and endline reports are unknown.

¹⁷³ During the finalization of this evaluation report, the UNICEF Programme Manager felt that it was important to mention that the Programme provided flexibility to schools to choose on which elements they want to focus based upon the needs of each school. This was a vision promoted by MoES at the design and implementation stages. Still, however, the Programme had a set or minimum standards or package of activities which are outlined in the *Mechanisms*. Thus, the Programme aimed to provide schools with practical tools that would help them to operationalize the *Mechanisms*.

¹⁷⁴ 30, 31, Mentor

¹⁷⁵ 30, 31, Mentor

276. Any effort to ensure sustainability of the Programme requires capacitating all school staff, and ‘winning their hearts and minds’ and getting them to commit to implementing the Programme and teaching the Programme’s curriculum. Any effort to ensure sustainability of the Programme also requires ongoing guidance and mentorship for school staff to implement the Programme, and further Programme development to ensure teachers have access to age- and grade-specific curriculum content for primary, middle and high school students

6. CONCLUSIONS

277. The conclusions presented below are derived from the findings, and present a picture of the strengths and limitations of the Programme, as it relates, in part to the Programme’s objective of creating a whole school approach to creating a safe school environment and to prevention school violence and bullying. The conclusions are, in part, forward looking, particularly if MES intends to scale-up the Programme nationally.

278. **Conclusion 1:** This evaluation found that the Steps Together Programme was coherent and designed and implemented specifically to support schools in their efforts to operationalize the *Mechanism of Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institutions of the Preschool and School Education System*. The *Mechanism* offers a policy framework for prevention and intervention against school violence and bullying, and which aims to assist educational institutions in their efforts to create a safe education environment. The Programme focused on providing each of the pilot schools and their staff with capacity building, technical assistance and tools to implement the *Mechanism* (paragraphs 162-166 and 171).

279. **Conclusion 2:** The Programme’s objectives, strategies and activities were relevant and aligned with government priorities, policies and reform agendas related to prevention and response to VAC, specifically school violence and bullying. In particular, the Programme was in line with the National Development Programme Bulgaria 2030 and regional priorities identified in the Europe 2030 Strategy, European Commission Recommendation "Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage", and the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021 and 2022-2027). The Programme was also aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and UNICEF’s Country Programme Document 2018-2022 (paragraph 167).

280. **Conclusion 3:** The Programme was evidence-based and modeled after a similar programme, entitled ‘For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools’ (SEES), which was designed and implemented in Croatia from 2003-2011, with full support from UNICEF Croatia.¹⁷⁶ The SEES Programme focused on prevention of peer violence and bullying for a safe and enabling environment in schools. To support the SEES Programme, UNICEF Croatia developed a handbook for teachers, school associates and principals involved in the development of the SEES Programme. In 2015, the Handbook was published by UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and has served as an evidence-based model for other schools in the region. UNICEF Bulgaria maintained that the Steps Together Programme Handbook was adapted to reflect the Bulgarian context and needs of schools, such as including a component on engaging students and parents (paragraphs 168-170).

281. **Conclusion 4:** The Programme was relevant because it was aligned with the needs of schools, and was implemented in a way that enabled schools to focus on their identified needs, in cooperation with the school mentor; however, there was a standard package of Programme materials and handbooks, and capacity building trainings and technical assistance provided to schools of schools. The Programme was aligned with the needs of schools as evidenced by school staff’s recognition that the Programme was relevant (paragraphs 171-178).

282. **Conclusion 5:** The Programme’s design and activities were appropriate for achieving the intended results and outcomes; however, UNICEF and MES would benefit from reviewing and revising the Programme Document to update it based upon lessons learned and plan for the future, and develop a proper ToC and to strengthen the RMF. The ToC should include a clearly developed programme goal and related outcomes, outputs and activities.¹⁷⁷ The lack of a proper ToC may have hindered the Programme, and could have been used to strengthen the RMF. Thus, any desire to scale-up the Programme should occur with a review and revision of the Programme Document and the ToC and RMF (paragraphs 179-181)

¹⁷⁶ UNICEF (2015). *Programme Handbook. Prevention of peer violence – For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools*. UNICEF Regional Office for the Central and Eastern Europe and its Commonwealth and Independent State: Geneva, Switzerland.

¹⁷⁷ The ToC included detailed indicators for monitoring outcomes and outputs

283. **Conclusion 6:** This evaluation found that in each of the pilot schools, the Programme was integrated into school life to varying degrees, and the majority of respondents who were engaged with the Programme recognized that the Programme was important to preventing school violence and bullying. On average, respondents ranked the Programme as an 8.4 on a 10-point scale (1=not important to 10=very important). In general, school staff appreciated the support provided by mentors to build their capacities to understand school violence and bullying, and to implement good practices for developing a whole school approach that will help to implement the *Mechanism* and prevent and respond to school violence and bullying, and to create a safe school environment. This is despite the fact that pilot schools were unable to fully implement the Programme in its entirety in the two-year period (paragraphs 182-190)
284. **Conclusion 7:** In terms of effectiveness, this evaluation found that the Programme achieved the planned objectives; yet there were challenges and delays that occurred during implementation because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although most pilot schools described their schools as having a safe environment, with occasional problems of aggression and bullying, some school staff tried to be more proactive and use prevention-related activities from the Programme Handbook as a means to prevent school violence and bullying. They felt that their efforts were paying off because they started to receive fewer alerts or tip-offs from parents and colleagues about aggression and bullying (paragraphs 191-198).
285. **Conclusion 8:** The Programme included a number of practices to prevent school violence and bullying. Some of these practices were more successful and readily accepted by school staff. For instance, establishing classroom rules and values was one, and peer-to-peer initiatives, such as the peace makers, was another; both of these practices were well received by pilot schools. Coordination councils saw the peace makers initiative as innovative and fairly easy to implement. The restorative justice approach, however, which was meant to be a cornerstone of the Programme, was more difficult for school staff to understand and implement. This, in part, is because the educational system has a long-held tradition of imposing punitive sanctions on students who violate school's rules, which is in contrast to the concept of restorative justice (paragraphs 191-195).
286. **Conclusion 9:** In each of the pilot schools, the Programme reached its target groups and had an impact on the targeted groups – school staff, students and parents – to varying degrees. The Programme fell short, however, of creating a whole school approach in the pilot schools. This in part was because at the time the evaluation was conducted, most pilot schools were in the early stages of introducing students and parents to the Programme, because implementation was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and teachers were still learning how to teach the Programme's curriculum to students. In addition, teachers faced difficulties when it came to finding time to integrate the Programme's curriculum into their teaching. The number of courses that form teachers could use to teach the Programme's curriculum was limited each semester (paragraphs 200-209).
287. **Conclusion 10:** Many students, particularly at the middle and high school levels, thought the Programme had little or no impact on changing students' behaviours, particularly the behaviours of aggressive and bullying students. There were, however, some students who thought the Programme helped to reduce some conflicts among students, but more so among students who were not known troublemakers and did not have a reputation of being aggressive or bullying. High school students seemed to be less interested in the Programme, because they perceived the Programme's content and materials to be more appropriate for younger students, except for high students who were involved in the peace makers initiative (paragraphs 210-218).
288. **Conclusion 11:** It was more difficult to see the benefits of the Programme for parents because it was difficult for school staff to engage parents in the Programme, including to identify one or two parents who were willing to serve on the coordination council. Parents of children in primary, middle and high school grades were not fully aware of the Programme, nor did they understand the Programme's content. Nevertheless, many parents believed that a Programme focused on creating a safe school environment and preventing school violence and bullying is very important, but they want it to be substantive and to have a real impact (paragraphs 219-223).
289. **Conclusion 12:** Assessing the Programme's impact after two years of piloting was not possible, nor was assessing differences in impact among the five pilot schools because the COVID-19 pandemic delayed implementation of the Programme and effected how the Programme was ultimately implemented, which was different from initially planned (as already explained). Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Programme, there was a shorter timeframe for Programme implementation; thus, it is too early to answer evaluation questions related to the impact of the Programme in each of the five pilot schools. Also, given the

fact that the Programme was not implemented school-wide in any of the five pilot schools, the impacts are not clear (paragraphs 224-225).

290. **Conclusion 13:** The Programme contributed to capacity building of schools to implement the Programme and address school violence and bullying. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of these trainings were delivered online in two- to three-hour training sessions; which was different from what was originally planned (i.e., face-to-face trainings). This was a challenge for everyone involved in the Programme, as they were not accustomed to delivering or receiving capacity building trainings online, and school staff were overwhelmed by online teaching and distance learning, which was leading to burnout. Nevertheless, on average, school staff ranked their level of satisfaction with the Programme as an 8.7 on a 10-point scale (1=not satisfied to 10=very satisfied) (paragraph 226-240).

291. **Conclusion 14:** Programme implementation was negatively impacted by challenges and barriers, including: difficulties finding time and space to teach the Programme's curriculum; teachers did not feel comfortable and/or confident teaching the Programme's curriculum; not all teachers were motivated to implement the Programme; school staff faced challenges engaging and communicating with parents; and many teachers' held negative attitudes toward parents and expressed an 'us against them' mentality (paragraphs 249-254).

292. **Conclusion 15:** This evaluation found that the Programme and its implementation was well planned and managed. From start to finish, with the support of mentors, UNICEF tried to tailor implementation strategies to each of the five pilot schools. Despite all of these efforts, there was still room for improvement. UNICEF was able to adapt and change to meet the needs of each of the pilot schools, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the pandemic significantly influenced the Programme's implementation and made engaging school staff and students more difficult as teachers were struggling to teach online and students' were having a difficult time with distance learning. Ultimately, UNICEF learned that two years was not enough time to implement the Programme to the extent that it was able to change the culture in the pilot schools, and to engage all of the school staff, students and parents. Nor was there enough time to really assess the Programme's impact or effectiveness, or to ensure sustainability over time. Schools need a longer period of time to be capacitated to possess the knowledge, attitudes and practices needed to effectively implement the Programme as a whole school approach, and the technical assistance of mentors. Each of the pilot schools would benefit from an additional two years of piloting the Programme (paragraphs 255-267)

293. **Conclusion 16:** This evaluation found limited evidence that the Programme will be sustainable after only two-years of implementation; more time is needed for Implementation. There were challenge and barriers to Programme implementation that need to be addressed for the Programme to be sustainable. This includes: revisions and enhancement to Programme-related materials; strengthening the capacities of school staff to implement the Programme as a whole school approach, in cooperation with students and parents; and ongoing technical assistance of mentors (paragraphs 272-276).

294. It is notable that there were no unexpected or unintended findings, either results or impacts, documented during this evaluation.

7. LESSONS LEARNED

295. There were several lessons learned to consider if there are plans going forward to scale-up the Programme, and could be relevant in other countries where there are plans to implement school-based programmes focused on preventing school violence and bullying. Lessons learned include:

- a. For the Programme to be properly and effectively implemented, school principals need to be committed to the Programme and the whole school approach to Programme implementation. In keeping, school principals need to serve as role models to school staff and communicate and demonstrate their commitment to the Programme, and ensure that all school staff are capacitated to implement the Programme.
- b. School principals need to delegate some responsibilities for coordination and implementation of the Programme to school staff, particularly coordination councils and teachers who are committed to the

Programme.¹⁷⁸ The Programme's success depends, in part, on coordination councils willingness to implement the Programme and apply the *Mechanism*.

- c. In Bulgaria, educational institutions and school staff are slow to change their approaches to engaging with and teaching students, and addressing anti-social and behavioural problems of students; thus, efforts to 'win the hearts and minds' of school staff to implement the Programme requires significant capacity building and technical assistance, a demonstration of results, and proper allocations of time in weekly teaching schedules.
- d. The majority of school staff need to be properly capacitated and mentored to implement the Programme and to work together as a team to implement the Programme as a whole school approach. A whole school approach will increase the responsibility and engagement of all school staff in the Programme, including school principals, coordination councils, psychologists and teachers, as well as students and parents. Schools need school staff who are willing to champion the Programme.
- e. School staff need to work with students of all grades, including those who are well-behaved and perform well in school, and those who tend to act aggressively and bully other students and teachers, to create a safe school environment and to prevent school violence and bullying.
- f. Both school staff and parents need capacity building and technical assistance to learn how to work together to ensure school environments are safe, and to prevent and address school violence and bullying. This requires breaking down the 'us versus them' mentality held by school staff, and strengthening partnerships and collaboration among school staff and parents.
- g. Programme Handbooks need to be age- and grade-specific to ensure that the curriculum and activities are relevant to students of all grades and ages. To accomplish this, Programme curriculum needs to advance with each grade and be transformative in ways that promotes social and emotional learning, and action for change to end school violence and bullying.
- h. Mentors need to exist outside of the school and not be subordinate to the school principals. By being outside of the school, mentors are able to take an independent perspective and provide recommendations and guidance, without being constrained or influenced by school principals. By being independent, mentors could ensure that school staff have a safe space to discuss challenges or issues that they are facing in the classroom and/or with particular students and colleagues, with confidence that the discussions will be held in confidence.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

296. The recommendations that follow are based upon findings, conclusions and lessons learned from this evaluation, and were discussed with UNICEF CO and MES staff, as well as school staff during data collection in the field. Recommendations have also been guided by good practices identified during previous efforts to implement and evaluate school- and curriculum-based initiatives aimed at preventing and responding to violence and bullying in schools. The level of participation of UNICEF CO and MES staff, and school staff in helping to formulate recommendations was not in proportion to their level of participation in the intervention or this evaluation. At the time of this evaluation, UNICEF and MES no longer had a reference group convened; thus, there was not reference group engaged in the formulation of the recommendations.

297. Recommendations presented below aim to TOR, focused on providing recommendations for the process of institutionalizing and scaling up the Programme nationally and actions that need to be taken to ensure quality and sustainable implementation of the Programme in the future. Following the recommendations is a prioritization and classification of each recommendation based upon urgency, impact and difficulty is provided (Table 11).

8.1. Strengthen National Mechanisms to Address School Violence and Bullying

298. **Recommendation 1: UNICEF should support MES and the Expert Group to review and revise the *Mechanism of Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institutions of the Preschool and School Education System* to strengthen the *Mechanism* and their implementation.** This evaluation found that In the pilot schools,

¹⁷⁸ During the finalization of this evaluation report, the UNICEF Programme Coordinator stressed that it depends on the leadership style of the school principal. In the Programme, mentors observed in some pilot schools school principals over delegated Programme responsibilities of the school principal to a few active and experienced teachers who were also engaged in other school programmes; as a result, these teachers soon burnt out or shifted their focus away from the Programme and only to implementing their formal duties.

coordination councils recognized that the Programme made it easier to recognize violence and helped to make members of the coordination councils more aware of the *Mechanism*. Coordination council members also pointed out that the Programme's methodology provided them with better approaches to resolving school violence and bullying. There were some coordination council members who thought that the Programme is actually better than the official *Mechanism*. Some respondents even felt that the MES needs to reform the *Mechanism* to align with the Steps Together Programme to be more meaningful (paragraphs 162-166). Based upon these findings, the *Mechanism* should be reviewed and revised for purposes of strengthening the policy framework for addressing school violence and bullying in schools, and working with child victims, witnesses and perpetrators of school violence and bullying.

8.2. Strengthen Steps Together Programme Materials

299. **Recommendation 2: UNICEF should support the MES and the Expert Group to review and revise Steps Together Programme materials.** This evaluation found that school staff and mentors perceived that the Programme materials were relevant, but that the Programme Handbook was too childish for middle and high school students and does not reflect the diversity of experiences of ethnic minorities. Thus, the Programme does not speak to or resonate with older students, nor does it resonate with ethnic minority students in ways that promotes inclusivity. School staff also found that the Programme Handbook. Another limitation of the Programme Handbook was that it was modeled after the SEES Programme Handbook that had been developed nearly a decade earlier, so school staff from the pilot schools felt the Programme Handbook's content and activities were outdated and needed to be revised and developed to reflect children and adolescents of today, particularly since there have been many technological and development changes, and a global pandemic, that has reshaped the national context and shaped the lives of children and adolescents.

300. Based upon these findings, it would be best to have separate handbooks and curriculum for primary, middle and high school students. The Programme should have a curriculum that advances in terms of content and activities from grades 1-12. In keeping with lessons learned, Programme Handbooks need to be age- and grade-specific to ensure that the curriculum and activities are relevant to students of all grades and ages. To accomplish this, Programme curriculum needs to advance with each grade and be transformative in ways that promotes social and emotional learning, and action for change to end school violence and bullying. There are lessons to be learned from the UN Women-supported *Voices Against Violence Handbook*¹⁷⁹ on how to develop age-specific educational curriculum focused on preventing and responding to violence, including gender-based violence, and to make the curriculum action-based. Programme Handbooks would benefit from also strengthening content related to gender-based violence in the Programme Handbook and curriculum.

301. The Programme Handbook should also be reviewed and revised to ensure that they are contemporary, reflecting children and adolescents of today. It would be a good to engage a team of mentors and school staff from the pilot schools to provide input and guidance during the review and revision processes. It would also be important to make sure that ethnic minority educators are engaged to ensure that revised Programme materials promote inclusivity of ethnic minority students and cultural diversity. It would also be beneficial to include content that supports inclusivity of children with disabilities.

302. **Recommendation 3: UNICEF and MES should consider developing a full-package of 'how-to videos' for school staff on how to roll out various components of the Programme.** This evaluation found that school staff need more resources that will help them to understand the Programme and how to implement the Programme, including teaching Programme-related activities from the Programme Handbook. During the evaluation, the evaluator explored teacher's interest in having a full-package of 'how to videos' that would help to build their capacities and show them how to roll out various components of the Programme, such how to teach different programme-related activities in the classroom, how to speak to student about school violence and bullying, and how to effectively communicate with parents in different scenarios. Teachers expressed interest in having access to such materials. Thus, it is recommended that UNICEF and MES should consider developing a full-package of 'how-to videos' for school staff on how to roll out and implement various components of the Programme. Such videos can be based upon a combination lecture and role play that provides vary practical guidance on how to implement various components of the Programme effectively and properly. These how-to

¹⁷⁹ Retrieved on 12 September 2022 from: [Voices against Violence | UN Women](#) and [Deliver the Voices against Violence curriculum \(waggs.org\)](#)

videos can be made part of a resources package of materials for school staff and is available online at the Steps Together Programme website.

303. **Recommendation 4: UNICEF and MES should work together to develop a proper ToC and RMF for the Steps Together Programme.** This evaluation found that the Programme lacked a clear and comprehensive ToC and had a RMF that had an ambitious and remarkable number of outcomes and activities which UNICEF and MES were focused on accomplishing; the RMF for the Programme was largely activities driven and not aligned with a ToC. If UNICEF plans to continue to invest in the Steps Together Programme and support MES to scale-up the Programme to all schools in Bulgaria, UNICEF and MES should work together to develop a clear and comprehensive ToC for the Programme. The ToC should have clearly identified components and a causal chain of high-level changes, along with intermediate changes will help to guide the way forward for both UNICEF and MES. A well-developed ToC would help to support the change process and key priorities, and to identify assumptions, risks and bottlenecks that may hinder progress toward planned changes and change strategies, and would need to be mitigated (Annex Q: UNICEF Reporting on Programme-Related Indicators). Once a clear and comprehensive ToC is developed, a new RMF should be developed that is aligned with the ToC, and not so activities driven. UNICEF and MES should use this as an opportunity to Integrate gender and inclusivity into the ToC and RMF, and baseline and monitoring and reporting tools.

304. UNICEF should contract a technical expert who can provide UNICEF and MES the support needed to develop a proper ToC and RMF to support the scale-up of the Steps Together Programme. The technical expert should also have the expertise needed to develop proper baseline, monitoring and reporting tools and results-based monitoring guidance to support the scale-up of the Programme. The ToC, RMF and related tools and guidance should also address issues of gender and inclusivity, which was lacking in the pilot for the Steps Together Programme. It would be important that the technical expert have expertise in school-based violence prevention programming, gender-based violence, transformative education and child development. They should also have a background in development contexts developing ToCs and RMFs, as well as baseline, monitoring and reporting tools and results-based management guidance.

305. There are also several documents that UNICEF and MES use to proceed with developing a proper ToC and RMF, and integrate gendering and inclusivity into programming.

- a. *Theory of Change: UNDAF Champion Guidance*. United Nations Development Group. Available at: [Microsoft Word – UNDG-UNDAF-Companion-Pieces-7-Theory-of-Change.docx](#)
- b. *Theory of Change*. UNICEF, 2014. Available at: [Theory of Change \(unicef-irc.org\)](#)
- c. *Guidelines for Preparing and Using a Design and Monitoring Framework*. Asian Development Bank, 2020. Available at: [Guidelines for Preparing a Design and Monitoring Framework \(October 2020\) \(adb.org\)](#)
- d. *Results-Based Management Handbook: Working together for children*. UNICEF, 2017. Available at: [file \(unicef.org\)](#)
- e. *How to Conduct a Gender Analysis: A Guidance Note for UNDP Staff*. UNDP, 2016. Available at: [UNDP Guidance Note how to conduct a gender analysis.pdf](#)
- f. *Gender Toolkit: Integrating Gender in Programming for Every Child in Child in Europe and Central Asia*. Available at: [file \(unicef.org\)](#)

8.3. Strengthen Efforts to Implement the Steps Together Programme

306. **Recommendation 5: UNICEF and MES should continue to support the pilot schools in their efforts to implement the Steps Together Programme for an additional two-years, particularly the pilot schools that are committed to strengthening their capacities to implement the Programme properly and effectively.** This evaluation found that the Programme was integrated to varying degrees in each of the pilot schools, however, none of the pilot schools were able to fully implement the Programme in the two-year period. At this stage, the Programme's sustainability is limited in each of the pilot schools because they have not had enough time, commitment or buy-in from the majority of school staff to implement the Programme as originally envisioned, i.e., as a whole school approach. Moreover, not all school staff felt that they had been capacitated enough to understand how to implement the Programme; in part, this is because the Programme was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, teachers felt that they were not provided enough time in the school day to teach the Programme's curriculum, because of the mandatory curriculum. For these reasons, the pilot schools would benefit from another two years of support to implement the Programme and to ensure more components of the Programme are sustainable. If UNICEF and MES decided to longer continue to support

Programme implementing in the five pilot schools, these schools will most likely not continue to implement the Programme or to scale up the Programme as a whole school approach as originally envisioned.

307. **Recommendation 6: UNICEF and MES should develop a plan to ensure the sustainability of mentors as a component of the Steps Together Programme.** This evaluation found that mentors are a key component of the Steps Together Programme. Each pilot school was assigned a mentor, which was capacitated by UNICEF to provide school staff with capacity building and technical assistance to implement the Programme. Pilot schools typically had weekly and/or monthly online sessions with their mentors which they found to be extremely helpful because the Programme brought a new way of working with a whole school approach to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying. School staff recognized and appreciated the support provided by mentors. School staff appreciated the support, advice and guidance that they received from mentors, such as helping them to see and understand problems or issues with students and parents from a different perspective. School staff also felt they were able to share with their mentors concerns and challenges, and mentors helped them to understand their role and how they can address and overcome challenges encountered with students and parents, and specific actions to take when violence and/or bullying occurs. In this way, mentors were an important component of the Steps Together Programme.

308. If UNICEF plans to continue to invest in the Steps Together Programme to support MES to scale up the Steps Together Programme to all schools in Bulgaria, UNICEF and MES should work together to develop a plan to ensure the mentors component of the Programme is sustainable. This requires developing a job description or Terms of Reference for mentors, defining mandatory qualifications for mentors, defining the selection process, defining mandatory induction and in-service training requirements and supervision.

309. **Recommendation 7: UNICEF and MES should develop a plan for a phased scale-up of the Steps Together Programme to all schools in Bulgaria, with a model that aims to roll out the Programme to schools that have school principals and at least 50-60 percent of school staff who are committed to implementing the Programme.** This evaluation revealed that it is too early to scale-up the Programme to all schools in Bulgaria; rather, it would be best to develop a plan for a staged scale-up which entails adding more and more schools each year. At this stage, the focus should be on identifying at least five to ten additional schools that are interested in being part of a larger cohort of schools that are implementing the Steps Together Programme. To be part of the scale-up, schools must demonstrate their commitment to implementing the Programme. This should include willingness and commitment of the school principal and deputy principal in the school, and at least 50-60 percent of school staff to implement the Programme and a whole school approach to creating a safe school environment and preventing school violence and bullying. This should include a commitment to participate in a series of Programme-related capacity building activities and to receive technical assistance from a mentor, as well as to learn from the other pilot schools. The Programme should not be rolled out to schools with no or limited expressed interest in implementing the Programme.

310. **Recommendation 8: MES should consider setting up a Steps Together Programme Training Camp for School Staff that engages school principals, coordination councils, school psychologists and teachers.** This evaluation found that although school staff in each of the pilot schools were capacitated by UNICEF and mentors to implement the Programme, not all school staff were confident using the Programme Handbook or teaching the Programme's curriculum to students, and some school staff resisted the Programme. This evaluation also found that in Bulgaria, educational institutions and school staff are slow to change their approaches to engaging with and teaching students, and addressing anti-social and behavioural problems of students. Thus, bringing changes to practices and processes can be slow and meet with resistance.

311. Thus, efforts to implement the Programme in schools and ensure sustainability requires 'winning the hearts and minds' of school staff to implement the Programme. The majority of school staff need to be properly capacitated and mentored to implement the Programme, and to work together as a team to implement the Programme as a whole school approach. A whole school approach will increase the responsibility and engagement of all school staff in the Programme, including school principals, coordination councils, psychologists and teachers, as well as students and parents. Schools need school staff who are willing to champion the Programme, and school staff need to see the positive outcomes of the Programme.

312. To accomplish this MES should consider setting up a Steps Together Programme Training Camp for School Staff that would strengthen teacher's capacities to understand the Programme and how to effectively implement

the Programme, and to teach the Programme's curriculum to students. This recommendation was introduced to school staff in four of the five pilot schools during the evaluation to gauge their interest in such an initiative as part of the Programme and for purposes of capacity building. The majority of school staff thought that the Steps Together Programme Training Camp for School Staff was a good idea and expressed interest in the opportunity to attend such a camp to strengthen their knowledge and capacities to implement the Programme and build a whole school approach, as well as to network with other schools implementing the Programme. Teachers felt that engaging school directors in the camp, alongside teachers and psychologists, would help to strengthen commitment to the Programme throughout the school. Teachers also expressed interest in helping to facilitate sessions so that new schools could learn from the pilot schools.

313. A Steps Together Programme Training Camp for School Staff should be established by MES which can serve as a training centre for school staff. The Training Camp should be a place where school staff come together and receive structured capacity building trainings from Programme experts and technical assistance from mentors on how to implement the Steps Together Programme. The Training Camp should be offered on an annual basis and school staff from schools selected to implement the Programme, including from the original five pilot schools, should be invited to attend the Training Camp. The Training Camp should be a prestigious training camp that allows participants to receive a certificate of completion. The training camp should be a five-day, all-inclusive training camp where school staff come together to learn about the Programme and how to implement the Programme in their schools, and learn how to teach the curriculum to students of different ages and to implement the peace makers initiative, how to effectively engage and communicate with students and parents, and more. The training camp should be highly interactive and engaging, and use an adult learning model and a variety of approaches to provide school staff with opportunities to 'learn by doing and through practice', coupled with instruction. School staff need to learn practical and technical skills on how to develop a whole school approach, and to work in teams to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying. The Steps Together Programme Training Camp for School Staff should be a requirement for a cadre of school staff from schools that have expressed an interest and commitment to implementing the Steps Together Programme. Over time, school staff who have been trained and become champions of the Programme can also help to train other school staff during the training camp.
314. **Recommendation 9: MES should develop a community of practice of school staff engaged in implementing the Steps Together Programme to strengthen their capacities and commitment to implement the Steps Together Programme, and to learn from each other.** This evaluation found that school staff from the pilot schools appreciated when they had opportunities to engage with school staff from other pilot schools to learn from each other as to how the Programme was being implemented. Even within schools, school staff appreciated have a school-based community of practices where school staff in a particular school were able to come together and receive capacity building trainings and develop plans to implement the Programme, and address challenges face and possible solutions. At the school level, mentors were important to the community of practice.
315. Given the desire for and benefits of a community of practice among school staff engaged in implementing the Steps together Programme, MES should develop a platform to establish a community of practice and organized exchanges at the national level to support school staff from across schools to strengthen their capacities and commitments to implement the Steps Together Programme, and to learn from each other and share experiences and approaches. At the national level, the community of practice can be formulated and emerge out of the Steps Together Programme Training Camp for School Staff, and be encouraged through an online social media platform, and an annual Steps Together Programme conference. This requires a budget to support a national community of practices for the Steps Together Programme.
316. School staff should also be encouraged and supported with technical assistance and a budget to have a school-based community of practices in which school principals, coordination council members, school psychologists and teachers can strengthen their work as a team, and learn from each other as they implement the Steps Together Programme. By strengthening cooperation between and among school staff and schools, through a community of practice, the Steps Together Programme will become a larger movement among educators in Bulgaria, particularly those who take pride in career development and advancement.

8.4. Strengthen the Steps Together Programme to Work with Aggressive and Bullying Students

317. **Recommendation 10: UNICEF and MES should integrate into the Steps Together Programme approaches for school staff to work with at-risk and high-risk students with behavioral problems and provide individualized intervention plans that serve to help the student understand the harm they are causing to other students and the disruptive environment they are creating in the school.** This evaluation found that students and parents felt that the Steps Together Programme had done little to address the behaviours of aggressive and bullying students. The Steps Together Programme offers a primary prevention curriculum and whole school approach, but lacks secondary and tertiary interventions that aim to address at-risk and high-risk students problem behaviours. Thus, UNICEF and MES should integrate into the Steps Together Programme and *Mechanisms* guidance and approaches for working with at-risk and high-risk students.

318. Secondary interventions are designed to provide more targeted interventions, instruction, and support to at-risk students to bring their behaviours into compliance with the school's rules, so that their problem behaviours do not escalate or become more serious or violent. Schools are the primary providers of secondary interventions with support from non-education sector agencies. The goal of secondary intervention is to provide targeted interventions that promote behavior change in at-risk students so they stop the problem behaviors and they do not become more serious or violent. There is a growing international literature that has found positive effects from secondary intervention for at-risk students.¹⁸⁰

At-risk students – students that demonstrate low level problem behaviours (not severe) and repeated unwilling or inability to abide by the ethical rules established by the schools.

High-risk students – student that are highly disruptive in the classroom and have more serious, aggressive, and violent behaviors toward other students and/or school personnel. These are also students that have chronic behavior problems and include students that do not respond to secondary interventions and require more individualized intervention and support.

319. High-risk students who require tertiary interventions require a support team, including their parents/caregiver, teachers, school psychologists, coordination councils and school principals. In most cases, high-risk students also require referrals to non-school sector agencies/organizations, such as child protection authorities and community-based services providers who specialize in working with vulnerable children and their families. The student and his/her parents should also be required to meet with the Coordination Council on a bi-weekly basis to review the student's progress in participating in and meeting the requirement of the tertiary intervention plan, and discuss any successes and/or continued problems.

8.5. Scale-up the Steps Together Programme

320. **Recommendation 11: MES should develop a plan to phase-in and make mandatory the Steps Together Programme curriculum in primary, middle and high schools.** This evaluation found that school staff, particularly teachers, complained that they faced challenges finding time and space to teach the Programme's curriculum. In fact, some teachers reported they did not teach the curriculum because they did not have enough time; they needed more class time to share and discuss the subject matter with students. To overcome this challenge, MES should develop a plan to phase-in and make mandatory teaching the Steps Together Programme in primary, middle and high schools, at least once every two weeks. This, however, cannot occur until MES has developed age- and grade-specific Programme Handbooks (see Recommendation 2). Once age- and grade-specific Programme Handbooks are available and school staff have been properly training to implement the Programme (see Recommendation 8), then they should be mandated to teach the Steps Together curriculum in their schools. This, however, requires a plan that phases-in mandatory teaching of the Programme's curriculum.

321. **Recommendation 12: Conduct a costing for the scale-up of the Steps Together Programme.** It was beyond the scope of this evaluation to conduct a costing analysis or cost comparisons for the Steps Together

¹⁸⁰ Resources: [Center on PBIS | Tier 2](#); [Help Your At-Risk Students Succeed: 3 Strategies for Motivation | UMass Global](#); [Prevention and Early Intervention | Youth.gov](#)

Programme. If, however, MES has plans to scale-up the Steps Together Programme, they need to conduct a proper costing study for the scale-up. A costing study should focus on estimating the costs of scaling up the Programme for MES and the costs of Programme implementation for schools. The costing study could also estimate the costs of not scaling up or implementing the Steps Together Programme in terms of costs of school violence and bullying on children's learning and development.

Table 11. Recommendations by ranking of urgency, impact and difficulty, and responsible parties					
#	Recommendation	Urgency	Impact	Difficulty	Responsible Parties
1	UNICEF should support MES and the Expert Group to review and revise the <i>Mechanism of Counteracting Bullying and Violence in the Institutions of the Preschool and School Education System</i> to strengthen the <i>Mechanism</i> and their implementation				Lead: MES Technical Partner: Expert Group Partner: UNICEF
2	UNICEF should support the MES and the Expert Group to review and revise Steps Together Programme materials.				Lead: MES Technical Partner: Expert Group; mentors; pilot school staff Partner: UNICEF
3	UNICEF and MES should consider developing a full-package of ‘how-to videos’ for school staff on how to roll out various components of the Programme				Lead: MES Technical Partner: Expert Group; mentors; pilot school staff Partner: UNICEF
4	UNICEF and MES should work together to develop a ToC and new RMF for the Steps Together Programme.				Lead: MES Technical Partner: Expert Group Partner: UNICEF
5	UNICEF and MES should continue to support the pilot schools in their efforts to implement the Steps Together Programme for an additional two-years, particularly the pilot schools that are committed to strengthening their capacities to implement the Programme properly and effectively.				Lead: MES Partner: UNICEF; pilot schools
6	UNICEF and MES should develop a plan to ensure the sustainability of mentors as a component of the Steps Together Programme.				Lead: MES Partner: UNICEF
7	UNICEF and MES should develop a plan for a phased scale-up of the Steps Together Programme to all schools in Bulgaria, with a model that aims to roll out the Programme to schools that have school principals and at least 50-60 percent of school staff who are committed to implementing the Programme.				Lead: MES Partner: UNICEF
8	MES should consider setting up a Step Together Programme Training Camp for School Staff that engages school principals, coordination councils, school psychologists and teachers				Lead: MES Technical Partner: Expert Group; pilot school staff; mentors Partner: UNICEF
9	MES should develop a community of practice of school staff engaged in implementing the Steps Together Programme to strengthen their capacities and commitment to implement the Steps Together Programme, and to learn from each other.				Lead: MES Technical Partner: Expert Group Partner: UNICEF; schools
10	UNICEF and MES should integrate into the Steps Together Programme approaches for school staff to work with at-risk and high-risk students with behavioral problems and provide individualized intervention plans that serve to help the student understand the				Lead: MES Technical Partner: Expert Group; mentors Partner: UNICEF

	harm they are causing to other students and the disruptive environment they are creating in the school.				
11	MES should develop a plan to phase-in and make mandatory the Steps Together Programme curriculum in primary, middle and high schools.				Lead: MES Technical Partner: Expert Group Partner: UNICEF
12	Conduct a costing for the scale-up of the Steps Together Programme.				Lead: MES Technical Partner: Expert Group Partner: UNICEF

 = High
 = Medium
 = Low

ANNEX A: REFERENCES

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ANNEX B: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT

**UNICEF BULGARIA COUNTRY OFFICE TERMS
OF REFERENCE
FOR INTERNATIONAL
CONSULTANT
FOR CONDUCTING
EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME ON PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AND BULLYING IN
SCHOOL - STEPS TOGETHER,
SUPPORTED BY UNICEF CO BULGARIA**

Start date of consultancy: 02 May 2022 End

date consultancy: 30 October 2022

Total number of days: up to 40 days

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

General context

Violence against children includes emotional and physical abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, sexual exploitation and abuse. It occurs in homes and families, schools, care and justice systems, workplaces and communities. Perpetrators include parents, family members, teachers, caretakers, law enforcement authorities and other children.

Many children do not feel protected in school. Globally, more than one third of all children aged between 13 and 15 say that they are regularly a subject of violence or bullying at school¹. This is why the sustainable development goals put on the global agenda ending violence against children and its sustainable prevention. There is clear evidence of the harm of violence on physical and mental health and children's development, on their ability to learn and build relationships with others, to become fully functional adults and parents. School bullying and insecure school environments are one of the reasons for early drop out of the education system, reduced attendance, poor student performance, and have significant socio-economic effects as education is key for the personal and professional realization of individuals and for the prosperity of societies.

According to the study on the health and behaviour of school aged children (HBSC)² students in Bulgaria are among the top ten out of 43 surveyed countries affected by the problem of school bullying. Data from the MES shows around 8000 cases of different forms of violence are registered in schools annually. A study of the views of

¹ A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents, UNICEF, New York, 2017

² Health and behavior in school-aged children - HBSC 2013/2014: An international survey. Summary of data for Bulgaria <https://www.unicef.bg/assets/NewsPics/2017/PDFs/HBSC_2013_2014_Resume.pdf> (02.07.18)

³ Official data MES; National Program for prevention of violence and abuse against children (2017-2020)

Bulgarian children on important areas of their life⁴, conducted by UNICEF and the State Agency for Child Protection, also confirms that violence, in particular school violence, is as a major problem for children and adolescents. The different forms of aggression, violence and bullying, are identified as one of the four major problems faced by children in Bulgaria together with poverty, the easy access to drugs, alcohol and cigarettes, and the low quality of education.

Schools, on the other hand, are recognized as an important space where children, teachers and education personnel can learn and adopt pro-social behaviours that can contribute to preventing violence within the school and in the community.

In April 2017, MES initiated the development of a cross-sectoral Action Plan which aims at prevention of violence and building safety in schools. The measures include provision of psychologists and pedagogical councillors, targeted trainings of teachers, introduction of in- class and after school activities for prevention of violence. There has been a revision of the State Standard on Inclusive Education with regards to the cases of bullying and violence in schools.

A Mechanism for combatting bullying and violence in educational institutions has been introduced in the education system⁵ to support educational institutions in their efforts to create a safe school environment. Its introduction implies the understanding that real progress in addressing violence and bullying can only be achieved by implementing a coherent and purposeful policy that is shared and implemented by all actors in the education process. The document introduces the necessary measures to create a safe school environment in the understanding of social-ecological model and a whole-school approach to prevention and intervention on violence. Each institution in the system of pre-school and school education is obliged to:

- Set up a coordination council which is responsible for planning, monitoring and coordinating efforts to tackle violence and bullying.
- Assess and analyse the situation with a view to educating the school community on the topic of violence, but also revealing prevalence of certain forms and measures taken so far.
- Based on the assessment, plan / update prevention and intervention activities at both institution and group/ class level.

Despite the existence of a unified framework that lays the foundation for a safe school environment, it appears that educational institutions need support for its effective implementation and enforcement. One of the weaknesses of the approaches so far is that they are adult-oriented, and that children and adolescents are not active participants. Empowering them as equal participants in improving the school climate is an approach that also contributes to their development as responsible and independent individuals. Additionally, the role of parents as part of the school community needs to be strengthened and pedagogues need support for their role in the prevention process.

UNICEF role

UNICEF Bulgaria is in the last year of implementation of the Country Programme for the period 2018-2022. The overall goal of the country partnership is to support Bulgaria in its efforts to enable all children and adolescents in the country, including the most disadvantaged, to enjoy their rights and develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society. The realization of the right of every child to live free from violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices is a cross-cutting element throughout the country partnership in the period 2018 – 2022.

⁴ My voice matters. UNICEF. 2015

⁵ The document has been introduced in 2012 and its latest update was in December 2017.

In June 2019 an expert group was established within the MES to develop the program intervention based on a whole-school approach which addresses violence and bullying in schools. The main goal of the programme is to raise the awareness, commitment and capacity of the entire school community to prevent and tackle school violence. Theory of change model was developed to explain how the activities are envisaged to contribute to results of the Program Detailed indicators for monitoring outcomes and outputs are included in the model.

The program builds on the whole-school approach, a social-ecological model to addressing the problem. Under this approach violence is looked at as social phenomenon with drivers on several levels (individually, interpersonally-the class, the school and the local community). Tackling the problem requires a response on each level, as well as from every participant in the school community (students, pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff, principals and parents). Key components of the programme are:

- assessing the school environment and creating a school commitment to prevention work;
- raising awareness and knowledge on the issue;
- training of principals and coordination committees in the whole-school approach;
- ongoing support and training of teachers on effective classroom management and communication with parents;
- strengthening the school community through student and parent participation and other mechanisms;
- creating a student peer-to-peer support group and installing the restoration of value approach.

The Program was implemented in five pilot schools for 3 school years (one preparatory 2019- 2020 and two full school years of implementation 2020 – 2022). The schools` selection was completed in two phases: 1) pre-selection of 13 schools through a questionnaire and 2) discussions with children, school staff and parents to explore their readiness and motivation to join the Programme.

Evidence and knowledge generated through the application of the approach and the implementation of the different components will inform the national policy framework on violence prevention and child protection in the education and will support the development of training packages and modules on the topic.

II. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of the evaluation of the Program on Prevention of Violence and Bullying in School “Steps Together” (The Program) is to lead to improvement of the structure, implementation, and quality of the Program, and eventually to ensure its national scale up and sustainability through its legal and administrative institutionalization and state budgeting.

The key target of the evaluation will be UNICEF CO and Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and pilot schools of the Program.

It is planned the evaluation to be supported by a Reference Group, consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, State Agency for Child Protection, Council of Children to the State Agency for Child Protection, Ombudsman, school principals, school psychologists and pedagogical councilors and teachers and other stakeholders as per nomination by the MES. The group will support and oversee the evaluation process, as well as will review the findings and recommendations.

III. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

To conduct an independent evaluation of the model and components of the Program and their impact on the school environment and levels of violence and bullying in five pilot schools in Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet.

The evaluation is both formative and summative in nature - the overall evaluation should bring an understanding and improvement of the process and also on whether the Program works.

The specific objectives will be:

- Assess and evaluate the Program, its implementation, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability and, to the extent possible, its impact on teachers, children and parents.
- Assess the Program's equity and child rights perspective both in terms of the capacities to reach out to and deliver support for prevention of violence and bullying in school and ensure safe school environment.
- Identify the enablers and challenges for institutionalizing and upscaling the Program nationally.
- To examine the integration of the Program into the school life and school management in pilot schools in Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet.
- To examine the impact of the Program on the operationalization in schools of the Mechanism for Countering Bullying and Violence in the Institutions in the System of Preschool and School Education.
- Provide recommendations for the process of institutionalizing and scaling up of the Program nationally and for actions to ensure its quality and sustainable implementation in the future.

The provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the Concluding observations to Bulgaria, and the other key human rights documents should guide the process of the evaluation, together with design of the methodology, implementation and analysis of results. The evaluation should also be designed and carried out to assess the equity dimensions of the interventions, as well as gender equality.

IV. EVALUATION SCOPE

The evaluation will focus on the five pilot schools, where the Program is implemented with UNICEF and Ministry of Education and Science support and will cover the period September 2019 – present.

Geographical coverage of the evaluation includes the pilot schools in Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet. The evaluation shall include the perspective and views of all relevant stakeholders: Ministry of Education and Science; school principals, school psychologists and pedagogical counsellors, teachers, children, parents, who benefited from the Program; UNICEF team – mentors of schools, Education Program Director, Coordinator of the Program, mentors and Consultant on VAC who supported the mentor's team, Consultant leading the component for work with parents.

The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), equity and gender equality and mainstreaming approaches also need to be assessed. Particular attention should be paid to exploring equity dimensions of the intervention. For UNICEF equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop, and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias or favoritism. Equity-based evaluation provides assessments of what works and what does not work to reduce inequity, and it highlights intended and unintended results for the most vulnerable groups as well as the inequalities in the outcomes for vulnerable children and families. To the extent possible access to quality support and outcomes for different subgroups of vulnerable children and families should be explored in the evaluation (based on ethnicity, residence, setting – institutional/family, gender, disability, etc.) and the groups least reached identified.

V. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND QUESTIONS

The evaluation will assess the Program in terms of the following criteria: relevance to the child rights and equity agenda, effectiveness, efficiency, relevance to national priorities/context and needs, coherence, sustainability, and impact (as defined by OECD/DAC).

Below are given indicative questions to guide the evaluation but the Consultant may further expand and refine them during the inception phase in consultation with UNICEF and implementing partners and the Reference Group. The need of assessment of relevant human rights, equity and gender equality aspects should be considered while formulating the questions. Local dimension (with respect to the five towns, where the Program is implemented) should be explored as well.

<p>Relevance: <i>The extent to which the objectives of the intervention</i></p>	<p><i>Questions should include but not limit to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent the Program's (objectives, strategies, activities, etc.) are realistic and feasible and aligned with the government policy priorities/policies/reforms agendas in the areas of prevention and response to VAC and specifically violence and bullying in schools?
<p><i>are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is the Program integrated into the school life and school management in the pilot schools in Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet? • To what extent the Program's approaches are evidence-based, correspond, and address actual needs of the whole school community (school staff, children and parents) in the pilot schools? • Is the design of the Program and the activities appropriate for achieving the intended results and outcomes? • To what extent the Program adapted to changes in the context (Covid-19 pandemic) to remain relevant? • Has the Program design and implementation been aligned with the CRC principles (non-discrimination, best interest of the child, the right to life, participation), gender mainstreaming and Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to programming? Did it contribute towards gender specific approach and HRBA?
<p>Coherence: <i>The extent to which other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the Program.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the Program coordinated with other school policies and violence prevention practices, established in the pilot schools to encourage synergies and avoid overlap? Was there any overlap of efforts? • To what extent the Program supported the operationalization of the Mechanism for Countering Bullying and Violence in the Institutions in the System of Preschool and School Education in the pilot schools? • To what extent the Program was implemented in coherence with other programs and interventions by UNICEF/ MES, carried out at national or regional level in adding value while avoiding duplication of effort? Was there any duplication of efforts?

<p>Effectiveness:</p> <p><i>The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the Program achieved the planned objectives? To what extent the objectives are realistic? • To what extent the target groups have been reached? Did the Program manage to reach out to the most vulnerable children? Has the Program been able to reach the whole school community in the pilot schools? • What are the key benefits for school principals, school psychologists/pedagogical counsellors, teachers, children, and parents who participated in the Program? Are different groups (based on ethnicity, socio- economic profile, urban-rural residence, children with special needs, etc.) benefitting to the same extent of the Program? • What factors affected the effectiveness of the Program and its impact on target groups? What factors affected the effectiveness in relation to the most vulnerable groups? • What factors (e.g. political, social, gender and cultural, social norms, systemic, or related to the Program design and implementation, professional practices, school environment etc.) were crucial for the achievement or failure to achieve the Program's objectives in the pilot schools so far? • Has Program provided any additional (unintended) significant contribution to or effect on target groups, including on vulnerable families and children? • How effective were the capacity building activities targeting principals, teachers, school psychologists/pedagogical counsellors and parents? • What is the level of satisfaction of school principals, teachers, school psychologists/pedagogical counsellors, children, and parents who benefited from the Program? What are their views for improving the Program?
<p>Efficiency: <i>a measure of how economically resources/ inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent the available funds and expertise were used within the Programme implementation in the most efficient manner? • Would there have been a more cost-effective way to achieve the expected results? • How well the establishment and implementation of the Program was planned and managed? • To what extent the data collection and monitoring activities performed by UNICEF and MES informed and contributed to improving the implementation of Program activities and achievement of results?
<p>Sustainability: <i>The continuation of the benefits after the end of the intervention. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have UNICEF and MES been able to support pilot schools to ensure ownership of the Program? • Were the legal, institutional, and financial mechanisms beneficial to ensure sustainability of the Program? • What are the key factors that can positively or negatively influence the institutionalization and long-term financial sustainability of the Program? • What specific recommendations could be given that would contribute to the sustainability of the Program – financial and institutional, resilience of capacities/systems underlying the continuation of benefits? • How sustainable are the results achieved for the whole school community in five pilot schools? • Are there any specific steps planned or done for ensuring sustainability an scaling up of the Program at national level?

<p>Impact: <i>The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the impact on the Program after two years of piloting? Are there any differences in the impact in the five pilot schools? • To what extent did the Program contribute to capacity building of schools in view of long-term positive changes in school environment and level of violence and bullying in pilot schools?
<p>Partnerships and cooperation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the transformative effects/ potential of the Program in terms of school norms, school environment, level of violence and bullying, target groups' wellbeing, human rights and gender equality? • What worked and what did not work to reduce inequities? What are the reasons for this? • To what extent did the Program contribute to increasing school community demand for implementing systematically the whole school approach for prevention of violence and bullying in schools? Are there any differences in the impact in the five pilot schools? • To what extent and in which areas the Program had significant impact? Are there any sub-group differences? • What factors favourably or adversely affected the impact of the Program on principals, school psychologists/pedagogical counsellors, teachers, children and parents, including on the most vulnerable? • To what extent the Program is recognized by the target groups in the five pilot schools and in local communities?

Issues related to the Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming, Equity, Results-Based Management and Gender Equality will be addressed across the evaluation questions or, if required, developed as specific points as per United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Guidance on Integrating human-rights and gender equality in evaluation (see link below) and complies with the organization's commitment to gender mainstreaming as expressed in the Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Girls⁶.

VI. METHODOLOGY AND PHASES

The evaluation will follow internationally agreed evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

Mixed method approach will be applied in the evaluation combining qualitative and quantitative components to ensure complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses. The analysis is expected to build on information collected from variety of sources through different methods including review of administrative data, primary data collection from government representatives, monitoring of the Program, pilot schools and others. It should critically examine the information gathered and synthesize it in an objective manner. If contradictory information is obtained from different stakeholders, an effort should be made to understand the reasons for such information, including any gender-based differences.

The evaluation should be participatory involving beneficiaries of the Program and representatives of the target groups. Methods, data collection tools and analysis should build on a human rights and child rights approach and should be gender and culturally sensitive.

The evaluation results will be validated with national partners and key stakeholders.

Inception Phase: The first step of the evaluation process will be the inception phase during which the Consultant will develop an evaluation framework, methodology, sources of information (including stakeholders to be involved) and data collection tools based on the TOR. For each of the questions and sub-questions, the Consultant will develop indicators to inform the responses and identify the corresponding means of verification. In addition, the Consultant will assess potential limitations to the evaluation work and the availability and reliability of data. During the inception phase the Consultant will also examine any ethical issues that may arise and propose appropriate mitigation strategies.

A Desk Review of relevant studies' reports and if necessary, laws, policies and strategies, Program documentation (Program description, schedule, base-line research on the levels of violence and bullying and the environment in schools, participating in the Program, mid-term assessment of the Program, final research on the levels of violence and bullying and the environment in schools participating in the Program, summaries of feedbacks of students (1-4 grade), electronic feedbacks from teachers and students (5-12 grade) from Workshops, other). The necessary documentation related to the Program will be provided by UNICEF and the respective local partners in English and in Bulgarian languages.

Primary data collection: Primary data will be collected at school level – in the five pilot schools, through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and/or individual face to face interviews/questionnaires and/or focus group discussions (depending on the methodology of the Consultant). The aim of primary data collection is to explore the opinions of school principals, school psychologists and pedagogical counsellors, teachers, children, parents in pilot schools in Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet, who benefited from the Program; UNICEF team – mentors of the schools, Education Program Director, Coordinator of the Program, mentors and Consultant on VAC who supported the mentors' team, Consultants on implementing the component for work with the parents and the Ministry of Education and Science. Primary data collection from pilot schools need to include in any case opinions of principals/deputy principals and pedagogical counsellors and opinions of teachers, parents and children from all educational levels in the relevant schools. Data collection tools are subject to UNICEF ethical review. The Consultant should ensure that the methodology allows for exploring the views of representatives of different stakeholders: representatives of the MES, UNICEF team – mentors of schools, Program Director Education, the Program coordinator and the consultant on VAC, representatives of the target group. In addition, evaluation data on and from Program beneficiaries with different socio-economic, ethnic and residence (urban/rural) profile should be collected as well to assess equity dimensions of the interventions. The methodology and data collection tools should also consider language difficulties experienced by some ethnic groups whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian (Turkish and Roma).

The possibility to use electronically administered questionnaires should be considered if applicable.

Data analysis and report writing: the process will start at the inception phase when the Consultant will propose a detailed methodology and the structure of the final report. Data analysis will progress simultaneously with the desk review and the data collection. Inception report and draft final report will be reviewed by UNICEF CO and national stakeholders as well as an external quality review company. Consultant will incorporate the received comments and submit the final report to UNICEF Bulgaria.

General considerations: The methodology of the evaluation should be in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards. UNEG Norms and Standards and UN Evaluation Policy. The Methodology and data collection tools are subject to UNICEF ethical review.

⁶ http://www.uneval.org/documentdownload?doc_id=980&file_id=1294

Data/information sources:

Official state institutions, pilot schools and UNICEF are the main sources of data and information for the purposes of the evaluation and are therefore considered reliable and of sufficient quality. Disaggregated data (based on ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, disability, etc.) may not always be available through the official sources and the Program sources.

Available documentation:

- Program documentation – Program descriptions and initial and updated schedules, base-line and final research on the levels of violence and bullying and the environment in pilot schools, mid-term assessment of Program implementation;
- MoUs, related to the Program;
- National strategic and policy documents in the area of violence prevention and response.
- Statistical data of the Ministry of Education and Science for the school years 2019/2020 - 2021/2022.
- UNICEF VAC study
- Any other studies, assessments and relevant documents available or that may be provided by the partners.
- CPD 2018 – 2022.
- Mission Reports from MES from monitoring visits in schools

All needed documents in English and in Bulgarian, together with a contact list of key stakeholders whose views should be taken into consideration, will be provided to the Consultant once a contractual agreement has been made.

Limitations of the evaluation

An evaluability assessment with all the partners hasn't been conducted. However, despite some data gaps there is available information to conduct a formative evaluation. Data sources being different from country to country, trends analysis will be preferred over comparison.

The level of disaggregation of available data and the quality of data provided by the monitoring of the Program may not be sufficient to assess equity dimension. This limitation can be addressed by ensuring the participation of the most vulnerable families in the evaluation process through appropriate data collection methods and tools.

Not all documents related to the programme implementation and monitoring are at UNICEF disposal and are available in English, particularly MES records and internal reports.

End of school year is end of June 2022 which should be taken into consideration when planning the data gathering processes, particularly surveys and interviews with school staff and students.

VII. TENTATIVE WORK PLAN AND EVALUATION MANAGEMENT

The evaluation will take place over the period May 2022 – October 2022 and will include the following activities, for a total up to 40 consultancy days. The Consultant will be supported for data collection and other activities, as per the below table by national expert (s). There is separate recruitment process for the national expert (s).

Activities	Responsible	Expected Timeline
INCEPTION PHASE (14 days)		
<i>Desk review of reference material and mapping of relevant stakeholders</i> UNICEF team will support the compilation of the most important background material, documents, and reports related to the object of evaluation. Documents will be provided in English and in Bulgarian language.	Consultant (5 days remote) with the support from national expert(s) (2 days-remote).	10 of May 2022
<i>Development of the inception report</i>	Consultant (5 days remote)	20 of May 2022
<i>Review and feedback on the draft inception report</i>	UNICEF and the Reference group	30 of May 2022
<i>Submission of the final inception report</i>	Consultant (3 days remote)	5 of June 2022
<i>Presentation of the evaluation methodology to the Reference group</i>	Consultant (1 day - remote)	June 2022
EVALUATION – IMPLEMENTATION (9 days)		
<i>Orientation/training of the national expert/s to support the evaluation – preparation and training</i>	Consultant (2 days remote in country)	May 2022
<i>Data collection</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collection of evaluation data (primary and secondary) is expected to be carried out through different techniques, including in-depth and semi- structured interviews, questioner (survey) and focus group discussions. Protocols/transcripts of interviews, focus groups and data/ collection (survey) results. 	National experts (15 days in country)	June - July 2022
<i>Provision of methodological support and supervision to the national expert (s)</i>	Consultant (2 days remote)	June - July 2022
<i>Data analysis</i>	Consultant (5 days remote) and national expert (s)	July 2022
	(5 days - remote)	
EVALUATION REPORTING (16 days)		
<i>Development of the 1st draft evaluation report</i>	Consultant (10 days - remote) with inputs from the National expert (s) (5 days - remote)	September 2022
<i>Review and feedback from UNICEF</i>	UNICEF team	September 2022
<i>Development of the 2nd draft of the evaluation report</i>	Consultant (3 days remote)	October 2022
<i>Review and feedback from UNICEF and the Reference group</i>	UNICEF CO and Reference group	October 2022
<i>Submission of the Final Evaluation Report, including a summary</i>	Consultant (3 days remote)	October 2022

DISSEMINATION (1 day)		
<i>Presentation of key findings</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of key findings of the evaluation to the Reference group and UNICEF • Discussions with stakeholders 	Consultant (1 day in-country) National expert (s) (1 day in-country)	October 2022
<i>Dissemination</i> Dissemination of evaluation report/key report findings (to key stakeholders and partners, Regional Office, etc.).	UNICEF team	October 2022
<i>Follow-up</i> Management response	UNICEF management	October/ November 2022

Depending on the epidemiological situation and other factors, ideally two country visits may be performed:

- June 2022 – for data collection (subject to discussion with national expert(s) and UNICEF CO);
- October 2022 – for presentation of the findings of the evaluation. All dates are tentative and will be further discussed with UNICEF office.

The Consultant is expected to provide the following deliverables:

The following deliverables are expected to be produced:

1. **First draft of the Inception report**, max. 40 pages without annexes – by 20 of May 2022
2. The inception report should include methodological approach and rationale for choosing specific research methods (sampling approach, data collection tools, data analysis and reporting); mechanisms for quality control; limitations of the methodology, along with mitigation strategies; proposed work plan; annotated outline of the study; outline of the potential ethical issues and mitigation strategies; data storage and data handling – procedures for ensuring data confidentiality, how, where and for what period data will be stored and accessed, procedures for release of data; data collection tools to be used in the study (as Annex); Informed consent sample (as Annex).
3. **Inception report** – by 5 June 2022.
4. **First draft evaluation report** (draft findings, conclusions and recommendations) – September 2022
5. **Second draft evaluation report** – October 2022;
6. **Final evaluation report, max. 50 pages without annexes** – October 2022.
7. **Evaluation summary** – October 2022.
8. **Two ppt presentations**: one with the methodology of the study and one summarizing key findings and recommendations to be used for dissemination and advocacy
9. **Concept note for additional communication materials presenting the evaluation results** – October 2022.

All deliverables should be submitted in English.

The evaluation report must be compliant with the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards⁷ and to the GEROS Quality Assessment System⁸. The consultant is required to clearly identify any potential ethical issues and approaches as well as the processes for ethical reviews and will ensure that the evaluation process is ethical, in line with UNEG Ethical Guidelines, UNEG Norms and Standards.

The consultant must conform the final report to the recommendations of the CO and the external quality review board.

Proposed structure for the inception and evaluation report (to be agreed with the Consultant):

Structure of the Evaluation Report (Tentative)

- Title Page
- Table of content
- List of Acronyms
- Executive Summary
- Acknowledgements
- Background and Context of project implementation
- Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope
- Evaluation Methodology
- Findings
- Conclusions and Lessons Learned
- Recommendations
- Annex

The structure of the final report will be further discussed with the Consultant (during the Inception Phase). The approximate size of the main body of the report should be not more than 50 pages.

- The Consultant should highlight key strategic recommendations, suggesting an appropriate sequencing in the implementation of recommendations whenever possible;
- Recommendations should be firmly based on evidence and analysis;
- Recommendations should clearly identify the specific operational units/offices/divisions responsible for its implementation.

The necessary format of the communication materials presenting the results of the evaluation will be agreed during the discussions of the draft of the final report.

Evaluation team composition:

The Consultant will be assisted by one or more national expert (s). The national expert(s) will be approved and contracted by UNICEF CO separately, based on a proposal for scope of engagement and responsibilities made by the Consultant. The competencies required from the Consultant are the following:

- Advanced degree in social sciences, law, psychology, public health policy or related fields;
- Extensive experience in conducting evaluations, assessments and analyses, with a focus on VAC prevention and response;
- Experience in evaluations, assessment and analyses of programs and policies on prevention of school violence and bullying is an asset;
- Proven knowledge on child rights;
- Ability to work in an international environment;
- Previous experience of working in CEE & CIS countries is an asset;
- Excellent analytical and report writing skills;
- Familiarity with UNICEF's mission and mandate is an asset;
- Familiarity with UNICEF Global evaluation report oversight system⁹ is an asset;
- Knowledge of the country context is an asset;
- Expertise on gender equality and human rights will be considered an asset;
- Excellent knowledge of English.

Ethical considerations:

The evaluation should be carried out in accordance with the ethical standards set in the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis¹⁰, including prevention of conflict of interest. The Consultant is required to clearly identify in her/his proposal any potential ethical issues and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process. The inception report should further elaborate on them including appropriate mitigation strategies to address any potential ethical issues. Participation in the research should be voluntary and the identity of the respondents should be protected. The inception report should also describe procedures for obtaining informed consent and preserving privacy and confidentiality of the respondents.

The evaluation methodology will go through an ethical review by an internal Ethical Board set up at UNICEF CO in Bulgaria.

Data sharing requirements and procedures: The consultant is responsible for ensuring that all data collected is stored and protected appropriately. Consultant needs to set up a system to ensure that personal data is accessible only to the members of the team involved in the research and is transferred securely between research team members, as well as with UNICEF. If cloud- based storage is used, limited sharing rights should be established. It should be also ensured that data cannot be moved from secure systems.

XII. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Evaluation will be led by the UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. The evaluation will be supported by a Reference group, including representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, and relevant stakeholders as per MES and UNICEF nomination. The group will review assessment methodology, support data collection, review, provide comments on and approve the report.

The selected Consultant, as well as the national expert (s) will work under the direct supervision of UNICEF Child Rights Monitoring Specialist and in close cooperation with UNICEF Education Officer, and Program coordinator. The implementation process will be jointly monitored by UNICEF and the Reference Group, including the approval of final deliverables.

UNICEF Country Office together with national partners will be responsible for providing all available documents, organizing the field visits, meetings, focal groups, consultations and interviews, for providing access to the government counterparts, donors and partners, and for coordinating the work at country level with other stakeholders.

The evaluation findings will be shared with all relevant national and local stakeholders, as well as internally within UNICEF including the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.

XIII. PAYMENT

The Consultant should present a detailed financial proposal in accordance with the Terms of Reference, including 1) professional fee (daily consultancy rate), 2) travel related expenses (per diem, local and international travel, accommodation), 3) other relevant cost. The price must include all costs to be borne by the applicant for undertaking the assignment. Online modality for delivery of the assignment is considered. However, it is recommended that travel cost is also included in a separate line. Travel is subject to further negotiation based on the current epidemiologic situation in the country and other applicable restrictions, if any. It is recommended however that the national expert (s) complete the tasks face-to-face.

If applicable, the Consultant is responsible for assuming costs for obtaining visas and travel insurance. The lump sum for travel should be based on economy class travel, regardless of the length of travel. Costs for accommodation, meals and incidentals shall not exceed applicable daily subsistence allowance (DSA) rates, as promulgated by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC).

Payment shall be made as follows:

- 40% will be paid upon submission and approval of the Inception report;
- 60% will be paid upon submission and approval of the final report

The UNICEF CO will provide interpretation during the in-county visits and meetings, no matter the modality – face to face or online. The evaluator will be provided with transportation for site visits and official meetings, logistical support for meetings, translation during meetings.

XIV. REMARKS AND RESERVATIONS

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/deliverables are incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines.

All material developed will remain the copyright of UNICEF and according to UNICEF guidance on external academic publishing (January 2017). Evaluators are responsible for their performance and products. UNICEF reserves the copyrights and the products cannot be published or disseminated without prior permission of UNICEF.

Candidates interested in the consultancy should submit a proposal, all-inclusive fees (including lump sum travel and subsistence costs), timeline, resume/CV and a brief (max. to 7 pages) concept note on the evaluation framework (suggested methodology, sampling approach, etc.).

The selected candidate must undertake the on-line Basic Security in the Field training (to be provided by UNICEF).

⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/global-evaluation-reports-oversight-system-geros-handbook-and-summary>

¹⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/unicef-procedure-ethical-standards-research-evaluation-data-collection-and-analysis>

ANNEX C: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE NATIONAL EXPERT

UNICEF BULGARIA COUNTRY OFFICE
TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR
NATIONAL EXPERT(S)
ASSISTING CONDUCTING OF
EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME ON PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AND BULLYING IN SCHOOL -
STEPS TOGETHER,
SUPPORTED BY UNICEF CO BULGARIA

Start date of consultancy: 02 of May 2022

End date consultancy: 30 of October 2022

Total number of days: up to 28 days

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

General context

Violence against children includes emotional and physical abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, sexual exploitation and abuse. It occurs in homes and families, schools, care and justice systems, workplaces and communities. Perpetrators include parents, family members, teachers, caretakers, law enforcement authorities and other children.

Many children do not feel protected in school. Globally, more than one third of all children aged between 13 and 15 say that they are regularly a subject of violence or bullying at school¹⁸¹. Therefore, the sustainable development goals, put on the global agenda are targeting ending violence against children and its sustainable prevention. There is clear evidence of the harm of violence on physical and mental health and children's development, on their ability to learn and build relationships with others, to become fully functional adults and parents. School bullying and insecure school environments are one of the reasons for early drop out of the education system, reduced attendance, poor student performance, and have significant socio-economic effects as education is key for the personal and professional realization of individuals and for the prosperity of societies.

According to the study on the health and behaviour of school aged children (HBSC)¹⁸² students in Bulgaria are among the top ten out of 43 surveyed countries affected by the problem of school bullying. Data from the Ministry of Education and Science¹⁸³ (MES) shows around 8000 cases of different forms of violence are registered in schools annually. A study of the views of Bulgarian children on important areas of their life¹⁸⁴, conducted by UNICEF and the State Agency for Child Protection, also confirms that violence, in particular school violence, is as a major problem for children and adolescents. The different forms of aggression,

¹⁸¹ A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents, UNICEF, New York, 2017

¹⁸² Health and behavior in school-aged children - HBSC 2013/2014: An international survey. Summary of data for Bulgaria <https://www.unicef.bg/assets/NewsPics/2017/PDFs/HBSC_2013_2014_Resume.pdf> (02.07.18)

¹⁸³ Official data MES; National Program for prevention of violence and abuse against children (2017-2020)

¹⁸⁴ My voice matters. UNICEF. 2015

violence and bullying, are identified as one of the four major problems faced by children in Bulgaria together with poverty, the easy access to drugs, alcohol and cigarettes, and the low quality of education.

Schools, on the other hand, are recognized as an important space where children, teachers and education personnel can learn and adopt pro-social behaviours that can contribute to preventing violence within the school and in the community.

In April 2017, MES initiated the development of a cross-sectoral Action Plan which aims at prevention of violence and building safety in schools. The measures include provision of psychologists and pedagogical counsellors, targeted trainings of teachers, introduction of in-class and after school activities for prevention of violence. There has been a revision of the State Standard on Inclusive Education with regards to the cases of bullying and violence in schools.

A Mechanism for combatting bullying and violence in educational institutions has been introduced in the education system¹⁸⁵ to support educational institutions in their efforts to create a safe school environment. Its introduction implies the understanding that real progress in addressing violence and bullying can only be achieved by implementing a coherent and purposeful policy that is shared and implemented by all actors in the education process. The document introduces the necessary measures to create a safe school environment in the understanding of social-ecological model and a whole-school approach to prevention and intervention on violence. Each institution in the system of pre-school and school education is obliged to:

- Set up a coordination council which is responsible for planning, monitoring and coordinating efforts to tackle violence and bullying.
- Assess and analyse the situation with a view to educating the school community on the topic of violence, but also revealing prevalence of certain forms and measures taken so far.
- Based on the assessment, plan / update prevention and intervention activities at both institution and group / class level.

Despite the existence of a unified framework that lays the foundation for a safe school environment, it appears that educational institutions need support for its effective implementation and enforcement. One of the weaknesses of the approaches so far is that they are adult-oriented, and that children and adolescents are not active participants. Empowering them as equal participants in improving the school climate is an approach that also contributes to their development as responsible and independent individuals. Additionally, the role of parents as part of the school community needs to be strengthened and pedagogues need support for their role in the prevention process.

UNICEF role

UNICEF Bulgaria is in the last year of implementation of the Country Programme for the period 2018-2022. The overall goal of the country partnership is to support Bulgaria in its efforts to enable all children and adolescents in the country, including the most disadvantaged, to enjoy their rights and develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society. The realization of the right of every child to live free from violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices is a cross-cutting element throughout the country partnership in the period 2018 – 2022.

In June 2019 an expert group was established within the MES to develop the program intervention based on a whole-school approach which addresses violence and bullying in schools. The main goal of the programme is to raise the awareness, commitment and capacity of the entire school community to prevent and tackle school violence. Theory of change model was developed to explain how the activities are envisaged to contribute to results of the Program Detailed indicators for monitoring outcomes and outputs are included in the model.

¹⁸⁵ The document has been introduced in 2012 and its latest update was in December 2017.

The program builds on the whole-school approach, a social-ecological model to addressing the problem. Under this approach violence is looked at as social phenomenon with drivers on several levels (individually, interpersonally-the class, the school and the local community). Tackling the problem requires a response on each level, as well as from every participant in the school community (students, pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff, principals and parents). Key components of the programme are:

- assessing the school environment and creating a school commitment to prevention work;
- raising awareness and knowledge on the issue;
- training of principals and coordination committees in the whole-school approach;
- ongoing support and training of teachers on effective classroom management and communication with parents;
- strengthening the school community through student and parent participation and other mechanisms;
- creating a student peer-to-peer support group and installing the restoration of value approach.

The Program was implemented in five pilot schools for 3 school years (one preparatory 2019-2020 and two full school years of implementation 2020 – 2022). The schools` selection was completed in two phases: 1) pre-selection of 13 schools through a questionnaire and 2) discussions with children, school staff and parents to explore their readiness and motivation to join the Programme.

Evidence and knowledge generated through the application of the approach and the implementation of the different components will inform the national policy framework on violence prevention and child protection in the education and will support the development of training packages and modules on the topic.

II. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of the evaluation of the Program on Prevention of Violence and Bullying in School “Steps Together” (The Program) is to lead to improvement of the structure, implementation, and quality of the Program, and eventually to ensure its national scale up and sustainability through its legal and administrative institutionalization and state budgeting.

The key target of the evaluation will be UNICEF CO and Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and pilot schools of the Program.

National experts will assist an international consultant, based on a proposal for the scope of their engagement, provided by him/her.

It is planned the evaluation to be supported by a Reference Group, consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, State Agency for Child Protection, Council of Children to the State Agency for Child Protection, Ombudsman, school principals, school psychologists and pedagogical councilors and teachers and other stakeholders as per nomination by the MES and UNICEF. The group will support and oversee the evaluation process, as well as will review the findings and recommendations.

III. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

To conduct an independent evaluation of the model and components of the Program and their impact on the school environment and levels of violence and bullying in five pilot schools in Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet.

The evaluation is both formative and summative in nature - the overall evaluation should bring an understanding and improvement of the process and also on whether the Program works.

The specific objectives will be:

- Assess and evaluate the Program, its implementation, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability and, to the extent possible, its impact on teachers, children and parents.
- Assess the Program's equity and child rights perspective both in terms of the capacities to reach out to and deliver support for prevention of violence and bullying in school and ensure safe school environment.
- Identify the enablers and challenges for institutionalizing and upscaling the Program nationally.
- To examine the integration of the Program into the school life and school management in pilot schools in Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet.
- To examine the impact of the Program on the operationalization in schools of the Mechanism for Countering Bullying and Violence in the Institutions in the System of Preschool and School Education.
- Provide recommendations for the process of institutionalizing and scaling up of the Program nationally and for actions to ensure its quality and sustainable implementation in the future.

The provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the Concluding observations to Bulgaria, and the other key human rights documents should guide the process of the evaluation, together with design of the methodology, implementation and analysis of results. The evaluation should also be designed and carried out to assess the equity dimensions of the interventions, as well as gender equality.

IV. EVALUATION SCOPE

The evaluation will focus on the five pilot schools, where the Program is implemented with UNICEF and Ministry of Education and Science support and will cover the period September 2019 – present.

Geographical coverage of the evaluation includes the pilot schools in Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet. The evaluation shall include the perspective and views of all relevant stakeholders: Ministry of Education and Science; school principals, school psychologists and pedagogical counsellors, teachers, children, parents, who benefited from the Program; UNICEF team – mentors of schools, Education Program Director, Coordinator of the Program, mentors and Consultant on VAC who supported the mentors' team, Consultant who led the component for work with parents.

The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), equity and gender equality and mainstreaming approaches also need to be assessed. Particular attention should be paid to exploring equity dimensions of the intervention. For UNICEF equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop, and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias or favoritism. Equity-based evaluation provides assessments of what works and what does not work to reduce inequity, and it highlights intended and unintended results for the most vulnerable groups as well as the inequalities in the outcomes for vulnerable children and families. To the extent possible access to quality support and outcomes for different subgroups of vulnerable children and families should be explored in the evaluation (based on ethnicity, residence, setting – institutional/family, gender, disability, etc.) and the groups least reached identified.

V. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND QUESTIONS

The evaluation will assess the Program in terms of the following criteria: relevance to the child rights and equity agenda, effectiveness, efficiency, relevance to national priorities/context and needs, coherence, sustainability, and impact (as defined by OECD/DAC).

Below are given indicative questions to guide the evaluation, but the national expert(s), guided by the international consultant may further expand and refine them during the inception phase in consultation with UNICEF and implementing partners and the Reference Group. The need of assessment of relevant human rights, equity and gender equality aspects should be considered while formulating the questions. Local dimension (with respect to the five towns, where the Program is implemented) should be explored as well.

<p>Relevance: <i>The extent to which the objectives of the intervention</i></p>	<p><i>Questions should include but not limit to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent the Program's (objectives, strategies, activities, etc.) are realistic and feasible and aligned with the government policy priorities/policies/reforms agendas in the areas of prevention and response to VAC and specifically violence and bullying in schools?
<p><i>are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is the Program integrated into the school life and school management in the pilot schools in Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet? • To what extent the Program's approaches are evidence-based, correspond, and address actual needs of the whole school community (school staff, children and parents) in the pilot schools? • Is the design of the Program and the activities appropriate for achieving the intended results and outcomes? • To what extent the Program adapted to changes in the context (Covid-19 pandemic) to remain relevant? • Has the Program design and implementation been aligned with the CRC principles (non-discrimination, best interest of the child, the right to life, participation), gender mainstreaming and Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to programming? Did it contribute towards gender specific approach and HRBA?
<p>Coherence: <i>The extent to which other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the Program.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the Program coordinated with other school policies and violence prevention practices, established in the pilot schools to encourage synergies and avoid overlap? Was there any overlap of efforts? • To what extent the Program supported the operationalization of the Mechanism for Countering Bullying and Violence in the Institutions in the System of Preschool and School Education in the pilot schools? • To what extent the Program was implemented in coherence with other programs and interventions by UNICEF/ MES, carried out at national or regional level in adding value while avoiding duplication of effort? Was there any duplication of efforts?

<p>Effectiveness:</p> <p><i>The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the Program achieved the planned objectives? To what extent the objectives are realistic? • To what extent the target groups have been reached? Did the Program manage to reach out to the most vulnerable children? Has the Program been able to reach the whole school community in the pilot schools? • What are the key benefits for school principals, school psychologists/pedagogical counsellors, teachers, children, and parents who participated in the Program? Are different groups (based on ethnicity, socio- economic profile, urban-rural residence, children with special needs, etc.) benefitting to the same extent of the Program? • What factors affected the effectiveness of the Program and its impact on target groups? What factors affected the effectiveness in relation to the most vulnerable groups? • What factors (e.g. political, social, gender and cultural, social norms, systemic, or related to the Program design and implementation, professional practices, school environment etc.) were crucial for the achievement or failure to achieve the Program's objectives in the pilot schools so far? • Has Program provided any additional (unintended) significant contribution to or effect on target groups, including on vulnerable families and children? • How effective were the capacity building activities targeting principals, teachers, school psychologists/pedagogical counsellors and parents? • What is the level of satisfaction of school principals, teachers, school psychologists/pedagogical counsellors, children, and parents who benefited from the Program? What are their views for improving the Program?
<p>Efficiency: <i>a measure of how economically resources/ inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent the available funds and expertise were used within the Programme implementation in the most efficient manner? • Would there have been a more cost-effective way to achieve the expected results? • How well the establishment and implementation of the Program was planned and managed? • To what extent the data collection and monitoring activities performed by UNICEF and MES informed and contributed to improving the implementation of Program activities and achievement of results?
<p>Sustainability: <i>The continuation of the benefits after the end of the intervention. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have UNICEF and MES been able to support pilot schools to ensure ownership of the Program? • Were the legal, institutional, and financial mechanisms beneficial to ensure sustainability of the Program? • What are the key factors that can positively or negatively influence the institutionalization and long-term financial sustainability of the Program? • What specific recommendations could be given that would contribute to the sustainability of the Program – financial and institutional, resilience of capacities/systems underlying the continuation of benefits? • How sustainable are the results achieved for the whole school community in five pilot schools? • Are there any specific steps planned or done for ensuring sustainability an scaling up of the Program at national level?

<p>Impact: <i>The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the impact on the Program after two years of piloting? Are there any differences in the impact in the five pilot schools? • To what extent did the Program contribute to capacity building of schools in view of long-term positive changes in school environment and level of violence and bullying in pilot schools? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the transformative effects/ potential of the Program in terms of school norms, school environment, level of violence and bullying, target groups' wellbeing, human rights and gender equality? • What worked and what did not work to reduce inequities? What are the reasons for this? • To what extent did the Program contribute to increasing school community demand for implementing systematically the whole school approach for prevention of violence and bullying in schools? Are there any differences in the impact in the five pilot schools? • To what extent and in which areas the Program had significant impact? Are there any sub-group differences? • What factors favourably or adversely affected the impact of the Program on principals, school psychologists/pedagogical counsellors, teachers, children and parents, including on the most vulnerable? • To what extent the Program is recognized by the target groups in the five pilot schools and in local communities?
<p>Partnerships and cooperation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have partnerships been sought and established and synergies created to support the work of the Program? • Were efficient cooperation arrangements established between schools and local/national authorities? • Have any new partners emerged that were not initially identified?

Issues related to the Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming, Equity, Results-Based Management and Gender Equality will be addressed across the evaluation questions or, if required, developed as specific points as per United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Guidance on Integrating human-rights and gender equality in evaluation (see link below) and complies with the organization's commitment to gender mainstreaming as expressed in the Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Girls¹⁸⁶.

VI. METHODOLOGY AND PHASES

The evaluation will follow internationally agreed evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

The evaluation will be led by the international consultant. National expert(s) will follow his/her guidance with respect to methodology, instruments, planning and implementation of the evaluation process. Mixed method approach will be applied in the evaluation combining qualitative and quantitative components to ensure complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses. The analysis is expected to build on information collected from variety of sources through different methods including review of administrative data, primary data collection from government representatives, monitoring of the Program, pilot schools and others. It should critically examine the information gathered and synthesize it in an objective manner. If contradictory information is obtained from different stakeholders, an effort should be made to understand the reasons for such information, including any gender-based differences.

¹⁸⁶ http://www.uneval.org/documentdownload?doc_id=980&file_id=1294

The evaluation should be participatory involving beneficiaries of the Program and representatives of the target groups. Methods, data collection tools and analysis should build on a human rights and child rights approach and should be gender and culturally sensitive.

The evaluation results will be validated with national partners and key stakeholders.

Inception Phase: The first step of the evaluation process will be the inception phase during which the international consultant will develop an evaluation framework, methodology, sources of information (including stakeholders to be involved) and data collection tools based on the TOR. National experts shall assist the international consultant by reviewing the most important background material, documents, and reports related to the evaluation, which are in Bulgarian language. For each of the questions and sub-questions, the international consultant will develop indicators to inform the responses and identify the corresponding means of verification. In addition, the international consultant will assess potential limitations to the evaluation work and the availability and reliability of data. During the inception phase the international consultant will also examine any ethical issues that may arise and propose appropriate mitigation strategies. National expert (s) will support the international consultant in this process.

A Desk Review of relevant studies' reports and if necessary, laws, policies and strategies, Program documentation (Program description, schedule, base-line research on the levels of violence and bullying and the environment in schools, participating in the Program, mid-term assessment of the Program, final research on the levels of violence and bullying and the environment in schools participating in the Program, summaries of feedbacks of students (1-4 grade), electronic feedbacks from teachers and students (5-12 grade) from Workshops, other). The necessary documentation related to the Program will be provided by UNICEF and the respective local partners in English and in Bulgarian languages.

Primary data collection: Primary data will be collected at school level – in the five pilot schools, through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and/or individual face to face interviews/questionnaires and/or focus group discussions (depending on the methodology, offered by the international consultant). The aim of primary data collection is to explore the opinions of school principals, school psychologists and pedagogical counsellors, teachers, children, parents in pilot schools in Sofia, Teteven, Kustendil, Iskar and Zavet, who benefited from the Program; UNICEF team – mentors of the schools, Education Program Director, Coordinator of the Program, mentors and Consultant on VAC who supported the mentors' team, Consultants on implementing the component for work with the parents and Ministry of Education and Science. Primary data collection from pilot schools need to include in any case opinions of principals/deputy principals and pedagogical counsellors and opinions of teachers, parents and children from all educational levels in the relevant schools. Data collection tools are subject to UNICEF ethical review. The international consultant should ensure that the methodology allows for exploring the views of representatives of different stakeholders: representatives of the MES, UNICEF team – mentors of schools, Program Director Education, the Program coordinator and the consultant on VAC, representatives of the target group. In addition, evaluation data on and from Program beneficiaries with different socio-economic, ethnic and residence (urban/rural) profile should be collected as well to assess equity dimensions of the interventions. The methodology and data collection tools should also consider language difficulties experienced by some ethnic groups whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian (Turkish and Roma).

The possibility to use electronically administered questionnaires should be considered if applicable.

Data analysis and report writing: the process will start at the inception phase when the international consultant proposes a detailed methodology and the structure of the final report. Data analysis will progress simultaneously with the desk review and the data collection. Inception report and draft final report will be reviewed by UNICEF CO and national stakeholders as well as an external quality review company. International consultant will incorporate the received comments and submit the final report to UNICEF Bulgaria.

General considerations: The methodology of the evaluation should be in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards. UNEG Norms and Standards and UN Evaluation Policy. The Methodology and data collection tools are subject to UNICEF ethical review.

Data/information sources:

Official state institutions, pilot schools and UNICEF are the main sources of data and information for the purposes of the evaluation and are therefore considered reliable and of sufficient quality. Disaggregated data (based on ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, disability, etc.) may not always be available through the official sources and the Program sources.

Available documentation:

- Program documentation – Program descriptions and initial and updated schedules, baseline and final research on the levels of violence and bullying and the environment in pilot schools, mid-term assessment of Program implementation.
- MoUs, related to the Program;
- National strategic and policy documents in the area of violence prevention and response.
- Statistical data of the Ministry of Education and Science for the school years 2019/2020 – 2021/2022.
- UNICEF VAC study
- Any other studies, assessments and relevant documents available or that may be provided by the partners.
- CPD 2018 – 2022.
- Mission Reports from MES from monitoring visits in schools

All needed documents in English and in Bulgarian language, together with a contact list of key stakeholders whose views should be taken into consideration, will be provided to the international consultant and national expert (s) once a contractual agreement has been made.

Limitations of the evaluation

An evaluability assessment with all the partners hasn't been conducted. However, despite some data gaps there is available information to conduct a formative evaluation. Data sources being different from country to country, trends analysis will be preferred over comparison.

The level of disaggregation of available data and the quality of data provided by the monitoring of the Program may not be sufficient to assess equity dimension. This limitation can be addressed by ensuring the participation of the most vulnerable families in the evaluation process through appropriate data collection methods and tools.

Not all documents related to the programme implementation and monitoring are at UNICEF disposal and are available in English, particularly MES records and internal reports.

End of school year is end of June 2022 which should be taken into consideration when planning the data gathering processes, particularly surveys and interviews with school staff and students.

VII. TENTATIVE WORK PLAN AND EVALUATION MANAGEMENT

The evaluation will take place over the period May 2022 – October 2022 and will include the following activities, for a total of up to 28 consultancy days for the national expert(s).

Activities	Responsible	Expected Timeline
INCEPTION PHASE (2 days)		

<i>Desk review of reference material and mapping of relevant stakeholders</i> UNICEF team will support the compilation of the most important background material, documents, and reports related to the object of evaluation. Documents will be provided in English and in Bulgarian language.	International consultant (5 days - remote) with the support from national expert(s)(2 days-remote).	10 of May 2022
<i>Development of the inception report</i>	International consultant (5 days - remote)	20 of May 2022
<i>Review and feedback on the draft inception report</i>	UNICEF and the Reference group	30 of May 2022
<i>Submission of the final inception report</i>	International consultant (3 days - remote)	5 of June 2022
<i>Presentation of the evaluation methodology to the Reference group</i>	International consultant (1 day - remote)	June 2022
EVALUATION – IMPLEMENTATION (20 days)		
<i>Orientation/training of the national expert/s to support the evaluation – preparation and training</i>	International consultant (2 days – remote or in country)	May 2022
<i>Data collection</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collection of evaluation data (primary and secondary) is expected to be carried out through different techniques, including in-depth and semi-structured interviews, questioner (survey) and focus group discussions. Protocols/transcripts of interviews, focus groups and data/ collection (survey) results. 	National experts (15 days – in country)	June - July 2022
<i>Provision of methodological support and supervision to the national expert (s)</i>	International consultant (2 days - remote)	June - July 2022
<i>Data analysis</i>	International consultant (5 days - remote) and national expert (s) (5 days - remote)	July 2022
EVALUATION REPORTING (5 days)		
<i>Development of the 1st draft evaluation report</i>	International consultant (10 days - remote) with inputs from the national expert(s) (5 days - remote)	September 2022
<i>Review and feedback from UNICEF</i>	UNICEF team	September 2022
<i>Development of the 2nd draft of the evaluation report</i>	International consultant (3 days -remote)	October 2022
<i>Review and feedback from UNICEF and the Reference group</i>	UNICEF CO and Reference group	October 2022
<i>Submission of the Final Evaluation Report, including a summary</i>	International consultant (3 days - remote)	October 2022

DISSEMINATION (1 day)		
<i>Presentation of key findings</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of key findings of the evaluation to the Reference group and UNICEF • Discussions with stakeholders 	International consultant (1 day in country) national expert (s) (1 day in country)	October 2022
<i>Dissemination</i> Dissemination of evaluation report/key report findings (to key stakeholders and partners, Regional Office, etc.).	UNICEF team	October 2022
<i>Follow-up</i> Management response	UNICEF management	October/ November 2022

The competencies required from the national experts are the following:

- Advanced degree in social sciences, law, psychology, public health policy or related fields;
- Extensive experience in conducting evaluations, assessments and analyses, with a focus on VAC prevention and response;
- Experience in evaluations, assessment and analyses of programs and policies on prevention of school violence and bullying is an asset;
- Proven knowledge on child rights;
- Ability to work in an international environment;
- Excellent analytical and report writing skills;
- Familiarity with UNICEF's mission and mandate is an asset;
- Familiarity with UNICEF Global evaluation report oversight system¹⁸⁷ is an asset;
- Knowledge of the country context is an asset;
- Expertise on gender equality and human rights will be considered an asset;
- Excellent knowledge of English.

Ethical considerations:

The evaluation should be carried out in accordance with the ethical standards set in the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis¹⁸⁸, including prevention of conflict of interest. The international consultant is required to clearly identify in her/his proposal any potential ethical issues and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process. The inception report should further elaborate on them including appropriate mitigation strategies to address any potential ethical issues. Participation in the research should be voluntary and the identity of the respondents should be protected. The inception report should also describe procedures for obtaining informed consent and preserving privacy and confidentiality of the respondents.

The evaluation methodology will go through an ethical review by an internal Ethical Board set up at UNICEF CO in Bulgaria.

Data sharing requirements and procedures:

International Consultant and national experts are responsible for ensuring that all data collected are stored and protected appropriately. They need to set up a system to ensure that personal data is accessible only to the members of the team involved in the research and is transferred securely between research team

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/global-evaluation-reports-oversight-system-geros-handbook-and-summary>

¹⁸⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/unicef-procedure-ethical-standards-research-evaluation-data-collection-and-analysis>

members, as well as with UNICEF. If cloud-based storage is used, limited sharing rights should be established. It should be also ensured that data cannot be moved from secure systems.

XII. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Evaluation will be led by the UNICEF Country Office in Bulgaria. The evaluation will be supported by a Reference group, including representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, and relevant stakeholders as per MES and UNICEF nominations. The group will review assessment methodology, support data collection, review, provide comments on and approve the report.

The selected international consultant, as well as the national expert (s) will work under the direct supervision of UNICEF Child Rights Monitoring Specialist and in close cooperation with UNICEF Education Officer, and Program coordinator. The implementation process will be jointly monitored by UNICEF and the Reference Group, including the approval of final deliverables.

UNICEF Country Office together with national partners will be responsible for providing all available documents, organizing the field visits, meetings, focal groups, consultations and interviews, for providing access to the government counterparts, donors and partners, and for coordinating the work at country level with other stakeholders.

The evaluation findings will be shared with all relevant national and local stakeholders, as well as internally within UNICEF including the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.

XIII. PAYMENT

The national expert (s) should present a detailed financial proposal in accordance with the Terms of Reference, including 1) professional fee (daily consultancy rate), 2) travel related expenses (per diem, local travel, accommodation), 3) other relevant cost. The price must include all costs to be borne by the applicant for undertaking the assignment. Online modality for delivery of the assignment is considered. However, it is recommended that travel cost is also included in a separate line. Travel is subject to further negotiation based on the current epidemiologic situation in the country and other applicable restrictions, if any. It is recommended however that the national expert (s) complete the tasks face-to-face.

The national experts will receive a daily fee in accordance with the submitted and agreed with UNICEF financial offer. Payments will be made based on written certification of timely and satisfactorily provision of consultancy services provided every month.

In addition, a lumpsum at the amount of up to 1000 BGN will be paid for in-country travel which includes travel cost, accommodation and DSA to the amount of 60 BGN for in-country travel without overnight and 120 BGN for in-country travel with overnight.

XIV. REMARKS AND RESERVATIONS

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/deliverables are incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines.

All material developed will remain the copyright of UNICEF and according to UNICEF guidance on external academic publishing (January 2017). Evaluators are responsible for their performance and products. UNICEF reserves the copyrights, and the products cannot be published or disseminated without prior permission of UNICEF.

Candidates interested in the consultancy should submit a proposal, all-inclusive fees (including lump sum travel and subsistence costs), timeline, resume/CV.

The selected candidate must undertake the on-line Basic Security in the Field training (to be provided by UNICEF).

Prepared by:

Maria Yankova
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Approved by:

Sanja Saranovic
Deputy Representative

ANNEX D: EVALUATION WORK PLAN

Annex Table D1. Evaluation Work Plan							
Steps	Description of Deliverables	Responsibilities	TL Total Days	TL Number Days/Location	NE Total Days	NE Number of Days/Location	Evaluation Team Deliverables (Submission Dates)
Inception Phase							
Desk Review	Desk review of relevant background documents, reports and data to understand the UNICEF’s initiative to support establishment of the Steps Together Programme	Lead: Dr. Robin Haarr (Team Leader, TL) Input: Dessislava Ilieva (National Expert, NE)	5 days	5 days remote	2 days	2 days remote	<u>Draft Inception Report</u> Date: 6 June 2022 <u>Finalized Inception Report</u> Date: 23 June 2022
Draft and finalize the Inception Report	Development of the Inception Report, including evaluation methodology data collection tools and protocols. Submitted to UNICEF CO for approval and quality assurance and ethical review, and presentation to reference group	Lead: Dr. Robin Haarr	9 days	9 days remote	0 days	0 days	
Evaluation – Implementation							
Orientation of national expert to support evaluation	Orientation/training of the national expert to support the evaluation	Lead: Dr. Robin	0 days	0 days in-country or remote	0 days	0 days	
Data Collection	Data collection in the field using the agreed upon methodology, data collection tools and ethical protocols. Orientation training for national expert.	Lead: Dr. Robin Haarr Input: Dessislava Ilieva	15 days	15 days in-country	15 days	15 days in-country	<u>Data collection in the field</u> Dates: 27 June-23 July 2022

Steps	Description of Deliverables	Responsibilities	TL Total Days	TL Number Days/Location	NE Total Days	NE Number of Days/Location	Evaluation Team Deliverables (Submission Dates)
Data Analysis	Collected data will be analysed by using relevant data analysis methods and triangulation.	Lead: Dr. Robin Haarr	10 days	10 days remote	0 days	0 days remote	<u>First draft evaluation report</u> (in English), maximum 50 pages, excluding annexes Date: 26 August 2022
Draft Evaluation Report	Prepare a draft report with data-driven conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations. The report structure will follow UNICEF's evaluation report guidance.	Lead: Dr. Robin Haarr	16 days	16 days remote	5 days	5 days remote	
Finalization of the Evaluation Report &	Submit Final Evaluation Report, including an Executive Summary	Lead: Robin Haarr			0 days	0 days	<u>Second draft evaluation report</u> (in English), maximum 50 pages, excluding annexes Date: 17 Sept 2022
Step 8: Presentation of Key Findings	Presentation of key findings	Lead: Robin Haarr	1 day	1 days remote	1 day	1 day in-country	<u>Final evaluation report</u> (in English), maximum 50 pages, excluding executive summary and annexes, and PowerPoint presentation (in English) Date: 7 October 2022
			Total: 56 days		Total: 28 days		

ANNEX E: ITINERARY FOR DATA COLLECTION IN THE FIELD

Annex Table E1. Itinerary for Data Collection in the Field			
Day	Date	Proposed Activity	Location
Sat	25 June	International consultant arrives in Sofia at 19:30 on Air France Overnight stay in Sofia	Sofia
Sun	26 June	International Consultant prepares for data collection in the field Overnight stay in Sofia	Sofia
Mon	27 June	International Consultant and National Expert collect data in Sofia school Overnight stay in Sofia	Sofia
Tues	28 June	International Consultant and National Expert collect data in Sofia school Overnight stay in Sofia	Sofia
Wed	29 June	International Consultant and National Expert collect data in Sofia school Overnight stay in Sofia	Sofia
Thurs	30 June	International Consultant and National Expert interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF 3 staff, 2 consultants & 3 mentors (one-on-one interviews) • 2 MES staff (small group interview) • 2 members of the Roditeli (Parents) Association • Online interviews with Zavet Overnight stay in Sofia	Sofia
Fri	1 July	International Consultant and National Expert interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF 3 staff, 2 consultants & 3 mentors (one-on-one interviews) • 2 MES staff (small group interview) • 2 members of the Roditeli (Parents) Association • Online interviews with Zavet Overnight stay in Sofia	Sofia
Sat	2 July	International Consultant will work on own to manage her data Overnight stay in Sofia	Sofia
Sun	3 July	International Consultant and National Expert travel to Teteven (2-hour drive from Sofia) Overnight stay in Teteven	Sofia/Teteven
Mon	4 July	International Consultant and National Expert collect data in Teteven school Overnight stay in Teteven	Teteven
Tues	5 July	International Consultant and National Expert collect data in Teteven school Overnight stay in Teteven	Teteven
Wed	6 July	Travel to Iskar in the early morning (only 1.5-hour drive from Teteven) International Consultant and National Expert collect data in Iskar school Interview with 1 UNICEF mentor in Pleven Overnight stay in Pleven	Iskar
Thurs	7 July	International Consultant and National Expert collect data in Iskar school Travel back to Sofia after complete data collection (3.5-hour drive from Sofia) Overnight stay in Sofia	Iskar/Sofia
Fri	8 July	Travel to Kustendil in the morning (2-hour drive from Sofia) International Consultant and National Expert collect data in Kustendil Return to Sofia on same day / Overnight stay in Sofia	Sofia
Sat	9 July	International Consultant will work on own to manage her data Overnight stay in Sofia	Sofia
Sun	10 July	International Consultant will work on own to manage her data Overnight stay in Sofia	Sofia
Mon	11 July	International Consultant leaves Bulgaria	Sofia

ANNEX F: EVALUATION MATRIX

During the inception phase, in consultation with both the UNICEF Country Office (CO) and Regional Office (CO), the Lead Evaluator narrowed the focus of the evaluation questions to key questions which required narrowing the evaluation matrix to focus on the key questions. During the evaluation, particularly during the data analysis and report writing phases, only the 15 key questions were focused on as agreed with UNICEF CO and RO, so the sub-questions were removed from the evaluation matrix. At the inception phase, the evaluation matrix included a total of 30 indicators related to the 15 key evaluation questions, of which 21 were qualitative indicators and 9 were quantitative indicators. During the data analysis and report writing phases, the evaluation matrix was slightly revised to include 34 indicators related to the 15 key questions, including 27 qualitative indicators and 9 quantitative indicators (two indicators that were both qualitative and quantitative indicators). Minor modifications to the indicators were made because during the inception phase only five programme documents were available for review, which made it difficult to draft indicators. During the data collection and analysis phases, the evaluation team came to better understand the Programme and data that were available. The minor modifications that were made to the indicators were done to strengthen the evaluator's ability to effectively answer the evaluation questions and present the findings. See Annex Table F2 for an explanation of modifications made to indicators.

Annex Table F1. Evaluation Matrix for Key Evaluation Questions				
Evaluation Criteria and Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Methods of Data Collection	Data Analysis Methods
Coherence (Key Questions)				
1.A. To what extent the Steps Together Programme supported the operationalization of the mechanism for countering bullying and violence in the institutions in the pilot schools?	1.a.1. Nature of the degree to which and ways that the Programme supported operationalization of the mechanism for countering bullying and violence in the institutions in the pilot schools (Qualitative)	UNICEF Annual Reports Programme documents UNICEF CO staff MES School staff	Desk review KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content analysis of desk review materials. Analysis of qualitative KII and FGD data with comparisons across schools and by target groups
Relevance (Key Questions)				
2.A. To what extent the Steps Together Programme's objectives, strategies and activities are relevant and aligned with government priorities, policies and reform agendas related to prevention and response to VAC, specifically school violence and bullying?	2.a.1. Nature of the ways that the Programme are in line with national priorities (Qualitative) 2.b.2. Nature of the ways that key stakeholders' confirm that the Steps Together Programme are in line with the national priorities (Qualitative)	UNICEF Annual Reports Programme documents	Desk review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content analysis of desk review materials.
2.B. To what extent is the Steps Together Programme integrated into school life and school management in the pilot schools?	2.b.1. # of class workshops held in five pilot schools, by school and grades (Quantitative) 2.b.2. # of teachers who participated in trainings, by schools and grades (Quantitative)	Programme documents UNICEF CO staff MES School staff Students Parents	Desk review KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content analysis of desk review materials. Analysis of qualitative KII and FGD data with comparisons across schools and by target groups

	<p>2.b.3. # of parents/guardians who participated in trainings, by schools (Quantitative)</p> <p>2.b.4. Ways that the Programme is aligned with the needs of schools to create a safe school environment and prevent school violence and bullying (Qualitative)</p> <p>2.b.5. Degree to which the Programme has been integrated and is important to preventing school violence and bullying (Quantitative/Qualitative)</p>			
2.C. To what extent the Steps Together Programme's approaches are evidence-based and correspond with, and address the actual needs of the whole school community – school staff, students and parents – in the pilot schools?	<p>2.c.1. # and quality of Programme indicators, and progress made against those indicators (Quantitative/Qualitative)</p> <p>2.c.2. Ways that the Programme was evidence-based (Qualitative)</p> <p>2.c.3. Degree to which the Programme had a well-developed ToC and clearly defined outputs and outcomes related to an evidence-based approach (Qualitative)</p> <p>2.c.4. Ways in which UNICEF mentors have been important to pilot schools and supported implementation of a whole school approach (Quantitative)</p>	<p>Programme documents</p> <p>UNICEF CO staff</p> <p>MES</p> <p>School staff</p> <p>Students</p> <p>Parents</p>	Desk review KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content analysis of desk review materials. • Analysis of qualitative KII and FGD data with comparisons across schools and by target groups
2.D. To what extent the Steps Together Programme's design and activities are appropriate for achieving the intended results and outcomes?	<p>2.d.1. Nature of the ways that key stakeholders and school staff believe that the Programme is appropriate for achieving the intended results and outcomes (Qualitative)</p> <p>2.d.2. Nature of which that the Programme's design, including mentors to pilot schools, have been important to the Programme's design (Qualitative)</p>	<p>Programme documents</p> <p>UNICEF CO staff</p> <p>MES</p> <p>School staff</p>	Desk review KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content analysis of desk review materials. • Analysis of qualitative interview and FGD data with comparisons across schools and by target groups
Effectiveness (Key Questions)				
3.A. Has the Steps Together Programme achieved the planned objectives? To what extent the objectives are realistic?	3.a.1. Ways in which the Steps Together Programme has helped to create a safe school environment, an intended outcome (Qualitative)	<p>UNICEF CO staff</p> <p>MES</p> <p>School staff</p> <p>Students</p> <p>Parents</p>	KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of qualitative interview and FGD data with comparisons across schools and by target groups

	3.a.2. Ways in which the Steps Together Programme has helped to prevent school violence and bullying, an intended outcome (Qualitative)			
3.B. To what extent target groups have been reached? Did the Steps Together Programme manage to reach the whole school community in the pilot schools?	3.b.1. Type of target groups reached by the Programme (Qualitative) 3.b.2. Ways in which the Steps Together Programme has benefited school staff (Qualitative) 3.b.3. Ways in which the Steps Together Programme has benefited students (Qualitative) 3.b.4. Ways in which the Steps Together Programme has benefited students (Qualitative)	UNICEF CO staff MES School staff Students Parents	KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of qualitative interview and FGD data with comparisons across schools and by target groups
3.C. What factors affected the effectiveness of the Steps Together Programme and its impact on target groups, including the most vulnerable groups?	3.c.1. Type of factors and/or issues reported by mentors, school staff, students and parents that have impeded and/or sustained achievements of the Programme (Qualitative)	UNICEF CO staff MES School staff Students Parents	KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of qualitative interview and FGD data with comparisons across schools and by target groups
Impact (Key Questions)				
4.A. What impact has the Steps Together Programme had after two years of piloting? Are there any differences in impact among the five pilot schools?	4.a.1. Assessment of the effectiveness of the Programme's capacity building activities (Quantitative/Qualitative) 4.a.2. Nature of the types of impacts, including factors for success and effectiveness, across the pilot schools (Qualitative)	UNICEF CO staff MES School staff Students Parents	KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content analysis of desk review materials. Analysis of qualitative interview and FGD data with comparisons across schools and by target groups
4.B. To what extent did the Steps Together Programme contribute to capacity building of schools to support long-term positive changes in schools and reductions in levels of violence and bullying in the pilot schools?	4.b.1. Type of impact Programme activities had on capacity building of schools to support long-term positive changes in schools and reduction in levels of violence and bullying in the pilot schools (Qualitative)	UNICEF CO staff MES School staff Students Parents	KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content analysis of desk review materials. Compilation of Programme-related quantitative data collected as part of the monitoring process Analysis of qualitative interview data

4.C. To what extent and in which areas the Steps Together Programme had significant impact? Are there any sub-group differences?	4.c.1. Pilot school differences to success and effectiveness of Programme implementation and its impacts (Qualitative)	UNICEF CO staff MES School staff Students Parents	KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content analysis of desk review materials. • Analysis of qualitative interview and FGD data with comparisons across schools and by target groups
4.D. What factors favorably or adversely affected the impact of the Steps Together Programme on school staff, students and parents, including the most vulnerable?	4.d.1. School staff's satisfaction with the Programme (Quantitative) 4.d.2. Types of challenges and barriers that have affected the impact of the Programme on school staff, students and parents (Qualitative)	UNICEF CO staff MES School staff Students Parents	KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content analysis of desk review materials. • Analysis of qualitative interview and FGD data with comparisons across schools and by target groups
Efficiency (Key Questions)				
5.A. How well the Steps Together Programme and its implementation was planned and managed?	5.a.1. UNICEF had a management and operations strategy to establish and implement planned Programme activities (Qualitative) 5.b.2. UNICEF was able to remain flexible and adapt to the pandemic when implementing the Programme (Qualitative) 5.b.3. UNICEF had a review of the Programme's monitoring and reporting approach (Qualitative)	Programme documents UNICEF CO staff MES	Desk review KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content analysis of desk review materials. • Analysis of qualitative interview data
Sustainability (Key Questions)				
6.A. To what extent has UNICEF and MES been able to support pilot schools to ensure ownership of the Steps Together Programme?	6.a.1. Ways in which, or lack thereof, that school staff in the pilot schools have taken ownership of the Programme (Quantitative)	UNICEF CO staff MES School staff	KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compilation of Programme-related quantitative data collected as part of the monitoring process
6.B. What are the key factors that can positively or negatively influence the institutionalization and long-term financial sustainability of the Steps Together Programme?	6.b.1. Type of factors that can positively and/or negatively influence the institutionalization and long-term sustainability of the Programme (Qualitative)	UNICEF CO staff MES School staff	KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of qualitative interview data

Partnerships and Cooperation (Key Questions)				
7.A. To what extent have partnerships been sought and established, and synergies created to support the work of the Steps Together Programme?	7.a.1. Type of partnerships established to support the Programme (Qualitative) 7.a.2. Benefits of partnerships established to support the work of and delivery of the Programme (Qualitative)	UNICEF CO staff MES School staff	KIIs and FGDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of qualitative interview and FGD data with comparisons across schools and by target groups

Annex Table F2. Explanation of revisions made to the evaluation matrix during the data analysis and report writing stages			
Criteria	Evaluation Question	Indicators	Justification
Coherence	1.A. To what extent the Steps Together Programme supported the operationalization of the mechanism for countering bullying and violence in the institutions in the system of preschool and school education in the pilot schools?	1.a.1. Nature of the degree to which and ways that the Programme supported operationalization of the mechanism for countering bullying and violence in the institutions in the system of preschool and school education in the pilot schools (Qualitative) 1.a.2. # of times per year pilot schools have implemented the mechanism for countering bullying and violence in the institutions in the system of preschool and school education in the pilot schools, by type of incident (Quantitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wording in the evaluation questions was a typo and should have been the same as in the body of the report – evaluation questions – so it was slightly modified. Wording in Indicator 1.a.1 was slightly modified for clarity and because preschools were not included, but the core of the indicator did not change. Indicator 1.a.2, was eliminated because the data were not available for this indicator. At the inception phase it was assumed that this data would be available, but the evaluation revealed that it was not.
Relevance	2.A. To what extent the Steps Together Programme's objectives, strategies and activities are relevant and aligned with government priorities, policies and reform agendas related to prevention and response to VAC, specifically school violence and bullying?	2.a.1. Nature of the ways that the Programme are in line with national priorities (Qualitative) 2.b.2. Nature of they ways that key stakeholders' confirm that the Steps Together Programme are in line with the national priorities (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This evaluation question was originally a key question in the report and in the body of the report; this was a typo that it was omitted and has been added back. The two indicators are the same as was in the Inception Report with subject
	2.B. To what extent is the Steps Together Programme integrated into school life and school management in the pilot schools?	2.b.1. # of class workshops held in five pilot schools, by school and grades (Quantitative) 2.b.2. # of teachers who participated in trainings, by schools and grades (Quantitative) 2.b.3. # of parents/guardians who participated in trainings, by schools (Quantitative) 2.b.4. Ways that the Programme is aligned with the needs of schools to create a safe school environment and prevent school violence and bullying (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators 2.b.4 and 2.b.5 were added or replace the originally visioned qualitative indicators which were too general and students and parents were not able to explain. The evaluation team was able to collect quantitative and qualitative data that were available which documents how the Programme was integrated into school life in the pilot schools from the perspective of meeting the needs of schools to create safe school environments and to prevent school violence, and was important to school staff in these ways.

		<p>2.b.5. Degree to which the Programme has been integrated and is important to preventing school violence and bullying (Quantitative/Qualitative)</p> <p>1.a.4. Nature of the ways that school staff confirm that Steps Together Programme is integrated into school life and school management (Qualitative)</p> <p>1.a.5. Nature of the ways that students and parents confirm the Steps Together Programme is integrated into schools life (Qualitative)</p>	<p>Changing/modifying the indicators strengthened the analysis and evaluation, although the changes were subtle..</p>
	<p>2.C. To what extent the Steps Together Programme's approaches are evidence-based and correspond with, and address the actual needs of the whole school community – school staff, students and parents – in the pilot schools?</p>	<p>2.c.1. # and quality of Programme indicators, and progress made against those indicators (Quantitative/Qualitative)</p> <p>2.c.2. Ways that the Programme was evidence-based (Qualitative)</p> <p>2.c.3. Degree to which the Programme had a well-developed ToC and clearly defined outputs and outcomes related to an evidence-based approach (Qualitative)</p> <p>2.c.3. Evidence of Programme monitoring and reporting on Programme outputs and outcomes, and result-based management during the Programme implementation period (Quantitative/Qualitative)</p> <p>2.c.4. Ways in which UNICEF mentors have been important to pilot schools and supported implementation of a whole school approach (Quantitative)</p> <p>2.c.4. Nature of the ways that school staff, students and parents believe the Programme is relevant to and addresses the needs of the whole school community (Qualitative)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based upon information available to evaluation team during data collection, Indicators 2.c.2 and 2.c.3 were added, which are a modification of the original indicator 2.c.3. This is because the evaluation team did not have access to monitoring and reporting tools, or the results-based management approach to be able to assess it. Indicator 2.c.4 was modified from the original 2.c.4 because it was found during the evaluation that mentors were really important to addressing the actual needs of the whole school community in the pilot schools.. These subtleties related to the Programme were not evident from the 5 documents that were part of the desk review. It became more apparent during data collection, analysis and report writing.
Effectiveness	<p>3.A. Has the Steps Together Programme achieved the planned objectives? To what extent the objectives are realistic?</p>	<p>3.a.1. # of planned objectives achieved (Qualitative)</p> <p>3.a.1. Ways in which the Steps Together Programme has helped to create a safe school environment, an intended outcome (Qualitative)</p> <p>3.a.2. Ways in which the Steps Together Programme has helped to prevent school violence and bullying, an intended outcome (Qualitative)</p> <p>3.a.2. Programme indicators targets met the intended results and outcomes achieved (Quantitative)</p> <p>3.a.3. Nature of the degree to which and ways that the Programme achieved planned objectives (Qualitative)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Programme had three very broad objectives, including:¹ 1) To support and foster school attitudes based on mutual respect, equal dignity and justice; 2) To promote well-informed and competent participation on the part of all members of a school community; 3) To employ a whole school approach by supporting school-based activities at all levels. During the data analysis and reporting writing stage, it was understood that the Programme's objectives were too broad and could not be assessed quantitatively, only qualitatively, so the quantitative indicator was deleted.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The RMF was activity-focused and indicators were aligned with activities, not outcomes or planned objectives; thus, the indicators were revised to focus on the ways that the Programme helped to 1) create a safe school environment; and 2) prevention school violence and bullying. Both of these were intended outcomes.
	3.B. To what extent target groups have been reached? Did the Steps Together Programme manage to reach the whole school community in the pilot schools?	3.b.1 # of school staff, students and parents reached by the Programme, including the most vulnerable groups of students (Quantitative) 3.b.1. Type of target groups reached by the Programme (Qualitative) 3.b.2. Ways in which the Steps Together Programme has benefited school staff (Qualitative) 3.b.3. Ways in which the Steps Together Programme has benefited students (Qualitative) 3.b.4. Ways in which the Steps Together Programme has benefited students (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators 3.b.1 was eliminated because data were not available to provide an accurate number of staff, students and parents reached by the Programme, including the most vulnerable groups of students. Indicators 3.b.2, 3.b.3, and 3.b.4 were added because the evaluation team had a wealth of qualitative as to the benefit of the Programme on school staff, students and parents. These qualitative indicators were more reliable and meaningful.
Impact	4.A. What impact has the Steps Together Programme had after two years of piloting? Are there any differences in impact among the five pilot schools?	4.a.1. Assessment of the effectiveness of the Programme's capacity building activities (Quantitative/Qualitative) 4.a.2. Nature of the types of impacts, including factors for success and effectiveness, across the pilot schools (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 4.a.1 was added because the evaluation team had a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data that allowed them to assess the effectiveness of the Programme's capacity building activities. This was not predicted at the inception phase.
	4.C. To what extent and in which areas the Steps Together Programme had significant impact? Are there any sub-group differences?	4.c.1. Nature of the ways that duty bearers and rights-holders recognized that the Programme has contributed to decreasing school violence and bullying, and increasing safety in the school environment (Qualitative) 4.c.1. Pilot school differences to success and effectiveness of Programme implementation and its impacts (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data for Indicator 4.c.1 was not available as originally given the stage of implementation of the Programme; this was not clear at the inception phase. A new indicator was developed which was more meaningful and focused on pilot school differences to success and effective of Programme implementation and its immediate impacts. This change strengthened the evaluation and ability to answer the evaluation question and assess impact.
	4.D. What factors favorably or adversely affected the impact of the Steps Together Programme on school staff, students and parents, including the most vulnerable?	4.d.1. Type of factors that have affected the impact of the Programme on school staff, students and parents, including the most vulnerable (Qualitative) 4.d.1. School staff's satisfaction with the Programme (Quantitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 4.d.1 was divided into two indicators 4.d.1 and 4.d.2, a quantitative and qualitative indicator. The evaluation team was able to collection data on school staff's satisfaction with the Programme and identify challenges and carriers that affected the impact of the Programme on school staff, students and parents as in

		6.d.2. Types of challenges and barriers that have affected the impact of the Programme on school staff, students and parents (Qualitative)	the evaluation question. These two indicators were more meaningful to the evaluation.
Efficiency	5.A. How well the Steps Together Programme and its implementation was planned and managed?	5.a.1. Type of strategies and actions utilized to establish and implement planned Programme activities (Qualitative) 5.a.1. UNICEF had a management and operations strategy to establish and implement planned Programme activities (Qualitative) 5.b.2. UNICEF was able to remain flexible and adapt to the pandemic when implementing the Programme (Qualitative) 5.b.3. UNICEF had a review of the Programme's monitoring and reporting approach (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator 5.a.1 was developed during the inception phase, but programme documents were limited in scope. During the data collect, analysis and report writing stage the indicators of this evaluation question became more clear from the data that was gathered. Therefore the indicator were modified and were developed in more specific language to reflect the data that were available. The three indicators are more meaningful and specific, than the one initially defined indicator.
Sustainability	6.A. To what extent has UNICEF and MES been able to support pilot schools to ensure ownership of the Steps Together Programme?	6.a.1. Ways in which, or lack thereof, that school staff in the pilot schools have taken ownership of the Programme (Quantitative) 6.a.1. Type of capacity building trainings and technical support provided by UNICEF to schools staff (Qualitative) 6.a.2. # of school staff in the five pilot schools who benefited from the capacity building trainings and technical support (Quantitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two originally indicators were deleted because they were not aligned with the evaluation question. There must have been a typo that was not noticed during the inception phase. A new indicator was created to align with the evaluation question and the qualitative data that was collected in the field to answer this evaluation question.
Partnerships and Cooperation	7.A. To what extent have partnerships been sought and established, and synergies created to support the work of the Steps Together Programme?	7.a.1. Type of partnerships established to support the work of the Programme (Qualitative) 7.a.2. Benefits of partnerships established to support the work of and delivery of the Programme to rights holders (Qualitative) 7.a.3. Nature of the ways that duty bearers confirm that established partnerships have benefited the work of the Programme (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators 7.a.1 and 7.a.2 were slightly modified, without changing the meaning Indicator 7.a.3 was eliminated because it was too similar to Indicators 7.a.1 and 7.a.2, and data did not exist related to Indicator 7.a.3.

ANNEX G: STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Annex Table G1. Stakeholder Analysis				
Human Rights Role	Stakeholders/Target Groups	Role in Intervention	Mandate Area(s)	Thematic Areas
Duty-bearers	UNICEF Bulgaria CO	Programme Management Funder	Normative Operational Coordination	Cross-cutting
	Ministry of Education and Science (MES)	Programme Partner Beneficiary Funder	Normative Operational	Cross-cutting
Rights-holders	Pilot school staff	Primary Beneficiary	Operational	Education
	Students	Primary Beneficiary	Operational	Education
	Parents/guardians of students	Primary Beneficiary	Operational	Education
Other interest groups who are not directly participating in the intervention but have strategic technical inputs into the intervention	Agency for Social Assistance (ASA)	Interested Partner	Normative Coordination Programme	Cross-cutting
	State Agency for Child Protection (SACP)	Interested Partner	Normative Coordination Programme	Cross-cutting
	National Council for Child Protection	Interested Partner	Normative Coordination Programme	Cross-cutting
	Child Protection Departments	Interested Partner	Normative Coordination Programme	Cross-cutting

ANNEX H: CONSENT FORM (FOR USE WITH UNICEF, MES AND SCHOOL STAFF)

Agreement to Participate in the Evaluation of the Steps Together Programme

(For use with UNICEF, MES and School Staff)

Who are we and why are we conducting this evaluation?

The evaluation is being conducted by the United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF), and is necessary for the purposes of the Steps Together Programme, which is implemented by UNICEF Bulgaria and the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) from 2019 to 2022. As the evaluators we are contracted by UNICEF, but we **are not** employees of UNICEF.

The purpose is to obtain an independent evaluation of the Steps Together Programme which is being implemented in five schools in five regions – Iskar, Kustendil, Sofia, Teteven and Zavet. The aim is to understand why and to what extent intended and unintended results were achieved and to analyse implications of the results. The evaluation is expected to support strategic learning and decision-making with regard to improving the structure, implementation and quality of the Steps Together Programme, and its eventual scale-up and sustainability.

What will be your involvement?

Your opinion and point of view are very important to us; therefore, we invite you to participate in this interview/focus group and share your perspectives, attitudes and experiences related to the Steps Together Programme. This will allow us to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the Steps Together Programme.

Bear in mind, you are just one of more than 100 people what we will be interviewing as part of this evaluation. Everyone who participates in this evaluation are guaranteed confidentiality to protect their privacy. No names or identifiers will be included in any documents or reports. Only summary data for all respondents will be presented in an evaluation report of the Steps Together Programme. It is also important that you know that participating in this interview will cause no risk to you.

We anticipate the interview/focus group will take about 1 hour/60 minutes. You acknowledge that:

- ☐ This interview will not be audio recorded, the interviewer will take detailed notes on their laptop.
- ☐ This interview will be audio recorded, subject to the rules of confidentiality of participants.

If you are participating in a small group interview or focus group with others from your institution/school, you are obliged to keep information confidential that is discussed during the interview or focus group.

How will the information collected be used?

We would like you to participate in an interview, but your participation is voluntary. While you will not benefit immediately from taking part in this interview/focus group, findings from this evaluation will be used to support efforts to strengthen the Steps Together Programme in the future. Evaluators will **not provide** financial reimbursement **nor** gifts of any type for participation. Refusal to participate **will not impact** you in any way. You can skip questions that you do not want to answer or stop the interview at any point without penalty. You can contact UNICEF in Sofia if you have questions.

HOW DO I GIVE PERMISSION FOR MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS EVALUATION?

You give your permission to participate by checking the appropriate 'Yes' box and signing the form. If you do not give your permission to participate, check the 'No' box. You should also sign and date this form, and return this form to evaluator before you begin the interview.

- ☐ **Yes, I agree to participate in the interview for this evaluation**
- ☐ **No, I do not agree to participate in the interview for this evaluation**

Signature _____ Date _____

If you have questions about this evaluation, you can contact Maria Yankova, UNICEF Education Officer, at myankova@unicef.org

ANNEX I: UNICEF AND NATIONAL PARTNER INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

UNICEF and National Partner Questionnaire																				
Introduction/Directions																				
<p>Introduce yourself and explain the scope and purpose of the evaluation and offer a brief description of the methodology. Review the informed consent form with each participant. Get each participant to sign the informed consent form prior to beginning the interview. Keep the signed copy of the informed consent form and leave them an unsigned copy.</p> <p>THE INTERVIEW SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 60 MINUTES</p> <p>BEFORE YOU BEGIN MAKE SURE TO SAVE THIS FILE IN YOUR DATA COLLECTION FOLDER WITH THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT TITLE:</p> <p>ID#_Region__Name of Agency/Institution_Interview Date (Example: 1_Sofia_UNICEF_26 June 2022)</p>																				
Background/Demographic Information																				
Date																				
Location (city)																				
Institution/Agency																				
Number of participants																				
Number of males																				
Number of females																				
Names & Titles (of each participant)																				
Have you obtained a copy of the signed consent form from each participant prior to beginning the interview?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → Proceed to interview <input type="checkbox"/> No → Do not interview																			
Familiarity with the Programme																				
1	What has been your involvement with the Steps Together Programme, that is the Programme for Prevention of Violence and Bullying in Schools?																			
Relevance and Coherence																				
<p><i>I want to ask you about the relevance of UNICEF and Ministry of Education efforts to establish and support the Steps Together Programme. If you do not know the answer to a question, we can skip it.</i></p>																				
2	In what ways has the Steps Together Programme been relevant?																			
3	<p>Has the Steps Together Programme been in line with national priorities and needs of the Government?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, in what ways? If no, where has UNICEF's support been unaligned?</p>																			
4	<p>On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is the Steps Together Programme to preventing school violence and bullying?</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Not important</td> <td></td> <td>Somewhat important</td> <td></td> <td>Very important</td> <td></td> <td>DK</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> <td>99</td> </tr> </table> <p>Why did you give it a ____?</p>	Not important		Somewhat important		Very important		DK	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99
Not important		Somewhat important		Very important		DK														
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99									

5	<p>Has the Steps Together Programme been implemented in combination with other programmes or interventions support by either UNICEF or the Ministry of Education?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, how did the Programme add value to these other programmes? Was there any duplication of efforts? Or were steps taken to avoid duplication?</p>
7	<p>In way ways has the Programme influenced violence prevention practices in the pilot schools? And school policies?</p>
10	<p>I'm curious, do you think the Steps Together Programme has helped to prevent violence and bullying in the pilot schools?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?</p>
12	<p>In what ways has the Programme supported the operationalization of the <i>Mechanism for countering bullying and violence in institutions in the system of preschool and school education in the pilot schools</i>?</p>
13	<p>Since the Steps Together Programme was introduced in 2019, has the Programme been able to adapt and change to remain relevant, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?</p>
14	<p><u>Ask only to UNICEF</u></p> <p>Since 2019, in what way has the Steps Together Programme been in line with UNICEF's Country Programme outcomes and outputs? Was this part of the planning process?</p>
15	<p><u>Ask only to UNICEF</u></p> <p>How has Programme been in line with UNICEF's Gender Action Plan?</p>
16	<p><u>Ask only to UNICEF</u></p> <p>In what ways and to what extent did UNICEF integrate an equity-based approach into the design and implementation of the Programme?</p>
<u>Effectiveness</u>	
<i>Now I want to ask you some questions about the effectiveness of the Steps Together Programme.</i>	
17	<p>From your perspective, what have been the benefits of the Programme for school staff in the pilot schools?</p>
18	<p>What have been the benefits of the Programme for students in the pilot schools?</p>

19	Also, what do you think have been the benefits of the Programme for parents in the pilot schools?
20	From your perspective, what factors have contributed to the success and effectiveness of the Programme in the pilot schools? Have there been any differences between schools?
<i>The Steps Together Programme has several objectives. I want to ask you about each of those objectives. If you aren't sure how to answer the questions, just let me know and we can skip it.</i>	
21	From your perspective, in what ways has the Programme increased the willingness of schools to work on problems of school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?
22	In what ways has the Programme increased the capacities of school principals and coordination councils to apply a whole school approach to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?
23	In what ways has the Programme increased the capacities of teachers to take on roles and responsibilities related to preventing school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?
24	In what ways has the Programme increased the capacities of school staff to work with students to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?
24.1	In what ways has the Programme engaged students to create a safe school and to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?
25	In what ways has the Programme engaged parents to create a safe school and to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?
26	Are there any challenges that need to be addressed in schools to improve Programme implementation and results?
27	In what ways has the Programme engaged local communities to establish safe schools and prevent school violence and bullying?
<i>I have a few more questions about effectiveness.</i>	
28	What challenges or barriers has the Programme faced when it comes to preventing school violence and bullying? And creating a safe environment?
29	From your perspective, how well was the Steps Together Programme planned, implemented and managed?

Impact	
<i>Now I want to ask you some questions about the impact of the Steps Together Programme.</i>	
31	<p>Has the Programme contributed to any positive changes in the pilot schools?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, what positive changes have you seen? If no, why not?</p>
31.1	What differences have you seen in the impact of the Programme across schools?
32	Have there been differences in the impact of the Programme on girls vs. boys?
33	Have you seen any differences in the impact of the Programme on primary school children versus middle/junior high and high school students?
34	<p>Has there been an increased demand by other schools in the country for Steps Together Programme or a similar whole of school approach to preventing school violence and bullying?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, how? If no, why not?</p>
35	What do you think has been the greatest achievements of the Steps Together Programme?
36	What can UNICEF and the Ministry of Education do to build upon or expand those achievements?
Partnerships and Cooperation	
<i>Now, I want to ask you a few questions about partnerships and cooperation.</i>	
37	What partnerships were established to support the Steps Together Programme? In what ways have these partnerships been beneficial?
39	Are there other partnerships that pilot schools need to achieve Programme results?
40	<p>As part of the Programme, has there been any cooperation between the pilot schools and local authorities?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, what cooperation has there been? If no, why not?</p>
41.1	<p>Has there been cooperation between the five pilot schools to learn from each other?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, what cooperation has there been? If no, why not?</p>
Efficiency	
<i>I want to ask you a couple of questions about the efficiency of UNICEF's efforts to develop and implement the Steps Together Programme. Remember, if you do not know the answer to a question, we can skip it.</i>	

42	<p>Do you think UNICEF's implementation strategy for the Programme has been efficient?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, in what way has it been efficient? If no, why not? If no, how could the implement strategy be more efficient?</p>
43	<p>Did UNICEF have a monitoring and reporting approach that ensured effective and efficient project management and implementation?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, can you tell me about the monitoring and reporting approach? How and why was it effective? If no, what were the problems with the monitoring and reporting approach?</p>
44	<p>In what ways has the monitoring and reporting approach contribute to and informed adjustments to the Programme? Is there anything more that could be done?</p>
<u>Sustainability</u>	
<i>I want to finish with some questions about the sustainability of the Steps Together Programme.</i>	
45	How sustainable do you think the results achieved in the five pilots schools will be over time?
45.1	Are there any potential risks that exist as it relates to sustaining the Programme's results?
46	What recommendations would you offer to improve sustainability of the Programme and its results?
48	Are there any plans or steps being taken to ensure sustainability and scale-up of the Steps Together Programme at the national level?
49	What recommendations would you offer to scale-up the Programme?

ANNEX J: SCHOOL STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

School Staff Interview Questionnaire	
Introduction/Directions	
<p>Introduce yourself and explain the scope and purpose of the evaluation and offer a brief description of the methodology. Review the informed consent form with each participant. Get each participant to sign the informed consent form prior to beginning the interview. Keep the signed copy of the informed consent form and leave them an unsigned copy.</p> <p>THE INTERVIEW SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 60 MINUTES</p> <p>BEFORE YOU BEGIN MAKE SURE TO SAVE THIS FILE IN YOUR DATA COLLECTION FOLDER WITH THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT TITLE:</p> <p>ID#_Region__Name of Agency/Institution_Interview Date (Example: 10_Sofia_School_26 June 2022)</p>	
Background/Demographic Information	
Date	
Location (city)	
Number of participants	
Number of males	
Number of females	
Names & Titles (of each participant)	
Have you obtained a copy of the signed consent form from each participant prior to beginning the interview?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → Proceed to interview <input type="checkbox"/> No → Do not interview
Familiarity with the Programme	
1	What has been your involvement with the Steps Together Programme, that is the Programme for Prevention of Violence and Bullying in Schools?
Relevance and Coherence	
<p><i>I want to ask you some questions about the relevance of UNICEF and Ministry of Education efforts to establish and support the Steps Together Programme. If you do not know the answer to a question, we can skip it.</i></p>	
2	In what ways has the Steps Together Programme been relevant?
3.1	<p>Has UNICEF's support to develop the Steps Together Programme been in line with the needs of your school?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, in what ways? If no, where has UNICEF's support been unaligned?</p>

4	<p>On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is the Steps Together Programme to preventing school violence and bullying?</p> <p>Not important Somewhat important Very important DK</p> <p>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 99</p> <p>Why did you give it a ____?</p>
5	<p>Has the Steps Together Programme been implemented in combination with other programmes or interventions in your school?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, how did the Programme add value to these other programmes? Was there any duplication of efforts? Or were steps taken to avoid duplication?</p>
7	<p>In way ways has the Programme influenced your school's violence prevention practices? And school policies?</p>
10	<p>I'm curious, do you think the Steps Together Programme has helped to prevent violence and bullying in your school?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?</p>
11	<p>Do you think the Steps Together Programme has helped to create a safe environment in your school?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?</p>
13	<p>Since the Steps Together Programme was introduced in 2019, has the Programme been able to adapt and change to remain relevant, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (2)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)</p> <p>If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?</p>
Effectiveness	
<i>Now I want to ask you some questions about the effectiveness of the Steps Together Programme.</i>	
17	<p>From your perspective, what have been the benefits of the Programme for staff in your school?</p>
17.1	<p>I know that some staff from your school participated in capacity building activities with UNICEF as part of the Programme. On a scale of 1 to 10, how effective were those capacity building activities?</p> <p>Not effective Somewhat effective Very effective DK</p> <p>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 99</p> <p>Why did you give it a ____?</p>

17.2	What capacity building activities were the most effective? In what ways were they effective?																		
17.3	Were there any capacity building activities that were no so effective or beneficial?																		
18	From your perspective, what have been the benefits of the Programme for students in your school?																		
19	What have been the benefits of the Programme for parents in your school?																		
20	From your perspective, what factors have contributed to the success and effectiveness of the Steps Together Programme in your school?																		
20.1	<p>On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with the Steps Together Programme?</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Not satisfied</td> <td></td> <td>Somewhat satisfied</td> <td></td> <td>Very satisfied</td> <td>DK</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> <td>99</td> </tr> </table> <p>Why did you give it a ____?</p>	Not satisfied		Somewhat satisfied		Very satisfied	DK	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99
Not satisfied		Somewhat satisfied		Very satisfied	DK														
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	99								
20.2	Do you have any thought on how to improve the Steps Together Programme?																		
<p><i>The Steps Together Programme has several objectives. I want to ask you about each of those objectives. If you aren't sure how to answer the questions, just let me know and we can skip it.</i></p>																			
22	In what ways has the Programme increased the capacities of the school principal and coordination council to apply a whole school approach to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?																		
23	In what ways has the Programme increased the capacities of teachers to take on roles and responsibilities related to preventing school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?																		
24	In what ways has the Programme increased the capacities of school staff to work with students to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?																		
24.1	In what ways has the Programme engaged students to create a safe school and to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?																		
25	In what ways has the Programme engaged parents to create a safe school and to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?																		
26	Are there any challenges that need to be addressed in schools to improve the Programme and its implementation?																		

<i>I have just a few more questions about effectiveness.</i>	
29	From your perspective, how well was the Steps Together Programme planned, implemented and managed?
<u>Impact</u>	
<i>Now I want to ask you some questions about the impact of Steps Together Programme.</i>	
31	Has the Programme contributed to any positive changes in your school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9) If yes, what positive changes have you seen? If no, why not?
32	Have there been differences in the impact of the Programme on girls vs. boys?
33	Have you seen any differences in the impact of the Programme on primary school children versus middle/junior high and high school students?
35	What do you think has been the greatest achievements of the Steps Together Programme?
36	What can be done to build upon or expand these achievements?
<u>Partnerships and Cooperation</u>	
<i>Now, I want to ask you a few questions about partnerships and cooperation.</i>	
37	What partnerships were established to support the Steps Together Programme? In what ways have these partnerships been beneficial?
39	Are there other partnerships that your school needs to improve Programme results?
40	As part of the Programme, has there been any cooperation between your school and local authorities? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9) If yes, what cooperation has there been? If no, why not?
41.1	Has there been any cooperation between your school and the other pilot schools to learn from each other? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9) If yes, what cooperation has there been? If no, why not?
<u>Efficiency</u>	
<i>I want to ask you a couple of questions about the efficiency of UNICEF's efforts to develop and implement the Steps Together Programme. Remember, if you do not know the answer to a question, we can skip it.</i>	
43	Did UNICEF have a monitoring and reporting approach that helped you to track progress made and benefits of the Programme? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know (9)

	If yes, can you tell me about the monitoring and reporting approach? How and why was it effective? If no, what were the problems with the monitoring and reporting approach?
<u>Sustainability</u>	
<i>I want to finish with some questions about the sustainability of Steps Together Programme.</i>	
45	How sustainable do you think the results achieved in your school will be over time?
45.1	Are there any potential risks that exist as it relates to sustaining the Programme's results?
46	What recommendations would you offer to improve sustainability of the Programme and its results?

ANNEX K: TEACHERS' FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Teachers' Focus Group Discussion Guide	
Introduction/Directions	
<p>Introduce yourself and explain the scope and purpose of the evaluation and offer a brief description of the methodology. Review the informed consent form with each participant. Get each participant to sign the informed consent form prior to beginning the interview. Keep the signed copy of the informed consent form and leave them an unsigned copy.</p> <p>THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 60 MINUTES</p> <p>BEFORE YOU BEGIN MAKE SURE TO SAVE THIS FILE IN YOUR DATA COLLECTION FOLDER WITH THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT TITLE:</p> <p>ID#_Region__Name of Agency/Institution_Interview Date (Example: 40_Sofia_TeacherFGD_26 June 2022)</p>	
Background/Demographic Information	
Date	
Location (city)	
Type of school/grades (check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary school teachers <input type="checkbox"/> Junior high/middle school teachers <input type="checkbox"/> High school teachers
Number of participants	
Number of males	
Number of females	
Names & Titles (of each participant)	
Have you obtained a copy of the signed consent form from each teacher prior to beginning the interview?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → Proceed to FGD with teachers <input type="checkbox"/> No → Proceed to FGD with teachers
<p>Review the ground rules with participants.</p> <p>Here are suggestions for ground rules that can be especially helpful for focus groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a public discussion, not a debate. The purpose is <i>not</i> to win an argument, but to hear many points of view related to the Steps Together Programme. • Everyone is encouraged to participate. You may be asked to share what you think or I may ask for comments from those who haven't spoken. It is always OK to "pass" when you are asked to share a comment. • No one or two individuals should dominate a discussion. If you have already voiced your ideas, let others have an opportunity. • One person speaks at a time. Refrain from side conversations. Pay attention to the person speaking. If you think you will forget an idea that comes to mind, write it down. • Listen to and respect other points of view. • Seek first to understand, not to be understood. Ask questions to seek clarification when you don't understand the meaning of someone's comments. • Keep focus group discussions confidential from anyone outside the group, this is important to ensuring everyone confidentiality. <p>In smaller focus groups, creating expectations together as part of the meeting is a helpful first step.</p>	

Once ground rules are clarified, participants should confirm that these rules will guide the discussion. The group's agreement allows the facilitator to directly address an issue when a ground rule is not followed.

Familiarity with the Programme

1	What has been your involvement with the Steps Together Programme, that is the Programme for Prevention of Violence and Bullying in Schools?
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Relevance and Coherence

I want to ask you some questions about the relevance of UNICEF and Ministry of Education efforts to establish and support the Steps Together Programme. If you do not know the answer to a question, we can skip it.

2	In what ways has the Steps Together Programme been relevant?
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4	How important is the Steps Together Programme to preventing school violence and bullying?
---	---

6	In what ways has the Programme addressed the needs of teachers and staff in your school?
---	--

7	In way ways has the Programme influenced your school's violence prevention practices? And school policies?
---	--

8	In what ways has the Programme addressed the needs of students in your school?
---	--

10	I'm curious, do you think the Steps Together Programme has helped to prevent violence and bullying in your school? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
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11	Do you think the Steps Together Programme has helped to create a safe environment in your school? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
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Effectiveness

Now I want to ask you some questions about the effectiveness of the Steps Together Programme.

17	From your perspective, what have been the benefits of the Programme for school staff?
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17.1	I know that some staff from your school participated in capacity building activities with UNICEF as part of the Programme. How effective were those capacity building activities?
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17.2	What capacity building activities were the most effective? In what ways were they effective?
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17.3	Is there any capacity building that you need, that maybe you didn't receive?
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18	From your perspective, what have been the benefits of the Programme for students in your school?
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19	What have been the benefits of the Programme for parents in your school?
----	--

20	From your perspective, what factors have contributed to the success and effectiveness of the Steps Together Programme in your school?
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20.1	How satisfied are you with the Steps Together Programme?
20.2	Do you have any thoughts on how to improve the Steps Together Programme?
<i>The Steps Together Programme has several objectives. I want to ask you about each of those objectives. If you aren't sure how to answer the questions, just let me know and we can skip it.</i>	
22	In what ways has the Programme increased the capacities of the school principal and coordination council to apply a whole school approach to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?
23	In what ways has the Programme increased the capacities of teachers to take on roles and responsibilities related to preventing school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?
24	In what ways has the Programme increased the capacities of school staff to work with students to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?
24.1	In what ways has the Programme engaged students to create a safe school and to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?
25	In what ways has the Programme engaged parents to create a safe school and to prevent school violence and bullying? What challenges have been faced, if any? How were the challenges overcome?
26	Are there any challenges that need to be addressed in schools to improve the Programme and its implementation?
27	In what ways has the Programme engaged local communities to establish safe schools and prevent school violence and bullying?
<i>I have just a few more questions about effectiveness.</i>	
28	What challenges or barriers has the Programme faced when it comes to preventing school violence and bullying? And creating a safe environment?
<u>Impact</u>	
<i>Now I want to ask you some questions about the impact of Steps Together Programme.</i>	
31	Has the Programme contributed to any positive changes in this school? If yes, what positive changes have you seen? If no, why not?
32	Have there been differences in the impact of the Programme on girls vs. boys?
33	Have you seen any differences in the impact of the Programme on primary school children versus middle/junior high and high school students?

35	What do you think has been the greatest achievements of the Steps Together Programme?
36	What can be done to build upon or expand these achievements?
<u>Partnerships and Cooperation</u>	
<i>Now, I want to ask you a few questions about partnerships and cooperation.</i>	
37	What partnerships were established to support the Steps Together Programme? In what ways have these partnerships been beneficial?
40	As part of the Programme, has there been any cooperation between your school and local authorities? If yes, what cooperation has there been? If no, why not?
<u>Sustainability</u>	
<i>I want to finish with some questions about the sustainability of Steps Together Programme.</i>	
46	What recommendations would you offer to improve sustainability of the Programme and its results?
<u>Wrap-up and Closure</u>	
<p><i>I want to thank you for participating in this discussion today. I really appreciate you taking the time to come and talk with me and share your views and opinions. This information is very useful to our evaluation. It is important to UNICEF to hear the views of teachers, because teachers are important to the Steps Together Programme. Please let me know if you have any questions of me before we end this meeting.</i></p> <p>Close the meeting.</p>	

ANNEX L: PARENTAL CONSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

Agreement for Child's Participation in the Evaluation of the Child Advocacy Centre

Parental Consent Form for Children's Participation

Who are we and why are we conducting this evaluation?

The evaluation is being conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and is necessary for the purposes of the Steps Together Programme, which is implemented by UNICEF Bulgaria and the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) from 2019 to 2022. As the evaluators we are contracted by UNICEF, but we **are not** employees of UNICEF.

The purpose is to obtain an independent evaluation of the Steps Together Programme which is being implemented in five schools in five regions – Iskar, Kustendil, Sofia, Teteven and Zavet. The aim is to understand why and to what extent intended and unintended results were achieved and to analyse implications of the results. The evaluation is expected to support strategic learning and decision-making with regard to improving the structure, implementation and quality of the Steps Together Programme, and its eventual scale-up and sustainability.

What will be your child's involvement?

Your child's opinion and point of view is very important to us; therefore, we want to invite your child to participate in a focus group discussion and share their perspectives and experiences related to their participation in the Steps Together Programme. We will ask them questions about Programme activities, including activities focused on preventing school violence and bullying, and create a safe school environment. This will allow us to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Steps Together Programme. Your child **will not** be asked about school violence or bullying that they may have personally experienced.

Bear in mind, your child will be just one of more than 100 people what we will be meeting with and talking to as part of this evaluation. Everyone who participates in this evaluation are guaranteed confidentiality to protect their privacy. No names or identifiers will be included in any documents or reports. Only summary data for all respondents will be presented in an evaluation report of the Steps Together Programme. It is also important that you know that participating in this interview will cause no risk to you or your child.

We anticipate the focus group will take about 1 hour/60 minutes. We want to make sure that you are aware that this focus group discussion will be audio recorded, subject to the rules of confidentiality of participants.

Is it mandatory for your child to participate in this focus group discussion?

It is up to you and your child to decide whether your child will participate in this focus group; their participation is voluntary. If you decide, now or at a later stage, that you don't want your child to participate in this focus group, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving any reason why. Even if you would be happy for your child to participate, they will decide for themselves whether they want to take part. It will also be explained to the child that they may stop their participation at any time without reason, as well as that they may refuse to answer any of the questions.

About 40 students from your child's school will be asked to participate willingly in one of the four focus groups that we have scheduled (10 students per focus group).

Will the child's answers be shared with anyone else?

The focus group is designed to protect your child's identity. All the information collected as part of the focus group will be strictly anonymous and confidential.

Who will have access to the data from this survey?

Only members of the evaluation team will be allowed to examine focus group responses. All information from focus groups will be stored on password protected computers, which are accessible only to authorised interviewers.

How will the anonymous answers given by your child in this survey be used?

The answers given by your child in the focus group will be used to evaluate how the Steps Together Programme was implemented in your child's school. We are interested in the general responses shared by all children who participate in focus groups. We plan to conduct a total of 18 focus groups in 5 schools in the country. Your child is one of about 100 children who have been asked to participate in a focus group.

HOW DO I GIVE PERMISSION FOR MY CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS EVALUATION?

You give permission for your child to participate by checking the appropriate 'Yes' box and signing the form. If you do not give your permission for your child to participate, check the 'No' box. You should fill out the below information and sign and return this form to the evaluators before your child participates in the interview (on the day of the interview).

☐ **Yes, I agree to have my child participate in the focus group for this evaluation**

☐ **No, I do not agree for my child to participate in the focus group for this evaluation**

Child Name (please print) _____ Age _____

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

If you have questions about this evaluation, you can contact Maria Yankova, UNICEF Education Officer, at myankova@unicef.org

ANNEX M: CHILDREN'S FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Students' Focus Group Discussion Guide	
Introduction/Directions	
Have you obtained a copy of the signed parental consent form for each child prior to beginning the focus group?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → Proceed to obtain verbal assent <input type="checkbox"/> No → Do not obtain verbal assent, take a break and have the child leave the group
<p>Introduce yourself and explain the purpose of the evaluation and offer a brief description of the methodology. Let the children know that they are only one of a large number of children who are being interviewed in four schools in four regions of Bulgaria – Iskar, Sofia, Teteven and Zavet.</p> <p>Read the following script before starting each interview:</p> <p>Your participation in this discussion is voluntary which means that you can choose not to participate if you do not want. It also means that if you choose to participate that you can skip questions or end your participation at any time without penalty. It is also important to understand that participation in this discussion is not a requirement of the school or your ability to continue to programme. If you choose not to participate in this discussion or choose to end your participation it will in no way impact your grades in school. No one from the school will know that you declined to participate.</p> <p>There are no right or wrong answer. You are guaranteed confidently which means that <u>no one</u> at the school will know how you answered any of the questions.</p> <p><u>No names</u> will be used during the report writing process, and <u>no</u> information that you provide will be attached to your name. If a quote is used it will be identified in general terms, such as “student.” Also, everyone will be randomly assigned a number to guarantee confidentiality.</p> <p>I would like to audio record the discussion, so that I can go back later and type up the notes from our discussion. I will bring the audio-recordings back to Sofia with me and type them up. After I type up my notes I will delete/erase the recording. I want to make sure that each one of you are okay with my recording our discussion. Do I have your permission to audio record the discussion?</p> <p>THE DISCUSSION TAKE NO MORE THAN 60 MINUTES. Make sure to monitor your time.</p> <p>BEFORE YOU BEGIN MAKE SURE TO SAVE THIS FILE IN YOUR DATA COLLECTION FOLDER WITH THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT TITLE:</p> <p>ID#_Region__Name of Agency/Institution_Interview Date (Example: 60_Sofia_StudentsFGD_26 June 2022)</p>	
Obtain verbal consent from each child as to their willingness to participate in the focus group	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → Proceed with FGD <input type="checkbox"/> No → Take a break and have the child leave the group
<p>If a child becomes upset during a focus group discussion, you must stop the discussion immediately, and invite a school staff member to console and talk with the child.</p>	

Background/Demographic Information	
Date	
Location (city)	
Type of school/grades (check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary school students (grades 3-4) <input type="checkbox"/> Junior high/middle school students <input type="checkbox"/> High school students
Number of participants	
Number of males	
Number of females	
Names (of each participant)	
Required equipment:	Flipchart paper, coloured markers, refreshments
<p>Post the ground rules in the room and review the ground rules with participants.</p> <p>Here are suggestions for ground rules that can be especially helpful for focus groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a public discussion, not a debate. The purpose is <i>not</i> to win an argument, but to hear many points of view related to the Steps Together Programme. • Everyone is encouraged to participate. You may be asked to share what you think or I may ask for comments from those who haven't spoken. It is always OK to "pass" when you are asked to share a comment. • No one or two individuals should dominate a discussion. If you have already voiced your ideas, let others have an opportunity. • One person speaks at a time. Refrain from side conversations. Pay attention to the person speaking. If you think you will forget an idea that comes to mind, write it down. • Listen to and respect other points of view. • Seek first to understand, not to be understood. Ask questions to seek clarification when you don't understand the meaning of someone's comments. • Keep focus group discussions confidential from anyone outside the group, this is important to ensuring everyone confidentiality. <p>In smaller focus groups, creating expectations together as part of the meeting is a helpful first step. Once ground rules are clarified, participants should confirm that these rules will guide the discussion. The group's agreement allows the facilitator to directly address an issue when a ground rule is not followed.</p>	
Familiarity with and Relevance of the Programme	
<p><i>Let's get started. I want to ask you some questions about the Steps Together Programme.</i></p> <p>I know that you have taken part in the Steps Together Programme, which focused on preventing school violence and peer bullying. What did you and your classmates call this programme?</p> <p>Today, I want to talk with you about that Programme. I want to hear what you and your peers did in the Programme, what you learned from the Programme, your thoughts about the Programme, what you liked about the Programme. You may even have some ideas on how to improve the Programme.</p> <p><i>Reminder the students that there are refreshments and to make themselves comfortable.</i></p> <p>I want you to think back to when you first participated in the Programme. I want you to use the paper and markers to draw or list on the paper the different activities that you remember participating in as</p>	

part of the Steps Together Programme. You can work together as a team to develop that list of activities you participated in as part of the Programme. Maybe some of you participate in an activity, but others did not, that is okay, still draw or list the activity on your paper.

Maybe want to list the activities on a timeline from past to present. For instance, what were some of the activities that you did at the beginning of the programme, what were some activities that you did in the middle of the programme, and what were activities that you did more recently at the end of the programme? Don't worry if you can't remember the order of activities. If you don't remember the order you can just list the different activities that you remember.

Depending on the number of attendees, you may want to split the children into two groups, but it is best to have 3-5 children in a group. So, if there are 6 children in the focus group divide them into 2 groups of 3. If there are 5 children in the focus group let them work together as a group of 5. You should have no more than two groups in one focus group discussion.

GIVE THE CHILDREN 10-15 MINUTES MAXIMUM TO COMPLETE THIS ACTIVITY

1.1	<p>After 10-15 minutes, once each group is done, ask each group, one at a time, to talk about the different activities they listed on their paper. Verify how the activity was part of the Steps Together Programme. You should ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about the activities you have drawn or listed on your paper? <p>Probing questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did this happen? • Who participated? • What impact did that activity have on you and your classmates? <p>Note: By involving all children in the discussion and the visualization task, it helps them recall the programme and their participation in it, which will help them to reflect in greater detail as the discussion continues.</p>
2	Do you think the Steps Together Programme is a good Programme to have in this school? If yes, why is it a good Programme to have in this school? If no, why don't you think it is a good Programme?
10	Do you think the Steps Together Programme has helped to prevent violence and bullying in your school? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
11	Do you think the Steps Together Programme has helped to create a safe environment in your school? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
18	From your perspective, what have been the benefits of the Programme for students in this school?
31	Has the Programme led to any positive changes in this school? If yes, what positive changes have you seen? If no, why not?
50	What did you like most about the Steps Together Programme?
51	Was there anything you did like about the Steps Together Programme?

20.2	Do you have any thoughts on how to improve the Steps Together Programme?
<u>Wrap-up and Closure</u>	
<p><i>I want to thank you for participating in this discussion today. I really appreciate you taking the time to come and talk with me and share your views and opinions. This information is very useful to our evaluation. It is important to UNICEF to hear the views of children, because children are important to the Steps Together Programme.</i></p> <p><i>“Thank you for your cooperation. I know that some of these questions were personal and may have made you feel sad or upset. I am going to give you a leaflet with phone numbers of some places that you can contact in case you would like to speak with someone. You can reach out at any time and these services are free. We would suggest that you keep this leaflet somewhere safe where no one else will be able to find it. I can also directly link you to a school staff member who can provide some help and support. Would you like for me to do this for you?”</i></p> <p><i>Please let me know if you have any questions of me before we end this meeting today.</i></p> <p>Close the meeting.</p>	

ANNEX N: CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Agreement to Participate in the Evaluation of the Steps Together Programme

(For use with Parents/Guardians)

Who are we and why are we conducting this evaluation?

The evaluation is being conducted by the United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF), and is necessary for the purposes of the Steps Together Programme, which is implemented by UNICEF Bulgaria and the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) from 2019 to 2022. As the evaluators we are contracted by UNICEF, but we **are not** employees of UNICEF.

The purpose is to obtain an independent evaluation of the Steps Together Programme which is being implemented in five schools in five regions – Iskar, Kustendil, Sofia, Teteven and Zavet. The aim is to understand why and to what extent intended and unintended results were achieved and to analyse implications of the results. The evaluation is expected to support strategic learning and decision-making with regard to improving the structure, implementation and quality of the Steps Together Programme, and its eventual scale-up and sustainability.

What will be your involvement?

Your opinion and point of view are very important to us; therefore, we invite you to participate in this focus group and share your perspectives, attitudes and experiences related to the Steps Together Programme. This will allow us to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Steps Together Programme.

Bear in mind, you are just one of more than 100 people what we will be meeting and talking with as part of this evaluation. Everyone who participates in this evaluation are guaranteed confidentiality to protect their privacy. No names or identifiers will be included in any documents or reports. Only summary data for all respondents will be presented in an evaluation report of the Steps Together Programme. It is also important that you know that participating in this interview will cause no risk to you

We anticipate the focus group will take about 1 hour/60 minutes. We want to make sure that you are aware that this focus group will be audio recorded, subject to the rules of confidentiality of participants. Since you will be participating in a focus group with other parents from your child's school, you are obliged to keep information confidential that is discussed during the focus group.

How will the information collected be used?

We would like you to participate in an interview, but your participation is voluntary. While you will not benefit immediately from taking part in this focus group, findings from this evaluation will be used to support efforts to strengthen the Steps Together Programme in the future. Evaluators will **not provide** financial reimbursement **nor** gifts of any type for participation. Refusal to participate **will not impact** you in any way. You can skip questions that you do not want to answer or stop the interview at any point without penalty. You can contact UNICEF in Sofia if you have questions.

HOW DO I GIVE PERMISSION FOR MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS EVALUATION?

You give your permission to participate by checking the appropriate 'Yes' box and signing the form. If you do not give your permission to participate, check the 'No' box. You should also sign and date this form, and return this form to evaluator before you begin the interview.

- ☐ **Yes, I agree to participate in the focus group for this evaluation**
- ☐ **No, I do not agree to participate in the focus group for this evaluation**

Signature _____ Date _____

If you have questions about this evaluation, you can contact Maria Yankova, UNICEF Education Officer, at myankova@unicef.org

ANNEX O: PARENTS' FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Parents' Focus Group Discussion Guide	
Introduction/Directions	
<p>Introduce yourself and explain the scope and purpose of the evaluation and offer a brief description of the methodology. Review the informed consent form with each participant. Get each participant to sign the informed consent form prior to beginning the interview. Keep the signed copy of the informed consent form and leave them an unsigned copy.</p> <p>THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 60 MINUTES</p> <p>BEFORE YOU BEGIN MAKE SURE TO SAVE THIS FILE IN YOUR DATA COLLECTION FOLDER WITH THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT TITLE:</p> <p>ID#_Region__Name of Agency/Institution_Interview Date (Example: 80_Sofia_StudentsFGD_26 June 2022)</p>	
Background/Demographic Information	
Date	
Location (city)	
Number of participants	
Number of males	
Number of females	
Names & Titles (of each participant)	
Have you obtained a copy of the signed consent form prior to beginning the interview?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes → Proceed to interview the parent/caregiver <input type="checkbox"/> No → Do not interview the parent/caregiver
Required equipment:	Flipchart paper, colour markers, refreshments
<p>Review the ground rules with participants.</p> <p>Here are suggestions for ground rules that can be especially helpful for focus groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a public discussion, not a debate. The purpose is <i>not</i> to win an argument, but to hear many points of view related to the Steps Together Programme. • Everyone is encouraged to participate. You may be asked to share what you think or I may ask for comments from those who haven't spoken. It is always OK to "pass" when you are asked to share a comment. • No one or two individuals should dominate a discussion. If you have already voiced your ideas, let others have an opportunity. • One person speaks at a time. Refrain from side conversations. Pay attention to the person speaking. If you think you will forget an idea that comes to mind, write it down. • Listen to and respect other points of view. • Seek first to understand, not to be understood. Ask questions to seek clarification when you don't understand the meaning of someone's comments. • Keep focus group discussions confidential from anyone outside the group, this is important to ensuring everyone confidentiality. <p>In smaller focus groups, creating expectations together as part of the meeting is a helpful first step.</p>	

Once ground rules are clarified, participants should confirm that these rules will guide the discussion. The group's agreement allows the facilitator to directly address an issue when a ground rule is not followed.

Familiarity with and Relevance of the Programme

Let's get started. I want to ask you some questions about the Steps Together Programme.

1	What has been your involvement with the Steps Together Programme, that is the Programme for Prevention of Violence and Bullying in Schools?
2	In what ways has the Steps Together Programme been important or relevant to this school?
8	In what ways has the Programme addressed the needs of students in the school?
24.1	In what ways has the Programme engaged students to create a safe school and to prevent school violence and bullying?
9	How has the Programme addressed the needs of parents?
25	In what ways has the Programme engaged parents to create a safe school and to prevent school violence and bullying?
10	Do you think the Steps Together Programme has helped to prevent violence and bullying in this school? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
11	Do you think the Programme has helped to create a safe environment in this school? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
18	From your perspective, what have been the benefits of the Programme for students in this school?
19	What have been the benefits of the Programme for parents in this school?
50	What did you like most about the Steps Together Programme?
31	Has the Programme contributed to any positive changes in this school? If yes, what positive changes have you seen? If no, why not?
35	What do you think has been the greatest achievements of the Steps Together Programme?
36	What can be done to build upon or expand these achievements?
20	From your perspective, what factors have contributed to the success and effectiveness of the Steps Together Programme in this school?
20.2	Do you have any thoughts on how to improve the Steps Together Programme?

28	Finally, I would like to ask you, what challenges or barriers has the Programme faced when it comes to preventing school violence and bullying? And creating a safe environment in the school?
51	Was there anything you did like about the Steps Together Programme?
Wrap-up and Closure	
<p><i>I want to thank you for participating in this discussion today. I really appreciate you taking the time to come and talk with me and share your views and opinions. This information is very useful to our evaluation. It is important to UNICEF to hear the views of parents, because parents and their children are important beneficiaries of the Steps Together Programme. Please let me know if you have any questions of me before we end this meeting.</i></p> <p><i>“Thank you for your cooperation. I know that some of these questions were personal and may have made you feel sad or upset. I am going to give you a leaflet with phone numbers of some places that you can contact in case you would like to speak with someone. You can reach out at any time and these services are free. We would suggest that you keep this leaflet somewhere safe where no one else will be able to find it. I can also directly link you to a school staff member who can provide some help and support. Would you like for me to do this for you?”</i></p> <p>Close the meeting.</p>	

ANNEX P: STEPS TOGETHER PROGRAMME RESULTS MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Party in charge of activity	Indicator (per school)	Means of verification
2019/2020 school year: preparatory period preceding the full implementation of the Programme					
Sustainable introduction, implementation and monitoring of the Programme.	Meetings with schools	December 2019	UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), teachers, students, parents	Number of meetings – 1	Communications concerning the meetings, report to the Minister of Education and Science containing a timetable of the meetings.
	Presentation at a teachers' council	December 2019	Teachers	Decision taken at a teachers' council	Minutes of votes during the teachers' council.
	Selection and appointment of the school's mentor	January 2020	UNICEF	1 mentor appointed	Contract of employment.
	Presentation of the school's participation in the Programme (either in each class, or before the whole school)	February 2020	Class teachers, principal, mentor	Number of parent-teacher meetings. Percentage of parents acquainted with the school's participation in the Programme.	School records. School website. Assessment of the impact of the Programme ¹⁸⁹ .
Endorsement of the findings of the survey of the current state of school attitudes and use of these as grounds to take specific actions under the Programme.	Using research methods and data processing [to extract relevant data].	February to March 2020	Class teachers, researchers, mentors, students, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and the principal.	Initial evaluation of the environment (levels of violence and bullying, indicators relevant to the environment and the community) conducted ¹⁹⁰	Questionnaires and documentation from focus group sessions filled out and processed; results processed.
	Summarising the results of each school.	April 2020	Coordination Council, researchers, mentor.	Number of reports/presentations – 1	Summary report on outcomes

¹⁸⁹ The assessment of the impact the Programme covers students, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and the principal. The assessment involves an initial, an interim and a final evaluation, all within the three-year pilot period designed to streamline the Programme. Each evaluation includes an annual survey of the levels of violence and bullying and measuring indicators relevant to the environment and the community.

¹⁹⁰ The initial evaluation conducted constitutes part of the comprehensive assessment of the impact of the Programme. Said assessment includes an initial, an interim and a final evaluation.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Party in charge of activity	Indicator (per school)	Means of verification
	Presentation and discussion of outcomes; needs mapping.	April 2020	Mentors and Coordination Council, teachers, students, parents, school staff	Number of conferences at each school – 1	Minutes of the conference held.
A policy on safe school environment developed.	Training principals to use the systemic and the whole school approach	April 2020	Principal, external trainer	Number of training events conducted – 1	Attendance sheet.
	Training Coordination Council members to use the systemic and the whole school approach	April 2020	All Coordination Council members, external trainer	Number of training events conducted – 1	Attendance sheet.
	Planning activities for the upcoming school year.	May 2020	Principal, Coordination Council, mentors.	Number of plans – 1	School records.
Mechanisms of instilling a sense of responsibility for establishing a safe school environment and a functioning school community in students developed and operational. The school community has been strengthened: students participate in, and assume responsibility for, maintaining a safe school environment.	Call for volunteers to participate in a peer support group (presenting the opportunity before each class).	June 2020	Guidance counsellor, school psychologist and social worker, class teachers, mentor.	Number of volunteers gathered.	School records. Consent from parents for their children to participate in a training event.
	Training event for volunteers wishing to participate in a peer support group.	June to July 2020	Guidance counsellor, school psychologist and social worker, external trainer.	Number of training events conducted – 1	Attendance sheets. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
Effective and well-informed engagement on the part of parents in establishing a safe school environment to prevent violence and bullying.	Meeting(s) with parents to establish action groups/clubs.	June 2020	School Board, Community Board, Coordination Council, mentor.	Number of meetings conducted – at least 1. Number of action groups formed.	Minutes of the meeting(s).

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Party in charge of activity	Indicator (per school)	Means of verification
Knowledge, skills and methodologies developed in support of teachers' efforts to establish a safe school environment and prevent violence.	Training on conducting class meetings and holding topical parent-teacher meetings.	July 2020	Teachers, class teachers, external trainer, mentor	Number of training events conducted – 1 Percentage of teachers feeling positive about their coping capacity.	Attendance sheets. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
The school community has been strengthened: parents and students participate in, and assume responsibility for, maintaining a safe school environment. Knowledge, skills and methodologies developed in support of teachers' efforts to establish a safe school environment.	Training in mediation and restorative approaches	July 2020	Teachers, students and parents who wish to participate, external trainer, mentor	Number of training events conducted – 1 (the event may entail more than 1 training module).	Attendance sheets. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
Functioning mechanisms and organisation to provide professional support for teaching staff.	Experiential training for teachers aiming to reduce stress and prevent burnout	July 2020	All teachers, external facilitators	Number of training events conducted – 1 Percentage of teachers feeling comfortable at their workplace.	Documentation relevant to the training event. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
2020/2021 school year: Year 1 of the full implementation of the Programme					
A school policy on safe environment developed.	Selection of members of the Coordination Council (said members include parents and students)	September 2020	Principal, teachers' council.	Decision on the membership of the Coordination Council reached.	School records.
Knowledge, skills and methodologies developed in support of teachers' efforts to establish a safe school environment.	Class meetings on drafting class rules.	September to October 2020	Class teachers, students.	Number of classes – 2	Class rules drafted.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Party in charge of activity	Indicator (per school)	Means of verification
<p>All actors acquainted with, and accepting of, the values, rules and consequences of said rules at school.</p> <p>School documents amended to reflect the common values cited.</p> <p>A school policy on safe environment developed.</p>	Adoption of school rules by the teachers' council	October 2020	Teachers' council, Coordination Council, student body representatives	Number of teachers' councils held – 1 Adoption of a school culture characterised by common values.	Overview of summaries of class rules presented by the Coordination Council. Minutes of the teachers' council. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
	Dissemination of the list of school values, rules and the consequences of the latter.	On an ongoing basis (as these are adopted).	Teachers' council, School Board, student body representatives, Coordination Council and others.	Percentage of actors acquainted with, and accepting of, the values, rules and consequences of said rules at school.	School records. School website. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
Knowledge and skills relevant to preventing violence and bullying developed among students.	Topic-based classwork dedicated to social-emotional learning	Ongoing (throughout the school year).	Teachers in the relevant disciplines, class teachers.	Integrating topics in the education plan (a minimum of 6 topics). Levels of violence and bullying.	Annual curriculum. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
Functioning mechanisms and organisation to provide professional support for teaching staff.	Introduction and use of intervention and supervision	Ongoing.	Mentor, external supervisor, teachers who wish to participate.	Number of supervision or intervention meetings throughout the school year. Percentage of teachers feeling positive about their coping capacity.	Attendance sheets. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
<p>Mechanisms of instilling a sense of responsibility for establishing a safe school environment and a functioning school community in students developed and operational.</p> <p>The school community has been strengthened: students participate in, and assume responsibility for,</p>	Volunteers in action: peer support group	Ongoing.	Volunteers, guidance counsellor, school psychologist and social worker.	Number of group interventions. Levels of violence and bullying.	Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
	Meetings of student body representatives on matters relevant to school life and the prevention of violence	Ongoing.	Student body representatives, peer support group, guidance counsellor, school psychologist, social worker and mentor	At least 4 meetings. Percentage of students involved in school life and the prevention of violence.	Assessment of the impact of the Programme.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Party in charge of activity	Indicator (per school)	Means of verification
maintaining a safe school environment.					
<p>Effective and well-informed engagement on the part of parents in establishing a safe school environment to prevent violence and bullying.</p> <p>The school community has been strengthened: parents participate in, and assume responsibility for, maintaining a safe school environment.</p> <p>A school policy on safe environment developed.</p>	Developing/improving the feedback system (opinions, proposals, complaints, alerts of cases of violence) for parents.	September 2020	Coordination Council, principal.	Share of parents reporting improved communication and greater trust in school authorities.	School records. School website. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
	Work within the framework of parent action groups/clubs	Ongoing.	Parents belonging to each group, representative of the Coordination Council	Number of working meetings of the action groups/clubs. Share of parents involved in school life.	Minutes of working meetings. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
	Meetings between parents on matters relevant to school life	Ongoing.	Parents sitting on the School Board and/or the Community Board, Coordination Council, mentor.	Number of meetings conducted – at least 2. Share of parents involved in school life.	Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
	Topical parent-teacher meetings/seminars	Ongoing.	Class teachers, parents, guidance counsellor, school psychologist, social worker and mentor.	Number of topical meetings conducted – at least 2. Share of parents reporting improved communication and greater trust in school authorities.	Minutes of meetings. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
Greater trust and more robust cooperation between families and school authorities on the one hand	Establishing contact with the local community (meetings)	Ongoing.	Principal, Coordination Council, parent action groups/clubs.	Number of meetings.	

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Party in charge of activity	Indicator (per school)	Means of verification
and school authorities and other stakeholders on the other. Schools are supported in their response to cases of children who have suffered of violence or bullying, as well as in other individual cases.	Action plan, partnership agreements with local stakeholders (institutions, services, organisations, media)	Ongoing.	Principal, Coordination Council.	Partnership agreements. Number of joint actions (lectures, events, casework)	School records.
All actors acquainted with, and accepting of, the values, rules and consequences of said rules at school.	Using mediation techniques and restorative approaches	Ongoing (following training).	Class teachers, teachers, parents and student who wish to participate.	Levels of violence and bullying. Number of conflicts resolved by non-violent means.	Log describing incidents and cases of violence at the school. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
A school policy on safe environment developed.	Duty to monitor school grounds	Ongoing.	Coordination Council, the entire school staff	Maximum monitoring of school grounds. Share of students feeling safe at school.	Duty schedule. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
Opportunity for any student to seek help in case of difficulties and conditions permitting them to do so. Empathy in cooperating with families in cases of violence.	Work with children and parents in need. Support meetings with mentors.	Ongoing.	Class teachers, guidance counsellor, school psychologist, social worker, local services and organisations, mentors.	Number of consultations disaggregated by case. Share of parents reporting improved communication and greater trust in school authorities. Share of students feeling safe at school.	School records. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
All actors acquainted with, and accepting of, the values, rules and consequences of said rules at school. A school policy on safe environment developed.	Adherence to the values, rules and consequences of the latter	Ongoing.	Students, parents, teaching and non-teaching staff.	Change in the overall attitudes at the school.	Assessment of the impact of the Programme.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Party in charge of activity	Indicator (per school)	Means of verification
Sustainable introduction, implementation and monitoring of the Programme.	Using research methods and data processing [to extract relevant data].	June to July 2021	All members of the school community, researchers, mentor.	Interim evaluation of the environment (levels of violence and bullying, indicators relevant to the environment and the community) conducted ¹⁹¹	Questionnaires and documentation from focus group sessions filled out and processed; results processed. Recommendations on possible improvements and changes to activities.
2021/2022 school year: Year 2 of the full implementation of the Programme					
Implementation of all activities in compliance with the recommendations on possible improvements and changes to activities offered in the interim evaluation.					
Sustainable introduction, implementation and monitoring of the Programme.	Final assessment and summarising outcomes.	June to August 2022	All members of the school community, researchers, external evaluator, UNICEF.	Final evaluation of the environment (levels of violence and bullying, indicators relevant to the environment and the community) conducted ¹⁹²	Final report on assessing the impact of the Programme. Recommendations on the Programme's potential for implementation in the system of preschool and school education.

¹⁹¹ The interim evaluation conducted constitutes part of the comprehensive assessment of the impact of the Programme. Said assessment includes an initial, an interim and a final evaluation.

¹⁹² The final evaluation conducted constitutes part of the comprehensive assessment of the impact of the Programme. Said assessment includes an initial, an interim and a final evaluation.

ANNEX Q: UNICEF REPORTING ON PROGRAMME-RELATED INDICATORS

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
2019/2020 school year: preparatory period preceding the full implementation of the Programme					
Sustainable introduction, implementation and monitoring of the Programme.	Meetings with schools	Dec 2019	Number of meetings – 1	13 meetings were held with the school community in selected schools. The meetings were organised with the whole school community – school management, teachers, students and parents.	Communications concerning the meetings, report to the Minister of Education and Science containing a timetable of the meetings.
	Presentation at a teachers' council	Dec 2019	Decision taken at a teachers' council	Decisions have been taken in the selected 5 schools at the teaching staff meeting.	Minutes of votes during the teachers' council.
	Selection and appointment of the school's mentor	Jan 2020	1 mentor per school appointed	5 appointed mentors in 5 selected schools (3 women and 2 men). In the second year one of the man left the Program and the ratio changed to 4 women and 1 man.	Contract of employment.
	Presentation of the school's participation in the Programme (either in each class, or before the whole school)	Feb 2020	Number of parent-teacher meetings. Percentage of parents acquainted with the school's participation in the Programme.		School records. School website. Assessment of the impact of the Programme ¹⁹³ .
Activities for adaptation of the Program for the reality of Covid-19 Pandemic					

¹⁹³ The assessment of the impact the Programme covers students, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and the principal. The assessment involves an initial, an interim and a final evaluation, all within the three-year pilot period designed to streamline the Programme. Each evaluation includes an annual survey of the levels of violence and bullying and measuring indicators relevant to the environment and the community.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
Sustainable introduction, implementation and monitoring of the Programme.	Joint online meeting to discuss the changes in the situation due to the Covid-19 pandemic and possible next steps under the programme	14 May 2020	Number of participants from the schools – 2 per school	A joint online meeting was held, which was attended by 2 representatives from all 5 schools – directors and deputy directors, members of the Coordination councils in schools, UNICEF and Ministry of Education and Science teams) – a total of 22 participants (18 women and 4 men). The situation in the schools was discussed with the programme team and mentors, a questionnaire was submitted to check the needs of the schools, the information from the answers was analysed and individual meetings of the school teams with their mentors were planned to adapt the programme activities.	Notes from the online meeting, a screenshot, a summary of the answers to the questionnaires given to the schools.
Sustainable introduction, implementation and monitoring of the Programme.	Meetings – gaining positive experience from the new situation, examining the specifics and needs of schools in connection with the programme.	25 June - 8 July 2020	Number of meetings conducted – 2 per school.	7 meetings - In 3 of the schools (Sofia, Zavet, Iskar) 1 meeting was held, and in 2 (Teteven and Kyustendil) – 2 meetings, according to the capabilities and workload of the school teams; these were sufficiently informative.	Meeting notes, summary report
2020/2021 and 2021/2022 school years: Year 1 and Year 2 of the full implementation of the Programme					
A policy on safe school environment developed.	Training principals to use the systemic and the whole school approach	April - Sept 2020	Number of training events conducted – 1	1 training (4 half-day sessions). The training was attended by 10 principals and deputy principals from the 5 schools – all women.	Attendance sheet. screenshot, training recordings
	Training Coordination Council members to use the systemic and the whole school approach	Sept 2020	Number of training events conducted – 1	1 training (4 half-day sessions). The training was attended by 15 representatives of the Coordination Councils of the 5 pilot schools – all women.	Attendance sheet. screenshot, training recordings

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
Endorsement of the findings of the survey of the current state of school attitudes and use of these as grounds to take specific actions under the Programme.	Using research methods and data processing [to extract relevant data].	Nov - Dec 2020	Initial evaluation of the environment (levels of violence and bullying, indicators relevant to the environment and the community) conducted ¹⁹⁴	<p>Levels of violence are identified by the baseline study.</p> <p>Data about respondents:</p> <p>1.Questionnaires:</p> <p>Teachers: 228 teachers reached of which 132 teachers fully completed the questionnaires: (119) 90 % women and (13) 10% of men.</p> <p>Length of work experience of teachers at the specific school:</p> <p>up to 5 years -29 % 5-10 years – 14 % 10-20 years – 28 % 20-30 years – 22 % over 30 years 7 %</p> <p>Students:</p> <p>214 students at primary school level, 50% girls and 50% boys. (II grade 13 (6%), III grade 102 (48%) IV grade 99 (46%)).</p> <p>1168 students were reached of them 925 students in middle and high school fully completed the questionnaires - 41% boys (377) and 59% girls (548).</p> <p>53% (490) of students are in middle high school and 47% (435) in high school.</p>	Questionnaires and documentation from focus group sessions filled out and processed; results processed.

¹⁹⁴ The initial evaluation conducted constitutes part of the comprehensive assessment of the impact of the Programme. Said assessment includes an initial, an interim internal assessment and a final evaluation.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	<p>Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator</p>	Means of verification
				<p>Parents: 1188 reached, 739 started to fill the questionnaires, 460 parents fully completed it. 44% (202) of them are parents of boys and 56% (258) of girls. 89% (409) are women, 11% (51) men.</p> <p>Focus groups and interviews:</p> <p>1.Interviews: 1.Directors and deputy directors: 6 (5 women and 1 man)</p> <p>2.Psychologists/pedagogical councilours: 4 (all women)</p> <p>2.Focus groups: 2.1. Total number of students by sex and grade: 142 – 87 girls (61%) and 57 boys (39 %) Primary school level – 15 girls and 15 boys Middle high school – 32 girls and 23 boys High school – 39 girls and 19 boys</p> <p>2.2. Total number of teachers by sex and grade: 112 – 103 (92%) women and 9 (8%) men Primary school 34 women and 4 men Middle and high school 69 women and 5 men.</p> <p>2.3. Total number of parents by sex and grade – 93 parents - 81 (87 %) women and 12 (13 %) men. Primary school – 32 women and 6 men Middle school – 23 women and 3 men High school – 26 women and 3 men</p>	

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
	Summarising the results of each school.	Jan 2021	Number of reports/presentations – 1	1 summary report and 5 reports for each school prepared.	Summary report on outcomes
	Presentation and discussion of outcomes; needs mapping.	Jan – Fe 2021	Number of conferences at each school – 1	5 conferences in 5 pilot schools, which were held online, were attended by a total of 222 principals, teachers, pupils, and parents.	Minutes of the conference held.
Mechanisms of instilling a sense of responsibility for establishing a safe school environment and a functioning school community in students developed and operational. The school community has been strengthened: students participate in, and assume responsibility for, maintaining a safe school environment.	Call for volunteers to participate in a peer support group (presenting the opportunity before each class).	April - May 2021 & Sept - Oct 2022	Number of volunteers gathered.	4 groups of total 74 volunteers in middle and high school – 59 (80% girls) and 15 (20 %) boys Middle high school students – 29 girls and 9 boys High school students – 30 girls and 6 boys	School records. Consent from parents for their children to participate in a training event.
	Training for volunteers wishing to participate in a peer support group.	April - May 2021 & Sept - Oct 2022	Number of training events conducted – 1	1 training for leaders of peer support groups was held with pedagogical councilours, school psychologists and teachers with total of 18 participants. 4 trainings for Peacekeepers were held with total 74 students – 59 (80% girls) and 15 (20 %) boys Middle high school students – 29 girls and 9 boys High school students – 30 girls and 6 boys	Attendance sheets. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
Effective and well-informed engagement on the part of parents in establishing a safe school environment to prevent violence and bullying.	Meeting with the mentors and the consultants for working with the parents (AP) with schools' teams Presentation of the school's participation in the Programme	Sept – Oct 2020	Number of meetings conducted per school – 1.	5 meetings: 13.10. – Zavet, 05.10 – Kyustendil, 29.10 – Iskar (online), 23.10 – Sofia, 16.10 Teteven, at which the programme schedule was presented, the composition and activity and challenges before the work of the CCs were discussed and the entrance survey was prepared, the work with parents so far was discussed, as well as proposals for working with parents under the programme.	Attendance list/ screenshot/ mentors' technical report
Knowledge, skills and methodologies developed in support of teachers' efforts to establish a safe school environment and prevent violence.	Training for trainers	Dec 2020 - Jan 2021	Number of training events conducted – 1	1. Training for trainers - 3 consecutive trainings for trainers were conducted by the author of the UNICEF Croatia programme – Ms. Jasenka Pregrad, for the mentors and pedagogical advisors and school psychologists (which were included in the last topic). The trainings were focused on the practical implementation of the programme in Bulgaria and the duration of the trainings was 2 days for each of the topics: - Classroom workshops – values, rules and consequences - Restoration approach. Classroom workshops – six topics.	Attendance sheets. Program and presentations of the training Assessment of the impact of the Programme.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
				<p>- Peacekeepers – UNICEF Programme for the introduction, training and support of school groups of peer assistants.</p> <p>Participants – 18 (mentors and school psychologists -16 women and 2 men).</p>	
Knowledge, skills and methodologies developed in support of teachers' efforts to establish a safe school environment and prevent violence.	Training for systematic work with parents (focus on community building and conducting interactive parent-teacher conferences)	March – Sept 2021	Number of training events conducted – 1 per school	All 5 schools participated in the training 91 participants – 84 women and 7 men	Attendance sheets. Documentation relevant to the training event.
	Support for organising parents - teachers meetings on demand of the schools	Oct-Nov 2021	Number of support meetings held	3 meetings in schools of Kyustendil and Iskar	Minutes of meetings
	Conducting training events for pedagogical specialists under the UNICEF Programme for social and emotional learning in the classroom to prevent violence and bullying at school	Jan - May 2021	Number of training events conducted – 1 per school. Percentage of teachers feeling positive about their coping capacity	<p>1.Trainings for classroom workshops, values, rules and consequences</p> <p>Participants: 161 teachers – 151 (93.78 %) women and 10 men (6.21 %)</p> <p>Percentage of teachers feeling positive (64% give 5 of 5 points to the training and 25% give 4 of 5)</p> <p>In the training participated 33% primary school teachers, 41 % middle school and 44% high school teachers. (Percentage of teachers is over 100 % as</p>	Attendance lists. Documentation from the trainings, summary of the feedback from the participants

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
				<p>some of the teachers are working at the same time in middle and high school).</p> <p>2.Trainings on the 6 topics for the prevention of violence and bullying 92 teachers – 87 (94.57%) women and 5 men (5.43%) In the training participated 29% primary school teachers, 42% middle high school and 44 % high school teachers. (56 % give 5 of 5 points to the training and 37 % give 4 of 5).</p> <p>3.Trainings on restauration approach - 103 teachers – 96 (93.20 %) women and 7 men (6.80%) In the training participated 29% primary school teachers, 42% middle high school and 44 % high school teachers. (56 % give 5 of 5 points to the training and 37 % give 4 of 5)*</p> <p>*The feedback questionnaire for training 2 and 3 is one and the same as some of the trainings combined both topics.</p>	
The school community has been strengthened: parents and students participate in, and assume responsibility	Training in mediation and restorative approaches	July 2020	Number of training events conducted – 1 (the event may entail more than 1 training module).		Attendance sheets. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
for, maintaining a safe school environment. Knowledge, skills and methodologies developed in support of teachers' efforts to establish a safe school environment.					
Functioning mechanisms and organisation to provide professional support for teaching staff.	Experiential training for teachers aiming to reduce stress and prevent burnout	July 2021	Number of training events conducted – 1 Percentage of teachers feeling comfortable at their workplace.	4 trainings were held with teams of schools in Teteven, Kyustendil, Zavet and Iskar. Sofia school did not plan the training due to tough schedule. Participants 106 pedagogical specialists (whole school teams – teachers and directors) – 94 (89%) women and 12 (11 %) men. In the training participated 14 % primary school teachers, 50 % middle high school and 69 % high school teachers. (Teachers in middle and high school in some of schools are the same.) (60 % give 5 of 5 points to the training and 31 % give 4 of 5 in terms of relevance to the topic, improving feeling comfortable at workplace)	Documentation relevant to the training event. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
Functioning mechanisms and organisation to provide professional	Drafting of Guide on prevention of professional burnout for teachers.	Aug - Oct 2022	Guide - 1	A guide was developed to summarize steps and methods that can be used by teachers on personal prevention of burnout. The guide is published on the UNICEF website .	UNICEF website.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
support for teaching staff.	Experiential training for school managers and coordination council members aiming at strengthening motivation of school teams to coordinate a Program on prevention of violence in school.	April 2022	Number of training events conducted – 1 Percentage of participants feeling more comfortable at motivating their teams.	1 training for 14 directors and members of coordination councils of the 5 pilot schools – all women. (72,7 % give 5 of 5 points to the training and 18,2 % give 4 of 5 in terms of relevance to the topic, improving feeling to motivate better their teams).	Documentation relevant to the training event. Feedbacks of participants
A school policy on safe environment developed.	Selection of members of the Coordination Council (said members include parents and students)	Sept 2021 & Sept 2022	Decision on the membership of the Coordination Council reached.	5 coordination councils established in 5 schools including 3-5 parents in each school involved as members. In some of the schools in the first year there was a tendency teacher who are also parents of children in the same school to be involved in double role. In the second-year involvement of parents increased, most substantially in the school of Kyustendil where the number of parents increased to 10 (7 women and 3 men). Students are included in Students Councils, not in Coordination councils. Participation of students in Student councils by sex and level of education: 128 students in the 5 schools 92 girls and 36 boys. Primary school: 1 girl and 2 boys (only in Zavet) Middle school: 34 girls and 16 boys High school: 57 girls and 18 boys.	School records.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
Knowledge and skills relevant to preventing violence and bullying developed among students.	Topic-based classwork dedicated to social-emotional learning Class meetings on drafting class rules.	Feb 2021 – July 2022	Number of classes – 2 Integrating topics in the education plan (a minimum of 6 topics). Levels of violence and bullying.	In all 5 schools were elaborated plans for integrating the activities of the Program for both school years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. Class teachers in 5 schools integrated the topics in the Program for the class work. On average class teachers succeeded to include maximum 3-4 topics per class. 90 % of classes elaborated their class rules. Participants in all class meetings -2015 students – 1110 (55%) girls and 905 (45 %) boys Primary school – 223 girls and 197 boys Middle high school – 348 girls and 314 boys High school – 539 girls and 394 boys	Annual curriculum. Assessment of the impact of the Programme. Field diaries of class teachers. Class rules drafted.
All actors acquainted with, and accepting of, the values, rules and consequences of said rules at school.	Adoption of school rules by the teachers' council	Sept 2021 – May 2022	Number of teachers' councils held – 1 Adoption of a school culture characterised by common values.	5 schools adopted school rules.	Overview of summaries of class rules presented by the Coordination Council. Minutes of the teachers' council. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
School documents amended to reflect the common values cited. A school policy on safe environment developed.	Dissemination of the list of school values, rules and the consequences of the latter.	On an ongoing basis (as these are adopted).	Percentage of actors acquainted with, and accepting of, the values, rules and consequences of said rules at school.	All 5 schools developed school rules and values and incorporated and disseminated them through the official school policies on prevention of violence and bullying at school or as separate specific school document of rules, created based on the collection	School records. School website. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
				of class rules. The elaborated rules are published on the school websites.	
Functioning mechanisms and organisation to provide professional support for teaching staff.	Introduction and use of Intervention and supervision	Ongoing.	Number of supervision or Intervention meetings throughout the school year. Percentage of teachers feeling positive about their coping capacity.	Intervention and supervision was just tested 3-4 times in all 5 schools.	Attendance sheets. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
Mechanisms of instilling a sense of responsibility for establishing a safe school environment and a functioning school community in students developed and operational. The school community has been strengthened: students participate in, and assume responsibility for, maintaining a safe school environment.	Volunteers in action: peer support group	Sept 2021 - May 2022	Number of group interventions. Levels of violence and bullying.	School activations (Handout was developed and delivered to schools by UNICEF within the Program). In all 5 schools peers (Peacekeepers and other students) organised and participated in many dedicated to prevention of violence school events on class and on school level. Participants in school events by sex and level of education: 838 students - 58 % (484) girls и 42% (354) boys from 1 to 12 th grade. Primary school - 207 (54%) girls and 176 (46 %) boys Middle high school – 227 (64%) girls and 130 (36%) boys. High school – 53 (54%) girls and 45 (46%) boys.	Assessment of the impact of the Programme.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
	Meetings of student body representatives on matters relevant to school life and the prevention of violence	Ongoing.	At least 4 meetings. Percentage of students involved in school life and the prevention of violence.		Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
Effective and well-informed engagement on the part of parents in establishing a safe school environment to prevent violence and bullying. The school community has been strengthened: parents participate in, and assume responsibility for, maintaining a safe school environment. A school policy on safe environment developed.	Developing/improving the feedback system (opinions, proposals, complaints, alerts of cases of violence) for parents.	Sept 2020	Share of parents reporting improved communication and greater trust in school authorities.		School records. School website. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
	Work within the framework of parent action groups/clubs	Ongoing.	Number of working meetings of the action groups/clubs. Share of parents involved in school life.		Minutes of working meetings. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
	Assessment of needs of parents	Sept 2021	1 assessment per school	4 schools Sofia, Zavet and Kyustendil and Teteven reported the results of assessment. Participants: Kyustendil 157 parents of students in middle school 470 - students high school No data disaggregated by sex. Sofia 166 parents 86% women and 14% men – 90% of respondents are with higher education and 10% with secondary level of education Teteven	Results of assessments

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
				122 parents – 110 women and 12 men. Zavet 131 parents - 103 women and 28 men Parents are from 1 to 12 grade from classes where teachers decided to do the assessment, but not all of them.	
	Drafting of plans for work with parents	Sept - Oct 2021 & Sept - Oct 2022	Plan for work with parents – 1 per school year	All five schools elaborated plans for work with parents for 2021 and 2022.	Plans for work with parents
	Meetings between parents on matters relevant to school life	Ongoing.	Number of meetings conducted – at least 2. Share of parents involved in school life.	Parents in school boards – up to 2-3 parents per school first year and up to 5 parents per school in the second year. Exception is the school of Kyustendil where the school reports 10 parents (7 women and 3 men) - permanent members of the coordination council and 27 parents who helped and organised activities with the coordination council in 2022. The number substantially increased since 2020 where the school had only an idea to involve parents, but not even 1 parent permanent member in the coordination council. Meetings between parents on the school life: Iskar – 8 meetings – 120 parents Sofia – 4 meetings – 30 parents Teteven – 3 meetings - 80 parents Kustendil	Assessment of the impact of the Programme. Statistics, gathered by coordinator from the schools about the participation of parents in the Program activities. For the meetings on school life source are Summaries of the meetings, prepared by schools and sent to coordinator and report for activities of Association Parents

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
	Training for individual work with parents (focus on community building and conducting interactive parent-teacher conferences)	Jan - April 2022	Number of training events conducted – 1 per school	4 schools trained – Zavet, Kyustendil, Teteven and Iskar 95 teachers (84 women and 11 men)	Attendance lists, documentation related to trainings
	Ongoing consultation with teachers on individual work with parents on demand	Sept 2021 - Jan 2022	Number of consultations	3 consultations with the relevant schools and number of teachers consulted Iskar – 12 Teteven – 10 Sofia - 8	Minutes of meetings
	Topical parent-teacher meetings/seminars	Ongoing.	Number of topical meetings conducted – at least 2. Share of parents reporting improved communication and greater trust in school authorities.	All five schools held at least 2 topical meetings. Not enough data about participants – only 1 school reported topics and number of participants.	Minutes of meetings. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
Greater trust and more robust cooperation between families and school authorities on the	Establishing contact with the local community (meetings)	Ongoing.	Number of meetings.		

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
one hand and school authorities and other stakeholders on the other. Schools are supported in their response to cases of children who have suffered of violence or bullying, as well as in other individual cases.	Action plan, partnership agreements with local stakeholders (institutions, services, organisations, media)	Ongoing.	Partnership agreements. Number of joint actions (lectures, events, casework)		School records.
All actors acquainted with, and accepting of, the values, rules and consequences of said rules at school.	Using mediation techniques and restorative approaches	Ongoing (following training).	Levels of violence and bullying. Number of conflicts resolved by non-violent means.		Log describing incidents and cases of violence at the school. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
A school policy on safe environment developed.	Duty to monitor school grounds	Ongoing.	Maximum monitoring of school grounds. Share of students feeling safe at school.	All 5 schools monitored their plans for activities under the Program with their mentors.	Duty schedule. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.
Opportunity for any student to seek help in case of difficulties and conditions permitting them to do so. Empathy in cooperating with families in cases of violence.	Work with children and parents in need. Support meetings with mentors.	Ongoing.	Number of consultations disaggregated by case. Share of parents reporting improved communication and greater trust in school authorities. Share of students feeling safe at school.		School records. Assessment of the impact of the Programme.

Outcomes	Activities	Deadline	Indicator (per school)	Data at the end of the Programme Period. Data should be provided for the total number with disaggregation by sex and grades of students for students and school staff, and disaggregated by vulnerability status of students where available. **For data not available provide an explanation as to why data are not available for the indicator	Means of verification
Sustainable introduction, implementation and monitoring of the Programme.	Using research methods and data processing [to extract relevant data].	June - July 2021	Interim evaluation of the environment (levels of violence and bullying, indicators relevant to the environment and the community) conducted ¹⁹⁵	Interim assessment results	Questionnaires and documentation from focus group sessions filled out and processed; results processed. Recommendations on possible improvements and changes to activities.
	Using research methods and data processing [to extract relevant data].	April – May 2022	Exit research of the environment (levels of violence and bullying, indicators relevant to the environment and the community) conducted	Exit research results.	Questionnaires and documentation from focus group sessions filled out and processed; results processed.
2021/2022 school year: Year 2 of the full implementation of the Programme					
Implementation of all activities in compliance with the recommendations on possible improvements and changes to activities offered in the interim evaluation.					
Sustainable introduction, implementation and monitoring of the Programme.	Final assessment and summarising outcomes.	June - Aug 2022	Final evaluation of the environment (levels of violence and bullying, indicators relevant to the environment and the community) conducted ¹⁹⁶		Final report on assessing the impact of the Programme. Recommendations on the Programme's potential for implementation in the system of preschool and school education.

¹⁹⁵ /The interim evaluation conducted constitutes part of the comprehensive assessment of the impact of the Programme. Said assessment includes an initial, an interim and a final evaluation.

¹⁹⁶ The final evaluation conducted constitutes part of the comprehensive assessment of the impact of the Programme. Said assessment includes an initial, an interim and a final evaluation.

ANNEX R: BREAKDOWN OF SUMMARY OF PROGRAMME EXPENDITURES (2019-2022)

	Result/activity	Timeframe		Total (MoES+UNICEF)	MoES contribution	UNICEF contribution Cash
Result level		Year 1	Year 2			
Output 1:	Design of campaign and programme implementation materials and products, incl, for social and behavioural change			BGN 15,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 15,000.00
1.1.	Design and print of materials, development of video resources	x		BGN 7,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 7,000.00
1.2.	Support for development of short movie and screening in schools		x	BGN 8,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 8,000.00
Output 2:	Development of the school capacity to apply a whole-school approach			BGN 17,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 17,000.00
2.1.	Training on whole-school approach, leadership and crisis management	x		BGN 12,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 12,000.00
2.2.	Training on people management and delegation and burnout prevention		x	BGN 5,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 5,000.00
Output 3:	Capacity building of schools through mentors			BGN 191,740.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 191,740.00
3.1.	Mentors fee	x	x	BGN 125,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 125,000.00
3.2.	Capacity building of mentors	x	x	BGN 8,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 8,000.00
3.3.	Mentors network coordination and supervision	x	x	BGN 58,740.00		BGN 58,740.00
Output 4:	Work with pupils in the prevention of violence and bullying			BGN 63,750.00	BGN 60,000.00	BGN 3,750.00
4.1.	School-based and class-based students-led activities, incl. peer exchange	x	x	BGN 60,000.00	BGN 60,000.00	BGN 0.00
4.2.	Development of school activation Guide		x	BGN 3,750.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 3,750.00
Output 5:	Parental involvement in the process of creating a safe school environment to prevent violence and bullying			BGN 72,500.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 72,500.00
5.1.	Devlopement of methodology and capacity building of pedagogical staff	x	x	BGN 72,500.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 72,500.00
Output 6:	Development of M&E framework and studies			BGN 10,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 10,000.00
6.1.	Baseline study - methodology and data analysis	x		BGN 5,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 5,000.00
6.2.	Exit study - methodology and data analysis		x	BGN 5,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 5,000.00
Subtotal for the outputs				BGN 369,990.00	BGN 60,000.00	BGN 309,990.00
Output :	Effective and efficient programme management					
7.1	Project coordination and management	x	x		BGN 0.00	BGN 45,000.00
Subtotal for the programme costs				BGN 45,000.00	BGN 0.00	BGN 45,000.00

ANNEX S: MODEL FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A THEORY OF CHANGE

Outcome		
Output 1		
IF – (UNICEF Prioritized Action) A	AND (National Action) B	THEN (Higher Level Result) C
IF UNICEF	AND national stakeholders	THEN
Output 2		
IF – (UNICEF Prioritized Action) A	AND (National Action) B	THEN (Higher Level Result) C
IF UNICEF	AND national stakeholders	THEN
Output 3		
IF – (UNICEF Prioritized Action) A	AND (National Action) B	THEN (Higher Level Result) C
IF UNICEF	AND national stakeholders	THEN
Output 4		
IF – (UNICEF Prioritized Action) A	AND (National Action) B	THEN (Higher Level Result) C
IF UNICEF	AND national stakeholders	THEN