

Multi-Country Programme Evaluation
ECA Region – Republic of Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan,
Moldova and Ukraine

Country evaluation report
BULGARIA

January 2022

This report represents the evaluation of Country Programme of Co-operation between the Government of Bulgaria and UNICEF 2018-2022 within the framework of the Multi-Country Programme Evaluation, covering UNICEF Country Programmes in Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations of the evaluation of the UNICEF Bulgaria Country Programme (CP) 2018-2022. The evaluation is part of the Multi-country Programme Evaluation, commissioned by UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, covering UNICEF programmes in Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine, with a focus on relevance, coherence, and impact.

Overview of the Country Programme 2018 – 2022

The overall goal of the UNICEF CP 2018-2022 is to assist Bulgaria to “ensure that all of its children and adolescents, particularly the most disadvantaged, enjoy their rights and develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society that respects their voice”.¹

The CP has four mutually reinforcing core Outcomes: 1) Early Childhood Development (ECD) and child care, 2) Inclusive education and early learning, 3) Prevention of violence, protection of victims and the promotion of access to justice for all children and 4) Partnerships for child rights.

Outcome 1 focuses on: the development of child-focused policies and programmes for family support and social inclusion; the improvement of national policies for ECD; the improvement of coordination between the health, social and child protection sectors on ECD; and increased access to quality and holistic services. Outcome 2 aims to increase access to better quality and inclusive education services.

Outcome 3 aims to decrease social tolerance for violence against children; strengthen the commitment of Bulgaria's Government and Parliament to legislative reform on children in conflict with the law, child victims and witnesses of violence and crime; and strengthen the prevention systems for violence against children. Outcome 4 supports the generation and use of evidence to promote child rights; the strengthening of partnerships among key stakeholders; and raising awareness about the situation of children in Bulgaria, with a firm focus on reaching the most vulnerable groups and reducing the discrimination, stigmatization and negative social norms that often shape their lives.

The CP Updated Strategy Note 2020 places more emphasis on emphasizes the most disadvantaged and marginalized children and on closing existing gaps in child rights realization. The document emphasizes the importance of Communication for Behavioural and Social Change (C4BSC) to promote solidarity and to counter the impact of discriminatory public attitudes, public hate speech and anti-human rights movements, and mobilize public and private support.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNICEF Bulgaria Country Office (CO) has added five new COVID-19-related indicators to outputs in three areas: support for ECD; support to reduce school dropout; and support for the prevention of (and response to) violence against children and gender-based violence.²

Purpose of the evaluation and its audience

This strategic evaluation aims to support the development of the next UNICEF Country Programme Document (CPD) by understanding the strategies used by the CO to drive changes for children, particularly those who are the most vulnerable. It draws lessons from the activities undertaken in order to enhance results in the future. At the same time, the evaluation aims to strengthen UNICEF's accountability to its national stakeholders.

The primary users of this evaluation are intended to be the UNICEF Country and Regional Offices. Secondary users are the Government of Bulgaria, UN agencies and development partners with a presence in Bulgaria. The evaluation builds on the agreements made among these partners and aims to assist the establishment of strategies for their future collaboration, as the parties move together into the next planning and programme cycle.

Evaluation context

The evaluation was conducted in a context marked by a complex political context, as a result of political instability (with three parliamentary and one presidential elections held in 2021), and also movements

¹ UNICEF Bulgaria Country Office (CO), Bulgaria Update Strategy Note 2020, p. 2.

² UNICEF Bulgaria CO, Results Assessment Module (RAM) Report 2020.

opposing to human rights. In addition, the country had to contend with the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced access to education for many children, including the most marginalized, increased domestic violence and triggered an economic crisis.

This challenging context added to an already difficult situation for many children in Bulgaria. In 2019, 38.6 per cent of Bulgarian children were at risk of poverty before social transfers, and 27.5 per cent after transfers³ (close to half a million children). Every fifth Bulgarian child lives in severe material deprivation (close to 250,000 children).⁴

In the recent years, the anti-human and anti-child rights narrative of some political parties and extremist groups, gained strong momentum in Bulgaria, impeding key children-related strategic and legislative changes, including adoption of the UNICEF-supported National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030. Moreover, in the context of Covid19 crises, anti-Roma public and politic rhetoric increased, in some cases even officials being engaged in this kind of discriminatory acts.

While the regulatory framework for children has been through significant reforms in recent years, the necessary enforcement is lacking. In line with this, the low enforcement of children rights has been recognized by some stakeholders as a serious challenge to Bulgaria's overall regulatory stability. As confirmed by the Situation Analysis of Children's Rights in Bulgaria conducted in 2020, in the area of Justice for Children, the low level of enforcement is inconsistent, because the authorities adopt a discriminatory approach towards crimes with a gender element, including domestic violence or rape, leading to biased prosecutions. Moreover, in the case of the Social Services Act adoption many interviewed stakeholders expressed their concern regarding the extent to which its implementation will be effective (taking into consideration the political will, the administrative capacity of responsible bodies and the available specialized human resources).

There are also regional disparities – and particularly at municipal level – in the provision of services to address vulnerability, minimize dependency, and prevent the intergenerational cycle of poverty and social exclusion, both in terms of the types of services available and capacity for service provision. Bulgaria's social protection system in the country remains fragmented with considerable gaps in coverage, especially for people in the bottom 20 per cent in terms of their income. Many families are not accessing the services and benefits that are available or the support they are offered may not meet their needs.⁵

Evaluation methodology

The Terms of Reference proposed a theory-based approach, based on the CP Theory of Change (ToC) developed by the UNICEF Bulgaria CO. The evaluation questions are structured around the OECD DAC⁶ criteria of relevance, coherence and impact. The evaluation criterion of sustainability is also covered to a certain extent by the evaluation, under the wider impact criterion. An Evaluation Matrix was developed during the inception phase to map out evaluation questions and sub-questions, judgement criteria, data collection methods and data sources.

An in-depth impact assessment was undertaken for three selected areas: early childhood development, inclusive education for children with disabilities, and violence against children, to provide lessons on UNICEF practices and strategies in achieving impact for children at scale. Other important evaluation methods utilized for the evaluation include a stakeholder analysis and a social network analysis. The evaluation also uses systems-based evaluation principles.

Data collection methods were mainly qualitative, requiring a wide-ranging document review and consultations with 24 key informant interviewees at national, regional and local level. The CO supported the identification of respondents who were consulted using semi-structured interviews. They included interviewees from UNICEF, government entities, UN agencies and other development agencies, and civil

³ Eurostat, European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Eurostat, Gini coefficient of equivalized disposable income - EU-SILC survey, tessi190 2020.

⁶ The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

society organizations (CSOs). In addition, UNICEF CO staff completed a questionnaire for the social network analysis.

The evaluation methodology fully considered the ethical obligations of evaluators. Child rights, equity and gender were key issues throughout the evaluation process.

Key findings

Relevance

The analysis shows that UNICEF has been relevant in addressing the changing needs of the most vulnerable children in Bulgaria throughout the implementation of its CP, and that the equity focus of the programme is being well defined and applied. The evaluation finds that the Country Programme Document (CPD) is fully aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UNICEF Strategic Plan (2018–2021) and the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016–2021).

First, the CP targets vulnerable groups through the models or pilots envisaged, and their implementation has generated observable results for the most marginalized, hard-to-reach families and children. Second, the CO has prioritized the generation of evidence on child rights realization in Bulgaria, with technical support to ministries and advocacy activities based on the studies that have been developed.

Third, UNICEF adjusted its activities to ensure a timely respond to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The CO has conducted studies and analyses on the impact of the pandemic on children's lives and has supported the government, local public actors and other stakeholders in providing access for children and their families to relevant information and vital services, including health and education. UNICEF also adjusted its strategies to respond to the growth in anti-human rights movement and discriminatory public narratives. The aim has been to achieve further results for the most marginalized children, but the response has been cautious rather than proactive, in the sense that the CO used several entry-points (such as domestic violence policy and practice opportunities) as to be able to promote child rights realization, being careful regarding the generalized negative perspective) on social protection services, promoting rights of children from Roma communities or on early childhood development legal framework. The evaluation found that this approach provided UNICEF Bulgaria CO the opportunity to maintain and strengthen their partnership with the government and also, maintain its status at national level as a key actor promoting child-rights realization.

UNICEF addresses gender equality to some extent in all aspects of its programming and implementation. While some planned actions address specific gender-related needs (such as the prevention of child marriages in Roma communities, and gender-sensitive statistics on violence against children), there are CP areas where the gender equality principle is not explicit in the programming or design phases (such as ECD).

Coherence

The UNICEF Bulgaria CPD remains true to its mandate to ensure the rights of all children to survival, development, protection and participation and has been prepared and implemented in line with UNICEF's global and regional strategies.

The evaluation finds that UNICEF has strong credibility among all CP stakeholders and is well-acknowledged as the primary defender of child rights in Bulgaria. UNICEF – with its accumulated knowledge, experience and expertise at the global, regional and national level – has gained the trust of all social and economic actors as a facilitator for policy dialogue across the public, private and civil sectors. UNICEF is perceived as a reliable partner that supports the government and strengthens its role in the fields of health, education and protection.

The overall partnership network developed by UNICEF Bulgaria CO can be defined as a relatively strong community, with various connections with actors from different sectors, such as governmental bodies, public agencies and institutes, CSOs, local authorities, and UN agencies and other international organizations. According to the data collected through interviews and the findings of the social network

analysis, the most stable and strong type of partnership is the one established with governmental bodies, followed by the partnerships with CSOs. Building strong partnerships, it has translated into programmatic work that allow the CO to provide technical support to governmental bodies and other implementing partners, conduct evidence-based advocacy, and develop and demonstrative models to be brought to scale.

UNICEF has commissioned or supported the collection of evidence through numerous research and studies, including research to inform the design of activities under outcome areas and generate valuable data on vulnerable and marginalized children. The UNICEF CO has used the evidence gathered to review and revise its strategic partnerships with a view to: 1) engage more academia in partnerships; 2) enhance collaboration with the regional or local service units that are gaining importance and focus on special groups (such as children from Roma community); 3) strengthen partnerships with the media for fundraising campaigns and to advance the application of the C4BSC approach; and 4) develop strategic partnerships to engage the private sector in common projects and leverage resources for children.

Impact

UNICEF actions have generated changes in the legislative framework for ECD, child protection and justice for children. The adoption of the New Social Act, for example, represents significant progress at the national level on the promotion and realization of child rights in social protection and justice for children.

Other legislative improvements that have been achieved with UNICEF's contribution include: the development of the National programme for prevention and protection of domestic violence for 2020; the adoption of the National Strategy for Promoting Equality between Women and Men for the period 2021-2030; the adoption of the amendments of the Law on Asylum and Refugees and the amendments of the Regulations and the Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria.

While UNICEF has also helped to enhance cross-sectoral cooperation, the impact remains limited to the tested models, such as the Home-Visiting Service (HVS) or Child Advocacy Centers models. There are also concerns about the continuation of such cooperation after the end of the projects. However, the models developed and implemented by UNICEF have proven to be very effective in improving the quality of integrated support services provided for children and their families in all CP areas. They have also helped to change the attitudes and behaviors of parents (in terms of the child care provided) and teachers (contributing to a more inclusive school environment). Through the Family Consultative Centers and HVS models, UNICEF has provided effective alternative care and support solutions to support the deinstitutionalization process in Bulgaria. But, without the national expansion of such pilots, their limited impact in terms of the numbers of people who benefit cannot generate a significant at-scale change in the lives of children in Bulgaria.

Data and other information collected by the evaluation team demonstrate that the CP and its implementation took into account the specific needs of different groups of children. Although most of the interventions are designed to provide universal impact for all children, in practice they tend to target and offer support for the most marginalized children. They achieve results, mainly, for these groups.

The CP documents include strategies to address the most critical bottlenecks. Comprehensive situation and needs assessments, surveys and evaluation studies suggest that UNICEF Bulgaria take a proactive approach to the identification of risks at different stages of the interventions, and uses different monitoring mechanisms to revisit these risks and identify mitigation measures.

Nevertheless, the bottlenecks that were initially identified have persisted over time and some have become serious threats to the efforts of the CO to achieve results at scale. Therefore, the sustainability of many CP outcomes is highly dependent on political will, existing institutional arrangements, and capacities at national and local level. As noted, UNICEF Bulgaria collaborates successfully with different government bodies. However, the prospects for the sustainability of the results achieved to date are uncertain. given the current political instability, strong opposition to human rights, constant changes in the policy agenda on children rights, weak cross-sectoral cooperation, fragmented institutional practices and limited capacities (especially at local level).

The evaluation found that CPD logic of the intervention lacks in coherence. While, many outcomes and outputs indicators define impacts rather than results, the causal links between outcome level and output level is weak. Thus, in some cases, the expected outputs could not significantly contribute to the related outcome.

Conclusions

The evaluation finds that UNICEF is well-positioned to assume a pivotal role in persuading actors from different sectors to engage in concerted efforts to produce results for children. Building on this strength, the CO has widened the scope and content of its partnerships when faced with political resistance to child rights, to ensure the continued promotion of these rights without compromising its strategic partnerships with the Government of Bulgaria and line ministries at the central and local level.

In this context, the evaluation shows that the CO has successfully addressed important and pressing needs of children in the country, especially for groups of vulnerable children, and has supported policy and institutional development for their benefit. UNICEF's efforts to improve the situation for the most marginalized children is well documented, with most CPD outputs focusing on specific groups of disadvantaged children, such as children in residential care; children living in poverty; Roma children; children with disabilities and/or at risk of developmental difficulties; child victims of violence; children in conflict with the law; and refugee and migrant children.

An important contribution identified by the evaluation has been the CO's provision of effective technical support for the development of the legislative framework in all areas of the CP. The available evidence shows important progress in the realization of child rights in most areas where the CO works.

UNICEF has, for example, made significant contributions to the process of deinstitutionalization and solutions for alternative care, as well as support and counselling for parents from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Its contribution to improving the legislative framework for child rights realization in Bulgaria is well documented. Nevertheless, UNICEF should pursue its work in this area and provide direct support for implementation through its available means. The process is long-term and the changes that should be generated at-scale at the level of children's lives will only be observable in time (*see Recommendation 1*).

The evidence collected for the evaluation shows that the modeling components of the CP have been very effective. The projects implemented have strengthened cooperation between duty bearers, and have improved the quality of services for children in marginalized areas or children in precarious living situations, in the areas of social protection, health and education. They have also increased access to proper educational services for children with special educational needs and have improved the knowledge, attitudes and practices of parents, especially those from the most remote and marginalized settings. Additionally, these models have improved access to justice for children in contact with the law, as well as access to specialized case-tailored services for child victims of neglect, abuse and violence or for children at risk.

UNICEF has also contributed to the development of human resource capacity (such as social workers, teachers and prosecutors) at the level of local public authorities and other public bodies involved in pilot initiatives. As noted, the impact of UNICEF's work can be observed mainly among disadvantaged children, and analysis of the results at-scale of UNICEF CO Bulgaria in the period of 2018 – 2020/2021 indicates that the effects do go (to a limited extent) beyond the geographic areas where the pilot programmes are implemented.

Nevertheless, there has been less progress on the objective of scaling up these pilots, and their impact remains limited to the geographic areas where they are implemented. Most of these interventions remain rather small in scale and local in scope. The data collected indicate that the provision of integration could not be delivered to the same level of quality or intensity without the support of UNICEF because of an ongoing lack of institutional capacity, and long-term impact is limited by the unclear strategy to engage the government in the scaling-up of pilot projects (*see Recommendations 3, 5 and 7*).

A shift towards a more preventive approach and “positive messaging on child well-being and good practice of the realization of children’s rights” was taken. However, there is room of improvement as regards CO involvement in better addressing public prejudices and to tackle both the strong anti-child propaganda and violation of child-rights. While UNICEF Bulgaria CO managed to generate results for children’s lives (through the demonstrative models developed and regulatory and legislative changes supported), the extent to which the new adopted legislation will be enforced or the current legislative framework will be further improved depends also on the evolution of this movement. (*see Recommendations 2 and 3*).

The evaluation found that the overall programming approach demonstrates gender sensitivity, with two gender-related interventions: (1) prevention of child marriages in some of the most vulnerable Roma communities and activities to empower the girls at risk; (2) interventions on violence against children. In addition, gender responsiveness and gender mainstreaming are incorporated into the implementation of other CP components (such as the HVS, parenting support programmes and the capacity building of frontline workers on ECD). However, UNICEF’s gender priorities are insufficiently clear and most stakeholders do not distinguish the gender equality aspect of its work. One serious limitation is the lack of disaggregated data by gender in all cases; there are few gender-sensitive indicators within UNICEF’s monitoring system (*see Recommendation 6*).

In addition to the gaps identified in the evidence to support UNICEF’s contributions to changes at national level, the evaluation identified a series of inconsistencies in the CP logic of intervention, as well as gaps in the CP performance framework (*see Recommendations 8*).

Lessons learned

UNICEF has adjusted its strategies to continue its work, despite the negative public discourse and movements that affect the realization of human and child rights in Bulgaria. As a result, the CO learned that there should be a balance between the extent to which it shifts its strategy to address the needs of most vulnerable children and the expected results. UNICEF have used several entry-points to promote the realization of child rights, being cautious in the face of negative perspectives, disseminated by Bulgaria’s media, on social protection, on the rights of children from Roma communities, and the legal framework for ECD. As a lesson learned, UNICEF has understood that a more proactive approach is needed to advance its work. It has, for example, tried to find sources of funding through which to target the Roma population directly and has, therefore, managed to advance its work through the European Union Child Guarantee programme.

Perhaps the most important lesson learned by the CO is the need for more efforts on in the scale-up of models. Without the development of a scaling-up strategy, agreed with all duty bearers in the early stages of the project, the prospects of public institutions taking up the intervention remain unclear, mainly due to a lack of public financial resources. Experience has revealed the challenges to the pilot model used by UNICEF, and the CO needs to address sustainability from the outset.

As a result of the first three years of the CP implementation, the CO has realized that it should do more to build upon the status of Bulgaria as a EU Member State and align more closely with EU priorities, to position itself as a strategic partner for the government in using EU funds to improve the situation of children in Bulgaria. UNICEF has worked to support the implementation of the EU Child Guarantee in Bulgaria, and to leverage the available funds to improve access for the most disadvantaged and marginalized children to quality, integrated services.

Another lesson learned relates to the strategy adopted by the CO when developing partnership with the business sector. Experience has shown that UNICEF’s usual approach to the fundraising component of the CP does not achieve the same impact when engaging with the private sector. In addition, the CO aims to create partnerships beyond fundraising and to engage the business community in a more strategic way, with interventions developed together and resources leverages on a more sustainable basis. There is, therefore, a need for a more structured and focused strategy on the development of partnerships with the business sector.

UNICEF has reacted in a timely and effective way to the COVID-19 pandemic in Bulgaria, with support to the government to contain the impact on children’s lives. UNICEF provided support that complemented the work of the government, as seen in pre-school education, where UNICEF has

provided technical and IT support for children and teachers to help them continue the educational process. Nevertheless, as the CO observed, there is still a pressing need to improve the quality and coverage of data on the effects of the crisis on the most disadvantaged children. The inconsistency of the national monitoring system on child rights has influenced the capacity of public institutions and UNICEF to address the specific needs of the most marginalized children in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the improvement of the monitoring system remains a priority for the development of well-grounded and effective policies.

Recommendations

The evaluation team formulated eight recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of the evaluation report. These cover four main areas of action: policy advocacy (from a sustainability perspective); partnership building and cross-sectoral cooperation; programming; and monitoring.

The team has developed a set of indicative measures (institutional, programmatic and operational), that can be used by the CO to guide the effective implementation of these recommendations, which are presented in the main report.

Policy advocacy

Recommendation 1. Continue to conduct advocacy activities and provide technical assistance to improve the legal framework, support the development of law enforcement documents and continue to follow-up on their implementation.

Partnership building and inter-sectoral cooperation

Recommendation 2. Continue to strengthen partnerships with both the government and key stakeholders in the country and develop partnerships with other international organizations and other UN agencies in a more strategic way.

Recommendation 3. Continue to support and facilitate the development of cross-sectoral cooperation at all levels and all areas addressed by the CPD.

Programming

Recommendation 4. Prioritize specific objectives under each area of the CPD to focus more resources on one single aim and to develop more coherent strategies for actions (this recommendation should be considered together with recommendation 5).

Recommendation 5. For results-at-scale, plan comprehensive activities that combine advocacy activities, technical assistance for improved financing/budgeting and support for capacity building (training, leadership development, procedures, and development of IT capacity)

Recommendation 6. Integrate equity and gender equality into all CP outcomes (where relevant).

Recommendation 7. Embed sustainability into the design of pilot interventions, including follow-up plans, handover and exit strategies, and arrangements for scaling-up.

Monitoring

Recommendation 8. Define the indicator framework of the CPD and the monitoring process to better record the actions and the results of the UNICEF CO.

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Table of acronyms

C4BSC	Communication for behaviour and social change
CO	Country Office
CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
CPD	Country Programme Document
CRC	United Nation Child Rights Convention
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CwD	Children with Disabilities
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EDEI	Early Detection and Early Intervention
EU	European Union
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IE	Inclusive education
J4C	Justice for Children
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training (on Youth)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SitAn	Situation Analysis of Children and Women
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Framework
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAC	Violence Against Children
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the UNICEF Bulgaria Country Programme (CP) 2018-2022. The evaluation was commissioned by the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) of UNICEF and is part of the Multi-Country Programme Evaluation (MCPE), covering country programmes evaluations in Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine and including a synthesis report. The evaluation was carried out between February and September 2021 and covers the entire UNICEF portfolio during the first three and a half years of the five-year programme. In addition, the evaluation considers previous activities that have been continued and contributed to UNICEF impact, taking into account UNICEF's global strategic plan 2018-2022. This is a strategic evaluation that complements the many sectoral evaluations and specialized studies that have been carried out by UNICEF and external experts during this period. The evaluation report is also drafted in order to complement the 2020/2021 Situational Analysis (SitAn) and is intended to inform, together with SitAn, the decisions for the next Country Programme of UNICEF Bulgaria CO.

The CP 2018–2022 had an initial budget of USD 4.2 million from regular resources and USD 11.5 million in other resources and aimed to reach all children and young people across the whole of Bulgaria through national level policy change and service improvements at all levels (national, provincial and district levels)⁷. The Country Programme is structured following four core outcomes focusing on early childhood development (Outcome 1), inclusive education (Outcome 2), child protection and justice (Outcome 3), promotion of child rights (Outcome 4).

Due to the focus on policy, many of UNICEF Bulgaria CO's partners were government ministries, agencies and departments at national level, but a number of programmes also targeted institutional strengthening at regional or district level. The evaluation assesses the CP's collaboration not just with government structures, but also with UN agencies and other development partners, as well as the civil society organisations (CSO) participating to CP implementation as implementing partners or joining efforts with UNICEF for advocacy.

Chapter 1 (the introduction) of this report describes the aims, objectives and scope of the evaluation, the context within which the CO has been operating, and the overall shape and content of the CP itself. Chapter 2 explains the methodology of the evaluation including ethics issues. Its findings are presented in Chapter 3, organized according to the main evaluation criteria of this specific evaluation (relevance, coherence and impact) and the evaluation questions set by the CO. Based on the findings, Chapter 4 presents conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations.

1.1. Brief description of the context and current situation

Bulgaria is an upper-middle-income country and a member state of the European Union (EU) since 2007. Its population is 6,862,000⁸ of which children are around 17% (i.e., close to 2 million children aged 0-17). Bulgaria is the country in the EU with highest shares of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion. In 2019, 38.6% of Bulgarian children were at risk of poverty before social transfers, and 27.5% after transfers⁹ (i.e., close to half a million children). Every fifth Bulgarian child lives in severe material deprivation (i.e., close to 250,000 children)¹⁰. Poverty and deprivation are more prevalent among Roma families living in marginalized communities: about half of Roma children live in households in the lowest decile of the income distribution, compared to fewer than one in ten Bulgarian non-Roma children. Roma families also tend to have less access to basic social services, and face exclusion and discrimination in education, employment and housing.¹¹

⁷ At the level of year 2019, the total budget expenditure was 3,717,781 USD from all sources of funding (RR/OR/BMA and ORE). There are no available data for the year 2020.

⁸ Source: NSI, data retrieved on March 2021

⁹ Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC

¹⁰ Source: Eurostat (ilc_mddd11) < <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>>

¹¹ Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC

There is no complete data on the actual number of children with disabilities in the country, but the estimated number is about 32,000. With respect to the number of children in institutional care, it has dropped from 7,587 in 2010 to 495 in 2019 (93%)¹². At the end of 2019, the number of children in residential care was 3,095 and 45 % of them (or 1,415 children) were placed in family-type placement centers for children and young people with disabilities¹³. *The number of social services for children and families has almost tripled - from 241 in 2010 to 620 in 2018*¹⁴. *Despite this progress, the number of children who are separated from their families has not dropped* and, annually, some 2,000 children continue to be separated and placed in alternative care.

Although still small as a share of GDP, the public expenses for education and healthcare are gradually increasing in recent years. The period between 2015 and 2021 was marked by an unfavourable political context, defined by strong opposition made by religious fundamentalist, anti-rights movements and constant conflicts within the governing coalition (this period culminated with the 3 parliamentary elections from 2021). In the recent years, the anti-human and anti-child rights narrative of some political parties and extremist groups such as The Bulgarian National Movement, gained strong momentum in Bulgaria, impeding key children-related strategic and legislative changes, including adoption of the UNICEF-supported National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030. Moreover, in the context of Covid19 crises, anti-Roma public and politic rhetoric increased, in some cases even officials being engaged in this kind of discriminatory acts. This came in the context of a legislative framework that, in some cases, affects the realization of child and human rights. An example in this regard can be the criminal code in regards with domestic violence, which is very lax when it comes to the classification of acts of violence. Only acts committed in a context of “systemic violence” were punishable¹⁵. Moreover, the measures enforced in the Covid 19 context have been applied to different extents to the population of Bulgaria. According to the available information¹⁶, in some localities where quarantine was imposed (such as: Sofia, Sliven, Nova Zagora) these measures were enforced in a discriminatory manner, with a focus on Roma communities. Also, officials and representatives of the nationalistic political parties have promoted hate speech models.

The regulatory framework has been significantly reformed in recent years, but with rather low overall level of enforcement. In line with this, low enforcement of children rights has been recognised by some of the stakeholders as a serious challenge to the overall regulatory stability in the country. As confirmed by the Situation Analysis of Children’s Rights in Bulgaria 2021, in the area of Justice for Children, the low enforcement is inconsistent, because the authorities adopt a discriminatory approach towards crimes with a gender element, including domestic violence or rape, leading to biased prosecutions. Moreover, in the case of the Social Services Act adoption many interviewed stakeholders expressed their concern regarding the extent to which its implementation will be effective (taking into consideration the political will, the administrative capacity of responsible bodies and the available specialized human resources). In addition, the country’s weak administrative capacity could be considered as one of the main obstacles towards the achievement of child-related policies.

The social protection system in the country remains fragmented with considerable gaps in coverage, especially for the bottom 20% of the population (income-related). *Many families are not accessing available services and benefits or the support they are offered is not necessarily adequate to their needs*. About 75,000 households belonging to the poorest 20% of the population receive no social benefits at all. More than half of the children from the poorest 20% of the households receive no formal or informal

¹² Source: Country Report Bulgaria 2020. Accompanying the document COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK AND THE EUROGROUP. 2020 European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011.

¹³ Source: Agency for Social Assistance (ASA)

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Amnesty, Bulgaria 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/bulgaria/report-bulgaria/>

¹⁶ Idem

care (provided by community members in an unregulated setting such as kindergartens).¹⁷ As a result, the contribution of services and benefits to reduce poverty and social exclusion is lower compared to other EU countries.

There are regional disparities in the provision of services, both in terms of the types of available services and available capacity, especially at municipal level, to mitigate risks of vulnerability, minimize dependency, and avoid falling into the intergenerational cycle of poverty and social exclusion. The Social Services Act adopted in 2019, aimed at improving the quality, effectiveness, financing and monitoring of social services and delivery mechanisms, addresses some of these challenges. The effective implementation of the Act was postponed to July 2020 and implementation started in August 2020. Bulgaria is one of the EU Member states where the newly introduced EU Child Guarantee is tested¹⁸.

Existing social services have not been developed systematically, and some municipalities and settlements are unable to provide adequate support. There is a considerable number of medium and small size municipalities without any services for people with disabilities, and in many cases, support is limited to residential type care with no option for day care or consultation services. In other localities, available capacity is lower than demand, and long waiting periods may be common before users receive any kind of service. The quality and inclusiveness of the education system continue to be challenging, despite on-going reforms. This poses challenges for disadvantaged groups, such as Roma and children in rural areas or in vulnerable situations. Persistently high rates of early leavers (age 18-24), though displaying a decreasing tendency is higher (12.7%) than the EU average (10.6%) as of 2018¹⁹.

Regarding the educational system, Bulgaria has been confronted in the past 7 years with a negative trend in pre-school and school-aged children rate of enrolment. This is a major point of concern. According to the data presented in UNICEF Bulgaria CO SitAn 2021, “children and adolescents are kept out-of-school for a range of complex and overlapping forms of exclusion, disparities and inequalities”. One of the most important factors that cause low levels of school participation is poverty or material deprivation. This can be observed with a much more prevalence in Roma communities²⁰.

Moreover, low educational performance is a major weakness. The rate of under achievement in PISA 2018 is 41.5% in reading as opposed to EU average of 19.7%; 42.1% in maths as opposed to EU average of 22.2%; and 37.9% in science as opposed to EU average of 20.6%²¹.

Good quality early childhood education and care plays a key role in creating equal opportunities, improving cognitive skills and reducing early school leaving and the risk of under-achievement at later stage. In Bulgaria, the enrolment rate of children aged less than 3 years of age in formal care is much lower than the EU average (16.2% vs. EU average 33.2%), particularly in some regions and among vulnerable children. Even if the maternity leave in Bulgaria is one of the longest in EU, consisting of 410 days from which 45 being used before the birth of the child, the lack of facilities is limiting participation, especially in large cities²².

The reform of vocational education and training (VET) continues, but the employment rate of VET graduates is still below the EU average. Tertiary educational attainment is still below the Europe 2020 target, and the provision of higher education is only partially aligned with the needs of the labour market. The rate of participation in adult learning is one of the lowest in the EU²³.

¹⁷ Eurostat, Gini coefficient of equivalized disposable income - EU-SILC survey, tessi190. 2020

¹⁸ Source: Child guarantee for vulnerable children - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)

¹⁹ Education and Training Monitor 2019: Bulgaria, European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

²⁰ UNICEF, SitAn 2021, p. 85

²¹ ibid

²² Idem.

²³ OECD. Economic Surveys: Bulgaria, January 2021, p. 86

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in the country, the UNICEF CO in Bulgaria is monitoring closely the situation of children and their families and is working with the Bulgarian Government, UN Agencies, municipalities, service providers, civil society, corporate partners and other partners to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus, strengthen national response capacities and keep children and their families safe with a special focus on the most vulnerable. The CO is providing timely communication on the best means of preparedness and prevention, including special guidelines and advice for parents, schools, health and other professionals, children and young people, through community-based communication, mass media and social media.

In terms of changes developed at the level of programme structure, CO of Bulgaria has added in total 5 new Covid19 related indicators under the following outputs: Support for ECD, Support for reducing school dropout and Prevention and response to VAC & GBV²⁴.

1.2. Country Programme components and goals

The overall goal of the UNICEF country programme 2018-2022 is to assist Bulgaria to “ensure that **all of its children and adolescents, particularly the most disadvantaged, enjoy their rights and develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society that respects their voice**”.²⁵

The CP contributes to meeting 10 Sustainment Development Goals (SDGs) in Bulgaria, as presented in the report, under the cohesion chapter, which focuses on the extent to which the programme addresses the global goals and priorities.

Bulgaria Country Programme is organised around four outcomes:

Outcome 1: The CP aims to support the development of child-focused policies and programmes for family support and social inclusion, the improvement of the national policies in the ECD area as to better address the most disadvantaged children, the improvement of cross-coordination between health, social and child protection sectors in the ECD area and the increase in access to support quality and holistic services regarding nurturing care and child protection. The outcome formulated to reach this objective is: *“by 2022, boys and girls, especially those who are most disadvantaged, benefit from effective national and local policies that support a nurturing family and social environment to attain a high level of development, health, learning and wellbeing”*.

Outcome 2: The CP aims to contribute to the increase in access to better quality and inclusive education services. The outcome that measures the objectives of UNICEF Bulgaria in the area of inclusive education and early learning is formulated as it follows: *“by 2022, boys and girls, especially the most disadvantaged, are in school and benefit from improved inclusive, gender-responsive educational policies and practices”*.

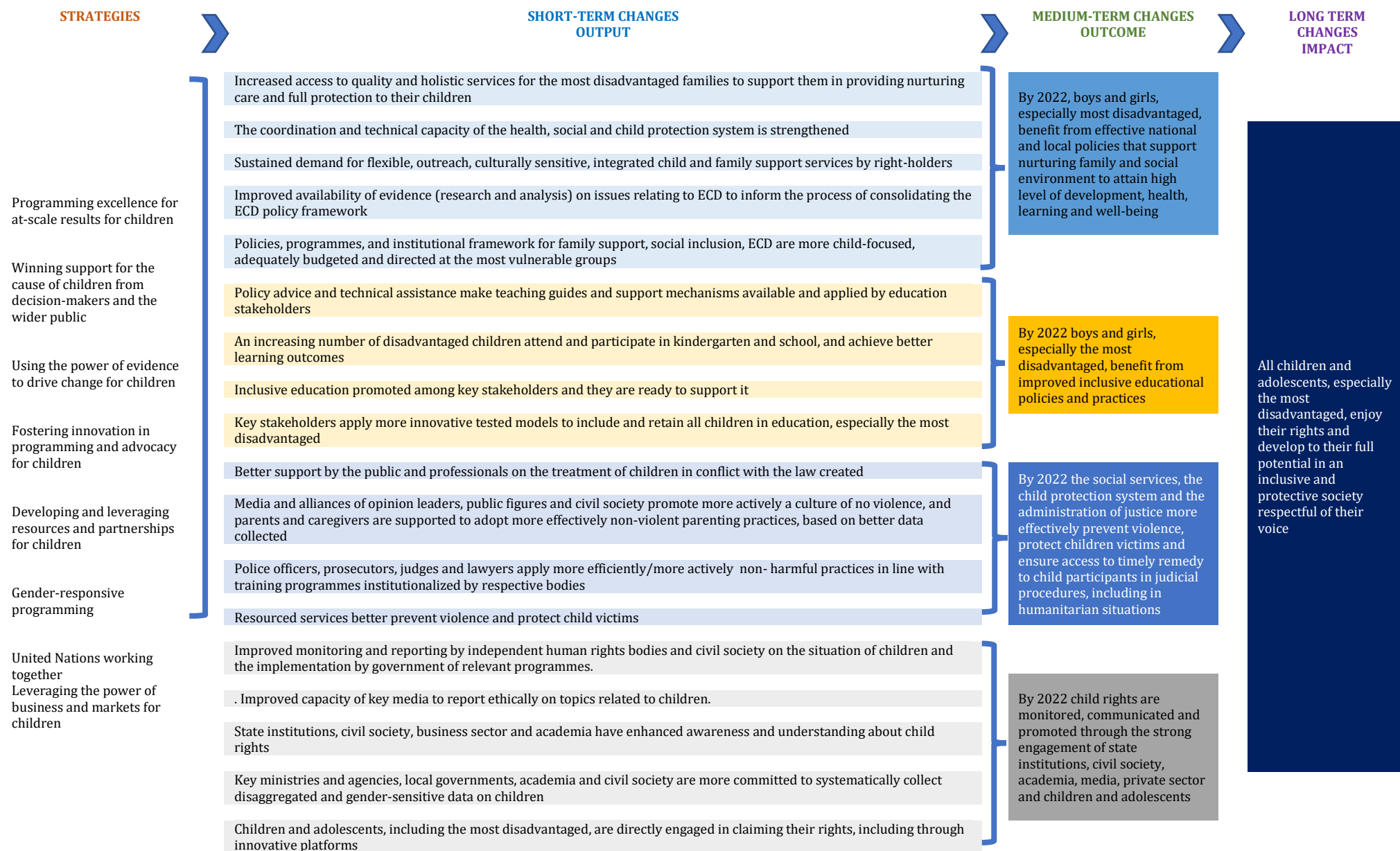
Outcome 3: The CP aims to contribute to the decrease in social tolerance on violence against children, to a strengthened commitment of Government and Parliament to the legislative reform on children in conflict with the law and child victims and witnesses of violence and crime, to a strengthened prevention system and to the decrease of the number of children being victims or being at risk. The outcome that measures the objective of UNICEF Bulgaria in the area of child protection and access to violence is formulated as it follows: *by 2022, the social services, the child protection system and the administration of justice prevent violence more effectively, protect child victims and ensure access to timely remedy for child participants in judicial procedures, including in humanitarian situations*.

12 CO Bulgaria, RAM Report 2020

²⁵ UNICEF CO, Bulgaria Update Strategy Note 2020, p. 2

Outcome 4: The CP aims to contribute to evidence on children rights realization generation and promoting, to partnerships among key stakeholders strengthening and to awareness raising regarding the situation of children in Bulgaria, focusing on the most vulnerable groups and to reducing discrimination, stigmatization and negative social norm towards children. The outcome that addresses this area is formulated as it follows: *by 2022 child rights are monitored, communicated and promoted through the strong engagement of state institutions, civil society, academia, media, private sector, children and adolescents and parents.*

Theory of change for Country Programme of UNICEF Bulgaria



ASSUMPTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Government allocates adequate resources - the Government and Parliament to continue legislative reforms in relation to children - Low resistance to change in social norms - Children's awareness on child rights is kept active
Risks and bottlenecks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - COVID-19 overall impact on social and economic development - Insufficient allocation of budgetary resources - Low level of information and awareness among stakeholders and target groups - The lack of resources (especially of well-motivated, trained and paid human resources) - The mechanisms of cross-sector coordination and cooperation are underdeveloped, especially at local level

Stakeholders play an important role in ensuring that the country programme planning and implementation will fit into the international and national planning/programming hierarchy while ensuring cohesion with public/private/civil stakeholders and the international and national community to foster effective alliances to drive change, as expected.

According to the stakeholder analysis conducted by the evaluation team, primary stakeholders include the following:

- **State Bodies** as UNICEF's main Government partners.
- **Civil Society Organizations** (CSOs), as implementing partners and in relation to piloting of CP activities
- **The academia** as collaborators in the CP implementation with a range of academic institutions.
- **Donors**, multilateral and bilateral donors, have a direct stake in the evaluation findings as these will account for their contribution to UNICEF's performance, without which the CP would not be possible
- **UN agencies** that are partners of the current the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and bi-lateral donors (USAID, DFID, SIDA, among others), and international finance institutions including the World Bank, and other IFIs are significant stakeholders in terms of policy framework, technical

Secondary Stakeholders refer to rights holders and duty bearers who benefit from the contributions of the CP, and organizations with which UNICEF does not have any formal partnership but that work with similar programmes and on child rights issues for which lessons and good practices drawn from the CPE may be relevant.

Finally, stakeholders inside UNICEF who have a particular interest in the MCPE include: Staff in UNICEF's Cos, the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO), and senior management in UNICEF who can draw upon the evaluation findings for regional and corporate learning and accountability purposes.

Below we present the results of stakeholder analysis in regards with the key identified stakeholders of the CP, their level of interest and power in regards with the aims of the programme.

Figure 1. Stakeholders position in Bulgaria



This analysis was further undertaken under the "coherence" criterion, from the perspective of the level of effectiveness of partnerships built by UNICEF Bulgaria CO with key stakeholders (see section 3.2.2).

1.3. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The objective of the Multi-Country programme Evaluation (MCPE) is to conduct a formative multi-country evaluation serving both accountability and learning purposes. This **MCPE aims to look back and assess the relevance, coherence and impact achieved throughout implementation of the country programmes (CPs)** in the four countries (Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine) to

identify good practices, and draw lessons and forward-looking recommendations that can inform the 2023-27 CP planning process, which already commenced or will commence soon in all four countries.

In line with the ToR, the objectives of the MCPE are to:

- Strengthen accountability of UNICEF to national stakeholders by evaluating UNICEF's contribution to the results for children at scale especially for the most vulnerable in Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine.
- Support the development of the next UNICEF Country Programme Document (CPD) by understanding and evaluating the implementation of the change strategies, through which the Country Programme is delivered to better understand the added value of UNICEF in each country context;
- Draw lessons from the previous CPD implementation in order to make the best use of UNICEF's change strategies in each country covered by the evaluation and in the region as a whole, while considering current circumstances.

In order to be able to produce the information and data to allow the assessment of the above stated factors, the evaluation, assesses:

- the linkages between international, regional, national and institutional strategies to bring about overall improvement in the status of children with a view to clarifying the roles and responsibilities of national stakeholders and how UNICEF interventions can add value and contribute to policy development for systemic improvements;
- the extent to which interventions focus and deliver results for most vulnerable categories of children, in each of the 4 countries;
- the performance monitoring systems in place at national and UNICEF level, the quality of indicators and their capacity to estimate their capacity to measure and communicate results, including the measurement of horizontal issues measured (gender, participation, equity, most vulnerable).

The geographical coverage of the MCPE is Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine. The geographical scope of the evaluation covers the whole of the countries, even in cases where the initiatives have started as pilots, because they are implemented with the intention to scale-nationally.

The evaluation is built on evidence collected from interventions implemented in the countries especially in the last 3 years and a half (under the current CPDs), but also, to a more limited extent, in the years before. Specific activities carried out to set aside the negative consequences of the current pandemic crisis were taken into account to the extent they are part of the results chains in areas selected.

Therefore, the scope of this Country Programme Evaluation is the following:²⁶

- Temporal scope: 2018-June 2021, meaning it covers the current Country Programme (2018-2022) to date. However, when relevant to the observed impact, the temporal scope of the evaluation is extended to the previous years and the previous CPD.
- Geographical scope: All areas in Bulgaria where UNICEF works
- Portfolio scope: All of the portfolio components, cross-cutting issues such as gender, and inter-sectoral support involving gender and communication.
- Organizational scope: The CO and wider provision of technical support and oversight from UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, when relevant, UNICEF's headquarters.
- Excluded: The evaluation will not provide a detailed assessment of all CP components. However, in order to provide lessons learned and UNICEF practices and strategies in achieving impact for children at scale, a more in-depth impact assessment has been undertaken for three selected areas: early childhood education, inclusive education, protection from violence against children.

²⁶ According to the ToR.

The primary users of this Country Programme Evaluation are intended to be the UNICEF CO and ECARO. Secondary users of the evaluation are the Government of Bulgaria, UN agencies and development partners present in Bulgaria. The evaluation report aims to build on the agreements made between them and to assist prioritization and establishing strategies for the future, as the parties move together into the next planning and programme cycle.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Evaluation framework: criteria and questions

The Evaluation Matrix was developed (Annex 1) during the Inception Phase, as the core analytical framework against which data was gathered and analysed. All evaluation questions were assigned to a specific evaluation criterion: **relevance, coherence and impact**. For each evaluation question, related indicators/descriptors, sources of information and data collection methods were specified in the matrix. The indicators and methods were based on the preliminary documentary review done at the Inception Phase of the evaluation.

The evaluation criteria and questions in the evaluation matrix are provided in the ToR and indicated to be final and not subject to change. Although the ToR provided the opportunity to each CO to add up to two questions, no additional evaluation questions were proposed by the COs during the Inception Phase.

The evaluation matrix is built on an overall approach linking evaluation criteria and level of assessment. On one side, analyses and findings on “Relevance” and “Coherence” (assessed across the entire CP) are to be taken into account under “Impact” due to the fact that, on one side, in order to determine a positive change, UNICEF Bulgaria CO’s interventions have to be relevant for those addressed by the CP. On the other side, CO’s impact - its contribution to an observed change - might be determined by other interventions, too, implemented by, e.g. other donors, and CO’s added value in this context is particularly important. Evaluation of impact is to be undertaken for the entire CP. In order to provide lessons on UNICEF Bulgaria CO practices and strategies in achieving results for children at scale, a more in-depth impact assessment, by using the process tracing method, has been undertaken for three selected areas, which were the subject of three case studies: early childhood education, inclusive education for children with disabilities, and protection from violence against children. The assessments at result area level contributed to findings and conclusions, as examples (case studies) of results-at-scale achieved (or not/less than expected). The result areas have been selected based on an initial analysis of the evaluation team and in consultation with the CO. The evaluation questions related to how UNICEF Bulgaria CO contributed to change for children at scale can be best answered using specific theory-based impact evaluation methods, as described below. Nevertheless, these methods are best applied to selected case, rather than to very complex and heterogenous programmes. In this regard, the 3 areas, where the in-depth analysis has been focused, have been selected to represent different types of results achieved by the CO, with different levels of change for children at scale generated by UNICEF Bulgaria CO to be analysed.

The evaluation utilized a **formative approach** to the evaluation to look back and assess the relevance, coherence and impact achieved throughout implementation of the Country Programme in the country, to identify good practices, and draw lessons and forward-looking recommendations that can inform the 2023-2027 CP planning process, which will commence during the last quarter of 2021. As the current Country Programme Evaluation is meant to inform the next UNICEF Bulgaria programmatic cycle, the evaluation team adopted a **utilization-focused approach**²⁷.

The CPE involved three phases: (1) inception; (2) data collection; and (3) analysis and reporting. The methodology used a mixed methods approach involving qualitative data collection methods as well as quantitative methods. To improve the reliability and to validate the findings, information from different lines of inquiry was triangulated.

²⁷ Michael Quinn Patton, *Utilization-focused evaluation, 4th edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008.

2.2. Data collection and analysis methods

The team engaged with UNICEF ECARO, UNICEF Bulgaria CO, government authorities, public institutions, civil society partners and other development agencies to ensure that the evaluation responds to the needs and priorities of the users.

The evaluation used the following methods of data collection: (a) document review (Annex 7); (b) key stakeholder interviews, and a survey for the social network analysis for the assessment of the coherence of the CP and UNICEF Bulgaria CO partnerships.

Semi-structured interviews were the main tool used with national partners, the interview guidelines reflecting the upstream nature of the programme and the status of the respondents. Primary data was collected from a variety of stakeholders, including government officials, UNICEF Bulgaria CO staff, civil society organizations and development partners (see the list of interviewed stakeholders in Annex 6). In total, 24 individual interviews were conducted largely remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions. 5 interviews took place in a face-to-face format. The interviews have been conducted by the international and national consultants, working in pairs or individually. The interviews were guided by checklists to support consistency of data collection across the team and varied stakeholders. But for each interview the questions have been tailored as appropriate to valorise best the position and knowledge of the interviewee. In line with the ethical consideration presented below the evaluation team ensures the confidentiality of the interviewees, without connecting the evidence and opinions expressed during meetings with the identity of the stakeholder

The selection of the key informants followed a dedicated sampling strategy, agreed with the ECARO and CO at the end of the inception stage. The aim of the sampling strategy was to cover the country programme in a general manner and the three selected impact areas and to include different types of key informants (UNICEF Bulgaria CO staff, representatives of the government, representatives of UNICEF agencies and other development agencies, representatives of academia, services providers and implementing partners) in the list of interviewees for each area. Following from the programme design and focus of its activities, it was decided to spend the majority of the time with stakeholders at national level, because so many of the planned results are at policy level.

As per ToRs of this evaluation, children and adolescents have not been interviewed or consulted directly in any way. The evaluation team decided instead to rely on sectoral evaluations and studies that have presented the perspectives of these groups more thoroughly than would have been possible during this evaluation. The evaluation team instead met representatives of intermediary groups that work closely with vulnerable children.

Three participatory online workshops have been organised with CO staff. The workshops aimed at (1) familiarizing the evaluation team with the CP and identifying and selecting the impact areas to be assessed more in-depth, (2) presenting the inception report, discussing key issues to be addressed by the evaluation and planning data collection in cooperation with the CO and (3) presenting and validating findings and discussing preliminary recommendations. The evaluation report will be also presented and discussed in the Evaluation Reference Group, as part of the dissemination phase of the evaluation findings and conclusions.

The analysis methods are presented in the evaluation matrix. A **theory-based approach** was applied for the Country Programme Evaluation (CPE), based on the explicit sectoral theories of change (ToCs) developed by the UNICEF Bulgaria CO (and reconstructed by the evaluation team) for the CP and selected impact areas. A brief presentation of the methodology for Process Tracing and Contribution Analysis methodologies used for the selected areas are presented in Annex 3. Another essential analysis method was the Realist Evaluation. According to Westhorp (2014) realist approaches “assume that nothing works everywhere or for everyone, and that context really does make a difference to programme outcomes”. Therefore, the Realist Evaluation focuses on how, why and in what contexts an intervention leads to particular outcome.

Finally, other important evaluation methods utilized for the evaluation are **stakeholders analysis** and **social network analysis** for evaluation of UNICEF Bulgaria CO coherence, added value and cooperation with stakeholders in order to enhance the results pursued; **systems-based evaluation principles**: holism, non-summativity, participation of stakeholders, equifinality and multifinality approaches were used through the evaluation, as UNICEF's interventions are not evaluated in a vacuum, but in a complex context that have been taken into account.

The recommendations were developed by the evaluation team, based on in-country consultations on the early draft findings, and the later analysis of the data, findings and conclusions. The specific wording of the recommendations was developed in consultation with the Country Office which provided feedback, comments and questions through the report drafting process.

2.3. Ethical issues and considerations of child rights, equity and gender

The evaluation team adhered to United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) **ethical guidelines** and **code of conduct**. This means that the evaluation team upheld the appropriate obligations of evaluators, including maintaining the independence, impartiality, credibility and accountability of the individual team members and the evaluation process as a whole. The evaluation team was not subject to any conflicts of interest and confirmed that they were able to carry out the evaluation without any undue interference. Along the data collection, analysis and reporting, in order to ensure the integrity of evaluation, special attention was paid by evaluators towards respecting the ethical standards of UNICEF, as presented in the "UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis" (April 2015), particularly as concerns: the harms and benefits, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, payment and compensation, conflict of interests.

The main ethical issue that emerged during planning the evaluation was the need for anonymity and confidentiality for government officials interviewed. The evaluation team ensured the consent of key informants to be interviewed and give the experts conducting interviews gave formal assurance that comments made during interviews would be anonymous. Hence none of the statements mentioned in this report are attributable to individuals or particular government departments. On the other hand, as no children have been directly involved in the evaluation, no formal letter of consent on the collected data was needed.

2.4. Limitations

The main challenge facing the evaluation arose from the spread and complexity of the CO's objectives and its strategies in Bulgaria during a period of political instability. Overall, the changes that UNICEF seeks to make are mostly long-term and countrywide. Moreover, the evaluated period overlapped with the COVID-19 pandemic (since March 2020). In this context the sustainability of UNICEF Bulgaria CO results, as assessed in this report, is endangered and the evaluation team is not able to confidently or clearly predict to what extent the strategies of upstream policy work will ultimately benefit children in the country, or the benefits already achieved will last given the social and economic crisis generated by the pandemic.

The evaluation ToR emphasized its strategic nature and the evaluation team focused on the main overall and long-term questions as it saw them; it was not able to analyse each of the different programme components in detail, nor did it set out to speak with the programme's planned or actual end-beneficiaries.

Assessing UNICEF Bulgaria CO's contribution to results at outcome or output level was another difficult area. The evaluation has devoted considerable attention to the question of causality, in other words, who or what is responsible for changes at different levels of policymaking or implementation of new policy. In many cases not only UNICEF but also several other organisations or development agencies have played a significant role in supporting the Government.

The evaluation team faced a few limitations at the design and evaluation phase of the Country Programme.

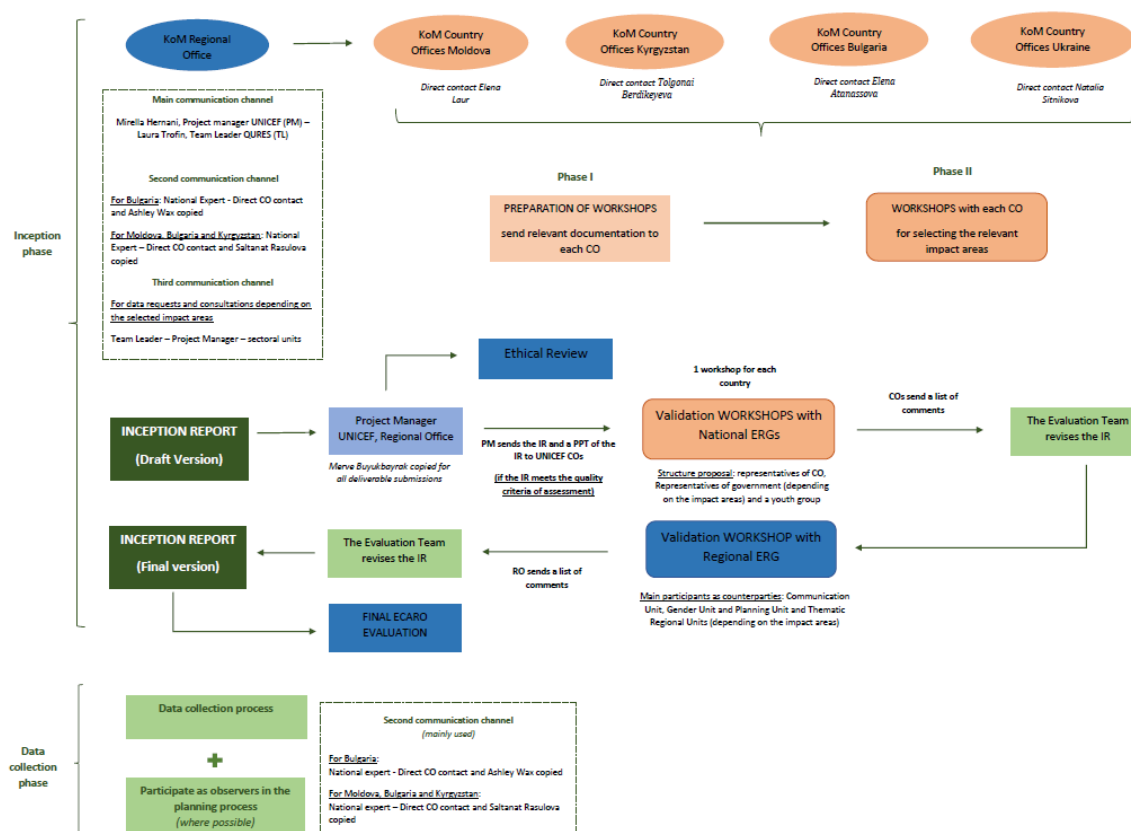
- Non-systematic documentation of the theory of change for some programme areas which was addressed by development, testing and validation of an indicative ToC to serve as framework for evaluation. However, in the case of Process Tracing, not all desirable evidence was available.
- As the data collection phase was delivered in July and August 2021, during the holidays season, not all key informants were available or reachable at the time of evaluation, however a sufficiently high number of interviews have been conducted.
- Some indicators (particularly for outcome) are not monitored (i.e., values are not inserted in RAM 2020). The targets for the indicators are set for 2022 and their values are not collected and reported annually.

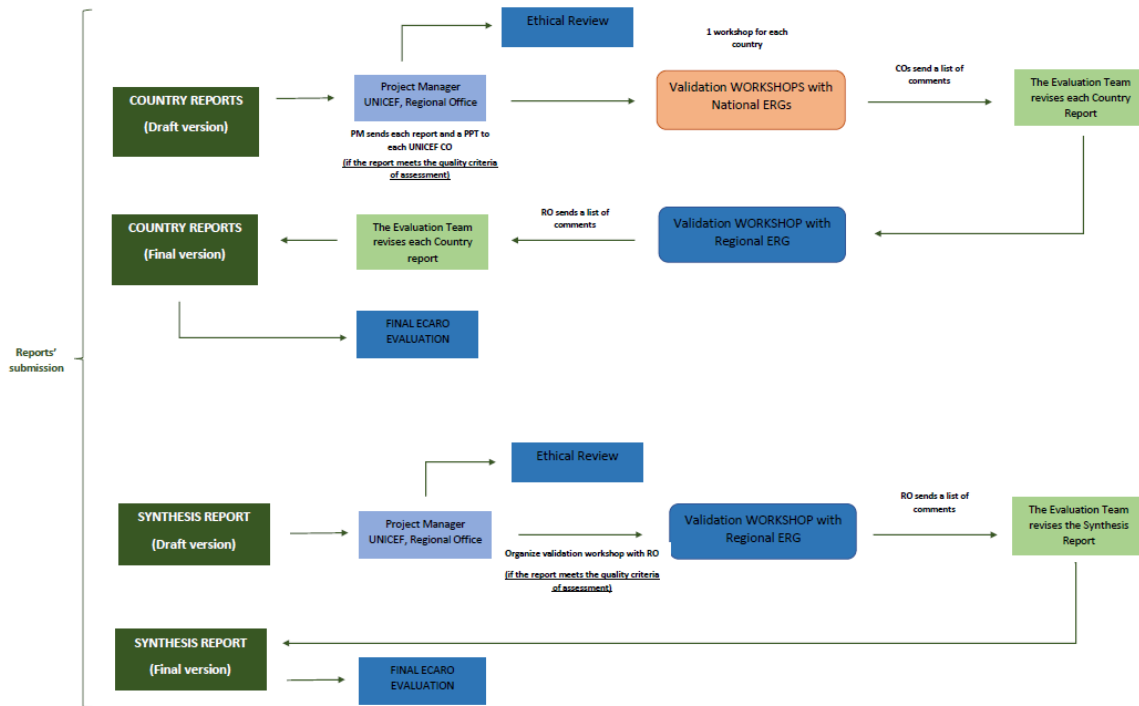
To maximize the reliability and validity of evidence used, the team triangulated the available information as much as possible, and tested consistency of the evidence within different claims using also the case-specific expertise of the evaluators and their good knowledge of the context. Also, a clear distinction between “*absence of evidence*” (which has little inferential power), and “*evidence of absence*” has been made, as the latter can strongly challenge the causal mechanism investigated.

2.5. Management of the evaluation

Alongside UNICEF evaluation managers at ECARO, the evaluation team maintained close contact with the CO representatives and staff and UNICEF Regional Advisors. The interviews with ECARO advisors greatly helped the evaluation team develop its analysis.

Figure 2. The procedural flow of the evaluation





3. MAIN EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1. RELEVANCE

3.1.1. To what extent has UNICEF responded to the (changing) needs of the most vulnerable throughout the programme implementation

UNICEF Bulgaria CO responded very well to the (changing) needs of the most vulnerable children throughout the programme implementation. First of all, the CP addresses the most vulnerable groups and the tested models that have proven this focus by generating observable results mainly at the level of most marginalized, hard-to-reach families and children. Second off all, the CO have put great efforts in evidence generating in regards with child rights realization in Bulgaria. In this context, the technical support provided to the ministries and the conducted advocacy activities were based on the developed studies and analysis. Finally, the CO have adjusted its work by focusing on the stringent needs of children in the context of the negative effects generated by the Covid 19 crises on children's lives.

The review of existing documents, reports, evaluations and studies provided by UNICEF Bulgaria CO for the purpose of this evaluation suggests a strong evidence-based approach to UNICEF-supported interventions. Findings from the Mid-term review of 2015 and from the 2017 Situation Analysis are well incorporated in UNICEF Bulgaria CO programming to prioritize the CP components and to align them with the national needs and priorities. Several studies have been used to provide updated information on changing national needs and to inform appropriate adjustments in the strategies used by UNICEF Bulgaria CO. Only in 2020, three situation analyses studies have been produced and used for mid-term strategy adjustment (i.e., update of Alfa SitAn, Public Finance Management for Children SitAn and Business for Result SitAn). This resulted in adaptation of the CP to strengthen the focus on closing disparities for the most disadvantaged and hardest-to-reach children (i.e., children in residential care; children living in poverty; Roma children; children with disabilities and/or at risk of developmental difficulties; child victims of violence; children in conflict with the law, and refugee and migrant children). It also has led to additional programing shifts aiming at pro-active participation in Covid-19 pandemic recovery and resilience building and strengthening partnership engagement with business.

There is a strong consensus among the stakeholders interviewed that child poverty was one of the biggest challenges for Bulgaria upon entry into the pandemic-induced crisis. According to the NSI data, more than one third of children aged 0-17 years in Bulgaria were at-risk-of-poverty in 2020²⁸. At the same time, despite the significant progress in limiting child mortality, there are still places and vulnerable Roma communities where children die in unacceptably high numbers.²⁹

The strong vulnerability focus of UNICEF Bulgaria CO activities, targeting the most marginalized children from deprived and hard to reach communities; Roma and Turkish children; children at risk of abandonment, those not attending school, children with disabilities, those living in remote rural areas or in regions with limited employment, children of migrant and refugee families (and particularly those who are unaccompanied and separated from their families); children in residential care; children with disabilities; out-of-school children; children victims of violence, has been well recognized by the stakeholders. These groups of children face significant inequalities that need to be addressed.

UNICEF responds directly to the needs of the most vulnerable groups by supporting their inclusion in mainstream education; supporting early childhood development; intervening to improve children's health; supporting provision of complex/advanced services to child victims of violence. In addition, UNICEF involvement in parental capacity development and empowerment of the parents from the most disadvantaged backgrounds is considered a pivotal strategy for responding to the needs of the most

²⁸ National Statistical Institute, EU SILC database

²⁹ UNICEF, SitAn 2021, p. 66

vulnerable children. Still, most of the modelling interventions addressing the needs of vulnerable children remain rather small in scale and local in scope, while there is a clear need for a comprehensive system for early childhood intervention at the national level. Further details on the models designed and implemented by UNICEF are presented in section 3.3.2, under Impact chapter.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in the country, UNICEF in Bulgaria is monitoring closely the situation of children and their families and is working with the Bulgarian Government, UN Agencies, municipalities, service providers, civil society, corporate partners and other partners to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus, strengthen national response capacities and keep children and their families safe with a special focus on the most vulnerable. UNICEF is providing timely communication on the best means of preparedness and prevention, including special guidelines and advice for parents, schools, health and other professionals, children and young people, through community-based communication, mass media and social media. Moreover, in 2020, 5 output indicators Covid 19 related were included in the CPD in order to capture the support activities conducted by UNICEF in this context.

3.1.2. To what extent has UNICEF consistently integrated the equity and gender equality in all aspects of programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy?

UNICEF addresses to a limited extent gender equality in all aspects of programming and implementation. While some planned actions address specific gender-related needs (such as: prevention of child marriages in Roma communities, gender sensitive violence against children statistics), there are also CP areas where the gender equality has not been addressed in an explicit manner, nor in the programming phase or in the implementation phase (such as ECD).

The Gender Programmatic Review (2020) shows that while gender equality has been developed as a cross-cutting issue in the UNICEF Bulgaria's CPD, an in-depth gender analysis is either not undertaken or not properly translated in the programming and implementation aspects³⁰. Moreover, the results from the interviews held suggest that gender priorities are not clearly articulated and majority of stakeholders do not clearly distinguish the gender equality aspect of UNICEF's work. The poor quality of data, including lack of disaggregated data by gender, has been identified as a serious limitation for the robust integration of gender equality in UNICEF's M&E system.

The overall **programming** approach demonstrates gender sensitivity, with several outcomes directly addressing achievement of results for both girls and boys. However, there are only few gender sensitive indicators within the UNICEF's monitoring system.

Two specific gender-related interventions have been programmed in the areas of inclusive education and violence against children, and linked to gender-specific outcomes:

- (a) "Roma adolescent girls" has been identified as a particularly vulnerable group, and a modelling intervention to test an integrated approach for addressing gender roles and social norms in several municipalities has been envisioned in the CPD to contribute to Output 2.3 *„Support for reducing school dropout“*. The intervention puts special focus on prevention of child marriages in some of the most vulnerable Roma communities, and seeks to identify the best approaches to empower girls and to influence families. A special indicator has been introduced to reflect the cross-sectorial approaches used on dropout prevention for Roma adolescent girls and children at risk of dropping out. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic this intervention was put on hold and no progress on the gender-specific indicator has been reported.
- (b) VAC-related planned interventions put special focus on collaboration with national stakeholders on improving data collection, including gender-disaggregated data, as well as provision of guidelines on the production/collection of gender-sensitive VAC statistics. It has been also envisaged that UNICEF Bulgaria CO will provide policy advice and technical assistance for legislative amendments and *“strengthening the systems for protection in a more child-sensitive*

³⁰ UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (2020). UNICEF Bulgaria 2022 Gender Programmatic Review. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

*and gender-sensitive manner*³¹. This is expected to contribute to output 3.1. *“Strengthened capacities, multi-sectoral programs, services and evidence-base for prevention and response to Violence against Children (VaC) & Gender Based Violence (GBV) and for creating a safe and protective environment for children”*.

Reported activities of UNICEF Bulgaria CO also demonstrate varying level of gender responsiveness and gender mainstreaming efforts are still not consistently and efficiently integrated into the overall **implementation** approach.

(a) Early childhood development

- None of the ECD and child care outputs are measured with gender-specific indicators.
- The interventions related to Home Visiting Service (HVS), parenting support programs and capacity building of front-line workers on ECD could be considered as having a purview regarding gender responsive approaches. The modelling interventions to strengthen parenting support through provision of HVS in the regions of Shumen and Sliven contribute to better access of young pregnant women and mothers, including pregnant adolescent girls, to integrated services, combining access to home visiting, healthcare, social services. There is a clear equity principle applied in delivery of these services, with considerable outreach to Roma and Turkish women and girls. However, as stated in the Gender Programmatic Review (2020), and confirmed by our informants during the interviews held for this evaluation, the services are focused extensively on female beneficiaries (pregnant women, young mothers, mothers-in-law) and are delivered predominantly by female service providers (nurses, health mediators). There is little evidence regarding engagement of fathers or male caregivers in the community-based parenting support programs. In addition, there is no gender disaggregated information on the number of children benefiting from these services. This situation is caused mainly by contextual factors, such as: patriarchal norms particularly strong in Roma communities and rural areas or gender specificity of some professions where the majority of employees are females.

(b) Inclusive education

- UNICEF interventions in this area target improvement of inclusive, gender-responsive educational policies and practices. Although CPD Outcome 2 states that “boys and girls especially the most disadvantaged are in school and benefit from improved inclusive, gender responsive educational policies and practices”, available data and evidence do not articulate any gender-specific progress of the activities and approaches focusing on inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream education. There are no indications that gender-differentiated needs of the children with disabilities are considered and addressed by the interventions and technical support delivered in this area.
- One of the interventions in the inclusive education area has a special gender equality element targeting ending of traditional child marriage and Roma adolescent girls’ empowerment to advance in secondary education. However, this intervention is outside the scope of the current evaluation and is not analysed in details.

(c) Protection from violence and access to justice

- There is clear evidence for gender-specific problems in the VAC-area. Both Ministry of Interior data, and the interviews held by the evaluation team show that there is a tendency towards increasing sexual violence and bodily harm of boys. Moreover, boys appear to be more often in conflict in law than girls, with boys being the predominant part of the children placed in correctional facilities.
- According to the findings of the Gender Programmatic Review (2020), UNICEF interventions supporting the provision of special premises for interviewing and hearing the testimony of children (i.e., “Blue rooms”) in several locations could be considered gender-sensitive, as they allow for gender-sensitive procedures ensuring privacy of child-victims and also facilitate their forensic examination (especially of the girls). However, the causal link between the existence of supportive infrastructure and children access to gender friendly justice is very weak.

³¹ UNICEF (2017). Country programme document Bulgaria

- At the same time, there are limited indications that UNICEF's actively and efficiently address the existing low gender-related sensitivity of the regulatory framework.
- UNICEF contributed to the National Strategy for Promoting Equality between Women and Men for the period 2021-2030, with proposing concrete measures related to strengthening the capacity for prevention and response to violence and victims' support.

(d) Data strengthening

- The poor quality of data, including lack of disaggregated data by gender has been identified by different evaluation studies commissioned by UNICEF as a serious limitation for the robustness of the M&E system. UNICEF provided a focused support to the National Statistical Institute and other national information systems aiming at the collection and analysis of disaggregated and gender-sensitive data. However, the access to quality disaggregated data on ECD, on inclusive education of CwD and on child participants in judicial proceedings is still limited.

3.1.3. To what extent has UNICEF been able to respond to changes in national needs and rights of the beneficiaries, especially of the most vulnerable and in national priorities during programme implementation?

The overarching goal of UNICEF Country Programme in Bulgaria is to support the country 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 CPD is also fully aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UNICEF Strategic Plan (2018–2021) and the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016–2021).

The evaluation team has found clear evidence that UNICEF Bulgaria CO has a practice to routinely engage children and adolescents (and/or their parents) in needs assessments and programming milestones (planning, mid/end-year review, monitoring, evaluations). Feedback received from some of the key informants shows that UNICEF approach to routinely organize surveys to collect feedback from different parties (children, parents, teachers, etc.) is recognized as a good practice providing an opportunity to look through the lenses of children, to identify properly possible bottlenecks and risks, and to tailor the program to better meet their needs. The CO practice to commission variety of reports and analysis every year, mobilizing the available Bulgarian expertise, is also considered by the stakeholders as a good practice both in terms of the needs-responsiveness of interventions and of provision of valuable information that ultimately could be used in evidence-based policy making.

UNICEF Bulgaria CO agenda is fully aligned with national priorities, as summarized in Table 1 below. This finding has been confirmed by the review of the relevant policy documents, all the available surveys evaluating specific UNICEF interventions, and the feedback received during the interviews held.

- In line with the national strategic documents, UNICEF contributed to the continuation of the national implementation of child care reform and deinstitutionalization process³².
- The UNICEF supported demonstration home visiting services (HVS) are well aligned with the Government's policies, programs and services established in the area of maternal and child health, early child education and care, social welfare and child protection and deinstitutionalization³³.
- Deinstitutionalization and development of foster care as a social service is a priority of the national social policy and part of the national policy for support of children and families. Accommodation of children at risk in a foster family is one of the alternatives to accommodation in a specialized institution, providing an opportunity to support and overcome crisis situations for children and their biological families.
- The UNICEF strategies and modelling interventions in the area of ECD are broadly aligned with the national strategic priorities, aiming at introducing quality social and healthcare services and preventive programs for children and their families; improving the health care for pregnant women, mothers and children by providing integrated health counselling services in maternity

³² UNICEF CO Bulgaria, Results Assessment Module (RAM) Report 2020

³³ Evaluation of HVS 2018

and child health counselling centres; introduction of screenings for children at risk of developmental difficulties; etc. Significant policy focus is put at creating a network of services for prevention of child abandonment, for reintegration into a family environment, special services for children with disabilities and others.

- Inclusive education has been acknowledged as an important priority of the national policies, aimed at ensuring the best interests of the child.
- CAC modelling intervention is well aligned with the national priorities aiming at developing various services, models and tools for violence prevention and work with children, victims and perpetrators of violence, identified with the National Program for Prevention of Child Violence and Child Abuse (2017-2020).
- The stakeholders involved recognized the CACs and UNICEF-supported efforts to address violence and bullying in schools as well aligned with the Government's national priorities to ensure a safe environment for children in schools.

Table 1. Consistency between the national priorities and CPD 2018-2022

Strategic documents	Main national objectives and priorities	CPD 2018-2022 planned results	Vulnerable children targeted
National Development Plan Bulgaria 2030	Priority 1.1. Inclusion in education	Output 2.1: Support to inclusive education Output 2.3: Support for reducing school dropout Output 2.4: Equitable access to early learning and education Output 2.5: Quality inclusive education for boys and girls from early years to adolescence	Children with SEN and CwD Marginalized children Roma children Refugee and migrant children
	Priority 11.2.b Social services for children and their families	Output 1.2: Child care Output 1.3: Social policy	
National Plan for Recovery and Resilience	Reform 5: Creation of conditions and mechanisms for conducting prenatal and neonatal screening, and screening of socially significant diseases	Output 1.4: Health care provision for r/m children/mothers	Marginalized children Roma children Refugee and migrant children
National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social inclusion-2020;	Priority area 2: Ensuring equal access to quality preschool and school education.	Output 2.1: Support to inclusive education Output 2.4: Equitable access to early learning and education Output 2.5: Quality inclusive education for boys and girls from early years to adolescence Output 1.2: Child care Output 1.3: Social policy Output 1.4: Health care provision for r/m children/mothers	Children with SEN and CwD Children in institutions Roma children Marginalized children Refugee and migrant children
	Priority area 3: Elimination of the institutional model of care and development of cross-sectorial social inclusion services		
	Priority area 4: Ensuring equal and effective access to quality healthcare		
	Priority area 6: Improving capacity and synergies in the field of education, health, employment and social services in realization of common goals for social inclusion		
National strategy for reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion 2030	Priority area 2: Ensuring equal access to quality preschool and school education. Priority area 3: Ensuring equal and effective access to quality healthcare Priority area 4: Affordable and quality social and integrated services and		

	integrated support		
National Strategy for the Child (2008 – 2018)	<p>Objective 1: Reducing child poverty and creating social conditions inclusion of children.</p> <p>Objective 2: Ensuring equal access to quality preschool education and school education of all children.</p> <p>Objective 3: Improving children's health.</p> <p>Objective 4: Encouraging the participation of children in the formation and implementation of policies related to their rights and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Output 1.1.: Support for ECD</p> <p>Output 1.2: Child care</p> <p>Output 1.3: Social policy</p> <p>Output 1.4: Health care provision for r/m children/mothers</p> <p>Output 2.1: Support to inclusive education</p> <p>Output 2.4: Equitable access to early learning and education</p> <p>Output 2.5: Quality inclusive education for boys and girls from early years to adolescence</p>	<p>Children with SEN and CwD</p> <p>Children in institutions</p> <p>Roma children</p> <p>Marginalized children</p>
National Strategy on Roma Integration (2012 – 2020);	<p>Operational Objective: Enrolling and retaining in the educational system all Roma children and students, ensuring for them high quality education in a multicultural environment</p> <p>Operational objective: Ensuring equal access to quality healthcare services and preventive programmes</p>	<p>Output 2.1: Support to inclusive education</p> <p>Output 2.3: Support for reducing school dropout</p> <p>Output 2.5: Quality inclusive education for boys and girls from early years to adolescence</p> <p>Output 1.4: Health care provision for r/m children/mothers</p>	<p>Roma children</p>
National Strategy for Vision of Deinstitutionalization (2012 – 2025)	<p>Objective 3: Closure of 137 institutions for a period of 15 years from the adoption of this document</p>	<p>Output 1.2: Child care</p>	<p>Children without parents</p>
National Health Strategy (2015 – 2020);	<p>Priority 1: Creating health conditions for all throughout life</p>	<p>Output 1.4: Health care provision for r/m children/mothers</p>	<p>Children with SEN and CwD</p> <p>Roma/Marginalized children</p>
National Program for Improving Maternal and Child Health (2014 - 2020);	<p>Operational objective 1: Raising the level of awareness of pregnant women, couples, children and their parents, on various aspects of reproductive health.</p> <p>Operational objective 3: Introduction of screenings for children with special needs</p> <p>Operational objective 4: Improved health care for pregnant women, couples, mothers and</p>	<p>Output 1.1: Support for ECD</p> <p>Output 1.4: Health care provision for r/m children/mothers</p>	<p>Children with SEN and CwD</p> <p>Roma children</p> <p>Marginalized children</p>

	children by providing integrated health counselling services in maternity and child health counselling centres.		
National Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers for the Period 2013-2020	Operational objective 3: Encouraging the inclusion of children in risk in education and development of inclusive education.	Output 2.1: Support to inclusive education Output 2.3: Support for reducing school dropout	Children with SEN and CwD Roma children
Strategic Framework for Development of Education, Training and Learning in Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030)	Priority area 1: Early childhood development Priority area 5: Effective inclusion, permanent inclusion and educational Integration	Output 2.1: Support to inclusive education Output 2.4: Equitable access to early learning and education Output 2.5: Quality inclusive education for boys and girls from early years to adolescence	Children with SEN and CwD Roma children Marginalized children
National Program for Prevention of Child Violence and Child Abuse (2017-2020)	Objective 1: Increasing the effectiveness of measures to protect children from violence Objective 4: Prevention of all forms of violence against children Objective 5: Prevention of violence against children in the education system. Objective 6: Introduction of various services, models and tools for violence prevention and work with children, victims and perpetrators of violence	Output 3.1: Prevention and response to VAC & GBV Output 3.2: Equitable access to justice Output 3.3: Protection of children on the move	Children victims Children in conflict with law

3.1.4. To what extent has UNICEF been able to respond to the shifts caused by crisis or major socio-economic and political changes?

UNICEF has adjusted its activities as to timely respond to the challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic outburst. In this regard UNICEF have conducted several studies and analysis on the effects of the pandemic on children's lives and supported the government, local public actors and other stakeholders in providing access for children and their families to relevant information and to vital services (such as: health or education). Regarding the growing anti-human rights movement and discriminatory public narrative in Bulgaria, UNICEF have adjusted its strategies as to able to further achieve results for most marginalized children, but its response has been rather cautious than proactive.

The Covid-19 pandemic created an unprecedented crisis with a strong impact on vulnerable children. A recent study indicates increasing gaps in access to education (which has been provided mostly remotely in electronic environment since the beginning of pandemic) for children and students with low socio-economic status, Roma and those living in rural areas³⁴. Covid-19 pandemic induced also strong anti-vaccination public opinion and affected negatively the overall propensity of parents to vaccinate children, especially in some vulnerable Roma communities. In addition, some social services were scaled down, limiting the access and demand for such services.

The UNICEF's flexibility and timely reaction to Covid-19 crisis has been largely recognized by the stakeholders, especially those involved in different piloting interventions locally. UNICEF contribution involved:

- Provision of sanitary packages and supplies to the most vulnerable families and children;
- Continuous support for parenting of young children using different modalities;
- Provision of information on COVID-19 and guidance on health and caregiving to families with young children through the home visiting services;
- Efforts to improve the access to remote online learning for children and adolescents from vulnerable communities, providing tablets and strengthening the role of education mediators.
- Provision of non-formal education activities for asylum seeking children and adolescents;
- Engagement with business within a Back to School with Business Initiative to share knowledge and guidance on how to safely reopen the schools;
- Active involvement in the prevention of Covid-19 related gender-based violence, in addition to the other support regularly provided.

In addition to supporting vulnerable children and their families during the pandemic, UNICEF also contributed to accumulation of COVID-19 related knowledge by commissioning a large number of studies, including:

- UNICEF commissioned an Assessment exploring economic, social, educational, psychological and organizational aspects of online learning, which influenced the development of the National Framework for re-opening of schools.
- UNICEF supported the MoES to develop a Toolkit for education provision in situation of COVID.
- National surveys for young people and COVID-19, providing evidence regarding the beliefs and behaviours of marginalized youth.
- Representative survey on needs and vulnerabilities among families and the impact of COVID-19
- Monitoring Survey on the social-economic impact of COVID-19 on households.
- An overview of municipal responses to COVID-19 with a focus on social and economic measures, etc.

However, the political situation in the area of child rights has been deteriorating in recent years. This could be considered as having a major negative influence on the Country Programme implementation in Bulgaria.

³⁴ Hristova, A.; Petrova, S. and Tosheva, E. (2021). Impact of distance learning in electronic environment on educational process teachers and students. Institute for Research in Education

The anti-human and anti-child rights narrative gained strong momentum, impeding key children-related strategic and legislative changes, including adoption of the UNICEF-supported National Strategy for the child 2019-2030.

Although UNICEF Bulgaria CO reported refocussing of its strategies to skills development and improving its readiness to work under the worsening anti-child rights environment, the feedback collected during the interviews indicate a rather cautious approach in reacting to these negative developments. The documents reviewed and the interviews with CO staff suggest some shift to more preventative approach and “*positive messaging on child well-being and good practice of the realization of children’s rights*”³⁵. The CO utilized domestic violence policy as an entry point to strengthen national and local response in the area of violence against children and turned the focus from gender-based violence and access to justice for children which were subjects more difficult to address given the context. The evaluation found that this approach provided UNICEF Bulgaria CO the opportunity to maintain and strengthen their partnership with the government and also, maintain its status at national level as a key actor promoting child-rights realization. Also, despite the fact that the negative public discourse regarding human and child rights become more visible and the social movements gained more adepts, UNICEF managed to surpass its targets related to output “Communication for child rights”, in terms of media coverage of UNICEF voice and number of potential impressions reached through traditional media. However, some of the stakeholders expressed certain concerns about UNICEF’s low preparedness to address public prejudices and to tackle effectively the strong anti-child propaganda and violation of child-rights.

3.2. COHERENCE

3.2.1. To what extent has UNICEF’s Country Programme kept true to its mandate and aligned with UNICEF’s global and regional strategies as well as UNSDCF and SDGs in any given country?

UNICEF Bulgaria CO CPD remains true to its mandate to ensure the rights of all children to survival, development, protection and participation and it has been prepared and implemented in line with the UNICEF’s global and regional strategies.

UNICEF Bulgaria CPD refers to SDGs in the programme documents, implementation strategies. It should be noted that **health, nutrition, education and protection** interventions in the first 8 years of life contribute to the achievement of at least nine of the SDG goals directly, also to the achievement of all goals as the most cost-effective window of opportunity for laying strong foundations for the future health, education and economic productivity of their citizens indirectly. Given the middle-income context of the ECA region, sustainable growth in countries is dependent on the development of “cognitive capital.”

The Country Programme encompasses 4 goal areas:

- **Goal Area 1 – Every child survives and thrives:** The CPD aimed at promoting national policies and strengthening national and decentralized capacities to support a nurturing family and social environment rich with stimulants for 0-3 age children and ensure equitable access to services of communities in remote settlements and the most disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable families.
- **Goal Area 2 – Every child learns:** The CPD aimed at building human, technical and operational capacity in the MoES for supporting the enforcement of inclusive educational policies and practices.
- **Goal Area 3 – Protection from Violence and Exploitation:** The CPD aimed at Prevention of violence against children, protection of victims and improved access to justice.

³⁵ COAR (2019)

- **Goal Area 4 – Child Rights Monitoring:** The CPD aimed at communication and promotion of child rights, developing new alliances and partnerships for better protection and monitoring of child rights.

Furthermore, UNICEF Bulgaria CO works with the government and EU institutions to transpose the European policies and principles of the **European Social Charter**, perceived as the **Social Constitution of Europe**. It represents an essential component of the continent's human rights architecture, with reference to civil and political rights, and a broad range of everyday human rights related to **employment, housing, health, education, social protection and welfare**, into national policies. The Charter lays specific emphasis on the protection of **vulnerable persons** such as elderly people, **children, people with disabilities and migrants**. It requires that enjoyment of those rights be guaranteed **without discrimination**. UNICEF Bulgaria CO has played a facilitating role in the piloting of *Child Guarantee* and in the preparation of the *of Human Resources Development and Food and Material Assistance*; *National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion 2030*³⁶.

³⁶ UNICEF CO Bulgaria, Results Assessment Module (RAM) Report 2020, p.1

Table 2. Consistency between the UNICEF global and regional strategies, UNSDCF and SDGs and CPD 2018-2022

UNICEF Global goals	UNICEF regional priorities	SDG	EU Policies	CPD 2018-2022 planned results
<p>Goal Area 1– Every Child Survives and Thrives</p> <p>Result areas:</p> <p>1. Deinstitutionalization</p> <p>2. Maternal and new born health</p> <p>3. Parenting support for care and development</p> <p>4. Gender sensitive approach</p> <p>5. COVID-19 response</p>	<p>Improve access to quality health services, and help vulnerable families care for their children in homes that are safe and stimulating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Inter-sectoral cooperation</i> • <i>Mainstreaming ECD in principles in health, nutrition, education, child protection, and emergency planning and response.</i> • <i>scale-up of evidence-based, and effective multi-sectoral packages aimed at ensuring that all children, including the most vulnerable, reach their development potential.</i> 	<p>Goal 1: <i>End poverty in all its forms everywhere</i></p> <p>Goal 2: <i>End hunger</i></p> <p>Goal 3: <i>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</i></p> <p>Goal 5: <i>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</i></p> <p>Goal 6: <i>Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</i></p> <p>Goal 10: <i>Reduce inequality within and among countries</i></p> <p>Goal 11: <i>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</i></p> <p>Goal 16: <i>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</i></p> <p>Goal 17: <i>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</i></p>	<p>European Social Charter – European Convention on Human Rights - Social Cohesion Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights related to employment, housing, health, education, social protection and welfare. • Protection of vulnerable persons such as elderly people, children, people with disabilities and migrants. • The rights shall be guaranteed without discrimination. • Policy for a more inclusive society 	<p>Outcome Area 1 – Early Childhood Development</p> <p><i>Promoting national policies and strengthening national and decentralized capacities to support a nurturing family and social environment for every young children and ensure equitable access to services</i></p> <p>COVID – 19 response:</p> <p><i>Collaboration with municipalities and CSOs to identify and support vulnerable children and as part of the EU operational programme for food and provision of basic material assistance.</i></p> <p>Alignment with EU/ESF+:</p> <p><i>Participation in the preparation of Human Resources Development and Food and Material Assistance); National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion 2030. (RAM 2020, p.1)</i></p> <p><i>Cooperation with the government, regional and local authorities, health, education, child protection and social welfare services, NGOs, academia and other stakeholders to ensure access to home visiting, early childhood intervention, inclusive pre-school education and integrated child and family support services for CwD and SEN in Burgas,</i></p>

				<p>Sliven and Stara Zagora. (RAM 2020, p. 1)</p> <p>Gender Aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting pregnant women for safe delivery and better parenting Highlighting the issue of early marriages as part of parent training <u>Gender-disaggregated data not collected at the level of final beneficiaries.</u>
<p>Goal Area 2 – Every Child Learns</p> <p>Result areas:</p> <p>1. Early Childhood Education (Inclusion of Children with Disabilities)</p> <p>2. Preventing Drop Outs</p> <p>3. Inclusion of Roma children, especially girls</p> <p>4. Violence in schools</p> <p>5. Gender sensitive approach</p> <p>6. COVID-19 response</p>	<p>Include all children in quality education and support their learning</p> <p>Access to quality pre-primary education services must be universal and efforts should^[1] be made to ensure that every child enrolls in grade 1, having completed at the very least one year of pre-primary school.</p> <p><i>By 2021, 700,000 girls and boys who would have otherwise been out of school are enrolled in high quality, inclusive pre-primary, primary and secondary education.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> empowerment model the use of ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health); ^[1]^[2] family-centered model, families as key and equal patterns in the Early Interventions process; ^[1]^[2] comprehensive services and a cadre of trained providers, skilled in ^[1]^[2]54 World Report on Disability – WHO/World Bank – 2011 early detection/Intervention evidence- based approaches; as apposed to an early childhood approach to disability, a life-cycle approach, allowing for a smooth transition to potentially life-long programs; ^[1]^[2] standard methods and tools for monitoring ECD and early detection, 	<p>Goal 4: <i>Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</i></p> <p>Goal 5: <i>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</i></p> <p>Goal 10: <i>Reduce inequality within and among countries</i></p>		<p>Outcome Area 2 – Inclusive Education</p> <p><i>Continued support MoES to increase access to education for disadvantaged children through inclusion of CwD, SEN, preventing violence at school, material support to students, adolescent services to prevent drop outs, encourage return to school. (RAM 2020)</i></p> <p>COVID – 19 response:</p> <p>Supporting children and adolescents from vulnerable communities to ensure access to distant learning and online education and to strengthen the role of education mediators.. (RAM 2020, p.12)</p> <p>Gender Aspects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> promoting gender equality through activities to support Roma girls for continued education.

	notably within primary health services.			
Goal Area 3 – Every Child Protected from Violence and Exploitation Result areas: 1. Violence Against Children 2. Access to justice 3. Gender equality	<p>Improve social protection and social-work systems to protect children from violence and prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their families</p> <p><i>By 2021, zero children in institutional care in the Region</i></p>	<p>Goal 5: <i>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</i></p> <p>Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p> <p><i>Target 16.2: end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.</i></p>		<p>Outcome Area 2 – Violence Against Children</p> <p><i>Continued follow-up support to CACs through and evaluation of the model. (RAM 2020, 27)</i></p> <p>Justice for Children</p> <p><i>Strengthening institutions of social welfare, child protection and the administration of justice to create an enabling environment of laws, policies and services across professional disciplines to prevent violence, protect children victims and ensure access and timely remedy to children participants in judicial procedures.</i></p> <p>Gender Based Violence:</p> <p><i>Support to victims of GBV, vulnerable mothers with under 3 children and unaccompanied children through response (incl. COVID-19 related) services including case management, social evaluations and plans of action? (RAM 2020, 27)</i></p>
Goal Area 4 – Monitoring Child Rights 1. C4D 2. Fund Raising 3. Partnerships	<p>Monitor and work to improve the well being of children, by drawing on sound evidence to create programmes, campaigns and initiatives where they are most needed.</p>	<p>Goal 1: <i>End poverty in all its forms everywhere</i></p> <p>Goal 2: <i>End hunger</i></p> <p>Goal 3: <i>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</i></p> <p>Goal 5: <i>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</i></p> <p>Goal 6: <i>Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</i></p> <p>Goal 10: <i>Reduce inequality within and among countries</i></p>		<p>Outcome Area 4 –</p> <p>C4BSC to communicate and promote child rights, to develop new alliances and partnerships for better protection and monitoring of child rights.</p> <p>Research studies to inform the C4BSC and partnership building activities; assistance to SACP in conceptualizing a platform for child related data from all sectors. (RAM 2020, 39)</p> <p>CRC@30 national campaign “With Eyes Open for All”,</p>

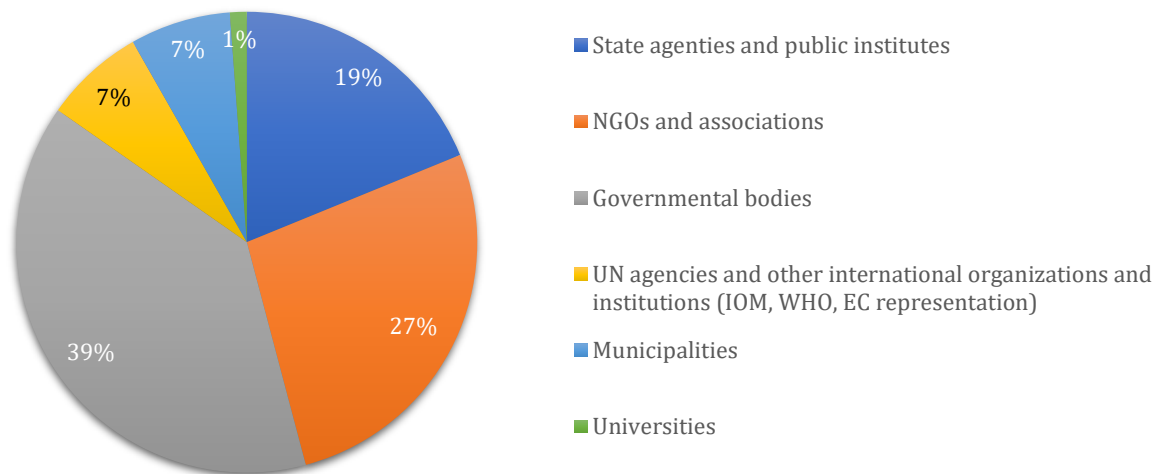
		<p>Goal 11: <i>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</i></p> <p>Goal 16: <i>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</i></p> <p>Goal 17: <i>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</i></p>		<p>dedicated to children with disabilities where adolescents and young people were empowered to be role-models and change agents in shifting public attitudes (COAR 2019, p. 7)</p> <p>COVID – 19 response: Information dissemination on health and parenting skills during the pandemic.</p>
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3.2.2. To what extent did UNICEF manage to build effective and sustainable partnerships in working towards addressing the predefined bottlenecks, advocating for evidence for equity and contributing to results at scale?

The overall partnership network developed by UNICEF Bulgaria CO, can be defined as a relatively strong community, with various connections between actors in different clusters formed around each department/specialist of the CO, thus in each addressed area of the CP and also with connection between the identified clusters. UNICEF has managed to build effective partnerships with key stakeholders, most effective being the ones with governmental bodies and CSOs. This finding is well reflected when UNICEF provides technical support to governmental bodies and other implementing partners, conducts evidence-based advocacy activities or tests models. Nevertheless, the collaborations with state agencies and institutes, local public authorities and UN agencies and other international organizations are also well-established. UNICEF Bulgaria CO has recently put efforts in developing strategic partnerships for engaging the private sector in common projects and leveraging resources for children, through the development of a corporate strategy and in involving more the academia in the implemented projects and in advancing the application of C4BSC approach.

According to the Social Network Analysis, the main institutions the CO collaborates with are: Governmental bodies, NGOs and associations and state agencies and institutes. As the below figure shows, among the institutions that have been mentioned by respondents, majority of connections have been established between governmental bodies and UNICEF CO (39% of the total number of connections), followed by collaborations developed with CSOs (27%). State agencies and institutes are also key actors in UNICEF COs network, as they represent 19% of the connections established with all identified collaborators.

Figure 3 Type of institutions/organizations indicated as important partners by Bulgaria CO respondents



Source: Data collected through a survey conducted at the level of UNICEF CO Bulgaria

The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy have been identified most often as important partners in the development of COs activities (7 times each), followed by the Agency for Social Assistance (6 times) and Ministry of Interior and State Agency for Child Protection (5 times each). Although the interviews held for the purpose of the evaluation have indicated the fields of cooperation with business bodies and underlined the need to improve partnership with the business circles, the fact that the country office staff have not mentioned business representatives among the most important stakeholders may imply a need for improved internal communication in this regard.

Stakeholders interviewed described the UNICEF CO's partnership strategies as (i) active participation in all multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary activities where children have a stake - high visibility among relevant stakeholders was ensured in this manner; (ii) active contribution to the development of surveys, research to inform policy development as well as advocacy and C4BSC strategies. Interviews also provide some evidence regarding the tendency to improve partnerships by (i) ensuring active involvement of academia, (ii) strengthening collaboration at the regional and local level to implement new models where service providers are encouraged to accept the parents and the families as partners, (iii) developing a corporate strategy, fund raising for vulnerable groups that are not directly addressed (as children from Roma communities).

Regarding the characteristics of the overall partnership network developed by UNICEF CO of Bulgaria, the data analysis shows **the existence of a relatively strong community, with various connections between actors in different clusters formed around each programming area or each specialist/expert of the CO.** The social network analysis (please see Annex 4) found that the actor that is best connected within the network is the ECD Officer, followed by: the Officer for communication and social change, the RMCP Officer, social policy specialist and the consultant on prevention of violence and access to justice area. Moreover, the collected data indicates that the most frequent and valued (in terms of provided support) paths of communication can be identified between: a) the Education officer and the Ministry of Education and Science in Bulgaria, followed by b) the Child protection specialist and the State Agency for Child Protection and the Agency for Social Assistance and c) Social policy specialist with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The programme documents, interviews and the Network Analysis conducted for the purposes of MCPE imply that, **UNICEF CO maintained the high-level involvement and provision of adequate and timely technical support to the Government of Bulgaria during the implementation of the current CP,** despite the social-political resistance against actions aiming to ensure the human rights of children and women. UNICEF continued to deliver results and kept vulnerable children's issues on the national agenda through continued collaboration with government partners, business and NGOs, and providing quality data and evidence for decision making as well as conducting C4BSC activities. UNICEF also assumed an active role for developing policies and guidelines, through cooperation with relevant international organization and participation in the preparation of operational plans within the framework of ESF+.

There are seven types of partnerships sustained by UNICEF Bulgaria CO:

1/ The partnership with the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and line Ministries, and with local authorities are managed in line with the country programme of cooperation. UNICEF provides intensive technical assistance to government authorities through transfer of know-how, investing in building capacity through training of professional staff, introducing new methodologies, tools and approaches, assisting the development of strategic documents, conducting evidence-based advocacy to improve the quality and coverage of public services and brings innovation in the fields it operates. Though, faced with obstacles due to political resistance on culturally sensitive areas, the partnership with the government, especially at the technical level, is reported to be constructive and positive, in general. This finding has been also supported by the social network analysis. The partnerships at the local level, especially in early childhood growth and development services are reported to be smooth and constructive. The ownership at the local service units for early childhood services increases with chances of mainstreaming the new models and/or practices.

2/ The partnership with implementing partners can take several forms, including cooperation with specialized institutions abroad for the provision of know-how on the specific field of intervention;

cooperation with international organizations with a mandate in the outcome areas; international and national CSOs to provide services within the framework of the programme implementation, and cooperation with academia and universities either for the implementation of training activities at the field or for improving the pre-service curricula.

The latter group function as service providers either through services agreements with UNICEF or through the provision of technical and financial support from UNICEF to accomplish their work at the ground level. Many of the partnerships in this group have led to a strong ownership of UNICEF priorities, strategies and objectives on the part of those partners. Other interlocutors, also, have assessed these partnerships as effective. It should be noted that very close working relations, ranging from joint advocacy initiatives (initiatives aiming at legislative amendments) to provision of services (either through capacity building or specialized assistance to target groups) are established with several CSOs. The stakeholder analysis conducted within the framework of this evaluation implies that the multi-year partnerships with some CSOs cut across all programme areas and collaboration in various activities. Such long-term partnerships imply that the collaboration was constructive and effective for producing intended results.

3/ Partnerships with non-governmental organizations, may take the form of cooperation through networks, alliances initiated by UNICEF to bring together like-minded people and professionals to initiate a community interested in children. These partnerships are established through partnership agreements and cooperation in campaigns within the framework of C4BSC activities, organizing seminars, research and publications. This type of partnerships was effective in building the knowledge base of civil society organizations and raising public awareness. The social network analysis also concluded that the partnerships established between UNICEF Bulgaria CO is among the strongest ones and, according to the perspectives of the CO staff, the most beneficial, in terms of the support provided in developing solutions for the identified problems (e.g. inputs for legislative changes, developing and implementing demonstrative models and other). However, it should be noted that some representatives of civil society organizations were critical of UNICEF's for not taking a stronger stance against the anti-child rights movement.

4/ The Partnership with International Organizations is working well. Since the UN community in Bulgaria is small, consisting of UNHCR, IOM, WB and IMF, with few staffs in each organisation; UNICEF, as the designated official, initiated the process for working together. The group is small, yet effective for advocacy purposes as well as in the preparation of national strategies through joint efforts with other international organizations. According to the social network analysis, the collaboration between UNICEF Bulgaria CO and the other UN agencies and international cooperation organization is the second-best valued partnerships by the CO staff members. UNICEF is playing an active role in the preparation of the operational programmes and plans in the framework of EU Cohesion Policy, especially within the framework of developing and implementing the EU Child Guarantee and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

5/ Partnerships through South -to -South Cooperation is considered a significant tool for knowledge exchange and peer interaction. UNICEF Bulgaria CO has conducted activities with UNICEF ECARO, UNICEF COs in various countries as well as key government and non-governmental partners from the COs in the region. Within this framework UNICEF Bulgaria CO: a) along with UNICEF Peru and UNICEF Uganda was a stakeholder in a joint proposal UNICEF headquarters submitted to H&M Foundation for a program to support early childhood intervention for children with developmental difficulties b) supported the Third International Conference on assistive technologies for alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) with exclusive UNICEF participation from ECARO, Serbia and Croatia; c) contributed to knowledge and experience sharing in the region as key government and non-governmental partners participated in different events related to De-I and childcare reforms in Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Greece. UNICEF Bulgaria CO benefited also from the support and cooperation with UNICEF Croatia on the transfer of a parenting program for parents of children with disabilities, under the ECD component.

6/ The Partnerships with the private sector is mainly focussed on project-based cooperation or fund-raising efforts involving employees and customers of corporate bodies. Partnerships with business are reported to be stronger in the areas of education and early childhood development compared to relatively low interest in the area of VAC and J4C. Although it is possible to trace scope of the actual support by the private sector networks consisting of employees and customers, it is not possible to analyse the contribution of private sector towards the results at scale. The study titled *“The Impact of the Business Sector on Children’s Rights in Bulgaria: Business Situation Analysis 2020”* and interviews held for the purpose of this evaluation imply that the partnership strategies with the business may evolve into a new phase. Accordingly, the renewed strategy on partnerships with the private sector is expected to rely less on funds secured from the private sector and to focus more on building on the corporate responsibilities in terms of business practices in employment, production of goods and services, local community development, environmental protection, technology and innovation with a view to converge business practices in a manner to support the full realization of child rights.

7/ The partnerships with media are established within the framework of Communication for Behavioural and Social Change (C4BSC), mainly in the form of cooperation in campaigns to disseminate basic messages and to help make the voices of children heard. Also, in partnership with the Association of European Journalists, UNICEF, prepared a guidebook for ethical reporting, which is used across the region, to improve reporting on child rights in media. Notwithstanding the opinion of some interlocutors to the effect that the media is not fully independent, the opinions collected from stakeholders within the framework of this evaluation also suggest also that UNICEF, should focus more on building on the potential role of media through enhancing its capacity for disseminating knowledge on the rights of the children and the need for all children to fully enjoy those rights, as opposed to working with the media to market its brand and increase donations.

According to the reports of UNICEF³⁷, the C4BSC activities have managed to reach a substantial number of people and engaged journalists and young people were engaged in content development.

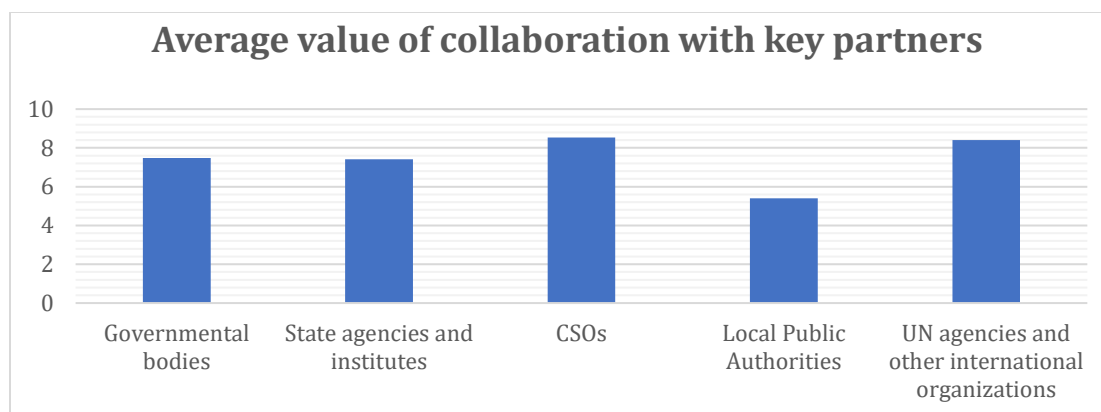
The CO has developed an inter-sectoral partnership with corporate businesses, NGOs, media and academia for the organization of the first youth-led virtual hackathon on digital solutions for media literacy³⁸.

Based on the perspective of UNICEF Bulgaria CO staff, on a scale from 1 (no value) to 10, the average value of the collaboration established with governmental bodies is 7,48 and with state agencies is 7,41. But the most valued cooperation is the one with CSOs, receiving 8,54 points out of 10. Another very good valued collaboration is the one established with UN agencies and other international organizations, receiving an average of 8,4 points. In the case of local public authorities (LPAs), the information and support received by the respondents is the least valued, receiving 5,4 points.

³⁷ UNICEF, Results Assessment Module (RAM) 2020

³⁸ UNICEF, Results Assessment Module (RAM) , 2020, p. 39

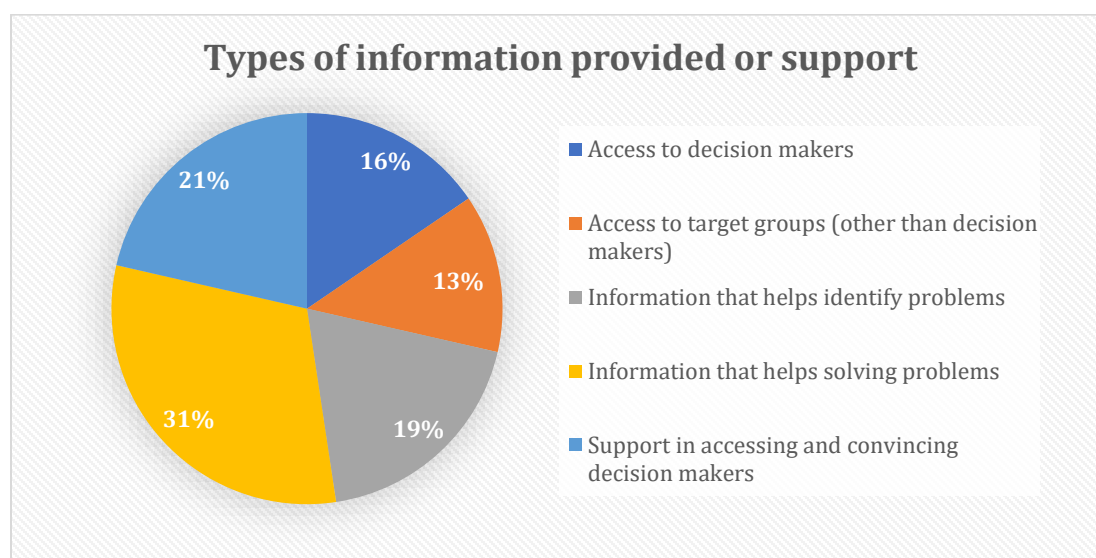
Figure 4 Average value of the collaboration with key partners as perceived by UNICEF CO



Source: Data collected through a survey conducted at the level of UNICEF CO Bulgaria

According to the opinion of respondents to the survey for the social network analysis (i.e., staff of the country office), the main benefits of the collaboration with partners are: information for solving problems (31%), followed by support in accessing and convincing decision makers (21%) and information that helps identifying problems (19%).

Figure 5 Type of information or support provided by the partners of UNICEF CO Bulgaria



Source: Data collected through a survey conducted at the level of UNICEF CO Bulgaria

Thus, while the most important gain from UNICEF Bulgaria CO partnerships is the relevant information for solving problems, the second most important benefit is the access to decision makers. These two combined contribute significantly to the achieved results of the CPD and highly reflect the overall approach of the CO in generating change for children in Bulgaria.

3.2.3. What are the comparative advantages of UNICEF in relation to other actors in the country, including development partners, private sector, and non-government sector, and to what extent were they necessary and sufficient for contributing to the results at scale to be achieved?

Both the documentation and the interviews held for the purpose of this evaluation reveal that UNICEF has strong credibility among all stakeholders and well-acknowledged as the primary defender of child rights. UNICEF – with its accumulated knowledge, experience and expertise at the

global, regional and national level – has gained the trust of all social and economic actors as the facilitator of policy dialogue among public-private-civil sectors. UNICEF is perceived as a reliable partner that supports the government and strengthens its role in the fields of health, education and protection.

Quoting the words of an interlocutor: “There are no cases in which UNICEF Bulgaria CO has not fulfilled a commitment”.

Partners (ministries and public institutions/agencies) acknowledge the contribution of UNICEF in highlighting the needs for and the implications on children in the decision-making processes in developing of strategic documents, legislations, policy documents and in piloting new services.

UNICEF is considered to provide valuable support; using excellent communication skills, adopting a flexible approach to work, responding to partners' needs and providing them with freedom of action. UNICEF has a very strong team and a very well-established network. They manage to combine the different elements of the area to support and recognize partnership opportunities very effectively.

UNICEF's unique contribution is in the way it provides support, which is based on evidence pertaining to the needs of the target groups and its flexibility and openness to take action in case of emerging opportunities. UNICEF's approach to researching, monitoring and evaluating interventions and collecting feedback from parents, teachers, experts in the Regional Departments institutions is highly appreciated and perceived as effective.

The municipalities are under a lot of pressure due to the structural changes that rendered them responsible of many social functions. Therefore, the support provided to municipalities by UNICEF through the services of CSOs is much appreciated. They also regularly consult with UNICEF staff.

UNICEF has developed good working relations with the relatively small offices of UN organisations in Bulgaria. The large UNICEF office is described as unique and rich in technical expertise. UNICEF's experience in working with the public authorities is perceived as an advantage. The best part of the collaboration with UNICEF is the fact that it is not based on competition but cooperation to develop common projects or activities to serve the best interest of children.

Cooperation with other UNICEF offices and prominent institutions as resource providers for knowledge exchange and peer interaction and is appreciated by all stakeholders since such interaction is perceived as learning opportunities.

All stakeholders perceive the partnership with the media, mainly in the form of campaigns, as effective in branding UNICEF and drawing public attention to child related issues, and raising funds. UNICEF is perceived to have enormous opportunities and resources to structure large-scale and targeted public campaigns.

Documented evidence and interviews held for the purpose of this evaluation imply that UNICEF is well-positioned to assume a pivotal role in persuading the actors from different sectors to engage in concerted efforts for producing results for children. Building on this strength, when faced with political resistance to promote child rights UNICEF Bulgaria CO, managed to widen the scope and content of its partnerships with the aim of ensuring an ownership for the rights of children among the general public, without compromising its strategic partnership with the Government of Bulgaria and the line ministries at the central and local level. The approaches to establish alliances have reportedly helped to expand the realm of UNICEF and improve its capacity to intervene.

One important aspect of UNICEF's approach to partnerships within the framework of capacity building activities is its focus on team building and peer learning and collective learning as opposed to individual learning.

Also, UNICEF, as an active user of Facebook³⁹ in providing information and announcing new services targeting younger families is perceived as yet another advantage.

3.2.4. How has UNICEF's approach to strategic partnerships changed over time, if any?

Building and strengthening partnerships is an important aspiration for UNICEF Bulgaria CO. Significant investments were made to understand the state of play in the social and economic arena with a view to ensure that the best interests of children are taken into consideration at all spheres of life.

UNICEF Bulgaria CO collected evidence through numerous research studies commissioned, supported, or contributed by it. These studies included: research informing the design and planning of activities under outcome areas and generating valuable data on vulnerable and marginalized children and on planning the COVID-19 response. **Within this framework, UNICEF Bulgaria CO reviewed and revised its strategic partnerships with a view to engage academia in partnerships, enhance collaboration with regional or local service units which are gaining importance compared to previous programme cycles and focus on special groups (such as the children from Roma community) as well as by strengthening the partnership with media for fundraising campaigns in this area. Moreover, UNICEF Bulgaria CO developed a corporate strategy which aims at engaging in a more consistent manner the private sector in common project as to leverage resources for children.**

As opposed to signing bilateral agreements with institutions, UNICEF has started to involve all relevant institutions at the central and regional level to sign a joint memorandum of cooperation, allocating respective responsibilities and commitments.

The fact that UNICEF CO's strategy on C4BSC is perceived as an approach for building strategic, cross-sectoral partnerships and ownership of a wide spectrum of social and economic actors with a view to produce results at scale is a strength. According to the data collected through the interviews conducted with key stakeholders and the evidence presented in the UNICEF Bulgaria CO reports, the partnership with the media was an important element of the programming for communicating the basic messages for behavioural and social change and encouraging the general public to promote the rights of children in all settings. This partnership was effective in ensuring continued public support for children, especially in the face of the anti-child rights movement, and in performing a critical role as an integral part of the COVID-19 response when families were supported with information about child care and nurturing care and students were provided with on-line learning opportunities.

Based on interviews carried out, compared to the past, the partnership with businesses currently enjoys increased attention by UNICEF Bulgaria CO and is expected to expand in scope in a manner to mainstream the overarching goal of full realization of child rights into business practices throughout the production and marketing process, including human resources management. UNICEF Bulgaria CO developed a strategy for partnerships with the private sector, documented in the Private Sector Plan 2018-2022, as an integral part of the Country Programme Management Plan. Both the documented evidence and interviews held for the

³⁹ As of July 2021, there were nearly 4.4 million Facebook users, with 22.7 percent of those users being between 25 and 34 years of age. The source also notes that 47.7 percent of these users were male and 52.3 percent were female. Statista Research Department, Oct 15, 2021.

purpose of the MCPE indicate that the CO perceives partnerships with the private sector as a means of achieving maximum results for children by mobilizing resources in a manner to develop operational partnerships beyond fundraising.

3.3. IMPACT

3.3.1. Did UNICEF Bulgaria contribute to results at-scale? If yes, how and why did it make a difference and for whom? If not, why not?

UNICEF managed to generate, through its actions, changes in the legislative framework in regards with ECD area, child protection and justice for children. UNICEF also contributed to the enhancement of cross-sectoral cooperation, but mainly in relation with the tested models and this effect remains limited, its continuation after the end of the projects being an important point of concern. Further, the models developed and implemented by UNICEF have proven to be very effective in improving the quality of services provided for children and their families in all CP areas and also changing attitudes and behaviors of parents (in term of child care provided to children) and teachers (contributing to a more inclusive school environment). But, without their expansion at national level, their limited impact in terms of number of children and families that benefit from the intervention cannot generate a significant at-scale change for children lives in Bulgaria.

In 2021 a Situational Analysis (SitAn) to support the development of the future Country Programme has been conducted and available data and information, as well as SitAn's findings and conclusions inform this impact assessment.

Further we present a set of horizontal findings regarding the contribution of UNICEF CO work on the following 3 key aspects: legislative framework improvements, enhanced cross-sectoral cooperation and access to improved integrated public services for children and their parents. These conclusions are drawn from the impact analysis developed under each outcome of the CPD (presented in the following sub-section 3.3.2).

The contribution of UNICEF in improving the legislative framework regarding child rights realization in Bulgaria is well documented. The access to expertise and well skilled personnel provides the CO credibility among key stakeholders in each area addressed by the CPD in order, which facilitates their engagement in strong and long-term partnerships with duty bearers and other implementing partners. All interviewees acknowledged UNICEF's contribution to providing effective technical support for developing the legislative framework in all CPD areas (ECD and child care, inclusive education, protection of children against violence access to justice for children and strengthening the monitoring system in regards to child rights realization in Bulgaria). **The adoption of the New Social Act represents a significant progress registered at national level regarding the promotion and realization of child rights in the areas of social protection and justice for children. Nevertheless, the fact that the new legislative framework is very recent did not allow the evaluation team to assess its actual impact on the lives of children in Bulgaria.** The policy enactment is an essential step in improving the access of children to better quality public services, thus, the implementation of the law is another important aspect that has to be further assessed. The process is a long-term one and the changes that should be generated at-scale at the level of children's lives will become observable in time. With the same importance in terms of the strategic level changes achieved with the support of UNICEF are the legislative improvements made in the area of refugee and migration and gender-based violence, such as: The National programme for prevention and protection of domestic violence for 2020, The National Strategy for Promoting Equality between Women and Men for the period 2021-2030, Amendments of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, amendments of the Regulations and the Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria.

UNICEF Bulgaria CO contributed to a better understanding at the level of central and local public authorities regarding the importance of cross-sectoral perspective when designing public services and aiming to improve the situation of children in need, but in practice, the effects of UNICEF's work in regards with the enhancement of the cross-sectoral cooperation remains limited to the implemented models and, to a large extent, does not continue after the projects are finished. The continuous efforts made for strengthening the cross-sectoral approach in certain areas, such as ECD or VaC, through well designed models that are based on the cooperation of relevant key actors from different sectors in regards with developing and delivering integrated services for children is well demonstrated by the available evidence⁴⁰. Nevertheless, based on the findings of the Situation Analysis and of the data collected through interviews, the lack of specialized human resources at the level of public service providers, the understaff situation, the insufficient financing limited the effects of UNICEF's work beyond the piloted projects. UNICEF have supported improvements in this respect (such as: support the strengthening of the legislative framework in the area of social care, support the adoption of the disability functional assessment, support the development of specialized training programmes for the specialist working with children), but there is still a need to strengthen the structural conditions that enable better public services provision for children.

The evidence collected shows that the modeling components of the CPD have been very effective, but their impact remains, in general, at a limited scale due to the fact that they have not been taken up by the government. Due to the fact that the models scaling-up is an objective where less progress was achieved, the observed impact on the targeted children (in terms of improving the lives of children and ensuring the realization of children's rights), remains limited at the level of geographical areas where the pilots are being implemented. The focus of UNICEF efforts on improving the situation of most marginalized children through the actions and interventions developed is well documented. Most of the CPD outputs are focused on specific categories of disadvantaged children (such as: children living in poverty, children exposed to neglect, abuse and violence, children with disabilities, children with special educational needs, refugee or migrant children, unaccompanied children, children from Roma communities and other). Further, based on the evaluations of the implemented models, the impact of UNICEF actions can be observed mainly at the level of these disadvantaged categories. . Nevertheless, as the analysis of the results at-scale of UNICEF CO Bulgaria in the period of 2018 – 2020/2021 shows and as already mentioned above, the impact observed or generated go beyond the areas where the pilot programmes are being implemented to a very small extent.

It is important to mention that, in the context of the pandemic, UNICEF has adjusted or developed new activities, within the outcomes of the current CPD, as to be able to support the governmental response and address the needs of most affected children and parents. In this regard, UNICEF has developed an extensive set of analyses and research on the impact of the pandemic; it has included public health information in its current campaigns; supported specific activities directly targeting vulnerable families and children. UNICEF provided learning materials for children and access to online learning for pre-school children and continued the work of CACs online when face to face counselling could not take place.

****Note on the assessment of UNICEF impact based on the outcome and output indicators in the Country Programme Document***

Although most of the indicators analysed are – according to UNICEF denomination – outcome and output indicators, they are not only measuring direct results of each activity conducted by UNICEF. They also potentially show overall or short-term changes with direct relevance for children at scale, either referring to the situation of children, changes in public perception, attitude or behaviour or systemic changes that enable institutions to fulfil better their role in providing services for children and protecting their rights.

Many outcome indicators are formulated as impact indicators as per UNICEF - Final results framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. In this regard, some examples are: under Outcome 1, # of children (disaggregated by gender, age, disability, refugee and

⁴⁰ Evaluation of HVS 2018, Evaluation of CACs 2020, the data collected from the interviews conducted with UNICEF CO and the implementing partners.

migrant children) entering formal care every year), under Outcome 2, Rate of school-age children out of school, by sex and education level and Early leavers from education and training, by sex, under Outcome 3, # of cases of violence against children identified, reported and addressed – Outcome 3.

Further, it is important to mention here that the contribution of UNICEF to the progress registered at country level, in the areas addressed by the CP, was difficult to be assessed in some cases, due to the logic of the intervention of the CPD, especially in terms of outcomes and outputs definition and the causal links established between them, which, to some extent, lack of coherence. On one hand many output indicators define impacts rather than results and the activities that should lead to the achievement of outputs are not very clear and, on the other hand, in some cases, the direct links between the outputs and the outcome that they should contribute to cannot be established. For example, the first 2 outcome indicators under Outcome 2 (Inclusive education and early learning), namely the rate of enrolment and the rate of early drop-outs, are very high level defined and they are not well correlated with the expected results of the proposed actions. The level of coverage of the developed interventions cannot generate significant changes regarding the 2 indicators, especially in the context in which for the last decade Bulgaria has been confronted with a constant decrease of the enrolment rate of children in education system, the highest decrease being registered at primary school aged children. Only one output is directly linked with the 2 outcome indicators mentioned above and the only action that can generate a direct impact on the level of school dropout consists in the development of a dropout prevention model which is planned to be fully implemented in two regions by the end of year 2022. Therefore, its limited coverage and the lack of a scale-up strategy in regards with this model cannot lead to a significant contribution at the level of the two outcome indicators. The current design of the ToC not only makes the assessment of the UNICEF CO impact difficult, but also affects the effectiveness of the monitoring system and thus, the internal capacity of CO to assess the progress made towards achieving the objectives of the programme during its implementation, as to be able to take mitigation actions if required. In this regard, for the second outcome indicator, under Outcome 1 (ECD and child care), namely the proportion of disadvantaged families with children 0–2 years of age who received targeted counselling and support for promoting early childhood development with a target of 30% for year 2022, no administrative or monitoring data is available in order to assess the extent to which UNICEF has contributed to its achievement. Further, in regards with the monitoring process implemented at the level of UNICEF CO, the fact that the progress at the level of outcome indicators achievement is not reported annually affects the extent to which the CO is able to effectively assess the progress of the CP throughout its implementation.

A comprehensive analysis of UNICEF contribution to overall developments at national level and a table analysing the indicators and achievements of UNICEF Ukraine is presented in Annex 2A.

*Indicators in the table are marked on their relevance for the assessment of impact. And when impact can be measured, the type of impact is identified as: (1) better **access** to services/direct improvement of the situation of children, (2) **behavioural and attitudes** change; (3) **institutional** change (including institutional capacity raised); (4) change in **policy** (including strategies, plans, laws, legislation of other nature/level); (5) improvement of **financing** for children.*

3.3.3.1. Evaluation of UNICEF impact under each Outcome of the Country Programme

A comprehensive account of UNICEF contribution to the reported impact is presented in Annex 2 and specific detailed examples are analysed as part of the process tracing case studies for three areas: (1) *early childhood development*, (2) *inclusive education for children with disabilities* and (3) *violence against children*. The findings of the 3 case studies feeds into the following analysis of impact under each outcome and it is presented in detail in Annex 3.

UNICEF contribution to observed progress concerning early childhood development and child care (impact under Programme Outcome 1)

The contribution of UNICEF has been significant in the process of deinstitutionalization, and for providing solutions and models for alternative care and support, which led to increased access for vulnerable children to better services. UNICEF also contributed to improved access to support and counselling for parents from disadvantaged, vulnerable groups and enhanced parenting skills, but the impact in this regard remained limited to the beneficiaries of the implemented models (HVS and FCC).

Early childhood development is a cross-sectoral area which embeds the health care, education and social and child protection services, according to the national and institutional legal framework of Bulgaria⁴¹. Nevertheless, the current system of social services lacks cross-sectoral coordination in the area. The efforts made by UNICEF as regards ECD and child care focused on increasing the access of parents to integrated and quality services, through testing family-based and community-based support models and through advocacy for the development of the national legislative framework in this direction.

The first outcome of the CPD 2018 – 2022 – Early Childhood Education and Child Care is operationalized through 2 outcome indicators. According to the existing administrative data at national level, **the first outcome indicator, which addresses the advancement of the deinstitutionalization process has been fully achieved in Bulgaria and the target set by UNICEF for 2022, has been already surpassed.** In the area of child care and more specifically in line with the National Strategy “Vision for Deinstitutionalization of children in Bulgaria 2015 – 2025, Bulgaria has made an important progress, overreaching its objectives. The number of institutionalized children has dropped significantly, the number of specialized institutions decreased and the development of alternative care services has been in parallel improved.

For the second outcome indicator of CPD, which refers to the increase of the **proportion of disadvantaged families with children between 0 and 2 years old that receive support and counselling for ECD, there is no available comparative data that can show the improvements achieved by 2021 at national level.** Nevertheless, the efforts of UNICEF in this concern led to an improved legislative framework in Bulgaria and to a significant number of families receiving ECD support and counselling, as it will be further presented.

The findings of the impact assessment on the area of early childhood development, which is presented in Annex 3. Process Tracing – Case studies, feeds into the following analysis.

UNICEF contributed to a strengthened legislative framework in Bulgaria in the area of ECD and child care and thus to the improvement of the situation of children, through: testing models and scaling them up, supporting evidence generation through studies and research, providing technical support to public authorities. UNICEF has supported the development and implementation of the National Strategy for Vision for Deinstitutionalization (2015–2025), which, along with the commitment of public authorities, led to a significant progress in ensuring the right of every child to live in a family environment. The contribution of UNICEF in informing national policy, and supporting services for vulnerable children and families, and for finding alternatives to institutional care is highlighted by the fact that UNICEF Bulgaria’s study “Helping to de-institutionalize children in Bulgaria: Evaluation of the Family for Every Child Project in the Region of Shumen, Bulgaria, 2017” was included in the Best of UNICEF Research and Evaluation 2020 joint publication⁴². Despite the unfavourable political climate due to which the ECD strategy has been put on hold, Bulgaria has adopted in 2020 the Social Services Act that leads to important improvement in the legislative framework of social service. The new act lays the ground for a more cross-sectoral coordinated system of social services, increases the focus on child rights realization and provides the framework for family and community-based serviced in the ECD area.

There is sufficient evidence that UNICEF’s actions in ECD area resulted in strengthened parenting competencies for the parents participating in COs initiatives (such as in HVS and FCCs, but not only) and thus, enhanced quality of parental care. Nevertheless, their impact remains limited to the geographical areas where the models have been implemented. According to the progress made by UNICEF in regards with provided support for ECD, 13794 parents/caregivers of children under 5 received parenting support to improve care and development of their children with support of UNICEF in the reporting year⁴³. The available secondary data (UNICEF’s reports and the Evaluation of HVS 2018) and

⁴¹ UNICEF, Bulgaria Update Strategy Note 2020, p.7.

⁴² UNICEF, RAM 2020, p.8, p. 47

⁴³ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p.5

primary data collected through interviews conducted with key stakeholders, shows that the knowledge, attitude and practices of parents participating in the models developed by UNICEF, especially among the most remote, marginalized and vulnerable settings, were improved. The evaluation of HVS model, from 2019, showed that the project enhanced the quality of parental care in certain areas, such as: introduction of solid food, massaging, bathing. It can be safely concluded that UNICEF has made a significant contribution in bringing up the need for ECD to the attention of all sectors and enhancing the level of understanding and knowledge regarding the importance of early years in human development and promoting the development of a more integrated approach to support parents and children in the early years. This has been achieved by setting successful examples of practices to support early childhood care and the nurturing family and social environment, especially at the local level.

The pilot interventions in the field of ECD increased access to social, health and education services for young children from isolated or disadvantaged communities/most vulnerable children, however, accessibility and quality of services at national level remain points of concern. The Family Consultative Centres (FCCs), co-created by several municipalities and UNICEF, was designed within the frame of the previous CPDs. The number of FCCs providing complex services (social, pedagogical, psychological, medical, etc.) to vulnerable groups is insufficient and they are not available in all municipalities. In 2020, 2,046 families and 3,055 children from vulnerable and isolated communities benefited from outreach and preventive services in the Family Consultative Centres (FCCs)⁴⁴. The demonstration of Home Visiting Services in two regions of the country, provided 6000 families of children aged zero to two with individual guidance, information and education for nurturing care⁴⁵. An evaluation of the UNICEF supported HVS model was completed and its findings were used to inform the development of a proposal for scaling up of the service on a national basis. According to the CPD, the model should be scaled up the end of 2022, but the progress in this regard is currently slow. Despite UNICEF advocacy and technical support, toward the end of 2019 Ministry of Health finally decided not to pursue the expansion because of concerns for availability of sustainable government funding after the end of the project.

Therefore, UNICEF Bulgaria CO played an active role and contributed to the following developments at policy level in the current programming period:

- Preparation of the new Social Services Act enforced in 2020. Through advocacy and technical assistance in the process of development of all relevant secondary legislation to the Act, UNICEF contributed in the efforts to lay the basis for expanding family-centred early childhood intervention services for children with developmental difficulties in the future, as well as sustainable provision of support for parenting and building caregivers' skills for nurturing care, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable children and their families⁴⁶.
- UNICEF supported the Open Society Foundation, the Roma Education Fund to conduct *The study on Roma Early Years Inclusion* (RECI+ studies), which informed the draft national strategy for inclusion and participation of Roma for the period 2021-2030⁴⁷.
- The case study of the FCCs model and outreach approach and the CO advocacy and piloting activities that led to updating the national methodology for provision of state-delegated community support services is included in the "Realising Children's Rights through Social Policy in ECA: A Compendium of UNICEF's Contributions (2014-2020)" as well as UNICEF Child Protection Scaling Up Paper⁴⁸.
- Selection of Bulgaria as a pilot country for Phase III of the Preparatory Action for the EU Child Guarantee, which will be tested with support from UNICEF ECARO and respective Country Offices. The pilot project

⁴⁴ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p.8

⁴⁵ UNICEF, COAR 2018, p.7

⁴⁶ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 1

⁴⁷ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 6

⁴⁸ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 8

on the EU Child Guarantee started in August 2020 and a MoUC (Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation) was signed between UNICEF Bulgaria CO, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Central Coordination Unit at the Council of Ministers, and respective district administrations.

UNICEF contribution to the improved inclusive educational and early learning policies and practices, adapted to needs of the most disadvantaged (Impact under Programme Outcome 2)

UNICEF has contributed to a significant extent to the strengthened capacity of the education system to address the needs of children with disabilities and special educational needs, but did not generate visible impact at the level of school enrolment and dropout rates. The analysis provides clear evidence that UNICEF undertook and supported a large number of initiatives in the field of inclusive education and the evaluation team is highly confident that these activities have short term results for the directly targeted institutions and professionals. They contributed to (i) improved competencies and positive attitudes of teachers and other supported specialists to work with children with disabilities and (ii) increased institutional capacity to offer better educational service and additional support to children with disabilities.

The second outcome of the CP includes 3 outcome indicators, from which 2 indicators refer to the level of participation of school-aged children in the educational system and one the other, to the number of available specialized school and kindergartens staff for children with special needs. Regarding the rate of school age children out of school and the rate of early leavers from education (addressed first 2 outcome indicators), the available administrative data show that the situation for Bulgaria has worsened. .

In comparison with the figures from school year 2016/2017, in 2018/2019 school year the enrolment rate has been lower, thus the target has not been achieved, as showed below:

- In the case of **children aged 3 - 6**, the enrolment has decreased from 84.8% in 2014/2015 to 80.1% in 2019/2020 school year, showing **an increase with 4,5 percentual points of children out of school**⁴⁹.
- In the case of children **aged 7 – 10**, the enrolment rate has decreased form 96.7% in 2014/2015 school year to 88.3% in 2019/2020 school year, meaning **an increase with 8.4 percentual points of children out of school**;
- In the case of **children aged 11 – 14/13**, the enrolment rate has decreased 94,1% in 2014/2015 to 90.1 in 2019/2020, showing **an increase with 4 percentual points of children out of school**⁵⁰.

Regarding the second outcome indicator, namely **the rate of early leavers from education and training, the available data show that the numbers has also increased in the period 2015 – 2020**, thus the target has not been achieved. The available data show that in 2015 the rate or early leavers (population aged between 18 and 24) was 13.4%, whereas, by 2019, the rate increased to 13.9%⁵¹. Moreover, as the Situation Analysis conducted by UNICEF emphasizes, the “about 30 – 35% of 6 grade children are at risk of dropping out of school”.sector .

The lack of progress made by UNICEF in this concern is caused by two factors: the poor design of the CP under outcome 2 and the general context from Bulgaria in regards with the more than 5 years long downward trend in school enrolment rates. Only one output under outcome 2 addresses directly the two above mentioned outcomes indicators, namely “Support for reducing school dropout”. Based on its design,

⁴⁹ The available administrative data do not provide disaggregated enrollment numbers or rates for children aged 3-4 and children aged 6 -7 and the CPD Bulgaria 2018 – 2022 sets the baseline (2015) and target (2022) for outcome indicator: *Rate of school-age children out of school, by sex and education level (52337)*. As to be able to proper assess the progress made in this case diagregated data by sex is required. Nevertheless, the CPD does not set up the target for 2022 in this manner.

⁵⁰ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis, 2020, p. 83

⁵¹ Key indicators report p. 8

UNICEF initially planned⁵², on one hand, to improve the EMIS national system which provides data on attendance and dropout and, on the other, to develop a prevention dropout model for Roma adolescent girls and children at risk of dropout and to implement it in two regions of Bulgaria. The limited geographical coverage of the project and fact that its expansion at national level it is not covered in the CPD made the expected impact regarding the increase of the enrolment rate and the decrease of school dropout difficult to be achieved. Moreover, while, at national level significant progress has been registered in the area of inclusive education (policy framework, services provided, available specialized pre-school and school staff), as we further present, for the last decade Bulgaria has been confronted with a constant decrease of the enrolment rate of children in education system, the highest decrease being registered at primary school aged children. Therefore, the targets set for the 2 outcome indicators were not feasible not only due to the planned outputs, but also in the context of the general situation regarding the enrolment rates of school-aged children in the educational system.

In regards with the third outcome indicator, the number of available specialized school and kindergarten staff for children with special needs, which addresses directly the inclusive education area by measuring the progress made in the available pre-school and school staff for children in need of support, the available data show that Bulgaria. The target set for year 2022 in the CP of 4500 specialist in the educational system that can adequately work with children with SEN has been exceeded in 2020 by 420 specialists. Thus, more children with SEN can benefit from adequate support, tailored to their needs. The progress can be observed not only in the number of specialized staff from the educational system prepared to provide support for children with disabilities, but also in legal provisioning, capacity building, securing of funding and creating favourable conditions for expanding the access of children and adolescents with disabilities and special education needs (SEN) to quality and inclusive education.

The findings of the impact assessment on the area inclusive education for children with disabilities, which is presented in Annex 3. Process Tracing – Case studies, feeds into the following analysis.

UNICEF has contributed to the increased institutional capacity of kindergartens to early detect and effectively intervene in the case of children with special educational needs and thus, provided increased access to support services for children enrolled in the kindergartens included in the project. More specifically, the pilot programme implemented by UNICEF led to improved skills and capacities of teachers and specialists to implement inclusive education practices, increased access to support services for children from the targeted regions and changed parental attitudes. In 2020, building upon the previous experience and lessons learned, UNICEF Bulgaria CO in collaboration with the MoES expanded the piloting of the pre-school inclusive practices to another 30 kindergartens (with over 6,100 children) in 3 new regions (Sliven, Stara Zagora and Burgas) under the framework of the “EU Child Guarantee” project. The core component of the project was the recruitment and training of specialist staff (speech therapists, psychologists, resource teachers). The formative evaluation of the inclusive pre-school model, implemented in 2018, provided clear evidence regarding the effectiveness of the support provided by UNICEF, including improved institutional capacity of the pilot kindergartens to early detect children with special education needs and intervene, improved skills and capacities of over 500 teachers and 100 specialists to implement inclusive education practices, and providing access to support services for more than 5,000 children, and changed parental attitudes. The evaluation report stated that *“it is more than likely that the no-cost practices implemented during the project and the impact of the teacher training will continue after project completion”*⁵³. Further, the evaluation provided recommendations on scaling-up of the model

⁵² Another output was added in 2020, to support home study in short term school closures with UNICEF support in the reporting year.

⁵³ Antonowicz, L. (2018). Formative Assessment Inclusive Pre-School Model in Bulgaria.

or different components of it. Based on the expansion of the project, other 6,100 children are provided with access to support services and benefit from a more inclusive school environment. **According to the conducted analysis, the impact remains limited to the area where the pilot and its extension have been implemented.** Nevertheless, the extension of the programme proves commitment from the government side in this area and shows good prospects for further advancements towards results at scale.

Evidence also shows that UNICEF contributed to a large extent to the strengthened capacities for application of functional assessment of disability in the education system in Bulgaria. Thus, the impact of UNICEF work in this area consists in generating an institutional change. UNICEF provided technical support to the MoES for the introduction of the functional assessment of children and students with SEN according to the WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disabilities and Human Health. UNICEF commissioned a renowned international expert to deliver methodological support to MoES and training of 70 trainers from the regional centers for supporting the process of inclusive education on how to apply the functional assessment of children and students with SEN according to the WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disabilities and Human Health⁵⁴. In 2020 the follow-up trainings for scaling up the functional assessment were included as a dedicated activity within a new MoES project funded under Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth⁵⁵. Therefore, the MoES has taken up the mechanism initiated by UNICEF and currently, is preparing the scaling up of the application of functional assessment of disability.

UNICEF contribution in terms of human capacity development in the area of promoting inclusive education has been significant. Due to the work of UNICEF CO, through modelling, advocacy and technical support provided to the ministry, normative changes were adopted by the MoES regarding the training of teachers in the area of inclusive education. Within the modelling intervention, UNICEF supported Karin Dom and the National Association of Resource Teachers to develop and deliver training focused on building teacher capacity to work with children with disabilities within the mainstream kindergartens, as well as to build an inclusive environment and to support the learning of children with SEN. **The training program has been accredited to the MoES for general use, by the registration at the Information Register of Approved Programs for Upgrading Qualification of Pedagogical Specialists, offering 4 qualification credits.** Available reports and the interviews held provide evidence that UNICEF in partnership with several universities, assisted to development of (i) the general framework for introducing pre-service teacher training on inclusive education and (ii) introduction of a 15-hour mandatory module for pre-service teacher training on inclusive education. The output of this collaboration and assistance was manifested in the amendments in the Regulation of the Professional Qualification of Teachers.

UNICEF contribution to preventing violence, protecting child victims and ensure access to timely remedy to child participants in judicial procedures (impact of Programme Outcome 3)

UNICEF made significant contributions regarding the development of the legal framework in the area of access to justice for children and protection against violence. Nevertheless, the impact of UNICEF efforts in developing child-friendly practices in this area remains limited due to the scope of the implemented models.

Even if the reach of UNICEF's actions and projects in the area of child protection from violence and prevention is rather low compared to the needs at national level, **all evidence collected show that the efforts made by UNICEF for the improvement of the system of child protection in the area of VaC have been essential for providing access of child victims of violence or children being at risk to**

⁵⁴ UNICEF, Country Office Annual Report, 2019

⁵⁵ RAM (2020)

integrated service and support and to child-friendly justice. UNICEF is recognized by all interviewed stakeholders as a key actor in this area in Bulgaria.

The third outcome of UNICEF CPD for the period 2018 – 2022 is operationalized through 4 outcome indicators. The **first outcome indicator** refers to the adequate support received by children on the move, including access to health and education services. According to the data **Bulgaria has made progress in addressing the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)** and ensuring the realisation of their rights, nevertheless, the indicator has been partially achieved. The ban on detention of UASC introduced in the law in 2017 and the adoption of the Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria (LARB) Regulations are two important legislative changes, to which UNICEF CO has contributed through technical support and evidence generating, that led to improvements in the state response to the needs of UASC. UNICEF supported the provision of social, health and educational services for children on the move, with a focus on gender-based needs. Nevertheless, there is a need for more coordination among key stakeholders providing services, such as child protection, judicial or health, to children on the move and also of increasing the preparedness of specialized staff dealing with UASC (cultural mediators, psychologists, social workers and other) and the expansion of the coverage of services provided.

UNICEF has contributed to strengthening the strategic and legislative framework in the area of child protection, by provided technical support for governmental bodies. The evidence show that UNICEF has contributed to strengthening the national and local policy in the area of prevention of violence against children and support for children, victims or at risk of being victims of violence, has been of outmost importance, consisting in:

- through its participation in the establishment of partnerships between central and local authorities, civil society, media, court and prosecutor's office;
- by changing attitudes towards children in conflict with the law and creating opportunities for support, integration and positive change for young people;
- by participating in the creation of national and local policies in the protection of children and in their implementation;
- collection and summarization of statistics and database, analyses, research in this direction;
- by participating in the introduction and provision of the so-called “blue rooms” that allow the objectives of the investigation to be achieved.

In this regard UNICEF has contributed with technical support and advocacy activities to the development and adoption of the following strategic and legal documents or amendments: Social Services Act, National programme for prevention and protection of domestic violence for 2020, National Strategy for Promoting Equality between Women and Men for the period 2021-2030, Amendments of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, amendments of the Regulations and the Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria. The contributions provided to the development of SSA were focused on improving the way in which social services are provided, putting more emphasis on the individualized and customized services and support for children. UNICEF has also contributed to the introduction of an integrated approach facilitating “multiagency coordination and team work”. The National programme for prevention and protection of domestic violence for 2020, has been based, among others, on the experience and results of UNICEF modelling work (e.g., Child Advocacy Centres and Steps together whole school programme)⁵⁶. The available documents show evidence of the support provided by UNICEF to the development of the National Strategy for Promoting Equality between Women and Men for the period 2021-2030. UNICEF has contributed to the strategy with specialized input that resulted in adding new measures related to strengthening the capacity for prevention and response to violence and victims support and the proposed indicators to monitor key

⁵⁶ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 24

activities⁵⁷ (priority area IV. Fight with violence, protection and support to victims). The amendments introduced to the Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria, and developed with the support of UNICEF, sets up the practice of referral to child protection departments, representation, the possibility of implementation of police custody, interpretation and legal aid for unaccompanied and separated children in the national immigration procedures⁵⁸.

Moreover, **UNICEF has also contributed to the improvements observed at policy level, by generating evidence in support of the changes made in the legislative area.** The CO has conducted several studies and tested models that have generated evidence on current situation of child protection system, including VAC and GBV and on the effectiveness of different types of integrated services. The data generated on the effectiveness of the tested models have informed the process of legal reform. In this concern, UNICEF has contributed to the development of The Analysis of the child protection (CP) system, developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with the support of UNICEF CO and The National Study on Violence Against Children, developed by UNICEF. Further UNICEF has developed the Situation Analysis on children and women in Bulgaria, 2017, A Situation Analysis of the child rights in Bulgaria, 2020 and the Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centres, 2020. In respect with data collecting on the impact of COVID 19 on children, UNICEF conducted the following: Representative survey on needs and vulnerabilities among families and the impact of COVID-19, High-Frequency Monitoring Survey on the socio-impact of COVID-19 on households (with WB) An overview of municipal responses to COVID-19 with a focus on social and economic measures, Legal analysis on the COVID-19 impact on child rights, A nationally representative research on preferred information channels, communication platforms, influencers and online behaviours of adolescents and youth in the digital space and Behavioural Insights national research related to COVID-19.

The **second outcome indicator** refers to institutionalized, specialized and quality routine training on the rights of child participants in legal proceedings for police officers, prosecutors, judges and lawyers working with children in justice processes. In this area there are no formalized trainings for professionals in the judiciary working with children, thus the indicator has not been achieved. All data available show that the professionals are not well prepared to work with children; although slight improvements are observed as regards the extent to which the alternatives to detention and the restorative practices are used, for observable at-scale results to be produced, there is a need of a legal framework, including on the integration of mandatory trainings for professional working with children. Nevertheless, a slight decrease in proceeding launched against children and also in the number of children convicted has been registered.

UNICEF contributed significantly to the improved access to integrated services for children in contact with the law, in the areas where the CACs model has been implemented. Nevertheless, the impact of UNICEF's work in this area is limited due to the fact that the model has not been scaled-up. UNICEF have initiated the Child Advocacy Centers project as a framework of intersectoral services (crisis interventions, therapeutic and legal support, medical and forensic expertise) provided in support of children victims of violence and their families. The collected evidence shows that, in Bulgaria, UNICEF, along with its partners in the project, ANIMUS and SAPI, are the only providers of this type of services and that the model has been effective and the scaling up is at most importance for the improvement of services provided by the government in the area of VaC. Moreover, the evaluation of CAC model implemented in Bulgaria showed that the intervention “unique in delivery of integrated and specialized services to child victims of violence and crimes, and their families”⁵⁹. Each CAC has a Blue Room which police and justice officials can use to interview children in a child friendly environment with the support of a psychologist and/or social worker from the CAC. Another important component of the CAC model is that centers provide child victims and their families with free legal services. The implementation of the model in Bulgaria has

⁵⁷ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 25

⁵⁸ UNICEF, Country Office Annual Report, 2018, p. 10

⁵⁹ Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centres, 2020, p. 4

been based on the previous experience of other countries with similar interventions and was developed taking into consideration the good practices established in Canada and Iceland. The effectiveness of the model has been assessed first in 2016 and second in 2020 through two evaluation reports. The CACs project have supported 538 children (female: 318 and male 220) and 413 parents (female: 323, male: 90) with integrated services related to prevention and response to VaC up to year 2020⁶⁰. The evidence collected show that the contribution of UNICEF in the coordination, implementation and funding of the model is vital for its sustainability in the given situation. Nevertheless, the CO did not elaborate a scaling-up strategy in the design phase of the model, which led to a difficult process. The lack of public funding allocated for this type of integrated services provided for children, the lack of administrative capacity and specialized human resources within public providers will lead to a decrease in the access of children victims of violence to integrated, quality services if the CAC model will be stopped.

UNICEF has contributed to the effective implementation of the inter-institutional, cross-sectoral cooperation system for case management in the area of VaC, thus child victims of violence or children being at risk benefit from improved, integrated services. The Situation Analysis conducted by UNICEF in 2020, shows that in the period of 2013 – 2019, the use of the Coordination Mechanism for cross-sectoral support provided to child victims of violence or children being at risk has increased with 33 percent⁶¹. The analysis provides evidence on the fact that “social services, health, education and civil society partners are increasingly involved at key stages of the juvenile justice process”⁶². Nevertheless, there is still a stringent need in the formalization of the cross-sector collaboration of key actors in area VaC. As data collected shows, UNICEF has been acting as a communication and cooperation facilitator between governmental actors, municipalities and service providers, CSOs and universities. This has been emphasized in its work on CACs model and constitutes an essential contribution of UNICEF in VaC area and child protection, due to the lack of cross-sectoral coordination and integrated services provide for children at risk and victims of violence. Moreover, the NGOs that have been interviewed consider that in general UNICEF has been not only the facilitator in the collaboration among them through their actions and projects, but also a facilitator in regards to the communication between CSOs and the government, being a very stable partners and also having a long-term collaboration with ministries, relevant national agencies, but also with the municipalities where they implement the modeling projects. The perspectives of the interviewees converge to the idea that the support provided by UNICEF to the CSOs legitimates their actions. Also, the data collected from interviews also show that UNICEF has been a liaison between administration within the projects supported by them, such as Child Advocacy Centers.

The **third outcome indicator** refers to the number of cases of violence against children identified, reported and addressed. The indicator has not been achieved because the number of signals and cases launched in the period 2015 – 2019 have decreased significantly. If in 2015, there were 3,741 signals received for violence against children and 957 cases launched, in 2019, there were only 1,171 signals received and only 446 cases opened. This trend must be analysed in comparison with the number of children victims of violence, that has increased from 3,566 in 2015 to 4,122 in 2019⁶³. Nevertheless, the available administrative data is inconsistent and the efforts made in the area of monitoring and identifying cases of VaC or children at risk are not sufficient.

Regarding the **fourth outcome indicator**, justice system complies with the minimum standards laid down in the Beijing Rules of Justice, the available data show progress due to the legislative improvements in the past years, but the target for 2022 of full compliance remains partially achieved.

⁶⁰ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 24

⁶¹ Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019, p. 122

⁶² Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019, p. 130

⁶³ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis of the child's rights in Bulgaria, 2020, p. 126

The monitoring system has slightly improved, with the contribution of UNICEF, but there is still a need to further develop the system as to fill in the information gaps, capture the level of child rights realization in the case of most vulnerable children and be able to provide solid evidence for policy-making. Based on the available data and the collected evidence, limited impact has been observed in this area. Even if there have been registered improvements in the administrative data collected, the evidence shows that there are gaps in the monitoring system, the available data is fragmented. There are insufficient efforts done in identifying children at risk of becoming victims of violence or child victims, children with disabilities or children from Roma communities, this issue being also emphasized through the analysis developed under the other 3 outcomes of the CPD.

As per CPD 2018 – 2022, the outcome of the area of partnerships for monitoring, communication and the promotion of child rights is operationalized through 3 indicators. The **first outcome indicator** refers to the extent to which state institutions, the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and network of child rights civil society groups are monitoring and regularly reporting on child rights violations, based on the equity principle thus, providing data on most vulnerable children. According to the available information, this indicator has been partially achieved. **UNICEF has fruitfully collaborated with the NSI and the Ombudsman's Office in regards with the development of the monitoring system, but the impact remains limited.** According to the available data, the National Statistical Institute has improved its statistical infrastructure⁶⁴ and the key indicators for which the NSI is collecting data are in accordance with EU requirements. Furthermore, according to UNICEF reports, the NSI produce data on children disaggregated in line with CRC concluding observations, through the Sector management information system⁶⁵. The Directorate on Child Rights of the Ombudsman's Office in Bulgaria is actively involved in monitoring the realization of child rights. Nevertheless, according to the data collected, its technical and financial capacity is insufficient as to able to collect data in all relevant areas. The available analysis and research developed in respect with child right realization emphasize that disaggregated data are not available, that information is fragmented and also the available database from different public institutions are not interoperable. The Situation Analysis conducted by UNICEF in 2020 highlights that “data on the actual numbers of children involved in labour, children/adolescents subjected to violence, child marriages, sexual violence, abuse and exploitation are not available”⁶⁶. Moreover, the analysis shows that in regards with vulnerable children, public institutions define and monitor in different manners their status. There still is an important gap in information regarding children from Roma communities and their rights realization. **Therefore, the extent to which the actions developed by UNICEF in this area have generated impact at the level of children lives could not be assessed, mainly because the progress made in this area has been limited at national level, despite the efforts made by UNICEF for the improvement of the monitoring system in Bulgaria.**

The **second outcome indicator**, refers to the number of complains brought to the Ombudsman's Office by children per year that are followed up/acted upon. The indicator has been partially achieved. The collected information shows that the number of complaints filed by children has increased, but they still represent a small part of the total numbers of complains submitted to the Ombudsman's Office. Moreover, the adverse

⁶⁴ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis 2020, p. 30

⁶⁵ UNICEF, RAM outcome and output indicators, 2020, p. 40

⁶⁶ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis 2020, p. 30

political context and movement of anti-child / human rights that emerged in Bulgaria in the past couple of years led to a decrease in the activity of the Ombudsman's Office⁶⁷.

The **third outcome indicator** monitor directly the effects of UNICEF's activities, referring to the number of partnerships engaged in communication and promotion of child rights. Therefore, the progress registered in this area, as defined in the CPD, is entirely attributable to UNICEF's efforts and does not reflect a national dynamic. According to UNICEF's reports the indicator has been achieved. **UNICEF has strengthened its business partnership strategy and started to engage more actively the business sector in its activities.** In this respect, the CO has developed a partnership with corporate businesses, NGOs, media and academia for the organization of the first youth-led virtual hackathon on digital solutions for media literacy⁶⁸. In 2020, UNICEF raised 1,581,728 (USD 992,301) in 2020, from private sector, 74% of its annual target⁶⁹, which were used for most vulnerable children affected by the pandemic context. Even if the collaboration with the business community has been effective so far, according to the data collected through interviews, the new approach the long-term engagement with members of the private sector is at an incipient stage and its successful implementation requires a change in the narrative of UNICEF from the focus on temporary collaboration mainly for fundraising, to the development of long-term partnerships build on common values and orientated towards the development of common project UNICEF's partnerships with public authorities and municipalities, key SCOs (within the models implemented, e.g. CACs, FFC, Together from kindergarten, HVS and other) in the fields of child protection, inclusive education, early childhood development are well established. The data collected through interviews show that UNICEF acts as a communication and partnership facilitator among duty bearers from different sectors, NGOs and academia. An important partnership that needs to be mentioned here is the partnership with Ombudsman of Bulgaria, which is actively involved in monitoring the realization of child rights in Bulgaria.

Moreover, as collected evidence shows, UNICEF have contributed **to raising awareness to the situation of vulnerable children in Bulgaria. Its C4D activities have reach a high number of people and engaged various actors in the area, such as: public authorities, CSOs, academia and media, but their effects could not be clearly identified or observed.**

In 2020, UNICEF developed an awareness and fundraising campaign to support non-verbal children 'A voice for every child'. The data collected from interviews indicate that the media coverage of the campaign was higher than 4.5 million people, reached through TV, radio, print and online media and UNICEF channels. Three corporate partners supported the campaign with advocacy messages and via the employee and customer networks. The campaign was supported by bTV, the most watched TV network in the country, and BNT. C4D activities also contributed to the engagement of young people digital activism, through production of information materials (videos, blogs, podcasts) that reached 2,382,797 people and engaged 40,720⁷⁰. Additionally, C4D launched U-Report Bulgaria and has reached 1,945,986 people in social media and has recruited its first ever 650 U-Reporters. UNICEF have developed the "Voice it" youth forum, the first youth hackathon on digital solutions for media literacy.

According to the data collected from interviews with key stakeholders, UNICEF have also contributed to ethical reporting on child rights in media and in this way to changing attitudes and

⁶⁷ UNICEF, Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019, p. 144

⁶⁸ UNICEF, RAM outcome and output indicators, 2020, p. 39

⁶⁹ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 49

⁷⁰ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 43

behaviours. From the perspective of the interviewees that participated in the data collection phase, the way in which media refers to children in Bulgaria has been improved in the past years. UNICEF developed a partnership with Association of European Journalists and created a guide book for ethical reporting (used not only in Bulgaria but in the region). Through UNICEF's activities 300 journalists were and young people were engaged in content writing. This led significant improvements in reporting on children in Bulgaria. Recently UNICEF has been invited by the Council of Electronic Media to draft a set of norms on how should media work with children. Moreover, the CO also created a Charter for ethical reporting and plans to scale-up the project in 2021.

3.3.3.2. Conditions and factors influencing the impact of UNICEF's Country Programme

Based on data collected from documents reviewed and interviews with stakeholders, the evaluation team identified a set of conditions and factors that have influenced the extent to which the CO work under the CP 2018 – 2022 have generated results at-scale (such as policy changes, institutional changes, including increased institutional capacity, changes in terms of access services, attitudinal and behavioural changes or changes in terms of financing for children). The detailed list of identified influencing factors per outcome can be consulted in Annex 2B. Detailed analysis of the general impact of the CP in Bulgaria.

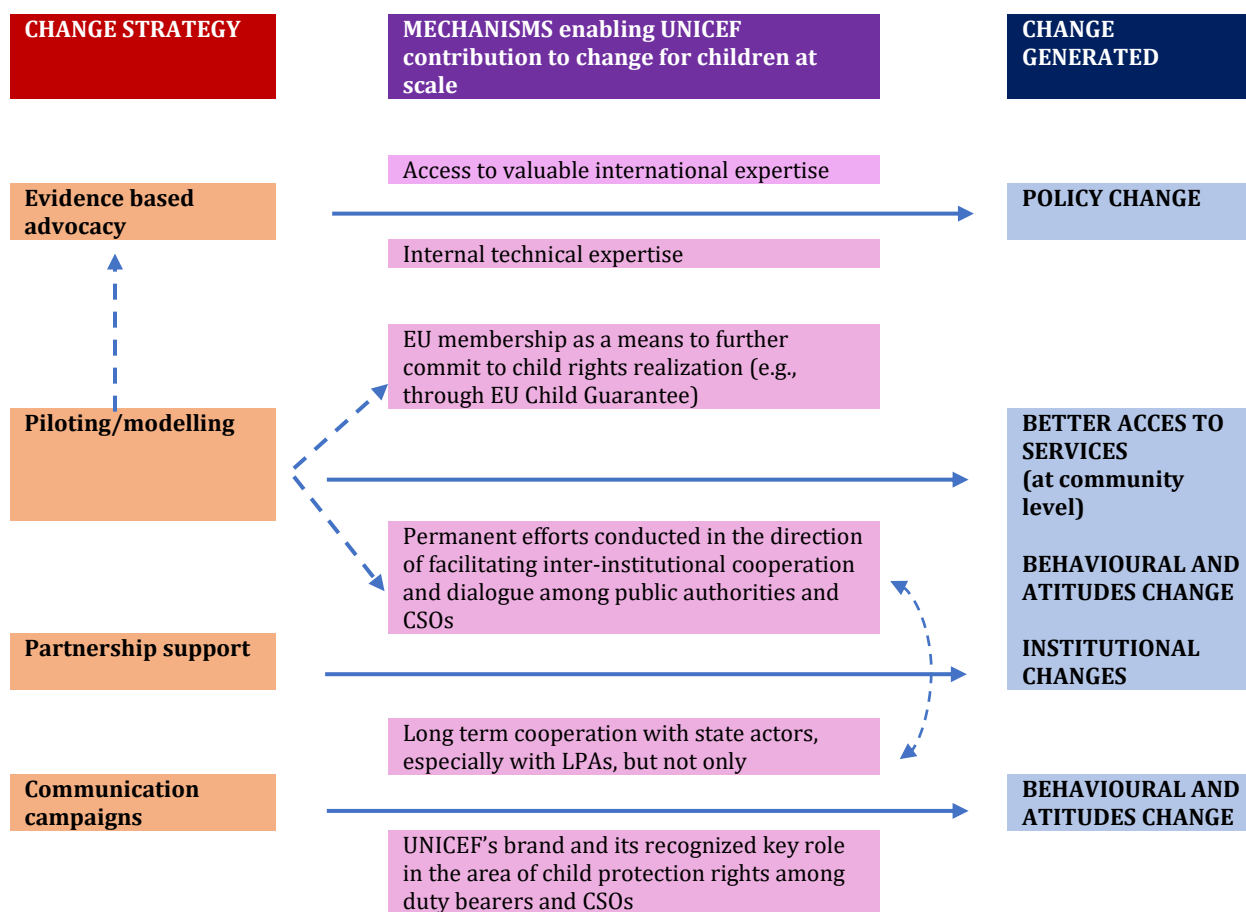
Further we present a general view of conditions that have facilitated the realizations of the CP's outcomes and factors that have negatively affected the progress of the programme.

In terms of enabling factors, the following were identified by this evaluation:

- effective partnerships and cooperation on the regional and local level, fostered by UNICEF through the efforts put in in all CPD's areas (e.g. with the regional departments for education, regional centers for supporting the process of inclusive education, stakeholders involved in Home Visits model, stakeholders involved in Child Advocacy Centers model) and thus
- commitment of service providers at the local level, due to sustainable local partnerships, in all CPD areas;
- credibility of the UNICEF brand and strong public recognition enabling greater influence on public opinion on the importance of early childhood care for development and inclusive education;
- UNICEF's access to valuable accumulation of knowledge and use of strong international expertise, in all areas covered by the CPD;
- EU membership, that allowed the introduction of EU Child Guarantee that could be used as a leverage to ensure progress in the field of ECD and VaC and also led to the adjustment of the data collected by the National Statistical Institute according to the European requirements;
- commitment and effective partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science, in the area of inclusive education;
- the commitment of the Ombudsman's of Bulgaria regarding monitoring and providing data on the situation of children in Bulgaria;
- the active role of Human Rights International Bodies in assessing the national monitoring system and providing recommendation for further improvements.

Below we present in a visual manner the summary of mechanisms enabling the contribution of the UNICEF to improving the situation of children in Bulgaria.

Figure 6. Summary of mechanisms enabling UNICEF contribution to change for children at scale



In terms of hindering factors, the analysis highlighted the following external elements that have influenced in a negative manner the extent to which UNICEF CO generated results at scale for children:

- The political crisis facing Bulgaria, which led to often changes at the level of governmental bodies and to the need to engage more resources in the partnership development activities;
- The resistance of conservative political groups and, as a consequence, the postponement of the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul Convention) and low political attention to the problems of children with disabilities;
- The lack of evidence-driven policy-making culture and practices in the area of education due to very fragmented responsibilities in monitoring the child rights realization in Bulgaria and lack of coordination among relevant public sectors;
- The prolonged periods of remote learning in electronic environment due to Covid-19 pandemic which increases significantly the risks for learning losses and widening educational inequalities, especially for the children with disabilities;
- Socio-cultural norms of some communities that may deprive children of their right to develop to their full potential;

- The general tolerance regarding domestic violence against women and children, which can be also observed at the level of judiciary professionals;
- The lack of knowledge and awareness about child rights, not only among the general public but also on the part of national and local authorities, professionals and the media;
- The underdeveloped culture of youth and adolescents' participation and engagement in public life and decision making, as a result of still lasting patriarchal social norms and age-related stereotypes.

3.3.2. Did UNICEF identify and reassess bottlenecks throughout programme implementation?

The CP documents contain specific strategies that are elaborated to address directly the most critical bottlenecks. The availability of comprehensive assessments of the situations and needs, surveys and evaluation studies suggest that UNICEF Bulgaria CO has pro-active approach for identifying risks at different stages of the interventions, and uses different monitoring mechanism to revisit the risks and to identify appropriate mitigation measures. At the same time, the review of the Country program documents and CO reports, as well as interviews held with CO staff and other stakeholders, demonstrated that all of the identified bottlenecks are persistent and sustained during the entire program cycle. Moreover, some of the bottlenecks have been transformed into serious threats, jeopardizing UNICEF Bulgaria CO efforts to reach results at scale.

The major **bottlenecks included in the Country Programme documents** are the following:

- Weak policy enforcement and policy implementation;
- Inadequacies in budgeting and monitoring especially of cross-sectoral programmes;
- Insufficient national resources to scale-up and mainstream the models demonstrated by UNICEF projects into the services to families with limited access to early childhood services;
- Lack of comprehensive and disaggregated data on children;
- Weak inter-sectoral cooperation;
- Deficient capacities at regional and local levels, such as: the low level of competencies and skills of human resources at the level various service providers (in the sectors of justice, health, mental health, psychological support, therapeutical support) dealing with cases in which children are involved.

Weak child rights culture and discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices. The Country Programme documents contain **specific strategies** that are elaborated to address directly the most critical bottlenecks, including:

- Putting emphasis on communication for social change (C4SC) to address the behavioural bottlenecks and empower families and caregivers to adopt positive child care and development practices;
- Addressing discriminatory public attitudes and the common prejudice against disadvantaged children;
- Strengthening the capacities and assisting duty bearers to meet their obligations;
- Empowering and supporting right holders to claim their rights and be agents of change;
- Strategic engagement with government and variety of relevant public institutions, NGOs, academia, business, etc. for supporting policy-making, policy enforcement and implementation for protection of children rights;
- Provision of evidence-based advocacy, technical assistance and policy advice to support the formulation, implementation and monitoring of child-related policies.
- Provision of targeted technical support for capacity building at national and local level.

1/ The evidence generated by the evaluation team suggests that the main bottleneck for full realization of the CP outcomes stems from the fact that their achievement is highly dependent on political will and contextual factors, over which UNICEF Bulgaria has limited to no control. **This requires a CP design and implementation plan that very thoroughly consider the environment in which the CP will be**

realized, identify precisely the possible political/contextual risks, elaborate well-targeted mitigation measures and offer concrete steps to successfully engage with the government. Although the CPD and the Updated Strategy Note provide an extensive list of concrete risks for realization of each output, these risks are mainly related to institutional and individual capacities, available resources, attitudes, etc. However, the program documents **rather vaguely consider the potential political risks and do not offer specific in-depth analysis and mitigation planning.** For example, the Updated Strategy Note identifies the major political risks in very general terms like “the rise of populist, nationalistic and anti-rights movements”, “increasing anti-rights agenda and deepening populism”, “political instability”, “risk of populist measures”, and only briefly points that “UNICEF will identify and engage with key government stakeholders who are supportive of UNICEF interventions, and who can influence other governmental actors”, or “will strengthen its engagement with the World Bank, the EC Representation, other international organizations and civil society for evidence generation and policy advocacy”.

2/ Strong propaganda on the part of the growing and well-organized anti child rights /human rights movement in the country has led to (i) increasing use of hate speech against children rights and (ii) deterioration in policy reforms supporting children rights. As a result, the implementation of several of the UNICEF-supported strategies, policies and laws enabling the scale-up of various services that benefit vulnerable children have come to a halt, thus failing to produce the expected results and impacts during the programme cycle covered by this evaluation. More specifically, the government put on hold implementation the National Strategy for the Child (2019-2030); the ECD Strategy; draft law regulating Juvenile Justice. The enforcement of the Social Services Act has been delayed. Important Family code amendments have been also delayed. Various social services reforms are either put on hold or progress very slowly.

Despite the detrimental impact of anti-rights propaganda on major legislative and policy changes focused on children rights and worsening prospects for scaling-up of most of the modelling initiatives due to increasing reluctance of the government to advance child-related initiatives, the mid-term review and the updated strategy do not offer in-depth analysis of this major political risk for CP realization, nor clear prioritization of the issue. The mid-term programming shifts do not directly target concrete mitigation efforts in this respect. Rather, the Updated Strategy Note refers to the adopted preventive and crisis communication strategy, and the need of continuing NGO sector capacity building to respond to this challenge. Some of the stakeholders interviewed shared concerns regarding the UNICEF Bulgaria preparedness and mandate to take strong pro-active role in opposing the anti-rights propaganda. Having the fact, that non-governmental sector in Bulgaria remains weak and is still not able to respond appropriately to the well-organized anti-rights campaigns, UNICEF Bulgaria’s willingness and ability to effectively counteract on organized attacks of anti-reform and anti-liberal forces is recognized as crucial.

3/ Cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination remain weak in all areas of UNICEF activities. In addition, the institutional capacity on local level remains largely insufficient. The UNICEF Bulgaria CO approach to focus on multi-sectoral initiatives, involving different ministries and/or government agencies, to invested significant efforts for inter-sectoral coordination, to participate in different multi-sectoral working groups and to partner with local authorities, has been recognized as an appropriate strategy by majority of the stakeholders interviewed. However, significant challenges remain, especially in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. For example, in regards with ECI, where the analysis has identified a lack of leadership regarding the integrated interventions, a challenge has been to facilitate the change of the focus of health services from children to parents. In this respect, a change at the level of medical approaches needs to be generated and this is a complex, long-term process. The current practice in ECI also impedes the development of a cross-sectoral approach.

4/ The allocation of national funds to serve the needs of vulnerable children is not at the desired level in terms of physical, material, human and financial inputs, and this could be considered a major threat for the sustainability of the interventions and/or scaling up models piloted during the programme cycle. UNICEF’s ability to build effective partnerships to successfully deliver services within the concrete modelling frameworks, along with the provision of technical expertise (including international) to support the local capacity building, have been recognized by stakeholders as crucial inputs for the implementation of the

respective pilots. However, there is no clear strategy applied to engage the government in scaling-up efforts. In terms of sustainability, the lack of exit strategy embedded in the modelling design has been recognized as an important bottleneck.

5/ In terms of internal bottlenecks, different areas of the Country Program appear slightly isolated from each other, involving separate sets of interventions, without common vision and internal links. This is visible from the respective Theories of Change and has been confirmed during the interviews. As presented in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2, even if the outcomes and outputs of the CPD are set at a very high level (e.g. some outcomes are operationalized through impact indicators or several outputs refer to policy and institutional changes which are considered long-term changes), the planned interventions cannot contribute to the fully realization of the outcomes. This situation is determined by the fact the CP is less developed when it comes to the upstream role of UNICEF. The scaling-up strategies or exit strategies regarding the tested models, the sustainability approach in terms of identifying and leveraging financial sources needed as the generated changes to remain in place after UNICEF interventions are ended are less developed or missing (as also mentioned under point 4). As concluded based on the document review phase of the evaluation and highlighted in several interviews, the most successful actions of UNICEF were the tested models, that have generated results at-scale for children, but their impact remained limited to the areas and mostly the beneficiaries targeted by the pilots. In the same vain, comparing the CPDs of Bulgaria and the other countries covered by this Multi-country evaluation, it appears that Bulgaria's CPD is closer to the typical non-EU agenda than to the EU policy framework. According to the data collected from interviews with key stakeholders, the CP, thus the work of UNICEF in Bulgaria should be more focused on addressing EU policies, due to the fact that at the national level, child rights are not on the public agenda. The CO initiated this process of addressing more EU policies, engaging in strategic partnerships with the institutions responsible for implementing Cohesion Policy in Bulgaria and thus, leveraging EU resources for the improvement of the situation of children from Bulgaria. Nevertheless, this focus is not explicitly covered by the current.

3.3.3. Did different groups, including children and the most marginalized, benefit in different ways from the Country Programme?

Data and information collected by the evaluation team demonstrates that UNICEF Bulgaria CP and its implementation took into account the specific needs of different groups of children. Although most of the UNICEF Bulgaria CO interventions are designed to provide universal impact for all children, in practice, to a large extent they target and plan to offer support for the most marginalised children and achieve results, mainly, for these groups.

More specifically, Bulgaria Country Programme focus strongly on closing equity gaps by targeting the most disadvantaged and hardest-to-reach children. However, some groups of vulnerable children benefited less from the work of UNICEF. The table below represents a summary of the vulnerable and marginalised children benefiting from the Country Programme and those 'left behind'.

As the following table shows, the UNICEF work has produced effects at the level of the following groups of children:

- Children at risk of poverty, including children from Roma communities and other isolated communities (outcome 1, outcome 2 and outcome 3);
- Children in residential care (outcome1);
- Children with SEN (outcome 2);
- Children with disabilities (outcome 1 and outcome 2);
- Child victims of violence and children being at risk (outcome 3);
- Children in conflict with the law (outcome 3);
- Refugee and migrant children (outcome 1, outcome 2 and outcome 3).

The analysis conducted by the evaluation team led to the following findings:

- Members of the same group of marginalized or disadvantaged children benefited in a different manner from the interventions designed and implemented by or UNICEF's support based on the targeted regions under the tested models;
- Under outcome 1, children in conflict with the law and homeless children are not specifically targeted;
- Under outcome 2, school-aged children with SEN did not benefit from the implemented interventions, the action being addressed only to kindergarten children.

It is important to mention here that the CP does not address homeless children in any way, even if the number of homeless children is on an upward trend. The national monitoring system in this regard is ineffective and the real number of homeless children is not available. Nevertheless, according to the SitAn 2021, the anecdotal evidence implies that most affected by this phenomenon are children from poor communities, including Roma communities, children transitioning from institutionalized care to the community and child migrants or children on the move⁷¹.

⁷¹ UNICEF, SitAn 2021, pp. 33, 65, 136

Table 3 The most marginalized and vulnerable children benefiting from UNICEF Bulgaria CP implementation

Outcome and outputs	More disadvantage children benefiting	The mechanisms enabling the impact for these children	More disadvantage children not benefiting	The mechanisms hindering the impact for these children
Outcome 1 - ECD AND CHILD CARE By 2022, boys and girls, especially most disadvantaged, benefit from effective national and local policies that support nurturing family and social environment to attain high standard of development, health, learning and well-being				
Output 1.1 SUPPORT FOR ECD The national policy framework is consolidated to ensure equitable access to services and support for early childhood development for all children	All children, with special focus on: - children at risk of developmental difficulties; - children with disabilities; - children exposed to neglect, violence and abuse; - children at high risk of poverty; - Roma children; - children from hard to-reach families;	Strengthening the ECD focus in key national strategic and policy documents. Strengthening the legal basis for provision of family-centred early childhood intervention services for children with developmental difficulties. C4D modalities, including home visiting, community-based parenting support programs. Implementation of community-based parenting support program. The HVS model has been piloted in districts with higher poverty levels, thus benefitting children at high risk of poverty.	Vulnerable/marginalized children from regions/municipalities that are not included in the modelling interventions (HVS) Homeless children	Beside strategic and legal provisions, UNICEF work was focused on modelling and pilot activities for capacity building at local level. The modelling proved successful to reach the most vulnerable groups, but it is not delivered at scale. Thus, the activities targeting most vulnerable children remained restricted to selected communities in the municipalities covered by the piloting initiatives. The needs of Roma children and children at high risk of poverty, living in rural regions and hard-to-reach families are not addressed in a systemic way towards the CP implementation. No specific activity of UNICEF was identified to answer the needs of homeless children.
Output 1.2 CHILD CARE The child and social protection systems are strengthened to provide consolidated interventions to ensure the right of every child to live in a caring and supportive family environment	Children in alternative care or at risk of being separated from their families; Refugee and migrant children; Children with disabilities Children from isolated communities;	Supporting child care reform and deinstitutionalization process. Promoting quality of social services. Supporting development and the implementation of family support packages to prevent family separation. Communication for Behavioural and Social Change (C4BSC) modalities. Modelling interventions to prevent family separation and stimulate child development – Family Consultative Centres;	Vulnerable/marginalized children from regions/municipalities that are not included in the modelling interventions (FCC); Homeless children; Children in conflict with law.	The activities targeting most vulnerable children remained restricted to selected communities in the municipalities covered by the piloting initiatives. Homeless children and children in conflict with law are not specifically targeted.

Output 1.3 SOCIAL POLICY National institutions and local authorities have strengthened capacity to develop and implement evidence-based, adequately funded and equity-focused policies and programmes addressing child poverty and social exclusion	Children at high risk of poverty; Children with disabilities; Roma children	Pilot implementation of the EU Child Guarantee in (2020-2022) to support the development and implementation of innovative approaches and models to ensure inclusion and access to services for vulnerable children and their families.	n/a	New activity; no enough data to evaluate the mechanisms hindering the impact for certain groups of marginalized children.
Output 1.4 HEALTH CARE PROVISION FOR R/M CHILDREN/MOTHERS Strengthened national authorities' capacity to provide health care, incl. immunization and other specialized services for refugee and migrant children and mothers	Refugee/migrant children	Strengthening the capacity of national authorities to provide health care for refugee and migrant children and mothers through health checks, screening, counselling and referral to national health services and specialized psycho-social support, under partnership agreements with implementing partners.	n/a	New activity; no enough data to evaluate the mechanisms hindering the impact for certain groups of marginalized children.
Outcome 2 - INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND EARLY LEARNING By 2022, boys and girls, especially the most disadvantaged, are in school and benefit from improved inclusive, gender-responsive educational policies and practices				
Output 2.1 SUPPORT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION Existence of tested mechanisms for implementation of inclusive practices and trained professionals to support inclusive education in kindergartens and schools	Children at risk of learning difficulties Children with SEN; Children with disabilities; Children at risk of poverty; Refugee and migrant children	Piloting a model for inclusive learning environment in kindergartens; Pre-service and in-service teacher training.	School-aged children with SEN and CwD; Children with SEN and CwD from regions/municipalities not participating in the pilots.	The piloted model focuses on inclusive education in pre-primary education only and does not cover children in schools; The activities/impact remained restricted to selected municipalities covered by the piloting initiatives only.
Outcome 3 - PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE By 2022, social services, the child protection system and the administration of justice more effectively prevent violence, protect child victims and ensure access to timely remedy to child participants in judicial procedures, including in humanitarian situations				
Output 3.1 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO VAC & GBV Strengthened capacities, multi-sectoral programs, services and	Children victims of violence and crime; Children living in poverty or children that are part of ethnical minority groups.	Modelling intervention to provide comprehensive support services to child victims and their families (Child Advocacy Centers) – a model "Everything under one roof" (the 'Barnahus' model) providing integrated services to children, involving medical support, crisis intervention,	Children in conflict with law; Children-victims in other regions not covered by the pilots.	Limited benefit to children victims only in the 3 pilot regions; The system of child protection is not proactive on identifying cases of violence against women and children or children being at risk. The service providers are not trained in this concern and they do

evidence-base for prevention and response to Violence against Children (VaC) & Gender Based Violence (GBV) and for creating a safe and protective environment for children.		<p>psychological and psychosocial support; Investment in Blue rooms.</p> <p>Evidence-based approach to addressing the needs of children, families and communities.</p> <p>Through the pilots, the access to justice has been improved especially to marginalized and vulnerable children (children living in poverty or children that are part of ethnical minority groups)</p>		<p>not have the necessary skills to identify such cases. Many cases of violence are not reported.</p> <p>Children in conflict in law needs preventive measures trough education, building motivation, support from the school – such interventions are not covered.</p>
<p>Output 3.2</p> <p>EQUITABLE ACCESS TO JUSTICE</p> <p>Output Statement: Strengthened administrative data, improved child-sensitive judicial procedures, quality legal aid and capacities of justice and law-enforcement professionals ensure that boys and girls in contact with the justice system receive fair, timely and effective services and remedies when their rights are violated.</p>	<p>Children victims;</p> <p>Children in conflict with law;</p> <p>Unaccompanied children</p>	<p>Provision of legal aid to children in contact with justice;</p> <p>Improvement in regards to child friendly justice practices</p>	<p>Children in risk</p>	<p>Many cases of violence are not reported. Limited capacity of service to identify cases of violence.</p> <p>Children in conflict in law needs preventive measures trough education, building motivation, support from the school – such interventions are not covered.</p>

3.3.4. Are the results likely to be maintained over time?

Sustainability of many of the CP outcomes is highly dependent of the political will, existing institutional arrangements and capacities at national and local level. UNICEF Bulgaria CO successfully collaborates with the government and different ministries, participates in different inter-institutional cooperation mechanisms and provides valuable technical support and expertise. However, given the current political instability, strong anti-rights opposition, constant changes in the policy agenda on children rights, weak cross-sectorial cooperation, fragmented institutional practices and limited capacities (especially at local level), the prospects for sustainability of the results are rather unclear.

Even the most successful modelling interventions that clearly demonstrate effectiveness of a service, face unclear sustainability prospects, as their scaling-up has been put on halt. The pilot project on the EU Child Guarantee that started in August 2020 and the Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation signed between UNICEF Bulgaria CO, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Central Coordination Unit at the Council of Ministers, and respective district administrations, provided good opportunity to further expand the access to home visiting services, early childhood intervention, inclusive pre-school education and integrated child and family support services for children with disabilities and developmental difficulties and children in precarious family situations in additional 10 pilot municipalities on the territory of 3 districts – Burgas, Sliven and Stara Zagora. But as a whole, the lack of (i) exit strategy that is embedded in the modelling design from the very beginning; and (ii) a clear strategy how to engage the government in scaling-up efforts have been recognized as major shortcomings in terms of ensuring sustainability of results. In addition, development of the expertise needed at national and local levels to expand out projects and introduce them in a sustainable manner in the public services system requires serious efforts aiming at building the national ownership and commitment since the very beginning of the modeling interventions.

3.3.5. Which strategies or group of strategies were effective in producing results at scale?

The impact assessment and case shows that the CO used a wide range of strategies, as described in the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 and all of them proved to be effective, especially when combined.

The change strategies most often used by UNICEF Bulgaria CO are:

1/ Fostering innovation in programming and advocacy for children. In all 3 impact areas covered by this evaluation, UNICEF Bulgaria CO used extensively modelling interventions introducing innovative approaches for Bulgaria as to facilitate the access of vulnerable children to early childhood development services, inclusive learning environment in kindergartens, comprehensive support services to child victims and their families, including:

- Home Visiting Services Model
- Together from Kindergarten
- Child Advocacy Centers
- Steps together whole-school programme

2/ Developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children, especially by influencing domestic planning, financing and the delivery of services for children, using, as a rule, **three main tools:**

- **Provision of technical assistance to key institutions (and duty bearers),** for example technical assistance for the development of relevant legislative framework; technical assistance for functional assessment of disability, etc.
- **Consolidating the efforts and strengthening the capacities of implementing partners,** for example to deliver services, provide trainings, etc.
- **Enhancing collaboration, promoting cross-sectorial cooperation and increasing synergies between different stakeholders** – public institutions, service providers, local authorities, NGOs, academia, etc.

3/ Using the power of evidence to drive change for children by providing evaluation and research in policy making, mobilizing the available Bulgarian research expertise, sharing knowledge, advocating for strengthening national statistics related to children for better evidence-based policy-making.

4/ Winning support for the cause of children from decision-makers and the wider public by focusing on (i) communication for social change (C4SC) to address the behavioural bottlenecks and empower families and caregivers to adopt positive child care and development practices; (ii) provision of training to improve competencies and attitudes (e.g. of teachers/caregivers); as well as (iii) implementation of variety of public campaigns to win support from the general public.

The case studies conducted using process tracing allow for a limited analysis of the effectiveness of strategies and combination of strategies used, as presented in the table below.

Table 4 Strategies used by UNICEF Bulgaria in selected areas of impact

Area of impact	Posterior level of confidence that the claims about UNICEF contribution to the impact is true	Strategies used - in (chrono)logical order
Early childhood development	0.875 - We can be highly confident that UNICEF Bulgaria contributed to improvements in the area of early childhood development, by increasing access to support services and improving parental care in the case of HVS beneficiaries. The analysis provide clear evidence that UNICEF undertook and supported interventions in collaboration and cooperation with public, private and civil sectors, and we are highly confident that these interventions have contributed to improved parenting competencies, with possible immediate outcomes in terms of improved access to social, health and education services for young children from isolated or disadvantaged communities/most vulnerable children.	<p>1. Fostering innovation in programming and advocacy for children</p> <p><i>1.1. Implementing modelling/piloting projects</i></p> <p>2. Developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children</p> <p><i>2.1. Technical assistance to key institutions</i></p> <p><i>2.2. Training provided by implementing partners</i></p> <p><i>2.3. C4D initiatives and partnership programs promoting positive interaction, nurturing and stimulating care for young children</i></p> <p><i>2.4. The establishment of the National ECD Allignes to strengthen civil society support for ECD.</i></p> <p>3. Using the power of evidence to drive change for children</p> <p><i>3.1. Support for the development of the Roma Early Years Inclusion Study in cooperation with key stakeholders</i></p>
Inclusive education	0.5714 – We can only be more confident than not that UNICEF Bulgaria contributed to the overall improvement of the inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream kindergartens and schools. There is clear evidence that UNICEF undertook and supported a large number of initiatives in the field inclusive education and we are highly confident that these activities have short term results for the directly targeted institutions and professionals, contributing to (i) improved competencies and positive attitudes of teachers and other supported specialists	<p>1. Fostering innovation in programming and advocacy for children</p> <p><i>1.1. Implementing modelling/piloting projects</i></p> <p>2. Using the power of evidence to drive change for children</p> <p><i>2.1. Documenting good practices and lessons learned to provide evidence for national scale-up</i></p>

	<p>to work with children with disabilities and (ii) increased institutional capacity to offer better educational service and additional support to children with disabilities. Evidence also shows that UNICEF provided valuable assistance for strengthening the capacities for application of functional assessment of disability in the education system.</p>	<p>2.2. <i>Gathering evidence supporting development of a national early childhood intervention system</i></p> <p>2.3. <i>Knowledge sharing related to the use of augmentative and alternative communication technologies to enhance learning</i></p> <p>3. Developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children</p> <p>3.1. <i>Technical assistance to MoES</i></p> <p>3.2. <i>Training for teachers provided by implementing partners</i></p> <p>4. Winning support for the cause of children from decision-makers and the wider public</p> <p>4.1. <i>Winning support from the specialists</i></p> <p>4.2. <i>Winning support from general public - public awareness raising campaigns on sensitivity and intolerance of society and school communities</i></p>
Protection from violence and access to justice	<p>0.6364 - we can be only cautiously confident that UNICEF contributed in a substantial manner to the number of children and parents benefiting from integrated services in the area of VaC, to the improvement of access to justice and to the cross-coordination for child protection from violence. The analysis allows us to be highly confident about the UNICEF contribution to the improvement of collaboration between CSOs, UN partners and Academia in the area of VaC and also, that it had an essential contribution to the existing evidence on the situation of children from Bulgaria in regards with the violence phenomena and on the status of the child protection system. However, we are less confident in the contribution of UNICEF to scaling up tested models.</p>	<p>1. Fostering innovation in programming and advocacy for children</p> <p>1.1. <i>Implementing modelling/piloting projects</i></p> <p>2. Using the power of evidence to drive change for children</p> <p>2.1. <i>Building and disseminating evidence base on children in conflict with the law and child victims of violence</i></p> <p>2.2. <i>Advocacy for strategic and legal provisions</i></p> <p>3. Developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children</p> <p>3.1. <i>Promoting cross-sector coordination for child protection from violence</i></p> <p>3.2. <i>Developing collaboration framework among public service providers, local municipalities and NGOs</i></p> <p>4. Winning support for the cause of children from decision-makers and the wider public</p> <p>4.1. <i>Winning support from the specialists</i></p> <p>4.2. <i>Winning support from general public</i></p>

4. CONCLUSIONS AND FORWARD-LOOKING RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. CONCLUSIONS

UNICEF Country Programme 2018-2022 has been implemented so far under a series of challenging circumstances. For the period under investigation (2018-2021), the only major crisis affecting Bulgaria is related to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the political instability has also created a context less enabling for reforms. Bulgaria is a middle-income country, with prudent fiscal policy, low level of public debt (one of the lowest in the EU), and rather low inflation rate. Different from the three other countries evaluated in the framework of MCPE, since 2007 Bulgaria is a member of the European Union, and has benefited of substantial financial support under the EU Cohesion Policy for areas of interest for UNICEF. Although still small as a share of GDP, the public expenses for education and healthcare have gradually increased in recent years.

The regulatory framework has been significantly reformed in recent years, but there is a rather low overall level of enforcement. In line with this, low enforcement of children rights has been recognised by many stakeholders as a serious challenge to the overall regulatory stability in the country. In addition, the country's weak administrative capacity as well as an increasing political resistance to promote child rights in a national context rather dominated by an anti-rights discourse constitute two key obstacles towards the implementation and effectiveness of child-related policies in Bulgaria.

The comparative advantage of UNICEF is represented by its access to high quality expertise, its key role as cooperation facilitator among duty bearers and CSOs in the areas targeted by the CPD, its cross-sectoral approach and its capacity to promote innovative and effective models of intervention.

The access to expertise and well skilled personnel of UNICEF provides the necessary credibility to build and sustain effective partnership for children rights and well-being with the Government of Bulgaria, other key public institutions, civil society organisations, other UN agencies and international organisations, the media and the business sector. All interviewees have acknowledged the CO contribution in providing effective technical support for developing the legislative framework in all CPD areas (ECD and child care, inclusive education, protection of children against violence access to justice for children and strengthening the monitoring system in regards to child rights realization in Bulgaria). The contribution of UNICEF has been significant in the process of deinstitutionalization and for providing solutions and models for alternative care and support and also in providing support and counselling for parents from disadvantaged, vulnerable groups.

The evaluation finds that UNICEF is well-positioned to assume a pivotal role in persuading actors from different sectors to engage in concerted efforts to produce results for children. Building on this strength, UNICEF Bulgaria has widened the scope and content of its partnerships when faced with political resistance to child rights, to ensure the continued promotion of these rights without compromising its strategic partnerships with the Government of Bulgaria and line ministries at the central and local level. The approaches to establish alliances have reportedly helped to expand the role of UNICEF as a key actor and communication and collaboration facilitator among stakeholders and improve its capacity to intervene. **(See Recommendations 2 and 3)**

UNICEF's approach to addressing the needs of the most marginalized children and generating change that positively influence their lives is well grounded in evidence

The evaluation shows that UNICEF Bulgaria CO has successfully addressed important pressing needs of children in the country, especially as regards different categories of vulnerable children, and it supported policy and institutional development for the benefit of these children. The focus of UNICEF efforts on improving the situation of the most marginalized children through the actions and

interventions developed is well documented. Most of the CPD outputs are focused on specific categories of disadvantaged children (such as: children in residential care; children living in poverty; Roma children; children with disabilities and/or at risk of developmental difficulties; child victims of violence; children in conflict with the law, and refugee and migrant children).

UNICEF Bulgaria CO uses an evidence-based approach to plan its intervention, ensuring relevance in regard to children needs. Several studies have been used to provide updated information on changing national needs and to inform appropriate adjustments in the strategies used by UNICEF Bulgaria CO. As a result, the mid-term strategy adjustment strengthened COs focus on closing disparities for the most disadvantaged and hardest-to-reach children. Nevertheless, the response strategies of UNICEF Bulgaria CO in regards with anti-rights propaganda become more preventive. The political situation in the area of child rights has been deteriorating strongly in recent years. The anti-rights narrative gained strong momentum, impeding key children-related strategic and legislative changes, including adoption of the UNICEF-supported National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030. In this respect, UNICEF Bulgaria CO refocussed its strategies to skills development and improving its readiness to work under the worsening anti-child rights environment, thus, shifting towards a more preventative approach and “positive messaging on child well-being and good practice of the realization of children’s rights”. Nonetheless, it is expected that CO uses its comparative advantage to better address public prejudices and to tackle effectively the strong anti-child propaganda and violation of child rights. (*See Recommendation 2*)

In addition to aligning the programme with the national priorities, UNICEF Bulgaria CO routinely engages children and adolescents (and/or their parents) in needs assessments and programming milestones, approach identified as a good practice by this evaluation.

Further, the impact of UNICEF actions can be observed mainly at the level of these disadvantaged categories. Nevertheless, as the analysis of the results at-scale of UNICEF CO Bulgaria in the period of 2018 – 2020/2021 indicates, the effects observed or generated go to a limited small extent beyond the areas where the pilot programmes are being implemented. Most of the modelling interventions addressing the needs of vulnerable children remain rather small in scale and local in scope. Long term impact of UNICEF is limited by the unclear strategy to engage the government in scaling-up efforts of modelling projects (*see Recommendation 7*). Nevertheless, the modeling work of UNICEF has supported its evidence-based advocacy actions and facilitated enhanced collaboration with duty bearers and other implementing partners.

Moreover, the impact is also limited by several general bottlenecks that remain salient and hinder the results of UNICEF work, especially related to strong propaganda against a human-rights based approach of public policies, including the policies for children (*see Recommendation 2*).

In regards with Covid-19 crisis, UNICEF’s flexibility and timely reaction has been largely recognized by the stakeholders, especially those involved in different piloting interventions locally.

The evaluation found that the CO reacted rapidly to COVID-19 crisis, and adjusted or developed new activities, within the outcomes of the current CPD, as to be able to support the governmental response and address the needs of most affected children and parents. In this regard, UNICEF has developed an extensive set of analyses and research on the impact of the pandemic, further it has included public health information in its current campaigns and support activities provided to vulnerable families and children, it has provided learning materials for children, it has provided access to online learning for pre-school children and it continued the work of CACs online when face to face counselling could not take place. Therefore, additional programming shifts have been taken with the aim to pro-actively participate in Covid-19 pandemic recovery and resilience building and strengthening partnership engagement with business. Timely and flexible reaction to COVID-19, direct support for children and parents in vulnerable categories, support for on-line education, thorough information and guidance on keeping safe, and prevention of gender violence have been among the activities of UNICEF Bulgaria with most added value in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF generates data periodically on the impact of political, social and economic changes on children’s situation in Bulgaria and addresses them to some extent, through revisions of its strategies, but mainly, uses them in evidence-based advocacy activities. In regards with the national monitoring system on child-rights realization, the evaluation did not identify major improvements.

The evidence generated by UNICEF through testing models and conducting or supporting the development of studies on the situation of different marginalized groups of children in Bulgaria, has been used to inform the development or improvement of legislative framework in the areas of ECD and VaC and, thus to fill in the existing gaps in the national monitoring system. The generated data has also been used in the advocacy activities conducted by UNICEF, including those regarding the scaling-up of implemented models, but with less results so far.

Even though UNICEF's work has also been focused on improving the quality and coverage of administrative data on child rights realization in Bulgaria, there is still room for improvement in this area. (*see Recommendations 1 and 2*).

The impact of UNICEF's work in terms of improvement of legislative framework in the areas addressed by the CPD has been significant. In terms of improved access for children to high quality, integrated services, UNICEF's contribution has been very important, but remained limited to the areas where the modelling interventions have been implemented.

The contribution of UNICEF in improving the legislative framework regarding child rights realization in Bulgaria is well documented. The access to expertise and well skilled personnel of UNICEF provides them the necessary credibility as to able to engage in strong and long-term partnerships with duty bearers and other implementing partners. UNICEF provided effective technical support for developing the legislative framework in all CPD areas (Social Service Act (SSA); National programme for prevention and protection of domestic violence for 2020; National Strategy for promoting equality between women and men 2021 – 2030; Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria (LARB) Regulations; Amendments of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.). Nevertheless, the extent to which the legislative framework is effectively implemented is another important aspect that has to be further assessed. The process is a long-term one and the changes that should be generated at-scale at the level of children's lives will be observable in time (*see Recommendation 1*).

The evidence collected for the evaluation shows that the modeling components of the CP have been very effective. The projects implemented have strengthened cooperation between duty bearers, and have improved the quality of services for children in marginalized areas or children in precarious living situations, in the areas of social protection, health and education. They have also increased access to proper educational services for children with special educational needs and have improved the knowledge, attitudes and practices of parents, especially those from the most remote and marginalized settings. And they have improved access to justice for children in contact with the law, as well as access to specialized case-tailored services for child victims of neglect, abuse and violence or for children at risk.

UNICEF has also contributed to the development of human resource capacity (such as social workers, teachers and prosecutors) at the level of local public authorities and other public bodies involved in pilot initiatives. As noted, the impact of UNICEF's work can be observed mainly among disadvantaged children, and analysis of the results at-scale of UNICEF CO Bulgaria in the period of 2018 – 2020/2021 indicates that the effects do go (to a limited extent) beyond the geographic areas where the pilot programmes are implemented.

Nevertheless, there has been less progress on the objective of scaling up these pilots, and their impact remains limited to the geographic areas where they are implemented. Most of these interventions remain rather small in scale and local in scope. The data collected indicate that the provision of integration could not be delivered to the same level of quality or intensity without the support of UNICEF because of an ongoing lack of institutional capacity, and long-term impact is limited by the unclear strategy to engage the government in the scaling-up of pilot projects (*see Recommendations 3, 5 and 7*).

Further than the gaps identified in terms of evidence to support UNICEF contributions to changes at national level, the evaluation identified a series of inconsistencies in the CP logic of intervention and gaps in the CP performance framework (*see Recommendations 8*).

UNICEF puts a lot of effort in maintaining and strengthening partnerships with governmental bodies, public local authorities, service providers and CSOs, this being an essential strategy in the current political instability in Bulgaria.

To a large extent, UNICEF successfully maintained its partnerships, with public institutions and CSOs, despite the constant political changes and varied level of openness particularly at central level (among ministries) and was also successful in building new and effective partnerships through:

- Active participation in all multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary activities where children have a stake leading to high visibility among relevant stakeholders.
- Active contribution to the development of surveys, research, policy documents, activities, campaigns and projects on the right of children
- Joint action with the public bodies.

Under the prevailing unfavourable social-political environment of strong anti-rights social tension, which resulted in putting on hold several reforming efforts, UNICEF CO managed to maintain the high-level involvement and provision of adequate and timely technical support to the Government of Bulgaria during the implementation of the current CP (*see Recommendations 2 and 3*). UNICEF continued to deliver results and keep vulnerable children's issues on the national agenda through continued collaboration with government partners, business and NGOs, and providing quality data and evidence for decision making as well as conducting C4BSC activities.

UNICEF provides intensive technical assistance to government authorities through transfer of know-how, invest in building capacity through training of professional staff, introducing new methodologies, tools and approaches, in developing strategic documents, conducting evidence-based advocacy as to improve the quality and coverage of public services and brings innovation in the fields it operates. Though, faced with obstacles due to political resistance on culturally sensitive areas, the partnership with the government, especially at the technical level, has been constructive and positive, in general. UNICEF Bulgaria CO works with the government and EU institutions to transpose the European policies and principles of the European Social Charter, perceived as the Social Constitution of Europe. It represents an essential component of the continent's human rights architecture, with reference to civil and political rights, and a broad range of everyday human rights related to employment, housing, health, education, social protection and welfare, into national policies.

UNICEF has integrated equity and gender equality in the CP in an uneven manner. Gender priorities are insufficiently clear and there are various levels of gender responsiveness and gender mainstreaming in UNICEF activities, while the equity focus very clear in both, the CP design and its implementation.

The evaluation found that the overall programming approach demonstrates gender sensitivity, with two gender-related interventions: (1) prevention of child marriages in some of the most vulnerable Roma communities and activities to empower the girls at risk; (2) interventions on violence against children. In addition, gender responsiveness and gender mainstreaming are incorporated into the implementation of other CP components (such as the HVS, parenting support programmes and the capacity building of frontline workers on ECD). However, UNICEF's gender priorities are insufficiently clear and most stakeholders do not distinguish the gender equality aspect of its work. One serious limitation is the lack of disaggregated data by gender in all cases; there are few gender-sensitive indicators within UNICEF's monitoring system (*see Recommendation 6*).

Most effective strategies UNICEF that enables the success of the interventions developed by UNICEF

The **strategies** used by UNICEF Bulgaria and identified as **most successful** by this evaluation are:

- **Fostering innovation in programming and advocacy for children**, through modelling services and approaches - in all 3 impact areas covered by this evaluation, UNICEF Bulgaria CO used extensively modelling interventions introducing innovative approaches to facilitate the access of vulnerable children to early childhood development services, inclusive learning environment in kindergartens, comprehensive support services to child victims and their families;
- **Using the power of evidence to drive change for children**, especially by influencing domestic planning, financing and the delivery of services for children;

- **Developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children**, especially by influencing domestic planning, financing and the delivery of services for children;
- **Winning support for the cause of children from decision-makers and the wider public**, **public** by focusing on (i) communication for social change (C4SC) to address the behavioural bottlenecks and empower families and caregivers to adopt positive child care and development practices; (ii) provision of training to improve competencies and attitudes (e.g. of teachers/caregivers); as well as (iii) implementation of variety of public campaigns to win support from the general public.

It is important to mention that, the analysis has highlighted a set of **enabling factors for the impact of UNICEF in Bulgaria**, the following were identified by the evaluation:

- effective partnerships and cooperation on the regional and local level, fostered by UNICEF through the efforts put in in all CPD's areas (e.g. with the regional departments for education, regional centers for supporting the process of inclusive education, stakeholders involved in Home Visits model, stakeholders and social services providers involved in Child Advocacy Centers model) and thus
- commitment of service providers at the local level, due to sustainable local partnerships, in all CPD areas;
- credibility of the UNICEF brand and strong public recognition enabling greater influence on public opinion on the importance of early childhood care for development and inclusive education;
- UNICEF's access to valuable accumulation of technical knowledge and use of strong international expertise, in all areas covered by the CPD;
- EU membership, that allowed the introduction of EU Child Guarantee that could be used as a leverage to ensure progress in the field of ECD and VaC and also led to the adjustment of the data collected by the National Statistical Institute according to the European requirements;
- commitment and effective partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science, in the area of inclusive education;
- the commitment of the Ombudsman's of Bulgaria regarding monitoring and providing data on the situation of children in Bulgaria;
- the active role of Human Rights International Bodies in assessing the national monitoring system and providing recommendation for further improvements.

4.2. LESSONS LEARNED

The progress achieved so far by the CO regarding the CP 2018 – 2022 highlighted a set of lessons learned. The political instability in Bulgaria, unfavourable economic context and the growing wave of anti-human rights groups , led to the need of several changes in the strategy of the CO.

UNICEF has adjusted its strategies to continue its work, despite the negative public discourse and civil movements that affect the realization of human and child rights in Bulgaria. As a result, the CO learned that there should be a balance between the extent to which its shifts its strategy to address the needs of most vulnerable children and the expected results. UNICEF have used several entry-points to promote the realization of child rights, being cautious in the face of negative perspectives, disseminated by Bulgaria's media, on social protection, on the rights of children from Roma communities, and the legal framework for ECD. As a lesson learned, UNICEF has understood that a more proactive approach is needed to advance its work. It has, for example, tried to find sources of funding through which to target the Roma population directly and has, therefore, managed to advance its work through the European Union Child Guarantee.

Perhaps the most important lesson learned by UNICEF CO is that the need for more efforts on in the scale-up of models. Without the development of a scaling-up strategy, agreed with all duty bearers in the early stages of the project, the prospects of public institutions taking up the intervention remain unclear, mainly due to a lack of public financial resources. Experience has revealed the challenges to the pilot model used by UNICEF, and the CO needs to address sustainability from the outset.

As a result of the first three years of the CP implementation, the CO has realized that it should do more to build upon the status of Bulgaria as a EU Member State and align more closely with EU priorities, to position itself as a strategic partner for the government in using EU funds to improve the situation of children in Bulgaria. UNICEF has worked to support the implementation of the EU Child Guarantee in Bulgaria, and to leverage the available funds to improve access for the most disadvantaged and marginalized children to quality, integrated services.

Another lesson learned relates to the strategy adopted by the UNICEF CO when developing partnership with the business sector. Experience has shown that UNICEF's usual approach to the fundraising component of the CP does not achieve the same impact when engaging with the private sector. In addition, the CO aims to create partnerships beyond fundraising and to engage the business community in a more strategic way, with interventions developed together and resources leveraged on a more sustainable basis. There is, therefore, a need for a more structured and focused strategy on the development of partnerships with the business sector.

UNICEF has reacted in a timely and effective way to the COVID-19 pandemic in Bulgaria, with support to the government to contain the impact on children's lives. UNICEF provided support that complemented the work of the government, as seen in pre-school education, where UNICEF has provided technical and IT support for children and teachers to help them continue the educational process. Nevertheless, as the CO observed, there is still a pressing need to improve the quality and coverage of data on the effects of the crisis on the most disadvantaged children. The inconsistency of the national monitoring system on child rights has influenced the capacity of public institutions and UNICEF to address the specific needs of the most marginalized children in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the improvement of the monitoring system remains a priority for the development of well-grounded and effective policies.

4.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

In contrast to the conclusions, the recommendations of this evaluation are not organized according to OECD DAC criteria, rather they apply to the overall strategy, thematic focus and balance of the programme. The aim is to propose an appropriate continuation and development based on the partnerships, teamwork and results of the 2018–2022 Country Programme – taking into account the challenges encountered.

The evaluation team formulated eight recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of the evaluation report. These cover four main areas of action: policy advocacy (from a sustainability perspective); partnership building and cross-sectoral cooperation; programming; and monitoring.

The team has developed a set of indicative measures (institutional, programmatic and operational), that can be used by the CO to guide the effective implementation of these recommendations, which are presented in the main report.

The evaluation team suggests to retain the two levels (programmatic and operational) as presented below: a) recommendations at programmatic level aim at laying the grounds for the development of the program (establishing consistency with UNICEF's institutional mandate, global policies and regional programs, SDGs, of UNICEF, the intervention strategies, working principles, and treatment of horizontal themes that cut across the program components, complementarity with similar ongoing endeavors as a whole; b) recommendations at the operational level aim at formulating the actions/projects/activities. Such differentiation may facilitate monitoring the outputs and outcomes both for the activities and for the programme.

Policy advocacy

Recommendation 1. Continue to conduct advocacy activities and provide technical assistance to improve the legal framework, support the development of law enforcement documents and continue to follow-up on their implementation.

Institutional level:

- Prepare an **institutional strategy and action** plan to conduct advocacy activities, building on the positive reputation of UNICEF as a reliable resource with international know-how, while demonstrating a strong willingness to engage with duty bearers in the development of the law enforcement documents in every possible opportunity.

Programmatic level:

- Focus more efforts on providing **technical assistance** (to introduce the national stakeholders with international experience and know-how) to governmental bodies in developing law enforcement documents (action plans, implementing methodologies, administrative regulations issued by responsible public bodies, road maps and budgets) and monitoring their implementation through the following type of analysis: data situation assessment, financial analysis for scaling up, gap analysis to assess the human, material and financial resource needs for the implementing agencies.

Operational level:

- Plan follow-up and revisiting activities to **assess the long term impact of the previous interventions** and **draw lessons learned** for future programming, as well as to track the effects of legislative changes (like in the case of the technical support provided to the Ministry of Interior for the development of the Automated Informational System for the Prevention of Child Crime and Protection of Children, where there is no available information on the progress regarding the population of the data base and on its utilization).
- **Follow-up and document the implementation of the action plans, advocacy activities** (events, meetings with decision and policy makers and partners, the implementation of communication campaigns) in connection with policy decisions, declarations on policies or institutional changes that could allow for a better understanding of how policy change is happening.

Partnership building and inter-sectoral cooperation

Recommendation 2. Continue to strengthen partnerships with both the government and key stakeholders in the country and develop partnerships with other international organizations and other UN agencies in a more strategic way.

Institutional level:

- Based on already existing partnerships, **create a country-wide coalition/alliance** involving all stakeholders supporting children's rights enforcement, aiming also to mitigate the negative effects of anti-rights movements in the country.

Programmatic level:

- Continue to **engage with government and key stakeholders** (including the local level represented by the local governments, LPAs and the National Association of Municipalities) in the design, implementation and monitoring of UNICEF activities to build ownership from the onset and ensure sustainability of the planned results (see recommendation 7).
- Continue the current practice of **signing Memoranda of Understanding** with all key stakeholders (governmental institutions and other members of the UN family - UNHCR, IOM, WB and IMF, other public, private and civil entities), including a clear definition of responsibilities in all stages of the process, as well as follow up activities put in place to ensure sustainability. UNICEF ECARO support in the development of the content of MoUs can be useful.
- Strengthen the **strategic partnership with the national responsible bodies for planning and implementing EU Cohesion Policy in Bulgaria** and participate as an observer in the Thematic Working Groups and in the Monitoring Committees of the operational programmes, in order to mobilize resources and create synergy as regards measures needed to realize child rights.

- Build **long-term partnerships with the private sector** with a focus on building on the corporate responsibilities in terms of business practices in employment, production of goods and services, local community development, environmental protection, technology and innovation.

Operational level:

- Enhance and enrich the means of cooperation with the CSOs, media, and the business circles through technical assistance for capacity development (monitoring CRC at unit/enterprise and national level, exchanging good practices, promotion of international best practices) partnerships for the implementation of projects/activities within the framework of UNICEF programme, campaigns, joint initiatives, introduction of micro-grant schemes, incentives in the form of contests, awards, prizes etc.
- Conduct social-political-cultural analyses to develop strategies to mitigate the negative effects of anti-rights movement as an obstacle for the realization of child rights and enforcement of relevant laws and legislations.

Recommendation 3. Continue to support and facilitate the development of cross-sectoral cooperation at all levels and all areas addressed by the CPD.

Institutional level:

- Develop a **horizontal strategy** setting up specific objectives according to which UNICEF CO will **strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation among key stakeholders** in the areas included in the CPD, in order to become more effective further than the implemented models/pilots.

Programmatic level:

- Conduct a thorough **stakeholder analysis** starting with the programming stage and update it throughout the implementation.
- **Map of the existing institutional structure of cooperation** relevant to the wellbeing of children and provide technical assistance, through skills building and hands-on assistance to institutions responsible of coordination **to strengthen their leadership skills for effective management of concerted actions by all entities.**
- Continue to facilitate and **encourage partnerships in a manner to ensure or contribute to inter-sectoral coordination**, as in the case of CACs model that ensured communication and collaboration between service providers in different sectors: social protection, health, mental health, and judiciary.

Operational level:

- Capitalize on successful cases in order to explain and promote the benefits of cross-sectoral cooperation to ensure a holistic approach focusing on the needs of the child and promotion and realization of child rights.
- Make use of available evidence or generate evidence as to demonstrate how partnerships and inter-sectoral cooperation facilitated the improvement in the health, development, education, protection and participation of children.
- Make sure that the efforts and contributions of all partners are duly acknowledged throughout the process.

Programming

Recommendation 4. Prioritize specific objectives under each area of the CPD to focus more resources on one single aim and to develop more coherent strategies for actions (this recommendation should be considered together with recommendation 5).

Programmatic level:

- Based on the Situation Analysis develop a **detailed problem analysis** (including an assessment of structural conditions such as institutional, human and financial capacities and resources) for each CPD area.
- Articulate types of interventions, necessary inputs, risks and expected and plausible effects in regards with each specific problem identified at programme area level.
- **Prioritize a smaller number of problems per area** where the resources and efforts of UNICEF CO should be focused as to be able to maximize the effects, taking into account the following two focuses:
 - a) on the actions conducted in the previous CP that led to the achievement of significant results and observable impact and **where follow-up measures are needed as to ensure that the generated effects will remain in place** (such as: legislative changes that need to be further implemented or effective models that need to be scaled-up),
 - b) on specific negative situations for each CP area where UNICEF can have the biggest contribution and where there is the **highest potential of achieving impact at-scale**.
- Identify the structural conditions that contribute to the problem and design the intervention as to be able to address as much as possible of them.

Recommendation 5. For results-at-scale, plan comprehensive activities that combine advocacy activities, technical assistance for improved financing/budgeting and support for capacity building (training, leadership development, procedures, and development of IT capacity)

Programmatic level:

More efforts should be directed towards the following aspects, that **should be combined when designing a set of interventions** in a certain area:

- plan human **capacity building** activities that aim to have a broader coverage (see recommendation 7);
- facilitate **leverage of resources** by identifying national and international programme that can support specific types of actions (such as the EU Guarantee) for each problem addressed within each CPD area (see recommendation 2);
- facilitate the development of **cross-sectoral partnerships** (see recommendation 3)

Recommendation 6. Integrate equity and gender equality into all CP outcomes (where relevant).

Institutional level:

- Prepare an **institutional strategy for promoting equity and gender equality**, in order to clearly identify gender-specific needs (if the case) and necessary activities to obtain positive results from an equity and a gender transformative perspective.

Programmatic level:

- Identify gender-based needs when planning the actions included in each outcome of the CPD.
- Address gender-based needs under each output, if relevant.
- Explicitly address the needs of most vulnerable groups when planning the actions included in each outcome and output and design the indicators framework in accordance.
- Set gender sensitive output and outcome indicators and monitor results of UNICEF's actions disaggregated by gender, where relevant (see Recommendation 8).

Recommendation 7. Embed sustainability into the design of pilot interventions, including follow-up plans, handover and exit strategies, and arrangements for scaling-up.

Institutional level:

- Prepare an **institutional strategy for scaling up innovative models** piloted by UNICEF CO, including key stakeholders, actions to be undertaken and resources needed.

Programmatic level

- As much as possible, plan the models/pilot interventions (introduction of a new service, promoting a new approach/methods/practices) in a manner to **build on the existing strengths and tendencies in the field to avoid resistance by professionals**.
- Based on already existing experiences and good practices (legislation, capacity building etc.), **identify actions to be taken to ensure transfer of responsibilities** regarding models during their implementation.
- Develop **concrete action plans** together with duty bearers and sign MoUs for steps to be taken by the stakeholders after the project implementation is over, including a costing plan as well as mobilization of national and international resources as official part of the Country Programme of Cooperation between the government and UNICEF.
- Establish the **links between the project outputs and outcomes and the mutual responsibilities towards the implementation of CRC and achieving the SDGs** and plan joint monitoring and evaluation activities to sustain the achievements and to follow up with progress in the form of long-term impacts.
- Initiate the **discussions for leveraging resources** by identifying available national resources and national and international funding opportunities (such as the EU Guarantee, WB etc.) that can support specific types of actions (including the costing for sustainability and scaling up and continue facilitating these discussions throughout the implementation).
- Plan **human capacity building activities** that aim to have a broader coverage (develop training programmes that can be cascaded through ToC, including the training content in the national curricula for pre- and in-service training by building on the experience gained as in the case of the training programme focused on building teacher capacity to work with children with disabilities within the mainstream kindergarten).

Operational level:

- Promote and encourage **joint management for projects/models** developed or supported by UNICEF to facilitate a gradual transfer of responsibilities and to support ownership during implementation, as opposed to end of project efforts.
- Organize regular meetings with project stakeholder to **review and revise the sustainability plans** and introduce improvements, as necessary.

Monitoring

Recommendation 8. Define the indicator framework of the CPD and the monitoring process to better record the actions and the results of the UNICEF CO.

Institutional level

- Introduce **new internal monitoring tools/procedures** (as per UNICEF Results-Based Management Handbook) to clearly trace the change pathways from UNICEF activities to results for children.
- **Document strategies used** to address each outcome/output of the programme, to improve the registration of institutional memory so that achievements can be duly reflected in the regular reports.
- Make sure that **the monitoring reporting system allows reflections about the synergies between the interventions/activities** in different areas/fields in a manner to draw lessons for future programming while providing information on areas where advocacy activities are most needed.

- Develop a **risk mitigation plan** in response to cases where the set indicators targets are not achieved, as well as to mitigate possible social-political-cultural risks that may jeopardize sustainability.

Programmatic level

- Make sure that the baseline data is available at the programming stage or an activity to set a baseline is planned for implementation stage.
- Make sure that the indicator sets are sufficient to reflect the differences between the outputs and the outcomes produced in a manner to inform the impacts.
- To the extent possible, and in collaboration with the stakeholders, identify indicators that are routinely collected within the national and/or institutional data sets to allow comparisons.
- Where possible and relevant, build on the indicators of previous interventions or identify indicators to follow up the achievements in the previous cycles to better assess long-term impact.
- Check for overlaps/repetition/links between the indicators for different outputs and outcomes.
- Make sure that the monitoring framework includes qualitative as well as quantitative indicators to assess changes in behaviors and practices leading to improvements in their lives of target groups, local communities as well as in service provision.
- Make sure that data collected and reported is in line with the indicator's label definition.

Operational level

- Periodically assess the level of indicators' achievement to identifies those at risk, through internal and external monitoring and evaluation activities.
- Review and revise the indicators, as needed, during the implementation.

5. Annexes

Annex 1. Evaluation Matrix

Relevance

Evaluation questions and sub-questions	Evaluation questions and sub-questions	Judgement Criteria	Indicators/Descriptors	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods	Sources of information / stakeholder groups to consult
RELEVANCE						
Q5.1	To what extent has UNICEF responded to the (changing) needs of the most vulnerable throughout the programme implementation and	5.1.1. UNICEF-supported interventions are responding to the (changing) needs of the most vulnerable children, adolescents and their families	Level of adequacy of CPs and their implementation strategies to needs of vulnerable children and their families identified in reliable assessments, studies, reviews and by key informants interviewed	Document review Interviews (see Annex E) Observation	Review of existing documents and interviews' results (minutes, recordings, notes)	Reference materials for evaluation UNICEF COs Central Government Ministries and Departments CSOs <i>(as identified in the stakeholders analysis)</i>
		5.1.2. Implementation strategies effectively reflected the needs identified at planning stages and the evolution of these needs	Examples of CPs interventions tailored to the specific needs of most vulnerable children (ideally for each goal area of intervention in the CPDs)			
Q5.2	consistently integrated the equity and gender equality in all aspects of programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy?	5.2.1. Implementation strategies are based on the identification of gender equality and difference issues and gaps and seek to address the issues and gaps identified.	Presence of gender equality as cross-cutting issue within the CPDs, implementation strategies of CPs, accountability (results) frameworks (including indicators) and reporting			
Q6	To what extent has UNICEF been able to respond to changes in national needs and rights of the beneficiaries especially of the most vulnerable and in national priorities during programme implementation?	6.1. UNICEF-supported interventions are consistently informed by comprehensive assessments of the situations and needs of vulnerable boys, girls and youth.	Availability of information, data and knowledge on changes in national needs and rights of the beneficiaries	Document review Interviews Observation	Critical System Heuristics approach <i>used to analyse interview results and to identify how the main stakeholders understand the context and its change and influence UNICEF actions within the respective</i>	Reference materials for evaluation UNICEF COs Central Government Ministries and Departments CSOs Other UN agencies, Donors/International development partners <i>(as identified in the stakeholders analysis)</i>
		6.2. UNICEF CPDs were aligned with country priorities and addressed key development issues	Evidence of consistency between the outcomes and UNICEF-supported interventions and national priorities and targets identified in official national strategic documents and by stakeholders at government level			
			Common understanding amongst stakeholders about the expected and actual links between UNICEF-supported interventions and selected national priorities			
			Stakeholders can identify actual or potential areas of convergence and divergence between the national strategies			

			and UNICEF-supported interventions in the country		<i>context dynamics</i>	
Q7	To what extent has UNICEF been able to respond to the shifts caused by crisis or major socio-economic and political changes?	7.1. UNICEF reacted early to crisis or major socio-economic and political changes in each country and: - generated knowledge on the impact of the crisis or socio-economic and political changes on children	Availability of information, data and knowledge on crisis and major socio-economic and political changes impact on children, adolescents and their families		Realist Evaluation (changes in national needs are part of the context analysed by the realist evaluation)	
		7.2.- proposed measures, strategies and activities to respond to new needs and priorities	Stakeholders can identify UNICEF's proposed measures, strategies and activities to respond to new needs and priorities of children, adolescents and their families affected by crisis and major socio-economic and political changes			

Coherence

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Judgement Criteria	Indicators/Descriptors	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods	Sources of information / stakeholder groups to consult
COHERENCE						
Q8	To what extent has UNICEF's Country Programme kept true to its mandate and aligned with UNICEF's global and regional strategies as well as UNSDCF and SDGs in any given country?	8.1. UNICEF's Country Programme developed in line with UNSDCF and SDGs and reflects UNICEF's global and regional strategies relevant to the country	Availability of references to SDGs and UNSDCF in programmatic documents, implementation strategies of CPs, reports, (CPDs, COARs) etc. Number/percentage of outputs of valid CPD aligned with UNICEF's global and regional strategies	Document review	Review of existing documents and interviews' results (minutes, recordings, notes)	CPDs, COARs, implementation strategies of CPs, UNICEF's official web resources listing global and regional priorities
Q9	To what extent did UNICEF manage to build effective and sustainable partnerships in working towards addressing the predefined bottlenecks, advocating for evidence for equity and contributing to the results at scale?	9.1. COs have in place and apply procedures to build and sustain effective partnerships	Availability of established procedures to build and sustain effective partnerships	Document review Interviews	Review of existing documents and interviews' results (minutes, recordings, notes) Network Analysis	Internal guidelines, standard operating procedures, meetings minutes
		9.2. Regular collaboration with partners focuses on predefined bottlenecks and contributes to achieve the results at scale	Documented evidence of regular collaboration with relevant partners			Partner ministries, representatives of relevant UN clusters, international stakeholders
			Percentage of interviewees assessing collaboration with UNICEF as effective / ineffective			

		9.3. COs advocate for equity and its evidence collection with relevant decision-makers in the country	Stakeholders can report about jointly solved bottlenecks / name advocacy actions triggered by CO / identify efforts for equity evidence or jointly achieved results at scale			<i>(as identified in the stakeholders analysis)</i>
Q10	10.1 What are the comparative advantages of UNICEF in relation to other actors in the country, including development partners, the private sector, the non-government sector and	10.1.1 Comparative advantage of UNICEF defined by relevant CO documents 10.1.2. Consistency in perception of UNICEF comparative advantage by CO and other actors in the country	Availability of narrative descriptions of CO / UNICEF comparative advantage Stakeholders can clearly distinguish the added value of UNICEF if compared with other actors in the country	Document review Interviews Observation	Review of existing documents and interviews' results (minutes, recordings, notes) Stakeholders Analysis	CPDs, COARs, implementation strategies of CPs Partner ministries, representatives of relevant UN clusters, international stakeholders, national stakeholders, including development partners, the private sector, the non-government sector <i>(as identified in the stakeholders analysis)</i>
	10.2 to what extent were they necessary and sufficient for contributing to the results at scale to be achieved? (to be integrated with questions under "Impact" criterion)	10.2 CO uses its strengths and opportunities to achieve to the extent possible the results at scale	Stakeholders can recall achieved results and can clearly define the role of UNICEF in such achievements OR Stakeholders can recall expected (not achieved) results and can explain the expected role of UNICEF (where it did not take action or the actions didn't generated the expected results)			
Q11	How has UNICEF's approach to strategic partnerships changed over time, if any?	11.1. CO revised its approach to strategic partnerships in the last two years 11.2. CO introduced recently new /amended approaches to improve strategic partnership	Availability of documented evidence about changes or amendments to partnership approach CO team report about changes in partnership and can explain their outcomes	Document review Interviews	Review of existing documents and interviews' results	CPDs, COARs, implementation strategies of CPs CO team

Impact

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Judgement Criteria	Indicators/Descriptors	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods	Sources of information / stakeholder groups to consult
IMPACT						
Q1	Did UNICEF contribute to the results at-scale? If yes, how and why did it make					

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Judgement Criteria	Indicators/Descriptors	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods	Sources of information / stakeholder groups to consult
	a difference and for whom? If no, why not?					
	Bulgaria CP	1.3.1. Positive changes can be observed concerning the implementation of effective national and local policies supporting nurturing family and social environment (related to Programme Outcome 1)	Trends in implementation and effectiveness of national and local policies supporting nurturing family and social environment All indicators related to Programme Outcome 1	Document review Data analysis	Longitudinal Analysis	UNICEF monitoring system National Statistical Institute Reference materials for evaluation (studies and evaluations)
		1.3.2. Positive changes can be observed concerning improved inclusive educational policies and practices, adapted to needs of the most disadvantaged (related to Programme Outcome 2)	Trends in inclusive educational policies and practices and improved access to such practices of vulnerable children. All indicators related to Programme Outcome 2	Document review Data analysis	Longitudinal Analysis	UNICEF monitoring system National Statistical Institute Reference materials for evaluation (studies and evaluations)
		1.3.3. Positive changes can be observed concerning preventing violence, protecting children victims and ensure access to timely remedy to child participants in judicial procedures (related to Programme Outcome 3)	Trends in preventing violence, protecting children victims and ensure access to timely remedy to child participants in judicial procedures All indicators related to Programme Outcome 3	Document review Data analysis	Longitudinal Analysis	UNICEF monitoring system National Statistical Institute Reference materials for evaluation (studies and evaluations)
		1.3.4. Positive changes can be observed concerning child rights monitoring, communication and promotion through engagement of all relevant stakeholders (related to Programme Outcome 4)	Trends in child rights monitoring, communication and promotion through engagement of all relevant stakeholders All indicators related to Programme Outcome 4	Document review Data analysis	Longitudinal Analysis	UNICEF monitoring system National Statistical Institute Reference materials for evaluation (studies and evaluations)

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Judgement Criteria	Indicators/Descriptors	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods	Sources of information / stakeholder groups to consult
		<p>1.3.5. UNICEF made significant contributions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the implementation of effective national and local policies supporting nurturing family and social environment (related to Programme Outcome 1) - improved inclusive educational policies and practices, adapted to needs of the most disadvantaged (related to Programme Outcome 2) - preventing violence, protecting children victims and ensure access to timely remedy to child participants in judicial procedures (related to Programme Outcome 3) - child rights monitoring, communication and promotion through engagement of all relevant stakeholders (related to Programme Outcome 4) 	<p>Plausible evidence that UNICEF actions have made a positive contribution to national priorities and change in national indicators, with emphasis on policies and targets related to children's rights, especially of the most vulnerable ones, under each Programme Outcome</p> <p>Stakeholders can offer examples concerning how UNICEF actions have influenced concrete changes at</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - institutional level and/ or - behavioural changes <p>resulting in the development of child situation and improvement of indicators concerning children</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Observation</p>	<p>Review of existing documents and interviews' results (minutes, recordings, notes)</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF COs</p> <p>Central Government Ministries and Departments</p> <p>CSOs</p> <p><i>(as identified in the stakeholders analysis)</i></p>
		1.3.6. Different conditions and factors influenced the effectiveness of UNICEF's CPDs	<p>Evidence on different mechanisms being valorised by UNICEF to generate results at-scale for children, under each Programme Outcome.</p> <p>Evidence showing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>how these mechanisms work</i> - <i>why these mechanisms work</i> - <i>for whom these mechanisms work best</i> 	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Observation</p>	<p>Realist evaluation</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF COs</p> <p>Central Government Ministries and Departments</p> <p>CSOs</p> <p><i>(as identified in the stakeholders analysis)</i></p>
	Inclusive education for children, including children with disabilities	<p>(1) UNICEF has supported the implementation of the pilot kindergartens component</p> <p>(2) UNICEF provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) by introducing the functional assessment of disability.</p> <p>(3) UNICEF supported the development of educational training programmes for teachers, relevant for IE.</p>	<p>Evidence to support each statement</p> <p>The probability of observing the evidence being assessed if the statement is true (sensitivity) – for each statement</p> <p>The probability of observing the evidence we are assessing if the statement is false (Type I error) – for each statement</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Observation</p>	<p>Process Tracing</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF COs</p> <p>Central Government Ministries and Departments</p> <p>CSOs</p> <p><i>(as identified in the stakeholders analysis)</i></p>

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Judgement Criteria	Indicators/Descriptors	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods	Sources of information / stakeholder groups to consult
		<p>(4) UNICER conducted public awareness raising campaigns on sensitivity and intolerance of society and school communities.</p> <p>As a result, educational services in the schools included in modelling initiatives improved, an increase of 10 % of positive attitudes towards including children with disabilities in mainstream education was registered as well as an increase of enrolment and inclusion of children with disabilities in pre-school and school education.</p>				
	Early childhood development	<p>(1) UNICEF provided technical support for the development of the ECD strategy and collaborative input through the Roma Early Years Inclusion Study, to the draft national strategy for inclusion and participation of Roma for 2021-2030.</p> <p>(2) UNICEF implemented the community-based parenting support program and supported the Government to set up Centers for Maternal and Child Health in at regional level, focusing on the component of Home Visiting Service (HVS).</p> <p>(3) UNICEF implemented the C4D initiatives and parenting support programs promoting positive interaction, nurturing and stimulating care for young children.</p> <p>As a result, parenting competencies were strengthened and access to social, health and education services for young children from isolated or disadvantaged communities/most vulnerable children increased.</p>	<p>Evidence to support each statement</p> <p>The probability of observing the evidence being assessed if the statement is true (sensitivity) – for each statement</p> <p>The probability of observing the evidence we are assessing if the statement is false (Type I error) – for each statement</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Observation</p>	<p>Process Tracing</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF COs</p> <p>Central Government Ministries and Departments</p> <p>CSOs</p> <p><i>(as identified in the stakeholders analysis)</i></p>
	Protection from violence and access to justice	<p>(1) UNICEF provided technical support and studies to the Government for the improvement of child protection policies, including the National Strategy for the Child</p>	<p>Evidence to support each statement</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Process Tracing</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF COs</p>

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Judgement Criteria	Indicators/Descriptors	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods	Sources of information / stakeholder groups to consult
		<p>and its action plan (covering protection from violence and access to justice).</p> <p>(2) Support to Government included amendments to the Law for Foreigners and improvement of statistics and a database on children in conflict with the law and child victims of violence.</p> <p>(3) UNICEF implemented the model of child advocacy centres, providing direct support to children for prevention and response to violence against children.</p> <p>As a result of UNICEF activities a large number of children and parents benefited from integrated services for prevention and response to violence against children, cross-sector coordination for child protection from violence has been improved and overall the access to justice for child victims has been improved in Bulgaria.</p>	<p>The probability of observing the evidence being assessed if the statement is true (sensitivity) – for each statement</p> <p>The probability of observing the evidence we are assessing if the statement is false (Type I error) – for each statement</p>	Observation		<p>Central Government Ministries and Departments</p> <p>CSOs</p> <p><i>(as identified in the stakeholders analysis)</i></p>
Q2	Did UNICEF identify and reassess bottlenecks throughout programme implementation?	<p>2.1. UNICEF COs identified and analysed bottlenecks and their impact on the realisation of CP outcomes and impacts</p> <p>2.2. The analyses of bottlenecks generated specific activities implemented / measures taken by UNICEF COs to overcome challenges and bottlenecks</p> <p>2.3. UNICEF COs used risk management and risk prevention strategies in order to overcome challenges and bottlenecks</p>	<p>Bottlenecks and barriers identified and analysed in relation to their impact on the realisation of CP outcomes (according to their specific ToC) and impacts and children's rights</p> <p>Evidence of measures taken to cope with barriers and overcome challenges and bottlenecks</p> <p>Evidence of management and prevention strategies and tools included in CPs and other planning documents</p> <p>Evidence of management and prevention strategies applied when need (the risks materialised)</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Observation</p>	Review of existing documents and interviews' results (minutes, recordings, notes)	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF COs</p> <p>Central Government Ministries and Departments</p>

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Judgement Criteria	Indicators/Descriptors	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods	Sources of information / stakeholder groups to consult
		2.4. Activities to overcome challenges, bottlenecks and risks have been effective in diminishing their impact on children and policies for children	Perceived level of effectiveness of activities / measures taken to manage challenges, bottlenecks and risks Evidence / examples of successful activities / measures taken to manage challenges, bottlenecks and risks			
Q3	Did different groups, including children and the most marginalised, benefit in different ways from the Country Programme? Are the results likely to be maintained over time?	3.1. UNICEF's CPDs and COs took into account differences between children and the needs of the most marginalised	Stakeholders can provide evidence of specific benefits for the most marginalised children and concerning reduced equity gaps with UNICEF's contribution	Document review Interviews	Realist Evaluation	Reference materials for evaluation UNICEF COs Central Government Ministries and Departments CSOs (as identified in the stakeholders analysis)
		3.2. Different conditions and factors influenced the effectiveness of UNICEF's CPDs for the most marginalised groups	Evidence on different mechanisms being valorised by UNICEF to generate results for the most marginalised children	Observation Result area analysis		
		3.3. UNICEF's COs took measures to ensure sustainability of their results	Evidence of exit strategies and measures undertaken by UNICEF to ensure ownership and sustainability of results	Document review Interviews	Review of existing documents and interviews' results (minutes, recordings, notes)	Reference materials for evaluation UNICEF COs Central Government Ministries and Departments CSOs (as identified in the stakeholders analysis)
		3.4. The results obtained by UNICEF's Cos are likely to be maintained over time	Evidence of: a. Concrete changes in national laws, policies, regulations, and plans that can sustain CPC results and strategies b. Scaling-up of pilot/model interventions c. Additional allocations of national budget and/or other donor resources d. Institutional capacity in place to sustain levels of achievement or a strategy/plan exists to indicate how it will be developed and funded e. Adoption of good practices or major lessons learned that led to changes in the strategic and organisational direction of the Government	Observation Result area analysis		
Q4	Which strategies or group of strategies were effective in producing results at scale?	4.1. UNICEF's CO employed different strategies aiming to generate the planned outputs and outcomes. These strategies have been adapted to the country and sector context. <i>In each result area under evaluation, a set of specific strategies can be identified, and each</i>	Evidence of different strategies with specific purpose used and combined to achieve results at-scale.	Document review Interviews Observation	Case studies under the result areas selected. Information and analysis based on the impact assessment	Reference materials for evaluation UNICEF COs Central Government Ministries and Departments CSOs

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Judgement Criteria	Indicators/Descriptors	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods	Sources of information / stakeholder groups to consult
		<i>strategy has a specific purpose, contributing to the planed result.</i>			performed using Process Tracing and Contribution Analysis (case-based methods)	<i>(as identified in the stakeholders analysis)</i>

Annex 2.A. Summary analysis of UNICEF Bulgaria impact

The table below is mainly based on the reports of UNICEF Bulgaria CO.⁷²

Note on the assessment of UNICEF impact based on the outcome and output indicators in the Country Programme Document:

Although most of the indicators analysed are – according to UNICEF denomination – output indicators, they are not only measuring direct results of each activity conducted by UNICEF. They also potentially show short term changes with direct relevance for children at scale, either referring to the situation of children, changes in public perception, attitude or behaviour or systemic changes that enable institutions to fulfil better their role in providing services for children and protecting their rights.

Indicators in the table are marked on their relevance for the assessment of impact. And when impact can be measured, the type of impact is identified as: (1) **better access to services**/direct improvement of the situation of children, (2) **behavioural and attitudes** change; (3) **institutional change** (including institutional capacity increased); (4) **change in policy** (including strategies, plans, laws, legislation of other nature/level); (5) improvement of **financing** for children

Strategies identified in the table are a simplified presentation of UNICEF Strategies as in the schema below.

Strategy according to UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021	Table presentation (basic approach identified)
Winning support for the cause of children from decision-makers and the wider public	Communication
Using the power of evidence to drive change for children	Evidence based advocacy
Fostering innovation in programming and advocacy for children	Modelling/piloting
Developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children	Resource mobilisation Partnership support
United Nations working together	UN partnership
Leveraging the power of business and markets for children	Business partnership

Outcome outputs and	Outcome and output indicators	Measurement of...	Baseline value (& year)	2020 value (& target)	UNICEF CO contribution	Strategies	Enabling factors	More disadvantaged children benefiting
Outcome 1 0570/A0/05/001 ECD AND CHILD CARE	- # of children (disaggregated by gender, age, disability, refugee and migrant children) entering	Impact - better access to services/direct improvement	2179 (2016)	476 (2019)	- UNICEF Bulgaria is among the finalist of Best of UNICEF Research and Evaluation 2020. The evaluation of the Family for Every Child project on the closure for infant homes in Bulgaria was rated among the most influential ones	Evidence based advocacy Modelling/piloting	The commitment of key national actors to the deinstitutionalization strategy	Yes, children in formal care

⁷² Other sources used are mentioned in the table or notes.

	formal care every year (52336)	<i>nt of the situation of children</i>		(2022 target: 10% reduction – 1961)	as it informed national policy as well as increased the strategic positioning of UNICEF with regards to child protection, and deinstitutionalization in particular. The evaluation inputs were valued not only for achieving the closure of the infant home but also for supporting services for vulnerable children and families, and for finding alternatives to institutional care. (RAM 2020, p. 47) - In line with the ambitious National Strategy for Vision for Deinstitutionalization (2010–2025) developed and implemented with support from UNICEF, Bulgaria has achieved significant progress in ensuring the right of every child to live in a family environment. The number of children living in specialized residential institutions fell from 7,587 in 2010 to 476 in December 2019 . (Strategy note 2020, p. 7)	Partnership support and resource mobilization	Long term, consistent and perseverant intervention Quality of cooperation/partnerships	
	- Proportion of disadvantaged families with children 0–2 years of age who received targeted counselling and support for promoting early childhood development (52335)	Impact - better access to services/direct improvement of the situation of children	1% (2016)	No available data (target 2022: at least 30%)	- Development of a network of 40 municipalities, local libraries and cultural institutions, as well as social and educational service providers that delivered a community-based parenting support program developed by UNICEF - Individualized support, guidance and information on nurturing care provided through the home visiting services, established with UNICEF support. (RAM 2020) - C4D modalities, delivered with UNICEF support, including community-based parenting support programs, digital platforms (dedicated parenting website, digital tools), and through engagement of pre-school teachers (RAM 2020)	Modelling/piloting Partnership support Communication	Long term, consistent and perseverant intervention Quality of cooperation/partnerships	Yes, disadvantaged families
Output 1 0570/A0/05/001/001 SUPPORT FOR ECD	Number of parents/caregivers of children under 5 receiving parenting support to improve care and development of their	effectiveness	5882 (2017)	13794 (10000) <i>Fully achieved</i>	- More than 13,900 parents of children under 5 years of age benefited from different parenting support and C4D modalities, including home visiting, community-based parenting support programs, as well as remote counselling and digital platforms. Support was provided for	Modelling/piloting Communication		Even if the indicator refers to all children, the activities were focus on most vulnerable children – children living in poverty and children

children with support of UNICEF in the reporting year [COVID]					the national efforts to address the public health needs associated with COVID-19, with a specific focus on the most vulnerable children and families	Partnerships support		from ethnical minority groups
By 2022, a national ECD Strategy is adopted by the Government, ensuring the delivery of integrated and holistic support for early childhood development to all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, across all relevant sectors. (52331)	Impact – institutional change / situation of children	NO (2017)		<i>Limited support</i> (Technical support provided and development of an Action plan for the implementation) <i>Partially achieved</i>	- Very limited technical support is provided to the Government with regard to strategy development because the process was put on hold by the Government	Partnership support Evidence based advocacy	-	The indicator refers in particular to most vulnerable children across all sectors
By 2022, home visiting services for delivering tailored support for strengthening caregivers (52332)	Impact – institutional change / situation of children	3 regions (2017)		No (A mechanism for ensuring sustainability of the two demonstration services is developed and proposed to the Government) <i>Not achieved</i>	- Options identified by UNICEF and discussion to be initiated in 2021	Partnership support Evidence based advocacy		- The model was more effective in delivering services for most vulnerable children and their families (according to the HVS evaluation), even though the programme is focus on this particular group
By 2022, guidelines for primary health care providers for counseling caregivers on ECD, as well as for screening for developmental difficulties are approved by the Ministry of health and relevant professional associations. (52333)	Impact – institutional change/ change in policy	no such guidelines (2017)		<i>Not finished</i> (Guidelines for vision screening developed and proposed for adoption by MH Guidelines on screening for developmental difficulties developed and proposed to the MH and MLSP) <i>Partially achieved</i>	- Guidelines development is initiated by UNICEF, partners identified	Evidence based advocacy Partnership support	-	-

	Number of families/caregivers reached with targeted C4D initiatives and parenting support programs promoting positive interaction, nurturing and stimulating care for young children in UNICEF regions of work and nationally. (52334)	Effectiveness	6700 (2017)	12464 (at least 10000) Fully achieved	- C4D modalities, delivered with UNICEF support, including community-based parenting support programs, digital platforms (dedicated parenting website, digital tools), and through engagement of pre-school teachers (RAM 2020) - UNICEF implemented HVS model - UNICEF implemented FCC model	Communication Modelling/piloting Partners support	Long term, consistent and perseverant intervention Quality of cooperation/partnerships Strong partnerships with LPA	The indicator does not address directly vulnerable or marginalized children
Output 2 0570/A0/05/001/02 CHILD CARE	No indicator							
Output 3 0570/A0/05/001/03 SOCIAL POLICY	No approved indicators							
Output 5 0570/A0/05/001/04 HEALTH CARE PROVISION FOR R/M CHILDREN/MOTHERS	No indicator							
Outcome 2 0570/A0/05/002 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND EARLY LEARNING	- Rate of school-age children out of school, by sex and education level (52337)	Impact – better access to services/direct improvement of the situation of children	Preschool (3–4 years) 26.7% (girls 26.7%, boys 26.7%) Preschool (5–6 years) 17.6% (girls 18.2%, boys 17.1%) Primary 5.1% (girls 5.2%, boys 5%) Lower secondary 4.5% (girls 5% girls, boys 4%) (2015)	3–6 years: 19,9% out of school 7 - 10 years: 11,7% out of school 11 – 14 years: 9,9% out of school (2019/2020 school year) (target 2022 Preschool (3–4 years) 20% Preschool (5–6 years) 10% Primary 3% Lower secondary 3%)	- A total 2290 vulnerable children and adolescents were provided with education materials before the start of the school year. Evidence from UNICEF Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on pre-school and school education influenced the development of the National Framework for re-opening of schools. A Toolkit for education provision in situation of COVID-19 with practical check lists, tools and practices was validated by over 1000 professionals and ready to be shared with schools. A child rights framework curriculum was developed and validated. A whole school approach for prevention of violence was initiated in pilot schools.	-	-	- vulnerable children, children at risk

				Not achieved				
- Early leavers from education and training, by sex(52339)	Impact – better access to services/direct improvement of the situation of children	13.4% (females13.4%, males13.3%) (2015)	13,9% (target 2022: 11%) Not achieved	-	-	-	-	-
- Number of dedicated school (and kindergarten) staff available (e.g., school psychologists, teachers, speech therapists, etc.) for children in need of support available(52338)	Impact – institutional capacity	1963 (2016)	4920 (target 2022: 4500)	- UNICEF commissioned a National representative study among over 200 specialists to assess their knowledge, practices and training needs with respect to AAC. The study revealed low levels of awareness and usage of AAC tools and therefore capacity building training modules on AAC were developed within a joint project of UNICEF, MoES and Foundation Assist. A Catalogue with guidance on the functional assessment of communication and featuring 50 AAC products, from low budget to high tech, was developed as part of this partnership. - Through trainings provided by UNICEF, the capacities of 450 kindergarten teachers were enhanced to provide early education at home, as well as over 500 special education professionals and teachers increased their awareness and skills with regards to assistive technologies for alternative and augmentative communication. - In 2020, UNICEF documented good practices from “Together from the kindergarten” project and continued to disseminate and enable multiplication at regional and national level. Building upon this experience, UNICEF in collaboration with the MoES continued to expand inclusive practices in kindergartens in the regions of Sliven, Stara Zagora and Burgas and 30 kindergartens, with over 6100 children who are educated there, were	Modelling Evidence based advocacy	Long term, consistent and perseverant intervention Quality of cooperation/partnerships	Children with disabilities	

					selected to pilot the “EU Child Guarantee” project within 1,5 years.			
Output 1 0570/A0/05/002/0 01 SUPPORT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION	An approach for inclusive learning environment in kindergartens and schools for all children is developed, documented and utilized to influence national inclusive policies and practices(52340)	Impact – institutional change / situation of children	No (2017)	YES (Good practices documented, and financial models developed)	- Good practices are documented	Evidence based advocacy	_ Quality of partnerships	-Children with disabilities
	Pre-service and in-service teacher training includes modules on special needs and inclusion issues (52341)	Impact – institutional change	No programs (2017)	YES (Webinars on IE are developed and made available for in-service teacher training through MES platform) <i>Fully achieved</i>	- Webinars on IE have been developed by UNICEF	Modelling/ piloting		- Children with disabilities
	Percentage of teachers supporting the inclusion of children with disabilities in kindergartens and schools.(52342)	Impact – access to service / institutional change (increased institutional capacity)	Kindergarten teachers: 35,6% (2017) School teachers: 32,5% (2015)	YES (A programme for improving pre-service teacher trainings is initiated) <i>Fully achieved</i>	- AAC training program for specialists developed has been developed with the support of UNICEF	Modelling/ piloting Evidence-based advocacy Partnership support		- Children with disabilities
Output 2 0570/A0/05/002/0 02 ENABLING ACCESS TO EARLY EDUCATION DISCONTINUED	Assessment of innovative ECE model is available for the government (52343)	Effectiveness	No (2017)	NA (A review of ECE models initiated) <i>Not achieved</i>	-	-	-	-
Output 3 0570/A0/05/002/0 03 SUPPORT FOR REDUCING SCHOOL DROPOUT	Number of children provided with teaching and learning materials to support home study in short term school closures with UNICEF support	Effectiveness	0 (2019)	2290 (2500) <i>Partially achieved</i>	- UNICEF procured learning materials and electronic devices for vulnerable children - A total 2290 vulnerable children and adolescents were provided with education materials before the start of the school year. Evidence from UNICEF Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on pre-school and school education influenced the	Resource leveraging Partnership support Evidence-based advocacy	Commitment of public authorities and other key stakeholder to support children affected by the COVID-19 pandemic	The indicator does refer to most vulnerable children, but the activities developed by UNICEF addressed most vulnerable children

	in the reporting year [COVID]				development of the National Framework for re-opening of schools. A Toolkit for education provision in situation of COVID-19 with practical check lists, tools and practices was validated by over 1000 professionals and ready to be shared with schools			(according to RAM 2020)
	System Strengthening - EMIS - National EMIS provides data on attendance and dropout - score (1-4), see guidance (22-01-L3-40)	Impact – institutional change/ change in policy	0 (2017)	2.5 (2.5) <i>Fully achieved</i>	- UNICEF provided support to the Ministry of Education	Evidence-based advocacy Partnership support	Strong partnership with the ministry of Education	-
	Cross sectoral approaches on dropout prevention for Roma adolescent girls and children at risk of dropping out(52344)	Effectiveness	Developed and ready to be pilot tested (2017)	Not initiated (A study on children's aspirations towards school life and marriage is conducted in a second region) <i>Not achieved</i>	- The pandemic context did not allow the initiation of the study	-	-	- Roma adolescent girls and children
Output 4 0570/A0/05/002/004 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EARLY LEARNING AND EDUCATION	No indicator							
Output 5 0570/A0/05/002/005 QUALITY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR BOYS AND GIRLS FROM EARLY YEARS TO ADOLESCENCE	No indicator							
Output 6 0570/A0/05/002/006 IMPROVED LEARNING AND SKILLS FOR	No indicator							

ADOLESCENT BOYS AND GIRLS								
Outcome 3 0570/A0/05/003 PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE	- # of Children on the move receive adequate services, including access to health and education (64622)	Impact - access to service / institutional change (increased institutional capacity)	partially complies (2018)	Still partially complies (Target 2022: all asylum seeking children)	-Prevention, reaction and response to violence against children, equitable access to justice and protection of refugee and migrant children have been at the forefront of UNICEF child protection efforts in the first two years of the Country Programme Partnership for the period 2018-2022.	Evidence-based support Partnership support	Quality of cooperation/partnerships	UASC
	- Institutionalized, specialized and quality routine training on the rights of child participants in legal proceedings exists for police officers, prosecutors, judges and lawyers working with children in justice processes (52347)	Impact - increased institutional capacity	None (2017)	None (target 2022: specialized and quality routine training on the rights of child participants in legal proceedings is institutionalized for police officers, prosecutors, judges and lawyers in their respective training)	- The CO has also contributed to discussions and provided a statement related to the amendments in the Penal procedural code with regard to the EU directives for children suspects or accused in criminal proceedings and children victims. The CoM has approved the draft and it's in Parliament now.	-	-	-
	- # of cases of violence against children identified, reported and addressed (52346)	Impact - access to service / institutional change	3,741 signals in the Child Protection Department s, 1,839 cases in the Child Protection Department s (2015)	1171 signals received and only 446 cases opened (target 2022: at least 4,677 signals and at least 2,299 cases)	-	-	-	-
	Justice system complies with the minimum standards laid down in the Beijing Rules of Justice (52348)	Impact - policy change	partially complies (2016)	Partially complies (target 2020: fully complies)	-	-	-	-
Output 1 0570/A0/05/003/001 PREVENTION	Core prevention and response interventions addressing violence	Effectiveness	0 (2019)	951 (600)	-UNICEF have developed parenting Programmes and provided support to vulnerable families and child victims of	Partnership support	Long lasting interventions in the area of VaC	- children victims of violence or children being at risk

AND RESPONSE TO VAC & GBV	against children through UNICEF-supported programmes (adapted to context of COVID-19): (a) number of mothers, fathers and caregivers reached through parenting programmes; and (b) number of girl			<i>Fully achieved</i>	violence and children at risk through CACs model		Strong partnerships with national and local key stakeholders (including NPA and LPA)	
	Number of UNICEF personnel and partners that have completed training on GBV risk mitigation and referrals for survivors [COVIDSitRep]	Effectiveness	0 (2019)	95 (50) <i>Fully achieved</i>	No details available	-	-	-
	Country routinely collects and publishes key types of administrative data on violence, exploitation and abuse of children, disaggregated by age and sex	Effectiveness	Partially (2017)	YES (National Study on VaC) <i>Fully achieved</i>	-With the support of UNICEF the National Study on VAC was completed	Partnership support Evidence-based advocacy		- Children victims of violence or children at risk
	Number of UNICEF-targeted women, girls and boys provided with risk mitigation, prevention or response interventions to address gender-based violence through UNICEF-supported programmes in the reporting year [COVID] (93-01-L3-07)	Effectiveness	0 (2019)	424 (200) <i>Fully achieved</i>	- UNICEF has implemented the CACs model through which it has provided integrated services to children who were victims of violence or support for prevention and risk mitigation	Modelling/ piloting Partnership support	Long lasting interventions in the area of VaC Strong partnerships with national and local key stakeholders (including NPA and LPA) The acknowledgement of UNICEF as a key actor in prevention of violence against children and	-child victims or at risk

							support for child victims	
	Share of parents who do not accept corporal punishment as a discipline method as a result of target C4D initiatives (52350)	effectiveness		YES (Baseline identified through VAC study)	-With the support of UNICEF the National Study on VAC was completed	Partnership support Evidence-based advocacy		- Children victims of violence or children at risk
	# of safe and accessible mechanisms for children to report violence (52349)	Impact - better access to services	1 (2017)	3 (1) <i>Fully achieved</i>	- UNICEF have implemented the CACs model who facilitate the increase in demand of integrated services and also the number of reported cases in the regions targeted by the model	Modelling/ Piloting	Strong partnerships with national and local key stakeholders (including NPA and LPA)	- Children victims of violence or children at risk
Output 2 0570/A0/05/003/002 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO JUSTICE	Existence of procedures and services for children in contact with law that are applied and delivered in line with international norms (23-03-L3-03)	Impact - policy change/ institutional capacity	Some services and procedures exist but they are not fully developed, applied and delivered in line with international norms (2017)	(Concept for introduction of restorative justice approach for children in conflict with the law is developed and discussed with key stakeholders) <i>Partially achieved</i>	- UNICEF have initiated "blue rooms" practice in Bulgaria through the CACs model	Modelling/ Piloting Evidence-based advocacy Support for partnerships	Strong partnerships with national and local key stakeholders (including NPA and LPA)	- Children being involved in proceedings
	Number of children placed in correctional boarding schools(52351)	Impact - better access to services	183 (2017)	115 (70) <i>Not achieved</i>	-	-	-	- children that commit crimes
Output 3 0570/A0/05/003/003 PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ON THE MOVE	Specialized legal aid is available to children participants in legal proceedings(52353)	Impact - better access to services	Specialized legal aid is available on projects basis (2017)	<i>Not achieved</i> (Training modules for specialized legal aid for children are developed and discussed with key stakeholders)	-UNICEF had provided trainings for professionals with CACs model, but the model has not been scaled up yet, this its effects are limited	-	-	-
	Data on the number of children participating in justice processes (criminal, civil,	Effectiveness	<i>Partially</i>	<i>Partially</i> (Target 2022: Data is: a. Integrated into existing data	- UNICEF supported MoI to develop Automated Informational System for the Prevention of Child Crime and Protection of Children.	Evidence-based advocacy	Strong partnership with public authorities in the field of access to justice	-all children

	administrative), and the reasons for their participation is: a. Integrated into existing data collection and management mechanisms b. Disaggregated by age and gender c. R			collection and management mechanisms; c. regularly collected) <i>Partially achieved</i>				
Outcome 4 0570/A0/05/004 PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILD RIGHTS	- State institutions, the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and network of child rights civil society groups are monitoring and regularly reporting on child rights violations(52356)	Impact – institutional change	Child rights monitoring and reporting is not equity-based and excludes the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach children (2016)	<i>The NSI monitoring system has been improved</i> <i>(target 2022: Child rights monitoring and reporting is equity-based and includes the most vulnerable children)</i> <i>Partially achieved</i>	- According to RAM 2020, the NSI produce data on children disaggregated in line with CRC concluding observations, through the Sector management information system. - UNICEF UNICEF provided assistance to the National Statistical Institute (NSI) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for the implementation of a project "New Approaches for Generating Data on Hard-to-reach populations at Risk of Violation of Their Rights", children being among the target groups. The results of the study will be ready beginning of 2021. In addition, UNICEF CO has conducted a general Situation analysis of children and adolescence in Bulgaria, as well as a SITAN on the impact of the Business Sector on Children Rights in Bulgaria and a SITAN on Public Finance Management and Children.	Evidence based advocacy Partnership Support	The commitment of HR international bodies towards the improvement of data collection and monitoring system in regards with child rights realization Strong partnerships	- All children
	- # of complaints brought to the Ombudsman's Office by children per year that are followed up/acted upon(52357)	Impact – institutional change	6 (2016)	<i>Partially achieved</i> <i>(target 2022: At least 30)</i>	-	-	-	-
	- # of partnerships engaged in communication and promotion of child rights(52358)	Impact: behavioural and attitudes change	10 (2017)	- <i>(target 2022: 15)</i>	- UNICEF supported the organization of following C4D events in partnership with relevant stakeholders: The Spring campaign 'Education for every child', the campaign of Fantastico for UNICEF (part of the Education for every child campaign), 'A voice for every child' campaign. - UNICEF supported the organization of the second International Conference on Augmentative and Alternative	Partnership support Communication	Quality of cooperation/ partnerships	- Children with disabilities mainly

					Communication, bringing together more than 400 participants from the government, NGO, education experts, principals, teachers, parents, international experts to present and discuss contemporary approaches and technologies for children and adults with communication difficulties. - UNICEF developed a partnership with Association of European Journalists and created a guide book for ethical reporting.			
Output 1 0570/A0/05/004/01 CHILD RIGHTS MONITORING	# NSI produced data on children are disaggregated in line with CRC concluding observations (CRC/C/BGR/CO/3-5)(52360)	Effectiveness	Partially in line/ Target (2017)	YES (Sector management information system) <i>Fully achieved</i>	-UNICEF UNICEF provided assistance to the National Statistical Institute (NSI) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for the implementation of a project "New Approaches for Generating Data on Hard-to-reach populations at Risk of Violation of Their Rights", children being among the target groups.	Evidence-based advocacy Partnership support	-	-All children
	Ombudsman Office works in compliance with the Paris Principles and is a full member of ENOC and periodically monitors and reports on the situation of the most vulnerable children(52361)	Effectiveness	Partially fulfils the criteria (2017)	YES (Partially fulfils the criteria) <i>Fully achieved</i>	- Based on UNICEF CO initiative, a survey and discussion on impact of COVID to children was organized among ENOC members resulting of a comprehensive report. Following those initiatives Bulgarian Ombudsperson will be part of the 2021 UNICEF – ENOC project on Child rights impact assessment and COVID-19.	Partnership support Evidence-based advocacy	The commitment of the Ombudsman Office towards monitoring child rights in Bulgaria	- Vulnerable categories of children
Output 2 0570/A0/05/004/02 HORIZONTAL COOPERATION AND ODA	Number of initiatives advancing child rights in other countries through bilateral cooperation(5236)	Effectiveness	1 (2016)	9 (5) <i>Fully achieved</i>	Through its excellent relationship with the General Directorate "Global Affairs" at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Country Office was able to receive heads up on funding opportunities under the Bulgarian ODA and to share the respective information on call for proposals and templates with UNICEF teams in the priority ODA countries. As a new donor, Bulgaria has prioritized child rights and children related initiatives for its bilateral cooperation. Although the grants provided by the Bulgarian Government are smaller in amount compared to larger bilateral donors, this is an important instrument for strengthening horizontal cooperation and longer-term engagement and advocacy for child rights.	Partnership support Evidence-based advocacy	UNICEF's credibility as a key actor in child right realization	-

Output 3 0570/A0/05/004/03 COMMUNICATION FOR CHILD RIGHTS	Number of people reached on UNICEF social media channels	Effectiveness	5000000 (2015)	20393145 (50000) <i>Fully achieved</i>	- All results are attributable to UNICEF C4D activities that have reached all together a record number of audience	Communication Partnership support	Strong partnerships with SCOs and media	-all children
	Number of articles/stories with UNICEF mentions in top-tier media outlets	Effectiveness	2220 (2017)	3019 (2310) <i>Fully achieved</i>				
	Number of professionals engaged in ethical communication and reporting on child rights(52365)	Effectiveness	4 journalists (2016)	76 journalists, photographers and students - ethical reporting; 103 adolescents - media literacy (100 journalists and journalism students, at least 2 MOUs signed with key universities) <i>Partially achieved</i>				
	% media coverage of UNICEF voice(52364)	Effectiveness	Positive: 30 %, Neutral: 70%, Negative: 0 (2017)	34.2% positive voice (1% increase of the positive voice) <i>Fully achieved</i>				
	Number of potentials impressions reached through traditional media(52363)	Effectiveness	15000000 (2015)	50299731 potential impressions reached through traditional media (3% increase) <i>Fully achieved</i>				
Output 4 0570/A0/05/004/04 EVALUATION	No indicator			<i>Fully achieved</i>				
Output 5 0570/A0/05/004/05 ADOLESCENT ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT	No indicator			<i>Fully achieved</i>				

Annex 2.B. Detailed analysis of general impact of the CP in Bulgaria

Positive changes regarding early childhood development and child care (impact of Programme Outcome 1)

The first outcome of the CPD 2018 – 2022 – Early Childhood Education and Child Care is operationalized through 2 outcome indicators. According to the existing administrative data at national level, the first outcome which addresses the advancement of the deinstitutionalization process has been fully achieved in Bulgaria and the target set by UNICEF for 2022, has been already surpassing. For the second indicator, which refers to the increase of the proportion of disadvantaged families with children between 0 and 2 years old that receive support and counselling for ECD, there are no available comparative data that can show the improvements achieved by 2021 at national level. Nevertheless, the results of UNICEF's work in this concern show that a significant number of families have been provided with ECD support and counselling, as it will be further presented.

According to the collected evidence, the following significant achievements in the ECD and child care have been made:

- Despite the unfavourable political climate due to which the ECD strategy has been put on hold, Bulgaria has adopted in 2020, the Social Services Act that leads to important improvement in the legislative framework of social service. The new act lays the ground for a more cross-sectoral coordinated system of social services, increases the focus on child rights realization and provides the framework for family and community-based serviced in the ECD area.
- In the area of child care and more specifically in line with the National Strategy “Vision for Deinstitutionalization of children in Bulgaria 2015 – 2025, Bulgaria has made an important progress, overreaching its objectives. The number of institutionalized children has dropped significantly, the number of specialized institutions decreased and the development of alternative care services has been in parallel improved.

National strategic and policy improvements in the ECD and area child care

The contribution of UNICEF Bulgaria to the implementation of national and local policies supporting nurturing family and social environment during the programme cycle 2018-2022 did not fully realize as planned. The assumption that there was maintained a continued cooperation and development of mechanisms of cross-sector coordination, especially at local level did not hold true, and did not lead to a decision to scale up the pilot projects. Furthermore, the foreseen risks increasing political risk due to strong anti-child right and anti-women rights social tension, resulting in putting on hold of the main child-related policies were realized. Thus, despite efforts, the ECD strategy could not be developed. Nevertheless, the new Social Services Act, for which UNICEF has also provided support and which came into force in July 2020, represents a certain improvement of the national legislative framework on social protection and thus child protection. **The act provides the legal framework for individualized and customized support and services and moreover, it brings new quality standards for social services.** As emphasized in the Situation of Analysis conducted by UNICEF in 2020, the new legislation supports the expansion of community-based services in the ECD area and more specifically of ECI services. Further, as a consequence of the adaptation of the SSA, an Agency for the Quality of Social Services has been established.

Progress made in the child care sector and deinstitutionalization

A brief review of the legal and institutional framework pertaining to early childhood in Bulgaria during the beginning of the programming cycle and as the approaching and end to the current CPD and in the process of developing the new CPD reveals that UNICEF has made clear contribution to the deinstitutionalization process in Bulgaria within the framework of the previous CPD as evidenced by

the international acknowledgment for UNICEF Bulgaria in this programme cycle. UNICEF is reported to have made significant contribution in ensuring the rights of all children to live in a family environment, as assessed by the progress against the outcome indicator: **number of children (disaggregated by gender, age, disability, refugee and migrant children) entering formal care every year**. In the last 10 years, the number of children living in specialized residential institutions decreased significantly from **7,587 in 2010 to 476 in December 2019**⁷³. The evidence collected show that number of institutionalized under-3 children has decreased the most, from children 556 in 2015 to 284 children in 2019. However, it is important to mention that there has been observed an increase in the proportion of children with disabilities placed in Family Type Placement Centres (FTPC)⁷⁴. Bulgaria has also made in regards with the number of specialized institutions, from 137 in 2010 to 20 institutions by the end of 2019 year⁷⁵. Moreover, the administrative data show that there has been an increase of family-based alternative care, the number of foster families has increased with 10 times since 2009. The number of community-based services for children and families has increased significantly, from 241 in 2010 to 630 in 2019. In this way, **Bulgaria has made significant progress in changing the approach in child care sector from residential care to family-based and community-based approaches**.

Current situation regarding the ECD services and support provided to families through the national system in Bulgaria

In the area of ECD there is still a significant need in cross-sectoral coordination and provision of integrated services for families and children in need. **The services provided by the national system in the area of ECD are mainly delivered through the health system and lack focus on promoting holistic child development and parenting**. As the Situation Analysis conducted by UNICEF in 2020 emphasizes “accessibility and quality of services remain points of concern”. The health services provided free of charge for insured pregnant women are insufficient (they include only one antenatal examination and delivery care) and the access to these services is very limited for women in rural areas⁷⁶. Moreover, the number of insured pregnant women has decreased with 2 percentual points from 2014 to 2019. Thus, it is important to emphasize that Bulgaria has made significant progress in reducing infant and child mortality rate from 9.4 per 1,000 live births in 2010, to 5.6 per 1,000 live births in 2019⁷⁷. Nevertheless, these figures need to be contextualized, as the number of births is also on a downwards trend. Within the ECD area in Bulgaria there is not enough support provided to parents with children under 3 years old to build their capacities to promote the optimal social, emotional and cognitive support of their children. Early detection of developmental difficulties is still an area where Bulgaria has not made sufficient progress. The collected data show that inter-sectoral mechanisms are underdeveloped and professionals are not properly trained. Further, specialized services for children that are identified as being at risk are insufficient and parents that have children under 3 years old with disabilities, but not only, lack in access to adequate support. Therefore, at national level, **the access to integrated ECD services, ECI and counselling of parents has not increased**. Nevertheless, the available data on the results on UNICEF’s extensive work on the development of Programmes and activities for the provision of families / caregivers with counselling and support for promoting ECD, show an improvement in access to these type of services for most disadvantaged groups in the areas where the interventions have been implemented. **In this respect, UNICEF CO Bulgaria have fully achieved its targets set for 2020**. The available documents show that in the period 2018 – 2020 more than 13,900 parents of children under 5 years of age benefited from different parenting support and C4D modalities, including home visiting, community-based parenting support programs, as well as remote counselling and digital platforms⁷⁸. Moreover, the provided support has also been adjusted to the specific needs of those most affected by the COVID 19 pandemic, such as

⁷³ UNICEF, Update Strategy Note 2020, p. 7

⁷⁴ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis 2020, p. 108

⁷⁵ UNICEF, Update Strategy Note 2020, p. 8

⁷⁶ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis 2020, p. 44

⁷⁷ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis 2020, p. 47

⁷⁸ UNICEF, RAM outcome and output report, 2020

public health information and support. It is important to mention that there is a need for more focus on scaling up the results and thus, generating impact at the level of the national system of services provided in the ECD area.

The second CPD 2018 – 2022 outcome - Inclusive education and early learning is operationalized through 3 indicators. The first two indicators address the level of school enrollment and the prevention of school dropout. In the case of both indicators, the rate of school age children out of school and the rate of early leavers from education, the available administrative data show that the situation from Bulgaria has worsen.

Regarding the **first outcome indicator**, in comparison with the figures from school year 2016/2017, in 2018/2019 school year the enrolment rate has been lower, thus the target has not been achieved, as showed below:

- In the case of **children aged 3 - 6**, the enrollment has decreased from 84.8% in 2014/2015 to 80.1% in 2019/2020 school year, showing **an increase with 4,5 percentual points of children out of school**⁷⁹.
- In the case of children **aged 7 – 10**, the enrollment rate has decreased from 96.7% in 2014/2015 school year to 88.3% in 2019/2020 school year, meaning **an increase with 8.4 percentual points of children out of school**;
- In the case of **children aged 11 – 14/13**, the enrollment rate has decreased 94,1% in 2014/2015 to 90.1 in 2019/2020, showing **an increase with 4 percentual points of children out of school**⁸⁰.

Regarding the **second outcome indicator**, namely the rate of early leavers from education and training, the available data show that **the numbers has also increased in the period 2015 – 2020**, thus the target has not been achieved. The available data show that in 2015 the rate of early leavers (population aged between 18 and 24) was 13.4%, whereas, by 2019, the rate increased to 13.9%⁸¹. Moreover, as the Situation Analysis conducted by UNICEF emphasizes, the “about 30 – 35% of 6 grade children are at risk of dropping out of school”. Therefore, despite the improvements that Bulgaria have made in the area of inclusive education, as will be further presented, the overall situation regarding the coverage of educational public services has worsen in the past at least 5 years. The efforts made by UNICEF have to be viewed in the light of the context of the overall educational system in Bulgaria and with the same level of importance, in the light of the effects that the pandemic context had and continues to have on the education section and more specifically on the access of school aged children to education.

In regards with the **third outcome indicator**, which addresses directly the inclusive education area by measuring the progress made in the available pre-school and school staff for children in need of support, the available data show that **Bulgaria has made a substantial progress** and the target has been fully achieved. The progress can be observed not only in the number of specialists prepared to provide support for children with disabilities, but also in legal provisioning, capacity building, securing of funding and creating favorable conditions for expanding the access of children and adolescents with disabilities and special education needs (SEN) to quality and inclusive education.

Progress made in national legislative framework in the area of inclusive education

Bulgaria made an important shift from the traditional educational model to a new model providing for (i) integration in mainstream education of all children and young people, including those with special needs and CwD; (ii) enabling learning environment and (iii) individual support according to individual characteristics of each child or student, introduced with the Pre-

⁷⁹ The available administrative data do not provide disaggregated enrollment numbers or rates for children aged 3-4 and children aged 6 -7 and the CPD Bulgaria 2018 – 2022 sets the baseline (2015) and target (2022) for outcome indicator: *Rate of school-age children out of school, by sex and education level (52337)*. As to be able to properly assess the progress made in this case disaggregated data by sex is required. Nevertheless, the CPD does not set up the target for 2022 in this manner.

⁸⁰ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis, 2020, p. 83

⁸¹ Key indicators report p. 8

School and School Education Act in 2016. A new IE education regulatory framework has been developed between 2016 and 2021 to support the transition, including a package of regulatory provisions establishing the state educational standard for inclusive education, stipulating for the provisioning of both general and additional support for the personal development of students; introducing requirements for specialized teacher trainings for provision of support to visually and hearing impaired children and students; introducing an obligation for the parents to provide information about the health condition of their child; defining the staffing rules for the number of teachers and other pedagogical specialists in the centers for special educational support; regulating the status and functions of the resource teachers in the kindergartens, schools or support centers for personal development and the teacher of children with mental retardation in the centers for special educational support; defining the standards for the physical environment necessary for education of children with SEN and CwD, etc. In this regard UNICEF supported the Ministry of MoES in developing the general framework for introducing pre-service teacher training on inclusive education and introduction of a 15-hour mandatory module for pre-service teacher training on inclusive education.

Progress made regarding the available support services for children with disabilities

The capacity of the system to provide support serviced to children with disabilities is gradually improving, but still remains insufficient. The number of professionals (such as speech therapists, educational mediators, psychologists, social workers and resource teachers) supporting students with SEN increased by 60% within a year- to 4920 (5,3 per 1000 students) in 2018/2019 school year compared to 3070 (3,2 per 1000 students) the previous year⁸².

Initial progress has been achieved in strengthening teacher capacity to work with CwD. A mandatory Basic Inclusive Education course has been introduced in pre-service university training of all teachers. In 2019, with the support of UNICEF, 70 trainers from the regional centers for supporting the process of inclusive education has been trained to apply the functional assessment of children and students with SEN according to the WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disabilities and Human Health⁸³. In 2020, follow-up trainings of 70 trainers from the personal development support teams in kindergartens and schools has been delivered for scaling up the functional assessment⁸⁴. Both trainings has been delivered with the UNICEF's technical assistance and support. Various methodologies and tools for working with children with different types of disability has been developed with MoES funding in addition to the screening test for learning difficulties⁸⁵. Increasing number of specialized training programs for teachers has been offered- as of August 2021, the Information Register of Approved Programs for Upgrading Qualification of Pedagogical Specialists of the MoES contains 91 registered training programs for IE, 56 training programs for work with children and students with SEN and 5 training programs for work with children and students with specific types of disabilities, offering qualification credits for teachers. According to the SitAn (2021) all these measures resulted in gradually increasing number of inclusive schools offering accessible and enabling learning environment and properly trained teachers but their numbers are still insufficient to provide adequate support for all children with SEN. Despite the available training opportunities, UNICEF's survey on teachers' attitudes⁸⁶ demonstrates very low level of both formal training and of involvement in informal training and self-training of teachers to support inclusive education. A recent national representative survey on the impact of remote learning in electronic environment on teachers and students demonstrate that 42% of Bulgarian teachers believe that they do not have the necessary skills and resources to support students with SEN⁸⁷. **The access of CwD to additional support services has been improved, but are still insufficient and unevenly distributed.** According to the MoES data, the number of children and

⁸² UNICEF (2021). A Situation Analysis of Children's Rights in Bulgaria. Report 2020.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ <https://www.mon.bg/bg/100381>

⁸⁶ UNICEF (2018) Survey of the attitudes of teachers in kindergartens to implement inclusive education (Second stage).

⁸⁷ Hristova, A.; Petrova, S. and Tosheva, E. (2021). Impact of distance learning in electronic environment on educational process teachers and students. Institute for Research in Education

students included in the mainstream education that have been provided with additional support from the regional centres for supporting the process of inclusive education increased by 13% between 2018 and 2020 – from 17 955 in 2018 to 20 314 in 2020⁸⁸. Despite the progress observed, important barriers remain. The support services to CwD and their families are still insufficient and unevenly distributed. According to MoES data, the total number of children with disabilities and special needs in kindergartens and schools in Bulgaria were over 25,000 in 2020, which means that some 4 686 children enrolled in mainstream education still don't have access to support services. One reason is the highly uneven geographic distribution of specialized services for children with developmental difficulties and disabilities, which hampers the equal access. In addition to this, CwD that are left outside formal education system or dropped out don't have access to complementary support services.

Progress towards attitudinal changes regarding inclusive education

There are mixed signals regarding the changes in teachers attitudes towards inclusive education of CwD. The specially commissioned UNICEF's survey demonstrates certain positive shift in teacher attitudes towards inclusion of CwD in the mainstream educational settings and positive contribution of specialized trainings on the registered change⁸⁹. However, the interviews conducted for this evaluation suggests significant remaining attitudinal challenges for teachers working with CwD, especially among older teachers. According to the feedback collected, the general teacher attitudes has worsened lately. More and more teachers, especially those with longer pedagogical experience, face difficulties and uncertainties working with children and students with disabilities, and increasingly consider that that these children should be educated separately.

The third outcome of UNICEF CPD for the period 2018 – 2022 is operationalized through 4 outcome indicators. The **first outcome indicator** refers to the adequate support received by children on the move, including access to health and education services. According to the data **Bulgaria has made progress in addressing the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)** and ensuring the realisation of their rights, nevertheless, the indicator has been partially achieved. The ban on detention of UASC introduced in the law in 2017 and the adoption of the Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria (LARB) Regulations are two important legislative changes that led to improvements in the state response to the needs of UASC. Nevertheless, there is a need of more coordination among key stakeholders providing services, such as child protection, judicial or health, to children on the move and also of increasing the preparedness of specialized staff dealing with UASC (cultural mediators, psychologists, social workers and other) and the expansion of the coverage of services provided.

The **second outcome indicator** refers to institutionalized, specialized and quality routine training on the rights of child participants in legal proceedings for police officers, prosecutors, judges and lawyers working with children in justice processes. In this area there are no formalized trainings for professionals in the judiciary working with children, thus the indicator has not been achieved. All data available show that the professionals are not well prepared to work with children and even if there has been observed slight improvements in the extent to which the alternatives to detention, the restorative practices are used, there is a need of a legal framework in this respect, including the integration of mandatory trainings for professional working with children, in order to be able to produce and observe at-scale results. Nevertheless, there has been registered a slight decrease in proceeding launched against children and also in the number of children convicted.

The **third outcome indicator** refers to the number of cases of violence against children identified, reported and addressed. The indicator has not been achieved because the number of signals and cases launched in the period 2015 – 2019 have decreased significantly. If in 2015, there were 3741 signals received for violence against children and 957 cases launched, in 2019, there were only 1171 signals received and only 446 cases opened. This trend must be analysed in comparison with the number of

⁸⁸ UNICEF (2021). A Situation Analysis of Children's Rights in Bulgaria. Report 2020

⁸⁹ Atanassova, A. et.al.(2019). Survey of the attitudes of teachers in kindergartens to implement inclusive education (Second stage). UNICEF

children victims of violence, that has increased from 3566 in 2015 to 4122 in 2019⁹⁰. Nevertheless, the available administrative data is inconsistent and the efforts made in the area of monitoring and identifying cases of VaC or children at risk are not sufficient.

Regarding the **fourth outcome indicator**, justice system complies with the minimum standards laid down in the Beijing Rules of Justice, the available data show progress due to the legislative improvements in the past years, but the target for 2022 of full compliance remains partially achieved.

Progress made in the improvement of the legislative framework on child protection and access to justice

In 2019 and 2020, in Bulgaria, 3 important policy and legislative documents have been adopted:

- Social Service Act (SSA);
- National programme for prevention and protection of domestic violence for 2020;
- National Strategy for promoting equality between women and men 2021 – 2030;
- Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria (LARB) Regulations;
- Amendments of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

The adoption of the Social Service Act, in May 2020 is a key moment in the development of the legislative framework in Bulgaria in the area of protecting and supporting children being victims of violence or at risk of violence. UNICEF and its implementing partners within the project Child Advocacy Centers, ANIMUS and SAPI, have supported the government in the process of drafting the Social Service Act. The evidence gathered from documents and interview highlight the importance of UNICEF's work in this regard. Moreover, the Social Services Act "weakens the mandate of SACP, and hands over licensing of social services functions to the Agency for Quality of Social Services (AQSS) and municipalities"⁹¹. This means also that the local policy has been influenced by the adoption of SSA, which has been supported by UNICEF. Moreover, the SSA changes the way in which the social services are provided, putting more emphasis on the individualized and customized services and support for children. Also, the new legislative document, introduces the concept of an integrated approach and thus, facilitates "multiagency coordination and team work"⁹².

In regards with the services provided to UASC, the adoption of the Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria (LARB) Regulations, have established that the "the educational system cannot be postponed by more than three months following the submission of the asylum application"⁹³. As a result, **the enrollment rate of UASC in schools has increased significantly**. According to the data provided by the Situation Analysis conducted by UNICEF in 2020, in 2016/2017 school year the enrollment rate was 10%, whereas in 2018/2019 was 60%. Regarding the improvements that have been made in Bulgaria in respect to the services and support provided to children on the move, is also important to mention that in 2017 the ban on detention was introduced into the law and therefore, unaccompanied children and separated children were not allowed to be detained any more and they should be referred to Child protection Departments. Further, the Amendments of the Law on Asylum and Refugees led to change in the arrangements for representation of UASC to be entrusted to specially selected list of legal aid lawyers from the Public Register of the National Legal Aid Bureau (NLAB)⁹⁴.

Progress made in the improvement of the national monitoring system of child rights realization

Ministry of Interior developed, with the support of UNICEF, the **Automated Informational System for the Prevention of Child Crime and Protection of Children**. The new system put in place in Bulgaria has been presented at the TransMonEE Network Meeting of National Statistical Offices in Europe and Central Asia, Austria, in 2019, as a promising example of a national monitoring system of children at risk and children victim of crime⁹⁵. Nevertheless, according to the documents revised and the data collected

⁹⁰ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis of the child's rights in Bulgaria, 2020, p. 126

⁹¹ Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers, 2021, p. 4

⁹² UNICEF, A Situation Analysis of the child's rights in Bulgaria, 2020, p. 100.

⁹³ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis of the child's rights in Bulgaria, 2020, p. 135, 136

⁹⁴ UNICEF, RAM outcome and output report, 2020, p. 24

⁹⁵ Ministry of Interior, The Promising Practice and Possibilities of the Automated Informational System for the Prevention of Child Crime and Protection of Children, within the TransMonEE Network Meeting of National Statistical Offices in Europe and Central Asia, Austria, November 2019

from interviews, there are no available of data on the operationalization of the system, nor on its utilization. The information collected through the Automated Informational System are not public yet. Moreover, duty bearers are not efficient in identifying victims of domestic violence and register them only when the child or adults file a complaint with the police. The monitoring system is inconsistent and fragmented between institutions from various sectors that address the needs of child victims of violence (child protection, health, education, justice) and the available database are not interoperable.

Progress made in cross-sectoral coordination under child protection area

The Situation Analysis conducted by UNICEF in 2020, shows that in the period of 2013 – 2019, the **use of the Coordination Mechanism for cross-sectoral support provided to child victims of violence or children being at risk has increased with 33%**⁹⁶. Moreover, the analysis provides evidence on the fact that “social services, health, education and civil society partners are increasingly involved at key stages of the juvenile justice process”⁹⁷. Further, the analysis emphasizes that Coordination Mechanism in the Case of Violence, established through the Child Protection Act requires urgent advances in its implementation.

Moreover, the collected data show that the sector of child protection presents “underdeveloped mechanisms for timely identification and multi-sectoral responses supporting children in need of protection”⁹⁸. The need of further development in the area of child protect in respect to the cross-sectoral coordination in Bulgaria has been emphasized also in the Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria from 2019. The report states that Bulgaria “lacks in clarity as to the multi-sectoral nature of the child protection system and its main components, functions and approaches”⁹⁹. The data collected through interviewees also support the idea that **the responsibilities in this sector are dissipated among a lot of actors and there is a lack of coordination which affects the quality of services provide for children.**

Progress made in proving access to justice for all children victims of violence

The Situation Analysis from 2021 emphasize that **the progress made in the period 2018 – 2021 in the area of access to justice in Bulgaria has been slow**¹⁰⁰. The analysis also emphasized that in general free legal aid for children is still difficult to access and inconsistent. The system of so-called “blue room”, initiated through CACs model, which allows the protection of children involved in legal proceedings has improved the access of children to child-friendly justice. The Situation Analysis conducted in 2020, showed that there are 25 blue rooms available in Bulgaria, “but they operate without any established rules or procedure, and overall are rarely used”¹⁰¹. Moreover, the system of child protection is not proactive on identifying cases of violence against women and children or children being at risk. The service providers are not trained in this concern and they do not have the necessary skills to identify such cases. Thus, as emphasized in the Situation Analysis many cases of violence are not reported.

Nevertheless, the evaluation team has collected evidences on the positives effects that the CACs model have on the access to justice for children being victims of violence or being at risk. According to the evaluation conducted in 2020, the **“CACs were able to improve access to justice** because they worked with lawyers who provided free legal services to children and their families”¹⁰². The centres also provided other types of services for children, such as mental health services and psychological and therapeutic services. They have also initiated the use of “blue rooms”, which allows the protection of children during proceedings. Further, the evaluation of CACs model emphasizes that the access to integrated services has been considered very facile by the children and parents that have benefited from

⁹⁶ Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019, p. 122

⁹⁷ Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019, p. 130

⁹⁸ A Situation Analysis on Childs Right in Bulgaria, 2020, p. 48

⁹⁹ Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ UNICEF, Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019, p. 47

¹⁰¹ UNICEF, Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019, p. 51

¹⁰² Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers, 2020, p. 71

them. The perspective of the beneficiaries towards the relevance and usefulness of the supports received from the centres is highly appreciative.

The third outcome of UNICEF CPD for the period 2018 – 2022 is operationalized through 4 outcome indicators. The **first outcome indicator** refers to the adequate support received by children on the move, including access to health and education services. According to the data **Bulgaria has made progress in addressing the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)** and ensuring the realisation of their rights, nevertheless, the indicator has been partially achieved. The ban on detention of UASC introduced in the law in 2017 and the adoption of the Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria (LARB) Regulations are two important legislative changes that led to improvements in the state response to the needs of UASC. Nevertheless, there is a need of more coordination among key stakeholders providing services, such as child protection, judicial or health, to children on the move and also of increasing the preparedness of specialized staff dealing with UASC (cultural mediators, psychologists, social workers and other) and the expansion of the coverage of services provided.

The **second outcome indicator** refers to institutionalized, specialized and quality routine training on the rights of child participants in legal proceedings for police officers, prosecutors, judges and lawyers working with children in justice processes. In this area there are no formalized trainings for professionals in the judiciary working with children, thus the indicator has not been achieved. All data available show that the professionals are not well prepared to work with children and even if there has been observed slight improvements in the extent to which the alternatives to detention, the restorative practices are used, there is a need of a legal framework in this respect, including the integration of mandatory trainings for professional working with children, in order to be able to produce and observe at-scale results. Nevertheless, there has been registered a slight decrease in proceeding launched against children and also in the number of children convicted.

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Regarding the **fourth outcome indicator**, justice system complies with the minimum standards laid down in the Beijing Rules of Justice, the available data show progress due to the legislative improvements in the past years, but the target for 2022 of full compliance remains partially achieved.

Progress in monitoring children rights realization at national level

According to the available data, the National Statistical Institute has improved its statistical infrastructure¹⁰⁴ and the key indicators for which the NSI is collecting data are in accordance with EU requirements. Furthermore, according to UNICEF reports, the NSI produce data on children disaggregated in line with CRC concluding observations, through the Sector management information system¹⁰⁵. The Directorate on Child Rights of the Ombudsman's Office in Bulgaria is actively involved in monitoring the realization of child rights. Nevertheless, its capacity technical and financial capacity is insufficient as to be able to collect data in all relevant areas.

Nevertheless, the available analysis and research developed in the respect with child right realization emphasize that disaggregated data are not available, that information is fragmented and also the

¹⁰³ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis of the child's rights in Bulgaria, 2020, p. 126

¹⁰⁴ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis 2020, p. 30

¹⁰⁵ UNICEF, RAM outcome and output indicators, 2020, p. 40

available database from different public institutions are not interoperable. The Situation Analysis conducted by UNICEF in 2020 highlights that “data on the actual numbers of children involved in labour, children/adolescents subjected to violence, child marriages, sexual violence, abuse and exploitation are not available”¹⁰⁶. Moreover, the analysis shows that in regards with vulnerable children, public institutions define and monitor in different manners their status. There still an important gap in information regarding children from Roma communities and their rights realization.

Further, as Bulgaria adopted the 2030 Agenda, it will develop a national mechanism of the coordination and implementation of the SDG which will include a monitoring system. This is an important opportunity for further improvements regarding available administrative data regarding the realization of children rights at national level.

Progress made in partnership strengthening for child rights

UNICEF has strengthened its business partnership strategy and started to engage more actively the business sector in its activities. In this respect, the CO has developed a partnership with corporate businesses, NGOs, media and academia for the organization of the first youth-led virtual hackathon on digital solutions for media literacy¹⁰⁷. Nevertheless, its partnerships with public authorities and municipalities, key SCOs (within the models implemented, e.g. CACs, FFC, Together from kindergarten, HVS and other) in the fields of child protection, inclusive education, early childhood development are well established. The data collected through interviews show that UNICEF acts a communication and partnership facilitator among duty bearers from different sectors, NGOs and academia. An important partnership that needs to be mentioned here is the partnership with Ombudsman of Bulgaria, which is actively involved in monitoring the realization of child rights in Bulgaria.

Progress in communicating and promoting for children rights

As part of the outcome 4 of CPD is directly attributable to UNICEF efforts, C4D, this section addresses only the progress observed by analysing the CO results in conducting C4D activities. UNICEF has been a key actor in Bulgaria in promoting child rights through communication and awareness raising campaigns.

According to the reports of UNICEF¹⁰⁸, the C4D activities have managed to reach a substantial number of people, as it follows:

- The Spring campaign ‘Education for every child’ aimed at developing the first digital educational platform in Bulgaria that will make the learning process more accessible to children with disabilities, that had reached 3,100,402 people through UNICEF channels and traditional media. The advocacy messages reached 538,500 people through corporate partners.
- The campaign of Fantastico for UNICEF (part of the Education for every child campaign) reached more than 3 million people. Wide coverage of the campaign was provided in TV, radio, press, online media and social media.
- ‘A voice for every child’ campaign had a substantial media coverage of 4,572,523 people reached through TV, radio, print and online media and UNICEF channels.
- In the context of the pandemic, in 2020, the communication related to COVID-19 conducted by UNICEF CO gathered a total of 55,577,870 impressions through UNICEF channels and radio, TV, online and print media.
- Furthermore, UNICEF contributed through engagement of young people digital activism: production of materials, incl. on disabilities (videos, blogs, podcasts) that reached 2,382,797 people and engaged 40,720.
- Additionally, C4D launched U-Report Bulgaria and has reached 1,945,986 people in social media and has recruited its first ever 650 U-Reporters.

¹⁰⁶ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis 2020, p. 30

¹⁰⁷ UNICEF, RAM outcome and output indicators, 2020, p. 39

¹⁰⁸ UNICEF, RAM outcome and output indicators

Conditions and factors influenced the effectiveness of UNICEF's Country Program in the area of ECD

The implementation of early childhood development program component could not proceed as planned due to: (i) significant change in the policies and practices in the provision of services for young children and their families, compared to the programming stage; (ii) resistance to inter-sectoral cooperation; (iii) insufficient national resources, but also lack of political will, to scale-up and mainstream the models demonstrated by UNICEF projects into the services to families with limited access to early childhood services; (iv) undeveloped legislation, particularly in regards to parenting support and (v) socio-cultural norms of some communities that may deprive children of their right to develop to their full potential.

The strengths that facilitated and supported improvements were: (i) UNICEF's access to valuable accumulation of knowledge and use of strong international expertise, especially in the field of ECD; (ii) credibility of the UNICEF brand and strong public recognition enabling greater influence on public opinion on the importance of early childhood care for development, (iii) commitment of service providers at the local level; (iv) effective partnerships and cooperation on the regional and local level (libraries, social service providers, health facilities); and the last but not least, (v) EU membership that allowed the introduction of EU Child Guarantee that could be used as a leverage to ensure progress in the field of ECD.

Conditions and factors influenced the effectiveness of UNICEF's Country Program in the area of inclusive education

The research done by the evaluation team shows that unlike the ECD and VAC areas where the lack of political commitment and the public sensitivity to child protection initiatives impose serious risks to effectiveness of UNICEF's Country Program, there are no strong political bottlenecks hindering the UNICEF's effectiveness and impact in the area of inclusive education for CwD. Nevertheless, there are significant challenges stemming from: (i) strong stigma and negative attitudes towards children with disabilities; (ii) the limited parental awareness of the importance of early diagnostics of disability and weak parental engagement; (iii) the lack of adequate staffing to support inclusive education at regional and local level; (iv) the lack of adequate qualification and experience of teaching workforce; (v) the lack of evidence-driven policy-making culture and practices in the area of education; (vi) limited data availability; (vii) the prolonged periods of remote learning in electronic environment due to Covid-19 pandemic which increases significantly the risks for learning losses and widening educational inequalities, especially for the children with disabilities; (viii) low political attention to the problems of children with disabilities.

On the other hand, there are various supporting factors, including (i) commitment and effective partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science; (ii) effective partnerships and cooperation on the regional level (with the regional departments for education, regional centers for supporting the process of inclusive education); (iii) access to and use of strong international expertise; (iv) sustainable local partnerships with quality service providers; (v) credibility of the UNICEF brand and strong public recognition enabling greater influence on public opinion on the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education.

Conditions and factors influenced the effectiveness of UNICEF's Country Program in the area of prevention of violence and access to justice

According to the analysis developed by the evaluation team, the hindering factors that have affected the progress registered in VaC and access to justice area are the following: (i) the political crisis facing Bulgaria, which led to often changes at the level of governmental bodies and to the need to engage more resources in the partnership development activities; (ii) the resistance of conservative political groups and, as a consequence, the postponement of the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul Convention); (iii) the lack of coordination among sectors and key actors in the area of child protection;

(iv) the low level of competencies and skills of human resources at the level various service providers (in the sectors of justice, health, mental health, psychological support, therapeutic support) dealing with cases in which children are involved; (v) the general tolerance regarding domestic violence against women and children, which can be also observed at the level of judiciary professionals and (vi) the lack of statistical/administrative data. All these bottlenecks led to a slow development of the area at national level and impacted the activities conducted by UNICEF.

On the other hand, the strengths that facilitated and supported improvements were; (i) UNICEF's acknowledged role, by all stakeholders that have been interviewed, as a key actor in the area of VaC and thus, its credibility among duty bearers and CSOs that activate in this area; (ii) the acknowledged role of UNICEF as a communication and partnership facilitator among national and local among public bodies and CSOs in the area of VaC and access to justice (mainly at the level of stakeholders involved in the development of CACs model) and (iii) the effective partnerships and cooperation on the regional and local levels.

Conditions and factors influenced the effectiveness of UNICEF's Country Program in the area of partnerships for monitoring, communication and promotion of child rights

The hindering factors that have affected the progress registered in developing partnerships for monitoring, communication and promotion of child rights are the following: (i) the lack of knowledge and awareness about child rights, not only among the general public but also on the part of national and local authorities, professionals and the media; (ii) the underdeveloped culture of youth and adolescents participation and engagement in public life and decision making, as a result of still lasting patriarchal social norms and age-related stereotypes; (iii) very fragmented responsibilities in monitoring the child rights realization in Bulgaria and lack of coordination among relevant public sectors; (iv) the insufficient financial and administrative capacity of institutions and bodies responsible for monitoring.

Based on the analysis conducted by the evaluation team, the strengths that facilitated and supported the observed improvements were: (i) UNICEF's credibility among duty bearers, CSOs and general public; (ii) the active role of Human Rights International Bodies in assessing the national monitoring system and providing recommendation for further improvements; (iii) the commitment of the Ombudsman's of Bulgaria regarding monitoring and providing data on the situation of children in Bulgaria; (iv) the membership of EU which led to the adjustment of the data collected by the National Statistical Institute according to the European requirements

Annex 3. Process Tracing – Case Studies

Methodology for Process Tracing

tracking evidence of each link in the causal chain. Therefore, it is suitable for the evaluation of effectiveness and impact and, partially, the relevance as part of causal chain in the Theory of Change.

This method as a qualitative approach through ex-post design where there is no control group available. It is distinguishable from other more commonly used approaches of evaluation because it focuses on increasing our level of confidence in a causal story rather than trying to measure impact and attribute it to a particular event. It rests on the belief that all processes, if correctly identified and specified, would show empirical manifestations that if observed would increase our confidence on its existence.

The method includes assigning probabilities to assess the strength of within-case observations and evidence of how and why an effect occurred.

Assigning probabilities to assess the strength of *within-case observations* and evidence can be subjective, within the limit of the existing evidence. On the other hand, the entire Process Tracing analysis is transparent: the evidence determining the probabilities assigned are presented to all readers of the report and this allows stakeholders to understand the impact and contribution of UNICEF beyond the numbers related to the evaluators own (subjective) assessment.

The impact case studies about UNICEF contribution on three selected areas – (a) adolescents and youth participation and health; (b) inclusive education; (c) justice for children – are based on Process Tracing. The reports sections dedicated to the impact case studies is structure according to the steps that a PT evaluation needs to follow, explaining briefly in each sub-section what the evaluation team did, following the six steps of Bayesian Updating in Evaluation set out by Befani (2019): 1) formulating a contribution claim; 2) establish a prior level of confidence in it; 3) focus on one specific piece of evidence at a time; 4) estimate the sensitivity of that piece of evidence for that contribution claim (answering the question: *If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?*); 5) estimate the type I error of that piece of evidence for that contribution claim (answering the question: *If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?*); 6) Update of the prior into the posterior using the Bayes formula.

The contribution claims have been formulated in the Inception Phase of the evaluation and updated based on the feedback from UNICEF Bulgaria Country Office (CO), before data collection through interviews. The prior level of confidence is established conventionally at 0.5.

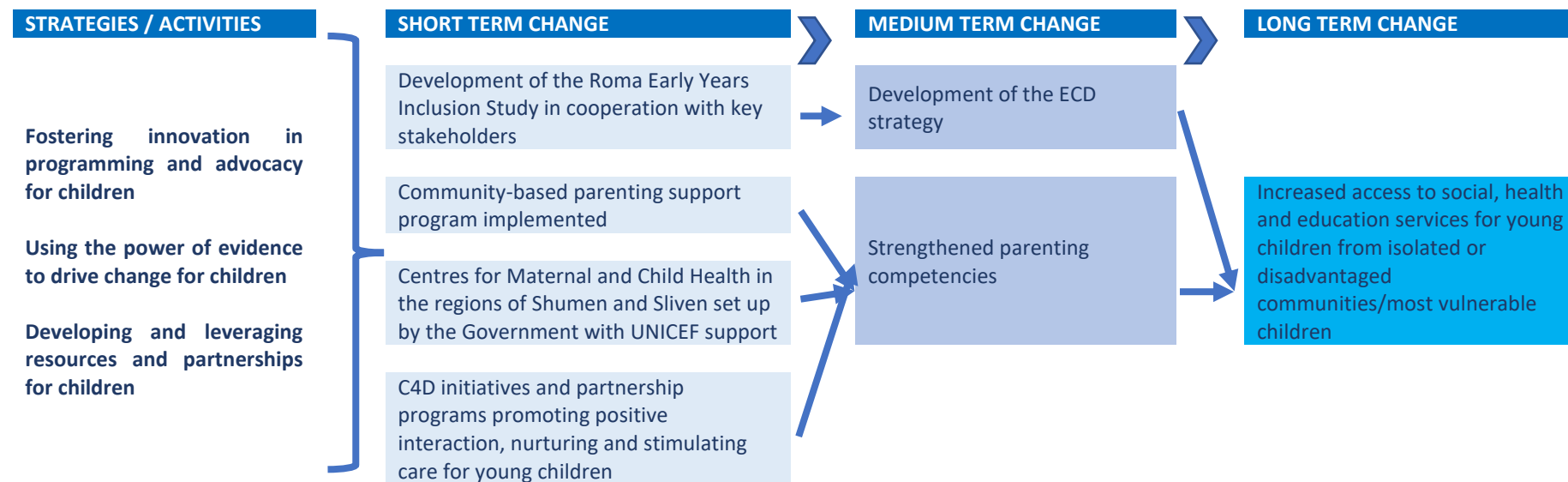
The evidence used was collected from documents provided by UNICEF and the implementation partners for each of the three selected areas mentioned above and from interviews. Prior to the interviews, the evaluation team sent a list of the types of documents required to UNICEF CO and received the most important documents. Interviews have been also used to collect evidences and documents. Interviews are not considered independent evidence because the people interviewed know each other and have been working together, sometimes for several years. This would make them more likely to have a common discourse about the analysed subject. Even though complete independence is not assumed, the interviews of public authorities and civil society organisations about UNICEF's contribution, its relative importance compared to other stakeholders, its reputation and their trust in the organization are considered important evidences when documents are missing, also considering that evidences on reputation and trust are traditionally based on stakeholders contributions to the evaluation.

More iterations between the data collection and the analysis of the evidence can increase the possibility of obtaining more supporting evidence and minimize issues arising from absence of evidence. However, in practice, this process may increase the time and cost of the evaluation. For this evaluation, only one iteration of data collection and analysis was possible, due to time constraints.

Case study 1: Assessment of UNICEF Bulgaria contribution in the area of early childhood development (ECD)

A visual presentation of the theory of change based on the change claim chain for the case study is presented below.

THEORY OF CHANGE



Assumptions	<p>Continued cooperation and development of mechanisms of cross-sector coordination, especially at local level</p> <p>Continued interest and ownership among service providers</p> <p>Interest and ownership of parents and care-givers</p>
Risks and bottlenecks	<p>Increasing political risk due to strong anti-child right and anti-women rights social tension, resulting in putting on hold of the main child-related policies</p> <p>Reduced chances of sustainability an mainstreaming</p> <p>The lack of resources (especially of well motivated, trained and paid human resources)</p> <p>COVID-19 impact/additional burden on the health system overall affects the growth and development of young children</p> <p>COVID-19 impact on access to services in general</p> <p>COVID-19 impact on increased poverty generated by the pandemic affects the growth and development of young children</p>

Process tracing has been applied as an analytical tool to evaluate UNICEF Bulgaria contribution in positive achievements in the area of early childhood development and to establish the impact level. Collected evidence from desk research and the interviews conducted has been used to make inferences about causal explanations of that case through a combination of induction and deduction, and is weighted in an attempt to provide a reasonable degree of confidence that each claim exists¹⁰⁹. In other words, the quality, strength, power, or probative value of the collected pieces of evidence have been assessed to support each of the elements of the causal mechanism described in the reconstructed Theory of Change.

Bayesian probability logic is followed in assessing the strength of the evidence of each part of the chain. In assessing the strength of evidence the evaluation team considered the reliability of each source and identified three potential limitations and biases: (1) there were gaps in UNICEF Bulgaria M&E mechanisms and limited documenting practices used to observe the intended change; (2) part of the respondents were UNICEF's service providers and/or partners working together for many years and their feedback might be biased; and (3) some respondents had limited knowledge on the parts of the mechanism under investigation that decreased their ability to provide well-informed judgments/statements. To maximize the reliability and validity of evidence used, the team tried to triangulate the information as much as possible, and tested consistency of the evidence within different claims using also the case-specific expertise of the evaluators and their good knowledge of the context. Also, a clear distinction between "*absence of evidence*" (which has little inferential power), and "*evidence of absence*" has been made, as the latter can strongly challenge the causal mechanism investigated.

Based on the initial research, the evaluation team formulated the following change claim chain: (1) *UNICEF has provided technical support for the development of the ECD strategy and (2) has collaborated with key stakeholders in developing the Roma Early Years Inclusion Study, which informed the draft national strategy for inclusion and participation of Roma for 2021-2030. Further, UNICEF (3) has implemented the community-based parenting support program and (4) provided support for the Government to set up Centers for Maternal and Child Health in the regions of Shumen and Sliven, with the main focus on the component of Home Visiting Service (HVS). UNICEF has also (5) implemented the C4D initiatives and parenting support programs promoting positive interaction, nurturing and stimulating care for young children.*

These actions resulted in (6) strengthened parenting competencies for the parents participating the aforementioned initiatives and (7) increased access to social, health and education services for young children from isolated or disadvantaged communities/most vulnerable children.

Claim 1: UNICEF has provided technical support for the development of the ECD strategy

Evidence implies that UNICEF has made efforts to contribute to the process of preparing the ECD strategy, as also evidenced below in the support to the preparation of the *Early Years Roma Integration Strategy* (Claim 2).

- In 2019, UNICEF provided input and technical support for the drafting process. However, the MES has no finalized the process yet. (RAM 2020, p. 5)
- In 2020, UNICEF provided very limited technical support to the Government with regard to strategy development because the process was put on hold by the Government (RAM 2020, p.5)

a) *Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?*

¹⁰⁹ Bennett, A. & Checkel, J.T. ed. (2015). *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Cambridge University Press

Sensitivity-0.70. The existing evidence informs that UNICEF would and could provide technical support for the development of the ECD strategy, had the process not been put on hold. However, it should be kept in mind that formulating policies and developing policy documents, may not always produced expected short-term change as anticipated the ToC. The likelihood of developing a national strategy depends on various external factors. In Bulgaria, although UNICEF was strongly positioned to make a contribution to the preparation of an ECD strategy, the anticipated political risk due to strong anti-child and anti-women rights social tension resulting in putting on hold of the main child related policies realised reducing the chances of producing the ECD Strategy.

b) *Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?*

Type I error probability-0.50. There is sufficient ground to accept that the claim had little a chances to be false at the time of conception of the programme. This claim is justified by the fact that the UNICEF's reputation and expertise to promote and monitor child rights accepted by all stakeholders as an added value in a process towards developing policies for children. Furthermore, evidence on the efforts to produce the ECD strategy is available.

d) *Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level*

Given the high level of likelihood evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and low probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.1), the account evidence of the documents and interviews imply a cautiously confident (0.700) probability for the hypothesis "*UNICEF Bulgaria has provided technical support for the development of the ECD strategy*", as being true given the evidence.

Claim 1	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.7
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.1
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.8750

Claim 2: UNICEF has collaborated with key stakeholders in developing the Roma Early Years Inclusion Study, which informed the draft national strategy for inclusion and participation of Roma for 2021-2030.

The study on Roma Early Years Inclusion (RECI+ studies), supported by the Open Society Foundation, the Roma Education Fund and UNICEF was completed and the findings disseminated among key national and international stakeholders and informed the draft national strategy for inclusion and participation of Roma for the period 2021-2030. (RAM 2020, 64)

a) *Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?*

Sensitivity-0.90. The existing evidence informs that the likelihood for this claim to be true is highly confident, because Roma Inclusion is a priority issue for UNICEF in its efforts to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized children. Furthermore, developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children is an identified strategy for the ECD interventions. Similarly, such collaboration is in conformity with the strategy on using the power of evidence to drive change for children and would inform the national ECD strategy, if it could be prepared.

b) *Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?*

Type I error probability- 0.10. There is sufficient ground to claim that the evidence could not be observed if the claim is false. This claim is justified by the fact that the UNICEF supported Roma Early Years Inclusion Study, which informed the draft national strategy for inclusion and participation of Roma for 2021-2030.

d) *Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level*

Given the high likelihood for level of evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and low probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.1), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to highly confident (0.900) the probability of the hypothesis of “*UNICEF Bulgaria has supported the implementation of the pilot kindergartens component*”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 2	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.9
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.1
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.900

Claim 3: UNICEF has implemented the community-based parenting support program

The program is designed building on the Family Consultative Centres (FCCs), co-created by several municipalities and UNICEF within the frame of the previous CPDs. The number of FCCs providing complex services (social, pedagogical, psychological, medical, etc.) to vulnerable groups is insufficient and they are not available in all municipalities.

- More than 300 service providers benefitted from capacity building activities organized by UNICEF and partners to effectively engage with parents, to improve their understanding of key concepts related to early childhood development. In addition, a module on ECD was integrated in the introductory training of Roma health mediators. (COAR 2019, p. 2)
- 2,501 families and 3,735 children from vulnerable and isolated communities benefitted from outreach and preventive services – Family Consultative Centres (FCCs). (COAR 2019, p. 2)
- Network of 40 municipalities, local libraries and cultural institutions, as well as social and educational service providers, delivered a community-based parenting support program developed by UNICEF reaching out to 680 caregivers of young children, including 168 parents of children with disabilities and developmental difficulties. (COAR 2019, p. 2)
- 2,046 families and 3,055 children from vulnerable and isolated communities benefitted from outreach and preventive services in the Family Consultative Centres (FCCs). (RAM 2020, p. 8)
- While working remotely during the state of emergency, the FCCs also provided comprehensive information about COVID-19.
- The CO continued to support one Community Centre to promote secondary education for Roma adolescent girls and to prevent child marriages in targeted Roma communities. 58 girls and 29 boys participated in motivational health and educational activities to increase their interest for completing secondary education. (RAM 2020, p. 19)

a) *Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?*

Sensitivity-0.90. The existing evidence supports a high level of confidence regarding UNICEF's role in the implementation of community-based parenting support programme, since it is an innovative intervention in line with UNICEF's strategies and the necessary resources are allocated by UNICEF for the intervention.

b) *Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?*

Type I error probability- 0.10. There is sufficient ground to claim that the evidence could not be observed if the claim is false. This claim is justified by the fact that the UNICEF funded and implemented the community-based parenting support programme.

d) *Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level*

Given the high level of likelihood evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and low probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.1), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to highly confident (0.900) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF Bulgaria has implemented the community-based parenting support program”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 3	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.9
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.1
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.900

Claim 4: UNICEF provided support for the Government to set up Centers for Maternal and Child Health in the regions of Shumen and Sliven, with the main focus on the component of Home Visiting Service (HVS).

Designed to inform the development of a proposal for scaling up of the HVS on the national basis with EU funds as envisaged in national strategic documents related to deinstitutionalization; Centers for Maternal and Child Health were built on the routine health services for young children and pregnant women, young children and their care givers provided in health facilities with a view to extend the services to include regular home visiting services (HVS), otherwise conditional for specific cases. A pilot study was planned in the regions of Shumen and Sliven assessed as regions where the most remote settlements, vulnerable and marginalized communities lacked access to services.

- The demonstration Home Visiting Services in two regions of the country, provided 6000 families of children aged zero to two with individual guidance, information and education for nurturing care. (COAR 2018, p. 7)
- An evaluation of the UNICEF supported HVS model was completed and its findings were used to inform the development of a proposal for scaling up of the service on a national basis. (COAR 2019, p. 2)
- An evaluation of the UNICEF supported HVS model was completed and its findings were used to inform the development of a proposal for scaling up of the service on a national basis. However, despite UNICEF advocacy and technical support, toward the end of 2019 Ministry of Health finally decided not to pursue the expansion because of concerns for availability of sustainable government funding after the end of the project. (COAR 2019, p. 2)

a) *Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?*

Sensitivity-0.90. Overall, the existing evidence supports a high level of confidence regarding the instrumental role plaid by UNICEF in supporting the Government to set up Centres for Maternal and Child Health in the regions of Shumen and Sliven, with the main focus on the component of Home Visiting Service (HVS).

b) *Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?*

Type I error probability– 0.10. There is sufficient ground to claim that the evidence could not be observed if the claim is false. This claim is justified by the fact that the UNICEF supported the Government to set up Centres for Maternal and Child Health in the regions of Shumen and Sliven, with the main focus on the component of Home Visiting Service (HVS) and commissioned an evaluation study to promote the scaling up of the services, which could not be affected within the framework of current CPD.

d) *Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level*

Given the high level of likelihood evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and low probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.1), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to highly confident (0.900) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF Bulgaria provided support for the Government to set up Centers for Maternal and Child Health in the regions of Shumen and Sliven, with the main focus on the component of Home Visiting Service (HVS)”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 4	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.9
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.1
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.900

Claim 5: UNICEF has implemented the C4BSC initiatives and parenting support programs promoting positive interaction, nurturing and stimulating care for young children.

Over 2,000,000 people were reached with ECD advocacy messages and fundraising appeal via employee and customer networks of 10 corporate partners. Over 30 media partners and five celebrities were involved to support the initiative pro-bono, covering over 200,000 people online. UNICEF developed of an in-house face-to-face programme. Bulgaria conducted an integrated fundraising and awareness campaign on ECD that generated 43,750 USD. The two-step approach to the acquisition of pledge donors was tested, resulting with 1350 parents of young children engaged in positive parenting messages. (COAR 2018, p.15)

UNICEF contributed to the national response to COVID-19 pandemic through different parenting support and C4BSC modalities (home visiting services, dedicated parenting website, pre-school teachers, community-based parenting support programs). UNICEF re-programmed interventions with partners to allow both face-to-face work as well as remote assistance (online, telephone, etc.) (RAM 2020, p. 2)

a) *Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?*

Sensitivity-0.90. The existing evidence supports a high level of confidence regarding the instrumental role plaid by UNICEF in supporting the implementation of C4BSC initiatives and parenting support programs promoting positive interaction, nurturing and stimulating care for young children.

b) *Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?*

Type I error probability– 0.10. There is sufficient ground to claim that the evidence could not be observed if the claim is false. This claim is justified by the fact that the UNICEF implemented C4BSC initiatives and parenting support programs to promote positive interaction, nurturing and

stimulating care for young children, which are reported to be highly instrumental during the COVID-19 pandemic.

c) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the high level of likelihood evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and low probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.1), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to highly confident (0.900) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF Bulgaria has supported the implementation of the pilot kindergartens component”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 5	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.8
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.1
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.888

Claim 6: These actions resulted in strengthened parenting competencies for the parents participating the aforementioned initiatives

UNICEF pilot project implementation on early childhood development through capacity building, hands-on-support to parents through HVS and C4BSC as well as initiatives as part of the COVID-19 response have contributed to strengthening parenting competencies through material assistance, information and knowledge as well as skills building.

- Through different parenting support and C4D modalities (home visiting services, dedicated parenting website, pre-school teachers, community-based parenting support programs). UNICEF re-programmed interventions with partners to allow both face-to-face work as well as remote assistance (online, telephone, etc.) (RAM 2020, p. 2)
- 13794 parents/caregivers of children under 5 received parenting support to improve care and development of their children with support of UNICEF in the reporting year (RAM 2020, 5)
- Community-based parenting support program developed by UNICEF reached out to 680 caregivers of young children, including 168 parents of children with disabilities and developmental difficulties. (COAR 2019, p.

a) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity-0.90. The existing evidence supports a high level of confidence regarding the instrumental role plaid by UNICEF in the implementation of HVS and community-based parenting support programme as well as C4BSC, since it is an innovative intervention in line with UNICEF's strategies and the necessary resources are allocated by UNICEF for the intervention.

a) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

Type I error probability – 0.10. There is sufficient ground to claim that the evidence could not be observed if the claim is false. This claim is justified by the fact that the UNICEF implemented ECD initiatives (HVS, community-based parenting activities and parenting support programs through C4BSC) to promote positive interaction, nurturing and stimulating care for young children.

b) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the high level of likelihood evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and low probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.1), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to highly confident (0.900) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF Bulgaria has supported the implementation of the pilot kindergartens component”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 6	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.9
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.1
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.900

Claim 7: These actions resulted in increased access to social, health and education services for young children from isolated or disadvantaged communities/most vulnerable children.

- Over 2,000,000 people were reached with ECD advocacy messages (COAR 2018, p.15);
- Around 300 services providers benefitted from capacity development activities,
- Institutions and organizations in 40 municipalities participated in community-based parenting support services (COAR 2019, p. 2);
- Around 5,000 families and 7,000 children received services (COAR 2019, p. 2; RAM 2020, p. 8)

Nevertheless, due to the political context in Bulgaria related to the movement, the process of scaling up the HVS model was postponed. Further, the shift in the government priorities, mainly regarding the measures taken to contain the effects of the pandemic in Bulgaria, did not allow UNICEF to led to resume discussions with the government on the expansion of the programme. In this context the impact of the intervention remains limited.

a) *Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?*

Sensitivity-0.80. The existing evidence supports our confidence that the UNICEF initiatives in the area of ECD has played and instrumental role in increasing access to social, health and education services for young children from isolated or disadvantaged communities/most vulnerable children, through HVS and community-based parenting, through which parents and communities were rendered partners in support of delivering the basic messages, adopting positive attitudes and behaviours.

b) *Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?*

Type I error probability– 0.10. There is sufficient ground to claim that the evidence provided during the interviews held within the framework of MCPE could not be observed if the claim is false. *Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level*

Given the high level of likelihood evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and low probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.1), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to highly confident (0.900) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF Bulgaria has supported the implementation of the pilot kindergartens component”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 7	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.8
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.1
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.888

Conclusion

According to process tracing methodology, the confidence in the overall claim is set by the “weakest link” (or lowest posterior) in the causal chain, corresponding to claim 1 (referring to the provision of technical support for the development of the ECD strategy) with a posterior of 0.875. This means that **we can be highly confident that UNICEF Bulgaria contributed to the overall improvement of early childhood development**. The analysis provides clear evidence that UNICEF undertook and supported interventions in collaboration and cooperation with public, private and civil sectors in the field of early childhood development. We are highly confident these activities have short term results for the directly targeted institution, professionals, families/care givers as well as the society in general and contributed to **improved parenting competencies with possible, long-term changes in terms of improved access to social, health and education services for young children from isolated or disadvantaged communities/most vulnerable children**.

	Claim	Prior level of confidence...	Posterior level of confidence...	Assessment...
		...that the claim is true		
1	UNICEF has provided technical support for the development of the ECD strategy	0.5	0.875	Highly Confident
2	UNICEF has collaborated with key stakeholders in developing the Roma Early Years Inclusion Study, which informed the draft national strategy for inclusion and participation of Roma for 2021-2030.	0.5	0.900	Highly confident
3	UNICEF has implemented the community-based parenting support program	0.5	0.900	Highly Confident
4	UNICEF provided support for the Government to set up Centers for Maternal and Child Health in the regions of Shumen and Sliven, with the main focus on the component of Home Visiting Service (HVS)	0.5	0.900	Highly confident
5	UNICEF has implemented the C4D initiatives and parenting support programs promoting positive interaction, nurturing and stimulating care for young children.	0.5	0.888	Highly confident
6	These actions resulted in strengthened parenting competencies for the parents participating the aforementioned initiatives	0.5	0.900	Highly confident
7	These actions resulted in increased access to social, health and education services for young children from isolated or disadvantaged communities/most vulnerable children	0.5	0.888	Highly confident

Case Study 2: Assessment of UNICEF Bulgaria contribution in the area of inclusive education for children with disabilities

Process tracing has been applied as an analytical tool to evaluate UNICEF Bulgaria contribution in positive achievements in the area of inclusive education of children with disabilities and to

establish the impact level. Collected evidence from desk research and the interviews conducted has been used to make inferences about causal explanations of that case through a combination of induction and deduction, and is weighted in an attempt to provide a reasonable degree of confidence that each claim exists¹¹⁰. In other words, the quality, strength, power, or probative value of the collected pieces of evidence have been assessed to support each of the elements of the causal mechanism described in the reconstructed Theory of Change.

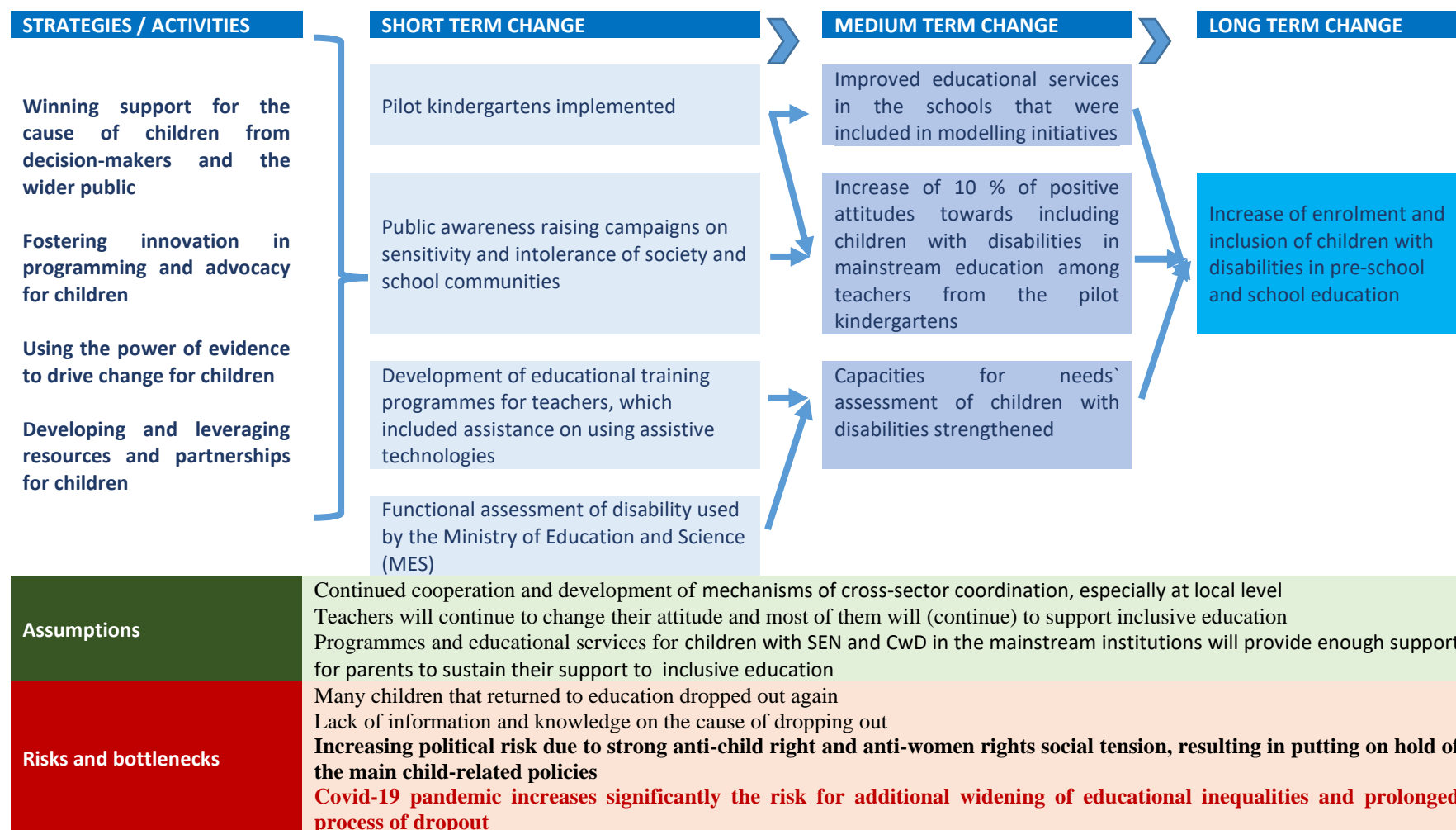
Bayesian probability logic is followed in assessing the strength of the evidence of each part of the chain. In assessing the strength of evidence the evaluation team considered the reliability of each source and identified three potential limitations and biases: (1) there were gaps in UNICEF Bulgaria M&E mechanisms and limited documenting practices used to observe the intended change; (2) part of the respondents were UNICEF's service providers and/or partners working together for many years and their feedback might be biased; and (3) some respondents had limited knowledge on the parts of the mechanism under investigation that decreased their ability to provide well-informed judgments/statements. To maximize the reliability and validity of evidence used, the team tried to triangulate the information as much as possible, and tested consistency of the evidence within different claims using also the case-specific expertise of the evaluators and their good knowledge of the context. Also, a clear distinction between “*absence of evidence*” (which has little inferential power), and “*evidence of absence*” has been made, as the latter can strongly challenge the causal mechanism investigated.

Based on the initial research, the evaluation team formulated the following change claim chain: (1) *UNICEF has supported the implementation of the pilot kindergartens component and (2) has provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) in strengthening the capacities for needs assessment of children with disabilities by introducing the functional assessment of disability. Further, UNICEF (3) supported the development of educational training programs for teachers, which included assistance on using assistive technologies, and (4) has conducted public awareness raising campaigns on sensitivity and intolerance of society and school communities. These activities resulted in (5) improved educational services in the schools that were included in modelling initiatives, (6) an increase of 10 % of positive attitudes towards including children with disabilities in mainstream education among teachers from the pilot kindergartens and also (7) an increase of enrolment and inclusion of children with disabilities in pre-school and school education.*

A visual presentation of the theory of change based on the change claim chain for the case study is presented below.

¹¹⁰ Bennett, A. & Checkel, J.T. ed. (2015). *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Cambridge University Press

THEORY OF CHANGE



Claim 1: UNICEF Bulgaria has supported the implementation of the pilot kindergartens component

a) Evidence

The evidence is based on program documents and reports provided by UNICEF Bulgaria. It shows that building upon the experience with the implementation of the modelling initiative for inclusive education at pre-school level “Together from kindergarten” project, which was launched in 2016 as a joint initiative of UNICEF the Ministry of Education and Science, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to provide methodological support to the pilot kindergartens and to document good practices and lessons learned for national scale-up¹¹¹. The modelling initiative has been implemented in 35 kindergartens in 4 regions: Montana, Sliven, Schumen and Sofia for two academic years (2016-2017 and 2017-2018). The core component of the project was the recruitment and training of specialist staff (speech therapists, psychologists, resource teachers).

Formative evaluation of the inclusive pre-school model has been commissioned and implemented in 2018. The evaluation identified lessons learned and provided recommendations on scaling-up of the model or different components of it. It provided clear evidence for the nature of the support provided by the UNICEF and established important conclusions regarding the effectiveness of this support, including improved institutional capacity of the pilot kindergartens to early detect children with special education needs and intervene, improved skills and capacities of over 500 teachers and 100 specialists to implement inclusive education practices, and providing access to support services for more than 5,000 children, and changed parental attitudes. The evaluation report stated that *“it is more than likely that the no-cost practices implemented during the project and the impact of the teacher training will continue after project completion”*¹¹².

It is reported that UNICEF Bulgaria initiated a meeting with a broad group of stakeholders - MoES, National Association of Resource Teachers, the National Education Inspectorate, municipalities, kindergartens, NGOs - to reach mutual vision and agreement on the next steps for scaling-up the pre-school inclusive education model and achieving sustainability¹¹³. No documents related to the discussions and the outcome of this meeting has been provided, but this has little inferential power.

In 2020, building upon the previous experience and lessons learned, UNICEF Bulgaria in collaboration with the MoES expended the piloting of the pre-school inclusive practices to another 30 kindergartens (with over 6100 children) in 3 new regions (Sliven, Stara Zagora and Burgas) under the framework of the “EU Child Guarantee” project. Although no relevant documents have been provided, the interviews held with various stakeholders clearly show that UNICEF Bulgaria support to piloting kindergartens within both “Together from Kindergarten” project and “EU Child Guarantee” project has been provided and is considered important.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity-0.90. Overall, the existing evidence supports a high level of confidence regarding the instrumental role plaid by UNICEF in supporting the implementation of the pilot kindergartens and strengthening their capacity to provide an inclusive learning environment for children with disabilities and developmental difficulties. Evidence about documented good practices was not

¹¹¹ COAR (2020).

¹¹² Antonowicz, L. (2018). Formative Assessment Inclusive Pre-School Model in Bulgaria.

¹¹³ COAR (2020)

provided to the evaluators and therefore could not be accessed directly, but all the available reports and interviews give a reasonably high degree of confidence that this claim is true.

c) *Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?*

Type I error probability= 0.10. There is sufficient ground to claim that the evidence could not be observed if the claim is false. This claim is justified by the fact that the UNICEF-supported pilot kindergartens have been excluded from other MoES/EU-funded projects to avoid double funding.

d) *Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level*

Given the high level of likelihood evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and low probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.1), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to highly confident (0.900) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF Bulgaria has supported the implementation of the pilot kindergartens component”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 1	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.9
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.1
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.900

Claim 2: UNICEF Bulgaria has provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) in strengthening the capacities for needs assessment of children with disabilities by introducing the functional assessment of disability

a) *Evidence*

There is clear evidence that UNICEF provided technical support to the MoES for the introduction of the functional assessment of children and students with SEN according to the WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disabilities and Human Health. UNICEF commissioned a renowned international expert to deliver methodological support to MoES and training of 70 trainers from the regional centers for supporting the process of inclusive education on how to apply the functional assessment of children and students with SEN according to the WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disabilities and Human Health¹¹⁴. All the relevant stakeholders confirmed that prof. Manfred Pretis (funded by UNICEF) provided technical assistance and delivered the above mentioned training. Following MoES request, the same expert also drafted instructions and guidelines for applying the functional assessment in educational settings¹¹⁵. In 2020 the follow-up trainings for scaling up the functional assessment were included as a dedicated activity within a new MoES project funded under Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁴ COAR (2019).

¹¹⁵ The WHO functional assessment is a multispectral tool that can be used by the general practitioners (doctors), kindergarten/schools and social services, and has been first introduced and applied in Bulgaria by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.

¹¹⁶ RAM (2020)

The interviews held also confirmed that UNICEF Bulgaria also contributed to the adaptation of the instrument to the national legislative terminology.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity-0.9. The existing evidence is completely conclusive UNICEF delivered technical support to MoES in introducing the functional assessment of disability. All the respondents interviewed underlined the importance of this assistance, and especially of valuable expertise of prof. Pretis, for capacity building in the area of needs assessment of children with disabilities.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

Type I error probability- 0.05. There is sufficient ground to claim that the evidence described above could not be observed if the claim is false.

d) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the high level of likelihood evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and low probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.05), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to highly confident (0.947) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF Bulgaria has provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) in strengthening the capacities for needs assessment of children with disabilities by introducing the functional assessment of disability”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 2	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.9
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.05
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.947

Claim 3: UNICEF Bulgaria supported the development of educational training programs for teachers, which included assistance on using assistive technologies

a) Evidence

Within the modelling intervention, UNICEF supported Karin Dom and the National Association of Resource Teachers to develop and deliver training focused on building teacher capacity to work with children with disabilities within the mainstream kindergartens, as well as to build an inclusive environment and to support the learning of children with SEN. The training program has been accredited to the MoES for general use, evident by the registration at the Information Register of Approved Programs for Upgrading Qualification of Pedagogical Specialists, offering 4 qualification credits. The training was delivered to teachers, kindergarten directors, speech therapists, psychologists, teacher assistants and in some instances auxiliary teachers four regions (Schumen, Sliven, Montana and Sofia), enabling the participants to receive 4 credits for their professional development. The UNICEF support for this training program was confirmed during the interviews by all the relevant respondents.

Available reports and the interviews held provide evidence that UNICEF in partnership with several universities, assisted to development of (i) the general framework for introducing pre-service

teacher training on inclusive education and (ii) introduction of a 15-hour mandatory module for pre-service teacher training on inclusive education. The output of this collaboration and assistance was manifested in the amendments in the Regulation of the Professional Qualification of Teachers.

UNICEF supported the organization of the second International Conference on Augmentative and Alternative Communication, bringing together more than 400 participants from the government, NGO, education experts, principals, teachers, parents, international experts to present and discuss contemporary approaches and technologies for children and adults with communication difficulties. UNICEF supported the Foundation Assist to develop a comprehensive training program for specialists for use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) technologies in their work with children with disabilities. Trainings have been delivered to professionals in 5 Regional Inclusive Education Support Centres. According to the interviews held the relevant respondents the trainings were instrumental for the adoption and use of AAC in the regional centres.

In addition, at the end of 2020 UNICEF Bulgaria commissioned a study aiming at exploring the level of professional competence in the field of AAC and its use in the practice of over 200 specialists from the Regional Centres for Supporting the Process of Inclusive Education in Bulgaria with the intention to use the results for provision of AAC-related training for mainstream teachers under the “Voice for every child” project.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity-0.75. The evidence shows that educational training programs for teachers, including training on using AAC technologies have been developed and there is enough evidence to be confident that this happened with the support of UNICEF and that UNICEF funded delivery of trainings. The evidence is enough to conclude that UNICEF made consistent efforts in raising awareness and building understanding about the importance and availability of different assistive technologies.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

Type I error probability – 0.3. It is unlikely to see the evidence presented above if the claim is false, as UNICEF funded the partnering organizations efforts in developing and delivering trainings. However, the evidence does not provide enough ground to distinguish the uniqueness of the UNICEF support for such training programs, as the supported partnering organizations themselves have developed and provided similar trainings. For example, according to the Information Register of Approved Programs for Upgrading Qualification of Pedagogical Specialists, one of the partnering organizations – Karin Dom –have 13 accredited training programs dealing with SEN, including related to inclusive education of children with disabilities. Foundation Assist also delivers AAC-related trainings under MoES-funded programs.

d) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the level of likelihood that the evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.75) and probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.3), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to confident (0.714) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF Bulgaria supported the development of educational training programs for teachers, which included assistance on using assistive technologies”, being true given the evidence.

Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.75
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.3
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.714

Claim 4: UNICEF has conducted public awareness raising campaigns on sensitivity and intolerance of society and school communities.

a) Evidence

UNICEF reports and provided documents, as well as the interviews confirm the role of UNICEF in conducting variety of public awareness raising campaigns on sensitivity and intolerance of society and school communities, including:

- UNICEF took part in an international initiative (Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia and Turkmenistan) on reducing discrimination and promoting social inclusion of Roma children and young people and children and youth people with disabilities in Europe and Central Asia region, supported by David Beckham for UNICEF. Within this campaign UNICEF Bulgaria focused on reducing the negative attitudes existing stereotypes among service providers in two regions: Shumen and Sliven. It has been reported that as a result, *“290 adolescents became agents of change in their communities; over 300 kindergartens and schools learned how to support the inclusion of Roma children in schools and promote diversity”*¹¹⁷.
- UNICEF Bulgaria developed partnerships with the Government, media, the NGO sector and the business to advocate for the best interest of children, including CwD. In 2019, within the awareness-raising and social change campaign on child rights “With eyes open for all”, UNICEF organized a national summit for youth and by youth with disability. According to UNICEF CO reports, more than 1.3 million people have been reached through large-scale media coverage of the campaign. The last phase of the campaign was built on the success of the Parenting month dedicated to parents of children with disabilities.¹¹⁸
- In 2020, UNICEF organized a campaign ‘Education for every child’ aimed at developing the first digital educational platform in Bulgaria that will make the learning process more accessible to children with disabilities. The Bulgarian national television was the official media partner and more than 10 other media outlets supported the campaign that had been reported to reach more than 3 million people through UNICEF channels and traditional media (no evidences based documented data has been provided to the evaluation team). UNICEF reports that through their corporate partners the advocacy messages has reached more than half million people.
- In 2020, as part of the Education for every child campaign, a campaign of Fantastico (Bulgarian chain of retail stores) for UNICEF was organized. It is claimed that it reached 3 million+ people, although specific documented evidence was not provided.
- An integrated awareness and fundraising campaign to support non-verbal children ‘A voice for every child’ has been also organized in 2020. An extensive media coverage was negotiated, claiming to have reached more than 4.5 million people through TV, radio, print and online

¹¹⁷ COAR (2018)

¹¹⁸ COAR (2019)

media and UNICEF channels (no data evidence provided). Three corporate partners supported the campaign with advocacy messages and via the employee and customer networks. The campaign was supported by bTV, the most watched TV network in the country, and BNT¹¹⁹.

The feedback collected during the interviews also provide evidence supporting the claim that UNICED organize a lot of information campaigns and donation campaigns, thus contributing to awareness raising.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity-0.9. The evidence allows for certainty that UNICEF Bulgaria has conducted public awareness raising campaigns on sensitivity and intolerance of society and school communities, although it is not very evident how it measures the scope of the audience reached by these campaigns.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

Type I error probability– 0.05. There is sufficient ground to claim that the evidence described above could not be observed if the claim is false and UNICEF didn't initiate/organize/implement these campaigns.

d) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the level of likelihood that the evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.05), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to confident (0.947) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF has conducted public awareness raising campaigns on sensitivity and intolerance of society and school communities”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 4	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.9
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.05
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.947

Claim 5: Improved educational services in the schools that were included in modelling initiatives

a) Evidence

As it was described in the previous sections, the new Preschool and School Education Act in 2016 the adopted State Educational Standard in Bulgaria has made significant progress in addressing barriers limiting access of children and adolescents with disabilities and special education needs (SEN) to quality and inclusive education. In addition, significant funding has been secured to strengthen the institutional capacity and teacher skills to deliver the necessary inclusive learning environment and support to children with disabilities. At the same time, the transition to the new inclusive model of mainstream education has been introduced without considering the scope and magnitude of the limitations in the institutional capacities of kindergartens and schools to deliver quality educational services to children with disabilities, especially in the economically distressed regions with high child

¹¹⁹ RAM (2020)

poverty, ageing teacher workforce, high share of marginalized children, etc. The documents and reports provided, as well as feedback collected with the interviews confirmed that UNICEF-supported modelling initiatives target educational institutions in regions where important barriers are present hampering the equal access to inclusive education services and support. The selection of piloting locations are based on the level of economic development, child poverty and the number of children with disabilities. The evaluation of “Together from kindergarten” project provided evidence that the UNICEF-supported project provided greater support to municipalities without delegated budgets to kindergartens, and greater support to kindergartens managing their own budget.

The MoES data clearly demonstrate that the number of professionals (such as speech therapists, educational mediators, psychologists, social workers and resource teachers) supporting students with SEN is increasing considerably – from 3070 (3,2 per 1000 students) in 2017/2018 school year to 4920 (5,3 per 1000 students) in 2018/2019 school year. However, there is not enough evidence to establish the role of UNICEF-supported modelling initiatives in this capacity improvement. The formative evaluation of “Together from kindergarten” initiative from 2018 provides little evidence of specific impact of this modelling initiative at regional level and even on local level. It has established that although the core component of the project was the recruitment of specialist staff, the impact on improving the overall availability of specialists to provide quality service is not sustainable it is unlikely that most of the kindergartens will be able to retain specialist staff on the payroll.

Available reports, including the evaluation report do not provide clear evidence for improved overall quality of the educational services provided, although there are clear indications that some elements directly related to quality of education are impacted, among which:

- increased understanding of disability and learning difficulties;
- increased understanding of the role of various stakeholders in inclusive education, including the role of specialists, teacher assistants and how to work with them;
- improved teacher competence;
- improved teacher mindsets;
- improved equipment and availability of learning materials;
- more inclusive classroom practices;
- positive parental involvement and support.

UNICEF also commissioned an evaluation of the quality of the learning environment in kindergartens based on direct expert observation in 40 selected kindergartens from four regions (Montana, Shumen, Sliven, and Sofia) that had been supported under the “Together from the kindergarten” project. The study provided mixed results, including indications for existing deficiencies in the instructional approaches used and the individualization of learning opportunities. However, due to the small sample size, missing control group, inconclusive results and lack of potential to demonstrate changes in the quality of the environment that could be attributed to the modelling intervention, this study was not considered as evidence for the purpose of this evaluation.

Also, available data provide indication for improved capacity of pilot kindergartens to early detect children with SEN and to deliver early intervention.

The interviews held provide enough evidence that the contribution of UNICEF-supported modelling initiatives for (i) the provision of pedagogical specialists and/or for improving their qualification, (ii)

the improvement of facilities and equipment; (iii) the introduction of high-tech assistive technologies that improve communication with children with severe disabilities is well acknowledged.

b) *Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?*

Sensitivity-0.75. The available evidence, including the modelling evaluation report, allow claiming with confidence that modelling services created conditions for improved educational services in the institutions involved. However, although UNICEF commissioned a survey on the quality of the learning environment in 40 selected kindergartens, there are no measurable indicators for the quality of the educational services *per se*. Also, there are concerns over the sustainability of the results after the end of the modelling interventions.

c) *Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?*

Type I error probability– 0.4. There is sufficient ground to claim that we could be more confident than not that the evidence described above could not be observed if the claim is false and the respective institutions have not been included in the modelling interventions. However, having the increasing variety of funding opportunities provided by the national programs for development of education and The EU funded Operational Program „Science and Education for Smart Growth“, it is not very clear whether these institutions would achieve similar improvement if they were eligible and received such funding (receiving UNICEF funding makes them ineligible due to the applicable demarcation rules). One of the major beneficial effect from the modelling initiatives envisaged by the evaluation report and interviews is the training provided to teachers, but data shows that there are significant number of available trainings in similar topics, accredited at MoES and also significant eligible funding for trainings provided by the National Program “Qualification” and the OPSESG project “Qualification of Pedagogical Specialists”. Additionally, significant public investments have been made in providing accessible physical environment in schools.

d) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the level of likelihood that the evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.75) and probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.4), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to cautiously confident (0.652) the probability of the hypothesis of “*Improved educational services in the schools that were included in modelling initiatives*”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 5	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.75
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.4
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.652

Claim 6: An increase of 10 % of positive attitudes towards including children with disabilities in mainstream education among teachers from the pilot kindergartens

a) *Evidence*

There is clearly documented evidence, based on well-designed national representative survey among 3,000 kindergarten teachers, confirming an increase with 10 % of positive attitudes towards

including children with disabilities in mainstream education among teachers from the pilot kindergartens compared to 3% decrease in positive attitudes among teachers from non-pilot kindergartens¹²⁰.

The available data also shows (i) increased understanding of disability and learning difficulties among teachers from pilot kindergartens; (ii) increased knowledge of the legislation and understanding of inclusive education related procedures, including the procedures for the provision of general and additional support; for screening and for assessment process; (iii) increased understanding of the role of various stakeholders in inclusive education, including the role of specialists, teacher assistants and how to work with them; and (iv) an increased understanding of when and how to refer children to community-based services.

At the same time, the feedback provided during the conducted interviews indicates that the attitudinal changes are highly dependent on the age of teachers and their experience in working with children with disabilities. There are concerns that the more the teachers gain knowledge and experience in working with such children, the more skeptical they become regarding the potential for their successful inclusion in the mainstream educational settings.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity – 0.9.

There is clear evidence that there is indeed an increase of 10 % of positive attitudes towards including children with disabilities in mainstream education among teachers from the pilot kindergartens compared to worsening attitudes in the control group. This provides reasonable ground to support the hypothesis that modelling interventions contribute to positive attitudinal change among teachers. However, as the exact causal mechanisms explaining this change are not well established, additional investigations could further increase the level of confidence.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

Type I error probability – 0.1

There is little ground to claim that the above mentioned improving attitudinal characteristics of the teachers from pilot kindergartens would be observed without UNICEF-supported modelling interventions, given the worsening attitudes among the control group (teachers from kindergartens that were not included in these interventions).

d) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the level of likelihood that the evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.1), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to highly confident (0.9) the probability of the hypothesis of “An increase of 10 % of positive attitudes towards including children with disabilities in mainstream education among teachers from the pilot kindergartens”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 6	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5

¹²⁰ Atanassova, A. et.al. (2019). Survey of the attitudes of teachers in kindergartens to implement inclusive education (Second stage). UNICEF

Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.9
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.1
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.900

Claim 7: An increase of enrolment and inclusion of children with disabilities in pre-school and school education

a) Evidence

Statistical data confirms that there is gradual increase of the share of children and students with special educational needs for the period 2017-2020, with the most significant growth witnessed in preschool education. More specifically, while in 2017/2018 school year the children with SEN represented 1.7% of all children enrolled in kindergartens, this share increased to 2.3% in 2019/2020 school year¹²¹. For the same period, the share of students with SEN enrolled in mainstream schools increased from 2.2% of all students to 2.6% of all students. It should be noted that there is still no data about the impact of remote learning due to Covid-19 crisis on the enrolment and inclusion of children with disabilities.

At the same time, there is no available data to establish what the exact percentage of children with disabilities is. The feedback provided during the conducted interviews suggests that due to higher per-student cost standard paid for students with SEN, there are some pervasive incentives for certain schools to diagnose neglected marginalized children and students as children/students with SEN. Also, existing reports provides indications that the actual numbers of students with SEN receiving proper inclusive education may be lower as there are practices in some of the mainstream schools to place students with SEN segregated classrooms¹²². Existence of such practices has been confirmed with the interviews. Existing evidence does not allow to establish the magnitude of these practices and the number of children with SEN separated in segregated classrooms.

Available data and reports do not provide enough evidence to establish a causal inference regarding the impact of the above established UNICEF activities on the enrolment rates of children with disabilities in mainstream kindergartens and schools.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity – 0.6.

Existing data, although generally confirming the claim do not provide a reasonable ground for assigning a higher level of certainty. Although there is evidence for increasing enrollment of children and students with SEN in the mainstream kindergartens and schools, there is no conclusive evidence about the actual dynamics in enrollment of children with disabilities. Moreover, there are indications for de facto segregation of part of those children in some of the schools. This means that the evaluation team could be only more confident than not that there is an increase of enrolment **and** inclusion of children with disabilities in pre-school and school education.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

¹²¹ SitAn (2021) based on NSI and MoES data

¹²² Ibid.

Type I error probability – 0.45

As there is lack of evidence providing ground for establishing causal inference between UNICEF interventions and the enrollment of children with disabilities, there is some ground to claim that the registered growth in enrollment of children with SEN could be observed without UNICEF interventions, especially in the light of variety of interventions/national programs providing support to inclusive education.

e) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the level of likelihood that the evidence being present if the hypothesis is true (0.6) and probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.45), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to more confident than not (0.571) the probability of the hypothesis of “An increase of enrolment and inclusion of children with disabilities in pre-school and school education”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 7	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.6
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.45
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.571

Conclusion

According to process tracing methodology, the confidence in the overall claim is set by the “weakest link” (or lowest posterior) in the causal chain, corresponding to claim 7 (referring to the overall impact of UNICEF’s contribution in the field of inclusive education) with a posterior of 0.5714. This means that **we can only be more confident than not that UNICEF Bulgaria contributed to the overall improvement of the inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream kindergartens and schools.** The analysis provide clear evidence that UNICEF undertook and supported a large number of initiatives in the field of inclusive education and we are highly confident that these activities have short term results for the directly targeted institutions and professionals, contributing to (i) improved competencies and positive attitudes of teachers and other supported specialists to work with children with disabilities and (ii) increased institutional capacity to offer better educational service and additional support to children with disabilities. Evidence also shows that UNICEF provided valuable assistance for strengthening the capacities for application of functional assessment of disability in the education system.

	Claim	Prior level of confidence...	Posterior level of confidence...	Assessment...
		...that the claim is true		
1	UNICEF has supported the implementation of the pilot kindergartens component	0.5	0.900	Highly confident
2	UNICEF has provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) in strengthening the capacities for needs assessment of children with disabilities by introducing the functional assessment of disability	0.5	0.947	Highly confident

3	UNICEF supported the development of educational training programs for teachers, which included assistance on using assistive technologies	0.5	0.714	Confident
4	UNICEF has conducted public awareness raising campaigns on sensitivity and intolerance of society and school communities.	0.5	0.947	Highly confident
5	Improved educational services in the schools that were included in modelling initiatives	0.5	0.652	Cautiously confident
6	An increase of 10 % of positive attitudes towards including children with disabilities in mainstream education among teachers from the pilot kindergartens	0.5	0.900	Highly confident
7	An increase of enrolment and inclusion of children with disabilities in pre-school and school education	0.5	0.571	More confident than not

Case study 3: Assessment of UNICEF Bulgaria contribution in the area of protection from violence against children (VaC)

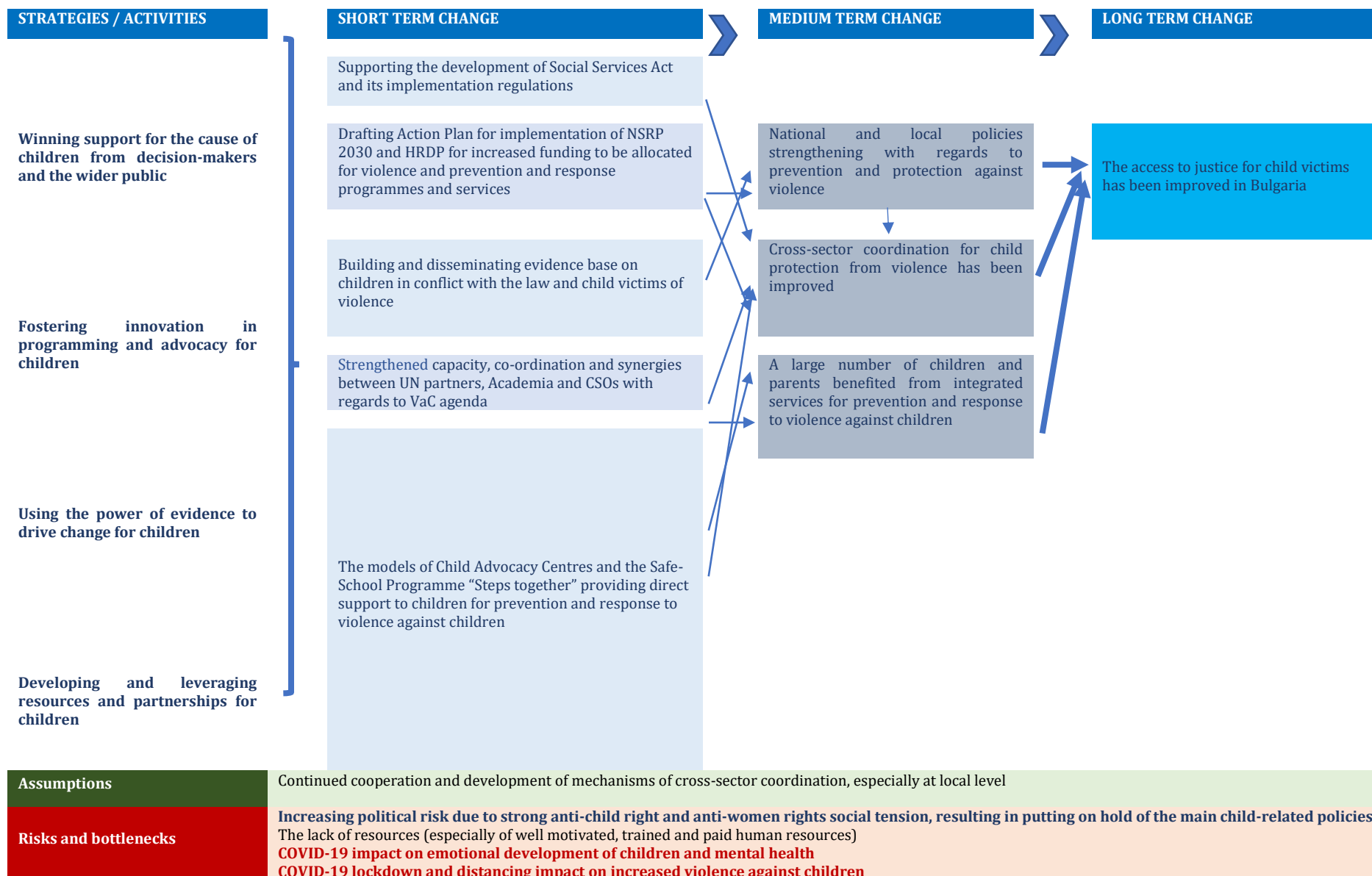
The analysis in this section uses Process Tracing to measure UNICEF Bulgaria's contribution in a selected area of impact, namely violence against children and thus, the improvement registered in the area. As underlined in the section dedicated to the methodology, we present the **change claim chain**, as elaborated in the Inception Phase of the evaluation and immediately after. We then present and analyse each claim in the logical chain and assess the level of confidence for each claim and globally.

Based on the initial research, the evaluation team formulated the following change claim chain:

Through (1) models tested and scaled up, (2) contributions to national and local policies strengthening with regards to prevention and protection against violence, as well as to (3) plans and proposals for increased funding to be allocated for violence prevention and response programmes and services, (4) to a strengthened capacity, co-ordination and synergies between UN partners, Academia and CSOs with regards to VaC agenda and (5) to building and disseminating evidence-base, (6) **a large number of children and parents benefited from integrated services for prevention and response to violence against children**, (7) **cross-sector coordination for child protection from violence has been improved** and (8) **overall the access to justice for children has been improved in Bulgaria**.

A visual presentation of the theory of change based on the change claim chain for the case study is presented below.

THEORY OF CHANGE



The analysis of each claim and the general conclusions are presented in the following sections.

Claim 1: UNICEF has contributed to models testing and scaling them up

a) Evidence

The finding of the analysis presented below are based on the evidences collected from the following documents Country Office Annual Reports, RAM outputs and outcomes reports, A Situation Analysis of Children Rights in Bulgaria, 2021, the Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers and from interviews conducted with representatives of UNICEF, Ministry of Justice and implementing partners.

UNICEF have initiated the Child Advocacy Centers project as a framework of intersectoral services (crisis interventions, therapeutic and legal support, medical and forensic expertise) provided in support of children victims of violence and their families. The collected evidence shows that, in Bulgaria, UNICEF, along with its partners in the project, ANIMUS and SAPI, are the only providers of this type of services and that the model has been effective and its scaling up is at most importance for the improvement of services provided by the government in the area of VaC. Moreover, the evaluation of CAC model implemented in Bulgaria showed that the intervention “unique in delivery of integrated and specialized services to child victims of violence and crimes, and their families”¹²³. Each CAC has a Blue Room which police and justice officials can use to interview children in a child friendly environment with the support of a psychologist and/or social worker from the CAC. Another important component of the CAC model is that they provide child victims and their families with free legal services. The implementation of the model in Bulgaria has been based on the previous experience of other countries with similar interventions and was developed taking into consideration the good practices established in Canada and Iceland. The effectiveness of the model has been assessed first in 2016 and second in 2020 through two evaluation reports. The CACs project have supported 538 children (female: 318 and male 220) and 413 parents (female: 323, male: 90) with integrated services related to prevention and response to VaC up to year 2020¹²⁴.

The evidence collected show that the contribution of UNICEF in the coordination, implementation and funding of the model is vital for its sustainability in the given situation. The lack of public funding allocated for this type of integrated services provided for children, the lack of administrative capacity and specialized human resources within public providers will lead to a decrease in the access of children victims of violence to integrated, quality services if the CAC model will be stopped.

According to the consulted documents, the specialized integrated VaC services provided through the Child Advocacy Centers are “considered as a key intervention for innovation and scale-up”¹²⁵. Moreover, they were essential in the response of UNICEF to the COVID19 crisis due to the fact that they were among few services which continued to function after the pandemic begun. The work developed by the centers has been conducted both face to face and online and the projects has provided, since the beginning of the pandemic 1428 MHPSS consultations to 687 children and 741 parents.

The evidence collected show that UNICEF has also **tested models in the area of prevention of violence against children**. UNICEF together with the MoES selected **five pilot schools for the implementation of whole-school approach for prevention of violence**. The model provides “introductory trainings for the school mentors, leadership training for the management staff and training of trainers by an international consultant to conduct students` workshops on social emotional learning and violence prevention”¹²⁶. In this case, according to the representatives of the UNICEF CO, based on the lessons learned through the

¹²³ Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centres, 2020, p. 4

¹²⁴ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 24

¹²⁵ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 25

¹²⁶ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 20

implementation of the CACs model, UNICEF has changed the strategy regarding the implementation and ensuring the sustainability of the model. In this regard, the main implementing partner is the Ministry of Education, who is also the authority that is going to scale up the model. Nevertheless, the model has not been yet scaled up.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity: 0.6 The evidence allows the evaluators to be **highly confident that UNICEF contributed to testing models** of interventions in the area of prevention of violence against children and also support for children victims of violence and their families. Nevertheless, the evidence supports the fact that the models addressed within this claim **are not yet scaled up**, even though the UNICEF, along with its partners, have made efforts in this direction through advocacy activities, evidence providing through models testing. Moreover, the importance of scaling up the model of Child Advocacy Centers have been recognized by all stakeholders that were interviewed, the model promoted through the project has been legitimized through the Social Service Act which promotes an intersectoral approach regarding the support provided to children victims of violence. Last but not least, UNICEF has made efforts to ensure the sustainability of the model through alternative funding as European funds and EEA and Norway funds.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

Type I error probability: 0.3. It is unlikely to see the evidence presented above if the claim is false, *although the existing evidence shows that even if the models have been tested the scaling up is not done yet*. The evidence on testing of the addressed models, creating a model of intersectoral cooperation for service providers in the area of violence against children, providing evidence on the effectiveness of the models could not have been collected if the claim was false. All relevant consulted documents record the contribution of UNICEF in this area. Nevertheless, because the scaling up has not been done yet, the analysis through the evidence collected could only demonstrate that UNICEF have made an important progress in this process.

d) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the likelihood of seeing account evidence if the hypothesis is true (0.6) and the probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.3), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to **cautiously confident (0.6667) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF contributed to testing models and scaling up in the area of violence against children”, being true given the evidence.**

Claim 1	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.50
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.60
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.30
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.6667

Claim 2: UNICEF has contributed to national and local policies strengthening with regards to prevention and protection against violence

a) Evidence

The analysis of the level of confidence regarding the second claim in the **result claim chain** is based on the evidence collected from the UNICEF’s country annual reports, RAM output and outcome reports, Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers, the National programme for prevention and protection of domestic violence for 2020, A Situation Analysis of Children Rights in Bulgaria, 2021 and on the evidence collected through interviews conducted with representatives of UNICEF, Ministry of Justice and service providers or implementing partners such as: ANIMUS, OSI and SAPI.

The provided documents show that UNICEF has supported with technical input, through advocacy activities and evidence generating through modeling testing, the development of the following legislative acts that address, among other, VaC:

- Social Service Act (SSA);
- National programme for prevention and protection of domestic violence for 2020;
- National Strategy for promoting equality between women and men 2021 – 2030;

The adoption of the Social Service Act, in May 2020 is a key moment in the development of the legislative framework in Bulgaria in the area of protecting and supporting children being victims of violence or at risk of violence. UNICEF and its implementing partners within the project Child Advocacy Centers, ANIMUS and SAPI, have supported the government in the process of drafting the Social Service Act. The evidence gathered from documents and interview highlight the importance of UNICEF's work in this regard. Moreover, the Social Services Act "weakens the mandate of SACP, and hands over licensing of social services functions to the Agency for Quality of Social Services (AQSS) and municipalities"¹²⁷. This means also that the local policy has been influenced by the adoption of SSA, which has been supported by UNICEF. Moreover, the SSA changes the way in which the social services are provided, putting more emphasis on the individualized and customized services and support for children. Also, the new legislative document, introduces the concept of an integrated approach and thus, facilitates "multiagency coordination and team work"¹²⁸.

The National programme for prevention and protection of domestic violence for 2020, has been based, among others, on the experience and results of UNICEF modeling work (e.g. Child Advocacy Centers and Steps together whole school programme)¹²⁹. UNICEF contributed to the strategy by providing concrete input for the text of the document, mostly around the CACs testing experience.

The available documents show evidence of the support provided by UNICEF to the development of the National Strategy for Promoting Equality between Women and Men for the period 2021-2030. UNICEF has contributed to the strategy with specialized input that resulted in adding new measures related to strengthening the capacity for prevention and response to violence and victims support and the proposed indicators to monitor key activities¹³⁰. UNICEF has contributed to priority area IV. Fight with violence, protection and support to victims.

Moreover, the data provided by UNICEF representatives show that their recommendation submitted to the Human Rights Council of UN in respect to access to justice for children have been included in the UPR recommendations to Bulgaria¹³¹.

According to the Ministry of Justice, UNICEF's contribution to the strengthening of the national and local policy in the area of prevention of violence against children and support for children, victims or at risk of being victims of violence, has been of utmost importance, consisting in:

- Participation in projects for legislative changes related to child protection and access to justice, in accordance with international and European standards;
- Introduction of adapted and child-friendly procedures and appropriate environment for interrogation of child victims and witnesses of violence and crimes, which ensures the achievement of the objectives of the investigation while not leading to adverse consequences for the psychological recovery of children;

¹²⁷ Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers, 2021, p. 4

¹²⁸ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis of the child's rights in Bulgaria, 2020, p. 100.

¹²⁹ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 24

¹³⁰ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 25

¹³¹ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 24

- Introduction of adapted procedures that guarantee the right of every child to be heard in all procedures that affect his or her life and well-being - criminal, civil and administrative;
- Participation in the creation of a policy that ensures that children have access to free quality legal aid provided by the state;
- Participation in the creation of a policy aimed at strengthening the capacity of professionals by introducing specialization for police officers, prosecutors, lawyers and judges who work with children.

The evidence collected show that UNICEF has also provided technical support and advocate for the development, revision or adoption of the following legislative and policy documents: National Strategy for the Child 2019 – 2030, the development of 2019-2020 Action plan for the implementation of the National strategy for prevention of violence against children and abuse, for the finalization of the draft legislation concerning children in conflict with law - Educational Measures Act. Nevertheless, due to the political crises, from the past couple of years, related to the anti-human and anti-child rights movements in Bulgaria, these documents have not been adopted yet.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity: 0.90. The evidence allows the evaluators to be **highly confident that UNICEF contributed to national and local policy strengthening in the area of violence against children**. Its work in this regard was mainly centered on advocacy activities, technical support throughout the development of legislative/policy documents and through models testing which led, on one hand to the inclusion of several practices in the local services framework and on the other, based on the evidence produced led to the adjustment of policy documents (e.g. Social Service Act). However, it is important to mention that at local level, the UNICEF work had a visible influence supported by evidence mainly in the area where the Child Advocacy Centers model is implemented, namely, Montana, Shumen and Sofia.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

Type I error probability: 0.3. It is rather unlikely to see the evidence presented above if the claim is false. Not only the UNICEF reports and representatives provide evidence on the contribution of UNICEF, but also the representatives of the Ministry of Justice from Bulgaria and the representatives of associations and institutes, partners in UNICEF modelling projects, consider that through its efforts UNICEF have contributed to the national policy framework in the area of VaC. Moreover, some national policy documents include referrals to UNICEF's work, which strengthens again the level of confidence of the evaluation team on the collected evidence. Each action developed by UNICEF and mentioned above is recognized by stakeholders as contributing, mainly, to national policy.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress out that the associations and institutes that have been interviewed have been working with UNICEF for a long time and are partners in the Child Advocacy Centres project, the main UNICEF modelling work in the area of VaC. Due to their partnership in the projects and activities related to support for children, victims of violence and their families, they may be biased.

d) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the likelihood of seeing account evidence if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and the probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.3), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to **confident (0.75) the probability of the hypothesis of "UNICEF contributing to national and local policies strengthening with regards to prevention and protection against violence", being true given the evidence.**

Claim 2	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5

Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.90
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.3
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.75

Claim 3: UNICEF has contributed to plans and proposals for increased funding to be allocated for violence prevention and response programmes and services

a) Evidence

The collected evidence has showed specific examples where UNICEF has contributed to the increase of funding allocated for violence prevention and response programmes. Through the work done by UNICEF in 2020, including multi-sectoral programmes, evidence based for prevention and also for children victim of violence and advocacy, 900,000 USD were leveraged from external sources¹³².

Furthermore, the new adopted Social Service Act, for which UNICEF has provided technical support, strengthens the regulations on funding in the area of social services in Bulgaria. Even though the effects of the new legislation are not observable yet, the new framework of integrated services in the area of child protection should be supported by increased funding. Nevertheless, the data collected through the interviews show that the opinions are mixed on the real effects that this new act due to the uncertainty regarding the funds that will be available for its implementation.

The efforts done by UNICEF in regards with the scaling up or ensure the sustainability of the CACs model, in the absence a firm commitment from the government's side, have also led to leverage of funding for child protection. The Draft Operational Programme of Human Resources has integrated the CACs model and allocated the necessary funding for its implementation. This step done forwards by UNICEF is essential for the maintained and also extension to other regions the model of integrated services for children victim of violence and also violence prevention. Nevertheless, the programme has not been adopted yet, therefore, the actual level of funding allocated for the child protection area may be adjusted by its final version. Moreover, UNICEF has provided technical support for the development of the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and promoting social inclusion 2030, which includes the necessary funding for the proper implementation of the strategy.

According to the data collected through interviews, the participation of UNICEF to the development of the two aforementioned documents was an opportunity to place children in the center of the social protection system and leverage resource for the improvement of the child protection system.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity: 0.90. The evidence allows the evaluators to be **confident that UNICEF contributed to plans and proposals for increased funding to be allocated for violence prevention and response programmes and services.** The UNICEF's technical support provided to the development of strategic documents, based on the evidence produced through studies and model testing have contributed to the provision of increased funding in the area child protection. Moreover, it is important to mention that the operations of the aforementioned will provide evidence on the extent to which the funding has been increased. At this moment there were no evidence available on this issue.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

¹³² UNICEF, RAM report 2020, p. 25

Type I error probability: 0.25. It is rather unlikely to see the evidence presented above if the claim is false. The evidence collected on the contribution/technical support for the development of the strategy and programmes are provided mainly by UNICEF reports and representatives.

e) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the likelihood of seeing account evidence if the hypothesis is true (0.9) and the probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.3), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to **confident (0.7826) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF contributed to plans and proposals for increased funding to be allocated for violence prevention and response programmes and services.”**, being true given the evidence.

Claim 3	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.90
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.25
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.7826

Claim 4: UNICEF has contributed to a strengthened capacity, co-ordination and synergies between UN partners, Academia and CSOs with regards to VaC agenda

a) Evidence

The evidence collected through documents and interviews with stakeholders show that the work developed by UNICEF in the area of VaC has facilitated the cooperation of different actors relevant for preventing violence against children and supporting through specialized services victims of violence. Through the model Child Advocacy Centers, UNICEF has developed a successful collaboration framework among public service providers, local municipalities and NGOs. According to the evaluation of the project, the model has been able to improve the “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 children victims of violence”¹³³. Moreover, the evaluation states that the cooperation between the 3 municipalities selected for the piloting, the service providers, social workers, police and prosecutors is of utmost importance for the successful implementation of the model. It is important to mention here that the project has also facilitation cooperation among stakeholders at national level, such as State Agency for Child Protection and the Social Assistance Agency.

UNICEF has contributed to the development of the following activities in area of VaC that have facilitated the collaborations between various stakeholders in the area – public authorities (national and local), international organizations, universities:

- the organization of the INSPIRE conference in 2019;
- the realization of VaC national study;
- the implementation of CACs model;
- the organization of training programmes developed and supported including through Bodrozzi EU project implemented by SAPI and Animus, active participation in meetings and strategic events, co-ordination and support including capacity building for the VaC Alliance (ToT on Inspire Strategies in 2019, translation and promotion of INSPIRE, etc.);
- Learning Action Partnership and the KHC for Alternative Care at New Bulgarian;

¹³³ Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers, p. 70.

- University as well as WHO, UNHCR and IoM with regards to violence against children and women including GBV prevention and protection.

Moreover, the NGOs that have been interviewed consider that in general UNICEF has been not only the facilitator in the collaboration among them through their actions and projects, but also a facilitator in regards to the communication between CSOs and the government, being very stable partners and also having a long-term collaboration with ministries, relevant national agencies, but also with the municipalities where they implement the modeling projects. The perspectives of the interviewees converge to the idea that the support provided by UNICEF to the CSOs legitimates their actions. Also, the data collected from interviews also show that UNICEF has been a liaison between administration within the projects supported by them, such as Child Advocacy Centers.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity: 0.95. The evidence allows the evaluators to be **highly confident that UNICEF has contributed to a strengthened capacity, co-ordination and synergies between UN partners, Academia and CSOs with regards to VaC agenda.** All data collected from documents and interviews with key stakeholders show that UNICEF has act as collaboration and communication facilitator among CSOs, academia and public authorities in the area of Violence against Children.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

Type I error probability: 0.05. It is unlikely to see the evidence presented above if the claim is false.

d) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the likelihood of seeing account evidence if the hypothesis is true (0.95) and the probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.05), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to **highly confident (0.95) the probability of the hypothesis that “UNICEF contributed to a strengthened capacity, co-ordination and synergies between UN partners, Academia and CSOs with regards to VaC agenda”,** being true given the evidence.

Claim 4	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.95
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.05
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.95

Claim 5: UNICEF has contributed to building and disseminating evidence-base

a) Evidence

The evidence collected from documents and interviews conducted with key stakeholders in the area of VaC show that UNICEF has contributed significantly to building and disseminating evidence-base. On one hand, UNICEF has developed or support the development of studies related to the system of child protection in Bulgaria, further it has analysed and provided evidence on the further need of the improvement of the monitoring system. On the other hand, UNICEF, through technical support provided to key public actors in the area, has contributed to the development of a monitoring framework and its operationalization, as presented further in this section.

The most relevant national studies in the area of child protection, that have been developed with the support of UNICEF, are:

- The Analysis of the child protection (CP) system, developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with the support of UNICEF CO;
- The National Study on Violence against Children, developed by UNICEF.

According to the evidence collected from documents and also through interviews, UNICEF has also supported the The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to finalize the Analysis of the child protection (CP) system. The analysis has examined the level of the effectiveness of the protection and support provide to children at risk by public bodies. The study also addressed the manner in which the system is able to responds to the individual needs¹³⁴. The study includes also a section related to the monitoring system in Bulgaria and recommendations on its improvement. The study emphasizes that that the available statistics are fragmented between the schools, the Agency for Social Assistance, the child protection departments at the State Agency for Child Protection, the Ministry of Interior, the Prosecutor's Office and medical institutions. According to the data collected through interviews the study provides essential evidence and guidelines for the improvement of the monitoring system.

Furthermore, UNICEF has conducted the following analysis which provides through evidence on the situation of child rights realization in Bulgaria, that cover the VaC area:

- Situation Analysis on children and women in Bulgaria, 2017;
- A Situation Analysis of the child rights in Bulgaria, 2020;
- Evaluation of Child Advocay Centres, 2020.

The Situation Analysis from 2020 emphasize that “violence against children is on of the areas that need additional monitoring, evidence based and analysis”¹³⁵. Furthermore, the models testing work of UNICEF, has also provided evidence on the effectiveness of certain types of services provided through its actions. For example, the evaluations that have been done for the model of Child Advocacy Centres have gathered evidence on the effectiveness of the model, its efficiency, sustainability, bottlenecks encountered and based on these, provided relevant recommendation for its further implementation and scaling up. The data provided through the evaluation has also been used as evidence based in the process of developing the text of the Social Service Act. The evaluation of the model states that “CACs demonstrated to local municipalities and other professionals how they can deal with cases of VAC and support child victims and their families in a coordinated manner with a focus on the best interests of the child”¹³⁶.

UNICEF has provided technical support to the Ministry of Interior for the development of the Automated Informational System for the Prevention of Child Crime and Protection of Children. The new system put in place in Bulgaria has been presented at the TransMonEE Network Meeting of National Statistical Offices in Europe and Central Asia, Austria, in 2019, as a promising example of a national monitoring system of children at risk and children victim of crime¹³⁷.

UNICEF has done an extensive set of analysis on the effects on the pandemic on children well-being. This has also covered the area of violence against children and the stringent needs of children when speaking about violence prevention and support for abused children. The following studies developed by UNICEF or with the support of UNICEF provide evidence on the impact of COVID19 pandemic on children, assessing also the its effects on the violence against children phenomenon, online bullying and gender-based violence:

- Representative survey on needs and vulnerabilities among families and the impact of COVID-19
- High-Frequency Monitoring Survey on the socio-impact of COVID-19 on households (with WB)

¹³⁴ UNICEF, Country Office Annual Report 2019, p. 2

¹³⁵ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis of the childs rights in Bulgaria, 2020, p. 24

¹³⁶ The evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers, 2020, p. 71

¹³⁷ Ministry of Interior, The Promising Practice and Possibilities of the Automated Informational System for the Prevention of Child Crime and Protection of Children, within the TransMonEE Network Meeting of National Statistical Offices in Europe and Central Asia, Austria, November 2019

- An overview of municipal responses to COVID-19 with a focus on social and economic measures
- Legal analysis on the COVID-19 impact on child rights
- A nationally representative research on preferred information channels, communication platforms, influencers and online behaviours of adolescents and youth in the digital space
- Behavioural Insights national research related to COVID-19

UNICEF CO Bulgaria has started in 2019 to work together with the WHO Regional Office for Europe, WHO CO of Bulgaria, NCPHA and the Ministry of Health on the development of a community survey of the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences in Bulgaria. The survey aims at collecting data that can allow the development of a profile of “adverse childhood experiences by socioeconomic, demographic and other variables as well as the impact on risk behaviors and other health outcomes”¹³⁸.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity – 0,95. The evidence allows the evaluators to be **highly confident that UNICEF contributed to building and disseminating evidence-base**. Based on the data collected from both documents and interviews with key stakeholders, the evidence shows that UNICEF has contributed to a great extent to evidence generating, through its studies and models testing and also through its technical support provided to key actors for the development of legislative frameworks regarding monitoring system in the area of child protection and also technical support for the development of the database used by the Ministry of Justice from Bulgaria.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

Type I error – 0,05. It is very unlikely to see the evidence presented above if the claim is false. The existing evidence related to studies conducted by UNICEF, support provided to the Ministry of Justice for the development of the monitoring platform, support provided to the Ministry of Labour for developing the SSA would not have been present if the hypothesis was false.

d) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the likelihood of seeing account evidence if the hypothesis is true (0.95) and the probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.05), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to **highly confident (0.95) the probability of the hypothesis of “UNICEF contributed to building and disseminating evidence-base”**, being true given the evidence. It is true that this is at the foundation of UNICEF’s works and that all activities developed/conducted are based on evidences (already existing or new evidences generated through UNICEF’s efforts).

Claim 5

Evidence – Account and trail

Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.95
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.05
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.95

Claim 6: A large number of children and parents benefited from integrated services for prevention and response to violence against children

a) Evidence

¹³⁸ Technical meeting to conduct a community survey of the prevalence of adverse childhood experience in Bulgaria, Sofia, November 2019

According to the evidence collected from documents and also from the interviews conducted with the key stakeholders, that a large number of children and parents have benefited from integrated services for prevention and response to violence against children, mainly through the services provided by the CACs, children and parents that otherwise would not have access to this type of specialized multi sectoral support.

In terms of data collected regarding the number of children and families that have benefited from integrated services for prevention and response to violence, UNICEF reports show that by the end of the year 2019, **more than 7500 children** that were victims of violence, witnesses of violence, children in conflict with the law, children that were participants in administrative and civil proceedings or separated children benefited from the integrated services provided by the 3 Child Advocacy Centers¹³⁹. Moreover, in the area of gender-based violence, through the efforts made by UNICEF, during year 2020, **1337 persons** have been reached through support services and prevention actions, which consisted in case management, social evaluations and plans of action¹⁴⁰. UNICEF has also supported vulnerable mothers and child survivors of gender-based violence through mother and baby unit and crisis center' support. Nevertheless, their number (**30 mothers and 28 children**) is very low compared to the existing needs at national level in this area. Further, **more than 1428 children and parents** have benefited of Mental Health and Psychological Support (MHPSS) Services provided by CACs during COVID 19 pandemic¹⁴¹.

Moreover, it important to mention that the model implemented by UNICEF has led to an increase in the demand of integrated services¹⁴². According to the evaluation of the model, the national and local key stakeholders consider that the closing of the centers, in the situation where there are going to be undertaken by the public bodies, "would be deprive children and their families of much needed quality psychosocial and legal services"¹⁴³. UNICEF has also conducted activities in the area of education that addressed prevention of violence in schools and prevention bullying and cyberbullying.

Regarding the number of children victims of violence or at risk of becoming victims of violence, the Situation Analysis from 2020 has showed that there can be observe an increase of 30% between 2013 and 2019 of the cases that were provided with cross-sectoral support¹⁴⁴. The analysis shows that in 2017 there were 928 of cases of children being victims of violence or being at risk for which the Coordination Mechanism stipulation in the Child Protection Act has been activated, where as in number of similar cases in 2019 increased to 1181.

The National Network for Children, in the report card of 2019, emphasize that there were no unified statistical data that could provide an over all image of the effectiveness of child protection system. This situation is still lagging, even if there has been made good progress in developing a legal framework regarding cross-coordination mechanism for support of child victims and children being at risk.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity: 0.80. The evidence allows the evaluators to be **confident that a large number of children and parents benefited from integrated services for prevention and response to violence against children**. Even if there is a lack of available administrative data at national level on children benefiting from integrated services, the evidence regarding the reach of UNICEF's activities in this regard, show that a large number of children had benefited from integrated services and support (in the areas of mental health, psychology, justice) that were provided through CACs, the model being unique in Bulgaria. Therefore, they could not have been benefited for this kind of support from other sources.

¹³⁹ UNICEF, Country Office Annual Report, 2019, p. 4

¹⁴⁰ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 28

¹⁴¹ UNICEF, RAM 2020, p. 24

¹⁴² Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers 2020, p. 70

¹⁴³ Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers 2020, p. 71

¹⁴⁴ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis of the childs rights in Bulgaria, 2020, p.122

c) *Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?*

Type I error – 0.3. It is unlikely to see the evidence presented above if the claim is false. The existing evidence related to the reach of child victims of violence, children at risk and their families through integrated services is sufficient to claim in a confident manner that the hypothesis is true. Nevertheless, the reach of UNICEF actions remains isolated to the regions where the activities have been implemented and the judgment on the level of truth is based mainly on UNICEF's reports and the perspective of stakeholders on UNICEF activities results.

d) *Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level*

Given the likelihood of seeing account evidence if the hypothesis is true (0.85) and the probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.30), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to **confident (0.7391) the probability of the hypothesis “A large number of children and parents benefited from integrated services for prevention and response to violence against children”, being true given the evidence.**

Claim 6	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.95
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.05
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.7391

Claim 7: Cross-sector coordination for child protection from violence has been improved

a) *Evidence*

The evidence collected from relevant documents such as: A Situation Analysis of Child Rights in Bulgaria, the evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers 2021, the CO annual reports and through the interviews conducted with stakeholders show inconsistent evidences regarding the improvements established in cross-sector coordination in VaC area in Bulgaria.

Most of the consulted documents emphasize that the child protection system which covers also the violence against children area. In this respect, the Situation Analysis from 2021 states that the sector of child protection presents “underdeveloped mechanisms for timely identification and multi-sectoral responses supporting children in need of protection”¹⁴⁵. Moreover, the need of further development in the area of child protect in respect to the cross-sectoral coordination in Bulgaria has been emphasized also in the Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria from 2019. The report states that Bulgaria “lacks in clarity as to the multi-sectoral nature of the child protection system and its main components, functions and approaches”¹⁴⁶. Moreover, the interviewees also support the idea that the responsibilities in this sector are dissipated among a lot of actors and there is a lack of coordination which affects the quality of services provide for children.

Nevertheless, the Situation Analysis conducted by UNICEF in 2020, shows that in the period of 2013 – 2019, the use of the Coordination Mechanism for cross-sectoral support provided to child victims of violence or children being at risk has increased with 33 percent¹⁴⁷. Further, the analysis emphasizes that Coordination Mechanism in the Case of Violence, established through the Child Protection Act requires urgent advances

¹⁴⁵ A Situation Analysis on Childs Right in Bulgaria, 2020, p. 48

¹⁴⁶ Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019.

¹⁴⁷ Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019, p. 122

in its implementation. Moreover, the analysis provides evidence on the fact that “social services, health, education and civil society partners are increasingly involved at key stages of the juvenile justice process”¹⁴⁸. Nevertheless, there is still a stringent need in the formalization of the cross-sector collaboration of key actors in area VaC.

It is utmost importance to mention that the adoption of the Social Service Act strengthens the coordination mechanism between duty bearers in the area of child protection, mechanism that has not been formalized before. The analysis and studies that were consulted by the evaluation team do not cover these systemic changes due to the recent adoption of the document. But the data collected from interviews emphasize the importance of the new social services law in regards to the cross-sectoral coordination and integrated service provision, UNICEF being part of this mechanism. The law is considered a great opportunity in this regard. The services provided through the Child Advocacy Centers are integrated in the local map of services and are licensed. Nevertheless, its effects, which are based on the operationalization of the law, could not be observed or measured at the time when the analysis has been developed. In this regard, the collected evidence shows also that, to a certain extent, the SCOs are cautiously appreciative when speaking about the possible effects of the law, mainly due to the uncertainty regarding the available funding for the implementation of the new framework.

On the other hand, the evidence collected through documents and interviews with stakeholders show that the work developed by UNICEF in the area of VaC has facilitated the cooperation of different actors relevant for preventing violence against children and supporting through specialized services victims of violence. Through the model Child Advocacy Centers, UNICEF has developed a successful collaboration framework among public service providers, local municipalities and NGOs. According to the evaluation of the project, the model has been able to improve the “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 children victims of violence”¹⁴⁹. Moreover, the evaluation states that the cooperation between the 3 municipalities selected for the piloting, the service providers, social workers, police and prosecutors is was of utmost importance for the successful implementation of the model. It is important to mention here that the project has also facilitated cooperation among stakeholders at national level, such as State Agency for Child Protection and the Social Assistance Agency. Furthermore, as the evaluation of CACs shows, even if UNICEF has facilitated the coordination of several relevant actors throughout the implementation of the model, the it does not have the power to develop a formalized inter-sectoral coordination framework, therefore “CACs lack the power needed to coordinate inter-agency responses to support children and families”¹⁵⁰.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity: 0.70. The evidence allows the evaluators to be **cautiously confident that the cross-sectoral coordination** for child protection in Bulgaria has been improved. The activities developed by UNICEF in this area, especially the model CACs, show its important effects regarding the increase in stakeholders’ cooperation and cross-sectoral coordination (health, social, judicial services). Nevertheless, their effects remain isolated at the level of regions selected for piloting. All consulted documents, analysis and studies on the child protection section in Bulgaria shows that the system is still fragmented and that there is a stringent need for more coordination among key service providers. Moreover, the adoption of the new Social Service Act provides great opportunity for the improvement of the cross-sectoral coordination among service providers in the area of child protection, but their effects are not yet observable.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

¹⁴⁸ Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019, p. 130

¹⁴⁹ Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers, p. 70.

¹⁵⁰ Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers, p. 83

Type I error probability: 0.40. Taking into consideration that the collected evidence do not show a certain improvement of the cross-sectoral national coordination in the area of VaC, but rather an improvement at the level of the 3 regions addressed by CACs model, which is confirmed to a large extent by the stakeholders that have been interviewed, more evidence regarding the existing changes within the national system are needed in order to consider the hypothesis as being true.

d) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the likelihood of seeing account evidence if the hypothesis is true (0.70) and the probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.40), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to **cautiously confident (0.6364) the probability of the hypothesis** that “cross-sector coordination for child protection from violence has been improved”, being true given the evidence.

Claim 7	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.70
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.40
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.6364

Claim 8: Overall the access to justice for children has been improved in Bulgaria

a) Evidence

The evidence collected from documents and interviews that were conducted with stakeholders show that even if the evolution in the area has not been substantial, the access to justice has been increased in Bulgaria and UNICEF has had an important role in the process. Nevertheless, all consulted studies/analysis on the current situation of child protection system show that there a lot of improvement that have to be expedited, including in the area of access to justice.

The Situation Analysis from 2021 emphasize that the progress made in the period 2018 – 2021 in the area of access to justice in Bulgaria has been slow.¹⁵¹ The analysis also emphasized that in general free legal aid for children is still difficult to access and inconsistent. The system of so-called “blue room”, initiated through CACs model, which allows the protection of children involved in legal proceedings has improved the access of children to child-friendly justice. The Situation Analysis conducted in 2020, showed that there are 25 blue rooms available in Bulgaria, “but they operate without any established rules or procedure, and overall are rarely used”¹⁵². Moreover, the system of child protection is not proactive on identifying cases of violence against women and children or children being at risk. The service providers are not trained in this concern and they do not have the necessary skills to identify such cases. Thus, as emphasized in the Situation Analysis many cases of violence are not reported.

Nevertheless, the evaluation team has collected evidences on the positives effects that the CACs model have on the access to justice for children being victims of violence or being at risk. According to the evaluation conducted in 2020, the “CACs were able to improve access to justice because they worked with lawyers who provided free legal services to children and their families”¹⁵³. The centeres also provided other types of services for children, such as mental health services and psychological and therapeutic services. They have also initiated the use of “blue rooms”, which allows the protection of children during proceedings. Further,

¹⁵¹ UNICEF, Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019, p. 47

¹⁵² UNICEF, Analysis of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria, UNICEF, 2019, p. 51

¹⁵³ Evaluation of Child Advocacy Centers, 2020, p. 71

the evaluation of CACs model emphasizes that the access to integrated services has been considered very facile by the children and parents that have benefited from them. The perspective of the beneficiaries towards the relevance and usefulness of the supports received from the centres is highly appreciative.

All interviewees confirm that the project has led to an increased access of child victims of violence or children being at risk to justice and there has been an improvement in regards to child friendly justice practices and if the centers would not function anymore, the children won't have access to integrated services. This perspective has also been confirmed during the data collection process conducted for the evaluation of CACs model. Both national and local stakeholders expressed their concern regarding the limited or blocked access of children to justice in the case centers were closing up.

It is important to mention that through the 3 centers that provide integrated services for children, the access to justice has been improved especially to marginalized and vulnerable children (children living in poverty or children that are part of ethnical minority groups).

Nevertheless, due to the fact that the CACs model has not been yet scaled up, its positive effects remain isolated and are mainly observable at the level of the 3 regions included in the pilot. As showed above, at national level the observed improvements in regards to access to justice for child victims of violence or being at risk is poor. There are promising developments in the legislative framework, for which UNICEF also provided support, but without their operationalization their effects are minimum.

Still, according to the data collected through interviews, UNICEF has contributed to the improvement of the access to justice for children in Bulgaria and the main activities that were effective in this concern, besides testing the CACs model, are the following:

- through its participation in the establishment of partnerships between central and local authorities, civil society, media, court and prosecutor's office;
- by changing attitudes towards children in conflict with the law and creating opportunities for support, integration and positive change for young people;
- by participating in the creation of national and local policies in the protection of children and in their implementation;
- collection and summarization of statistics and database, analyses, research in this direction;
- by participating in the introduction and provision of the so-called "blue rooms" that allow the objectives of the investigation to be achieved.

b) Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?

Sensitivity: 0.80. The evidence allows the evaluators to be **confident that the overall the access to justice for children has been improved in Bulgaria**. Based on the presented evidence the evaluation team can be highly confident that the access to justice has been improved to a substantial extent in the regions where the CACs model has been implemented, but at national level the improvements, even if they exist, they are still very poor.

c) Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?

Type I error probability – 0.2. It is unlikely to see the evidence presented above if the claim is false. The evidence regarding the effectiveness of the CACs model in regards to access to justice for child victims of violence and at risk have been collected from documents, studies and interviews with UNICEF representatives, government representatives and CSOs representatives.

d) Update of the prior into the posterior confidence level

Given the likelihood of seeing account evidence if the hypothesis is true (0.80) and the probability of seeing this same evidence if that hypothesis was false (0.20), the account evidence of the documents and interviews increases to **confident (0.80) the probability of the hypothesis "overall the access to justice**

for children has been improved in Bulgaria”, being true given the evidence. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that, the overall improvement has not been significant and also that the observed improvement have not been homogenous at national level.

Claim 8	Evidence – Account and trail
Prior probability of the claim being true	0.5
Sensitivity - If the claim is true, how likely would we expect to see this evidence?	0.80
Type I error - If the claim is false, how likely would we expect to see the evidence?	0.20
Posterior probability of the claim being true	0.8000

Conclusions

According to process tracing methodology, the confidence in the overall claim is set by the “weakest link” (or lowest posterior) in the causal chain, corresponding to claim 7 (Cross-sector coordination for child protection from violence has been improved) with a posterior of 0.6364. This means that **we can be only cautiously confident that UNICEF contributed in a substantial manner to the number of children and parents benefiting from integrated services in the area of VaC, to the improvement of access to justice and to the cross-coordination for child protection from violence**, in line with the change chain presented above and with the theory of change of the area (as presented at the beginning of the annex).

Nevertheless, the analysis allows us to be **highly confident** about the fact that UNICEF has contributed to the improvement of collaboration between CSOs, UN partners and Academia in the area of VaC and also, that it had an essential contribution to the existing evidence on the situation of children from Bulgaria in regards with the violence phenomena and on the status of the child protection system. Further, we are **less confident** in the contribution of UNICEF to scaling up tested models. In this regard the evidence show that UNICEF has made efforts in this line, but the two models addressed in the analysis are not scaled up yet.

Claim	Prior level of confidence...	Posterior level of confidence...	Assessment...
	...that the claim is true		
1 UNICEF has contributed to models testing and scaling them up	0.5	0.6667	Cautiously confident
2 UNICEF has contributed to national and local policies strengthening with regards to prevention and protection against violence	0.5	0.7500	Confident
3 UNICEF has contributed to plans and proposals for increased funding to be allocated for violence prevention and response programmes and services	0.5	0.7826	Confident
4 UNICEF has contributed to a strengthened capacity, co-ordination and synergies between UN partners, Academia and CSOs with regards to VaC agenda	0.5	9.9500	Highly confident
5 UNICEF has contributed to building and disseminating evidence-base	0.5	9.9500	Highly confident
6 A large number of children and parents benefited from integrated services for prevention and response to violence against children	0.5	0.7391	Confident
7 Cross-sector coordination for child protection from violence has been improved	0.5	0.6364	Cautiously confident
8 Overall the access to justice for children has been improved in Bulgaria	0.5	0.8000	Confident

Even if the reach of UNICEF’s actions and projects in the area of child protection from violence and prevention is rather low compared to the needs at national level, all evidences collected show that the effort

made by UNICEF for the improvement of the system of child protection in the area of VaC have been essential for providing access of child victims of violence or children being at risk to integrated service and support and to child-friendly justice. Moreover, UNICEF have conducted several studies and tested models that have generated evidence on current situation of child protection system, including VaC and GBV and on the effectiveness of different types of integrated services. Based on this evidence, but not only, UNICEF has provided support for governmental bodies in the process of strengthening the strategic and legislative framework in the area of child protection, including the inter-institutional, cross-sectoral cooperation system for case management in the area of VaC. Furthermore, as the data collected shows, UNICEF has been acting as a communication and cooperation facilitator between governmental actors, municipalities and service providers, CSOs and universities.

Nevertheless, the political crisis which Bulgaria is facing, the resistance of conservative political groups, the lack of administrative capacity, the lack of coordination among sectors and key actors in the area of child protection, the low level of competencies and skills of human resources at the level various service providers (in the sectors of justice, health, mental health, psychological support, therapeutical support) dealing with cases in which children are involved and the lack of statistical/administrative data, led to a slow development of the area at national level. The new adopted Social Services Act has brought essential improvements in the legislative framework in area of VaC, but its operationalization still remains a challenge. Regarding the overall progress made in the area of VaC, the scaling up of the models initiated by UNICEF that have already proven their effectiveness is still not finalized, thus their effects remain mostly isolated to the regions where the interventions have been piloted.

It is utmost importance to mention that within this context UNICEF has managed to make essential contributions to the area, due to the technical support provided, the evidence generating and the provision of a set of unique integrated services in Bulgaria. In child protection sector and most especially in VaC area UNICEF had been recognized by all interviewed stakeholders as a key actor.

Annex 4. Results of the Social Network Analysis and stakeholder analysis

Social Network Analysis contributes to answering the evaluation question no. 9 ("To what extent did UNICEF manage to build effective and sustainable partnerships in working towards addressing the predefined bottlenecks, advocating for evidence for equity and contributing to the results at scale?"). Social network analysis (SNA) is a field of data analytics (a quantitative method) that uses networks and graph theory to understand social structures. In order to build SNA graphs, two key components are required: actors and relationships. In network analysis, actors are referred to as nodes (the dots on the graph) and relationships as edges (the lines on the graph). Social Network Analysis is the most effective method available today for visualizing and evaluating group connectivity. By using Network Analysis, three measures can be tracked: (1) depth of relationship and (2) frequency of communication. The Network Analysis allows the evaluation team to track and measure the connections that exist between stakeholders and UNICEF Country Offices.

In order to apply the Social Network Analysis an online survey among all staff members of UNICEF CO has been conducted.

The data collection phase has been conducted in August 2021. Through the SNA questionnaire, the evaluation team has collected data on main collaborations developed by UNICEF Bulgaria CO, the areas of collaboration, type of support received or benefits, frequency of collaboration and the value of information or other type of support received CO specialists.

By applying network analysis, the evaluation team was able to track and measure the connections that exist between stakeholders from Bulgaria and the Country Offices and to make recommendations to strengthen the collaboration of UNICEF with other organizations and/or institutions across the country¹⁵⁴. Network Analysis is the most effective method available today for visualizing and evaluating group connectivity. Through network analysis, the evaluation team identified key stakeholders and potential connections for the Country Offices of UNICEF¹⁵⁵. By using Network Analysis, the evaluation teams appreciated the depth of the relationship by looking at two dimensions¹⁵⁶:

- **Frequency of communication**, which was quantified by including a 1-10 scale in the survey that measures frequency of communication, in which 1 represents weak communication and 10 represents strong communication. The respondents were asked to appreciate the frequency of communication by using the scale;
- **Quality of support**, which was quantified by including a 1-10 scale in the survey that measures the quality of support offered by the selected stakeholders in the survey, in which 1 represents weak support and 10 represents strong support. The respondents were asked to appreciate the quality of support by using the scale.

Network analysis provided a tool through which UNICEF ECARO and the Country Office can increase their collective self-awareness and ability to see the whole system. The network maps that were developed have the following components¹⁵⁷:

- A node is any individual or organization in the network. Nodes can take different size, proportional to the influence of the individual or organization. In the network analysis that was conducted for this evaluation, **the nodes are the experts** (officers, specialists or external consultants) that work for or collaborate with the Country Offices of UNICEF from the Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan and **various stakeholders** from the four countries that collaborate with the Country Offices of UNICEF.
- An edge is a bond or relationship that connects two individuals or organizations. Edges can be assigned a weight depending on the strength of the connection. For this evaluation, the weight

¹⁵⁴ Ehrlichman D. (December 2017), Using Network Analysis For Evaluation and Design, to be consulted at:

<https://www.ruralcenter.org/rhi/network-ta/networking-news/using-network-analysis-for-evaluation-and-design>

¹⁵⁵ Idem

¹⁵⁶ Ehrlichman D. (December 2017), Using Network Analysis For Evaluation and Design, to be consulted at:

<https://www.ruralcenter.org/rhi/network-ta/networking-news/using-network-analysis-for-evaluation-and-design>

¹⁵⁷ Springet A. C. and de Steiguer J. E. (December 2011), Social Network Analysis: A Tool to Improve Understanding of Collaborative Management Groups, Volume 49 Number 6, Article Number 6RIB7

accorded to the edges encompass the values given by the respondents for the two scales included in the survey: **frequency of communication and quality of support**. The evaluation made an average of the values given by the respondents on the two dimensions and applied to the edges.

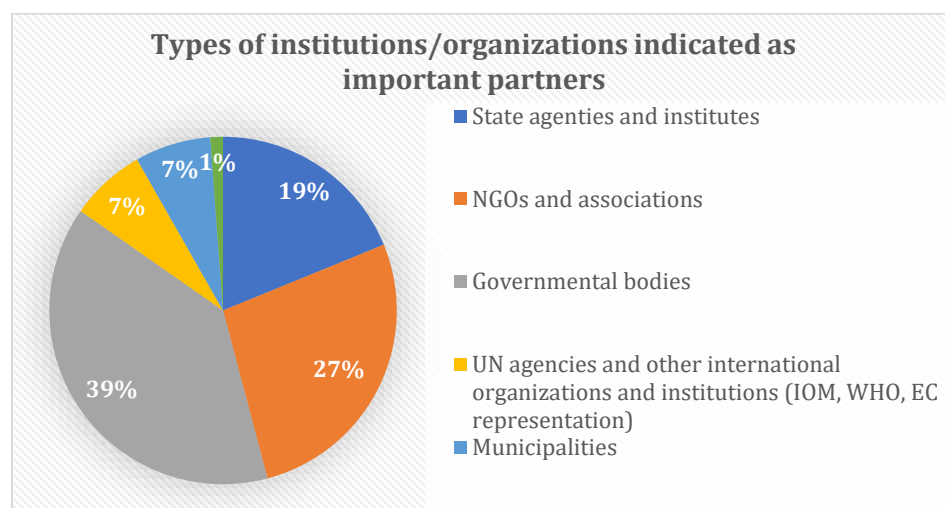
Besides the development of the graphs, the evaluation team applied a collection of metrics to quantify how important and influential are nodes in the network, evaluate the size and diameter of the network and obtain information on the length and distance of the paths between nodes in the network.

Metric	Value
Average Degree	Average number of links per node
Network Diameter	The maximum distance between any pair of nodes in the graph.
Modularity	Modularity is one measure of the structure of networks or graphs. It was designed to measure the strength of division of a network into modules (also called groups, clusters or communities). Networks with high modularity have dense connections between the nodes within modules but sparse connections between nodes in different modules.
Average Path Length	Average path length is defined as the average number of steps along the shortest paths for all possible pairs of network nodes. It is a measure of the efficiency of information or mass transport on a network.
Connected Component	A connected component is a group of nodes that are connected to each other, but not connected to another group of nodes. Another way of thinking of this is a group of connected nodes that have no path to a node from another group.

In the case of Bulgaria, the specialists/country officers that have provided us answers to the questionnaire work in following areas: early childhood development, refugee and migrant children, communication for social change, local services, education, child rights monitoring, social policy and child protection.

According to the collected data, the main institutions with whom the CO collaborates are: Governmental bodies, NGOs and associations and state agencies and institutes. As the below figure shows, from the institutions that have been mentioned by respondents, most connections have been established between governmental bodies and UNICEF CO (39% of the total number of connections), followed by the collaboration developed with CSOs (27%). State agencies and institutes are also key actors in UNICEF COs network, as they represent 19% of the connections established with all identified collaborators.

Figure 7 Type of institutions/organizations indicated as important partners by Bulgaria CO respondents (annex)



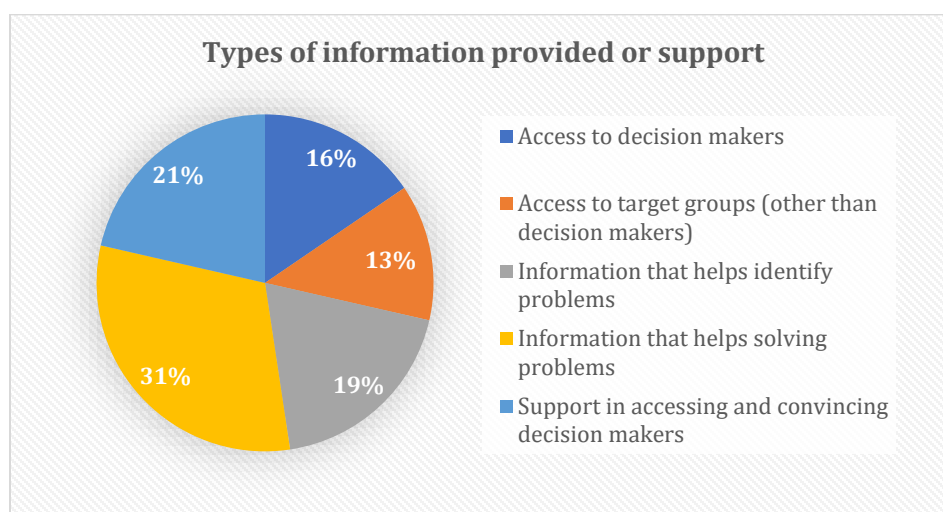
Source: Data collected through a survey conducted at the level of UNICEF CO Bulgaria

The Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy have been identified most often as important partners in the development of COs activities (7 times each), followed by The Agency for Social Assistance (6 times) and Ministry of Interior and State Agency for Child Protection (5 times each). Most of the NGOs and associations that have been mentioned have only one connection with UNICEF CO (with the exception of National Association of municipalities – 3 connections, ANIMUS – 2 connections and National Network for Children – 2 connections). Nevertheless, as presented above, this category of stakeholders represents 27% of the total number of connections, due to the fact that UNICEF works with a broad range of CSOs¹⁵⁸. Regarding the importance given by respondents to the collaboration established with UN agencies, according to the collected data, this is rather low. Just 2 agencies have been mentioned, each with only one connection, UNICEF ECARO and UNHCR.

Regarding the frequency of communication, as observed from the data collected, most frequent contacts have established with: UNICEF ECARO, The Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria and Mission wing foundation. Moreover, the majority of most frequent connections with the identified institutions and organizations are with CSOs (such as: Mission Wings Foundation, Assist Foundation, Association of European Journalists, Association of Parents, Bulgarian Pediatrics Association, Karin dom, Social Policy and Practice Institute and other). Less frequent connections established annually are identified at the level of governmental bodies (such as: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Health or Ministry of Labor and Social Policy).

According to the opinion of respondents, the primary benefit of the collaboration with stakeholders is: information for solving problems (31%), followed by the support in accessing and convincing decision makers (21%) and information that helps identifying problems (19%).

Figure 8 Type of information or support provided by the partners of UNICEF CO Bulgaria



Source: Data collected through a survey conducted at the level of UNICEF CO Bulgaria

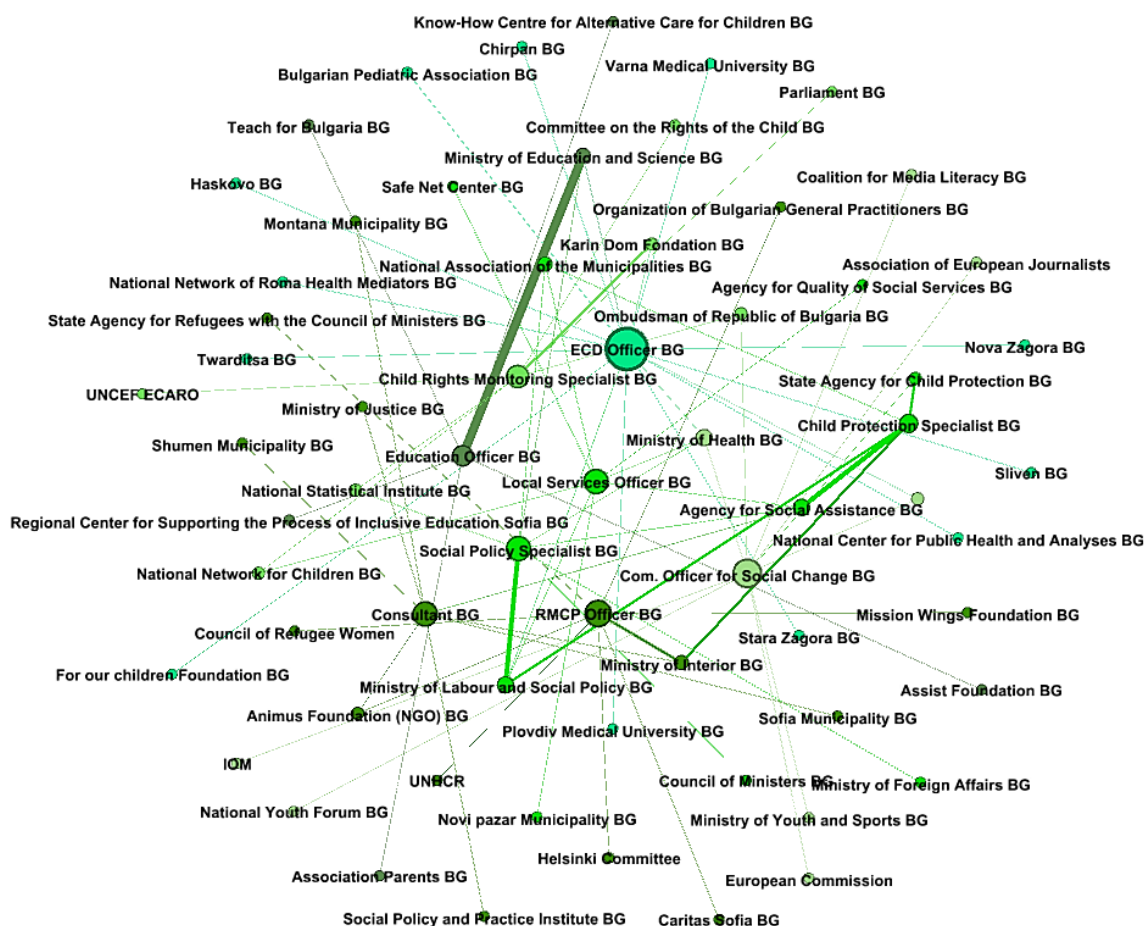
When speaking about the benefits identified in the collaboration with CSOs, most important types of support identified were: information that helps solving problems (40%) and access to target groups, other than decision makers (30%). When addressing the benefits received from the collaboration governmental

¹⁵⁸ Animus Foundation (NGO), Assist Foundation, Association of European Journalists, Association Parents, Bulgarian pediatric association, Caritas Sofia, Coalition for Media Literacy, Karin dom, Know-How Centre for Alternative Care for Children, Mission Wings Foundation, National Association of the Municipalities in Republic of Bulgaria, National Network for Children, National Youth Forum, For our children foundation, National network of Roma health mediators, Professional organization of Bulgarian general practitioners, Regional Center for supporting the process of inclusive education Sofia, Safe Net Center, Social Policy and Practice Institute (NGO), Teach for Bulgaria

bodies, the most important aspect, as perceived by respondents, is that they receive information for solving problems (42% of the cases), followed by access to decision makers and information that helps identifying problems (each 26%). In the case of collaboration with LPAs, the benefits are equally distributed among the following: information for solving problems, information that helps identifying problems and support in accessing and convincing decision makers.

Another important criterion of the analysis is the level of value that the CO's staff or contracted experts give to certain collaborations. On a scale form 1(no value) to 10, the average value of the collaboration established with governmental bodies is 7,48 and with state agencies is 7,41. The value of the collaboration established with CSOs is 8,54. In the case of LPAs, the information and supported received by the respondents is the least valued, receiving 5,4 points. Another high valued collaboration is the one established with UN agencies and other international organizations, noted with an average of 8,4 points. Analysing the scores received by each institution, the collaborations that have been the most appreciated (receiving 10 points) are with the following institutions or organization: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Caritas Sofia, Committee on the Rights of Child, Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria, Mission Wings Foundation, Novi Pazar Municipality and Teach for Bulgaria.

Figure 9. Social Network of UNICEF in Bulgaria (annex)



Source: Data collected through a survey conducted in Bulgaria

Table 5. Metrics of the Social Network Analysis in Bulgaria

Metric	Value
Average Degree	2.4
Network Size	65
Network Diameter	8

Metric	Value
Modularity	0.646
Average Path Length	4.089
Connected Component	1

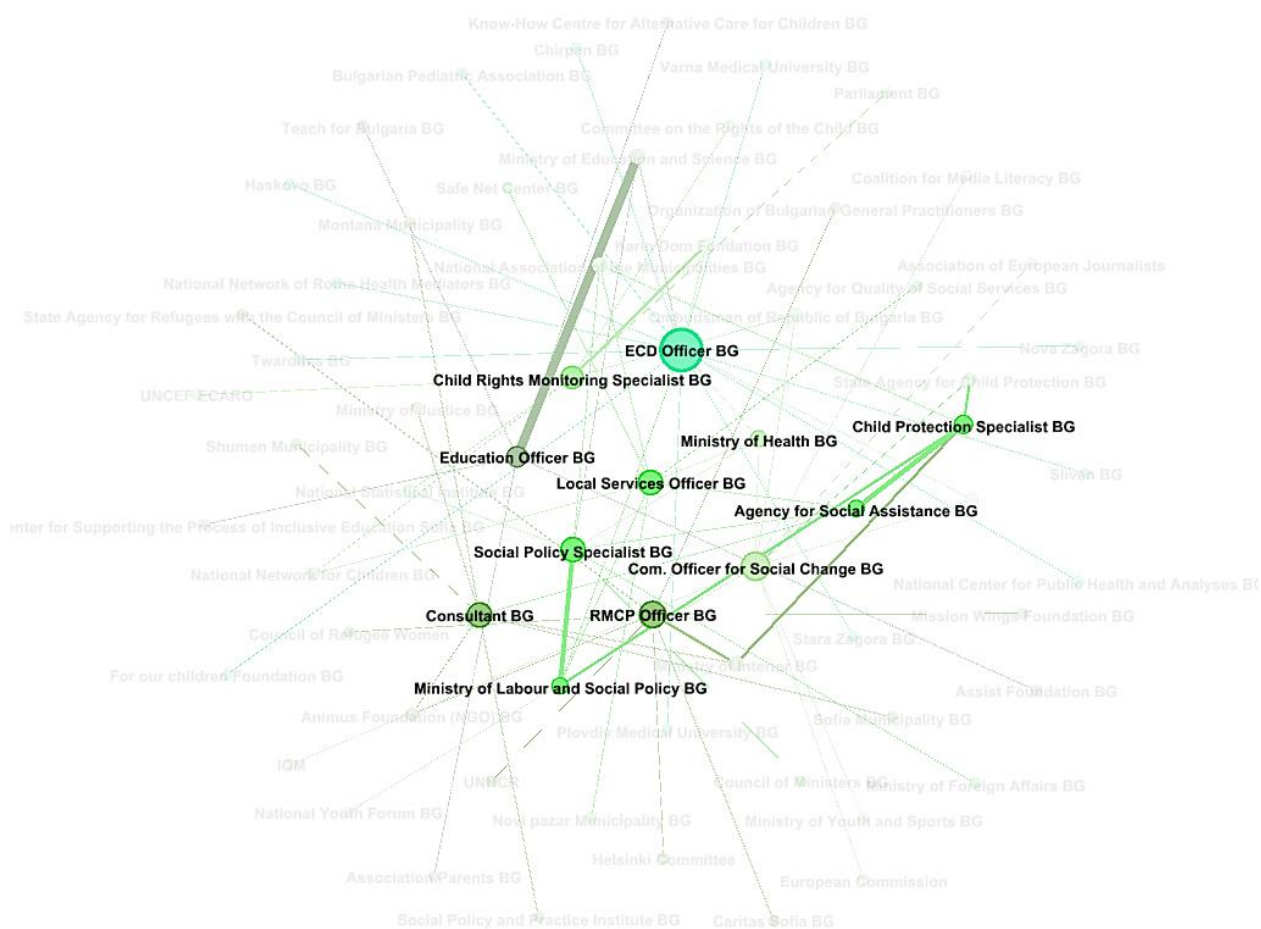
Source: Data collected through a survey conducted in Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, the social network of UNICEF CO has an average degree of 2.4 edges per nodes. This indicates that the average connection per actor in the network is around 2 or 3 connections. The size of the network of UNICEF CO Bulgaria is 65 nodes (how many actors are in the network) and the network diameter has a coefficient of 8 nodes (the longest path between the least connected actors in the network). Circulation of information to the peripheral areas of the network is much difficult for UNICEF CO Bulgaria, because the number of well-connected actors is limited.

Regarding the characteristics of the overall partnership network developed by UNICEF CO of Bulgaria, the data analysis shows the existence of a relatively strong community, with various connections between actors in different clusters formed around each department of the CO or each specialist/expert of the CO. This conclusion is based on the modularity coefficient (0,646), that shows that the network is not formed only by clusters of interactions, but that the identified clusters are interconnected through the connections established between their members. The network is less partitioned by areas of interest as in the case of UNICEF CO Moldova, because the experts of UNICEF CO Bulgaria are connected with external organizations that are specialized or activates in various fields, not only in one field, as in the case of the experts of UNICEF CO Moldova. This statement is also supported by the presence of only one connected component in the network.

The coefficient of the average path length is 4.089, which indicates a flow of information that encounters roadblocks in the network of UNICEF CO in Bulgaria. The average number of steps along the shortest paths for all possible pairs of network nodes is 4 UNICEF experts and/or external partner organization. This length can be explained due to the peripheral areas of the network in Bulgaria. In other words, to reach a certain actor in the network it requires a path of communication through 4 other members from the network.

Figure 10. Social Network of UNICEF in Bulgaria filtered by number of degrees



Source: Data collected through a survey conducted in Bulgaria

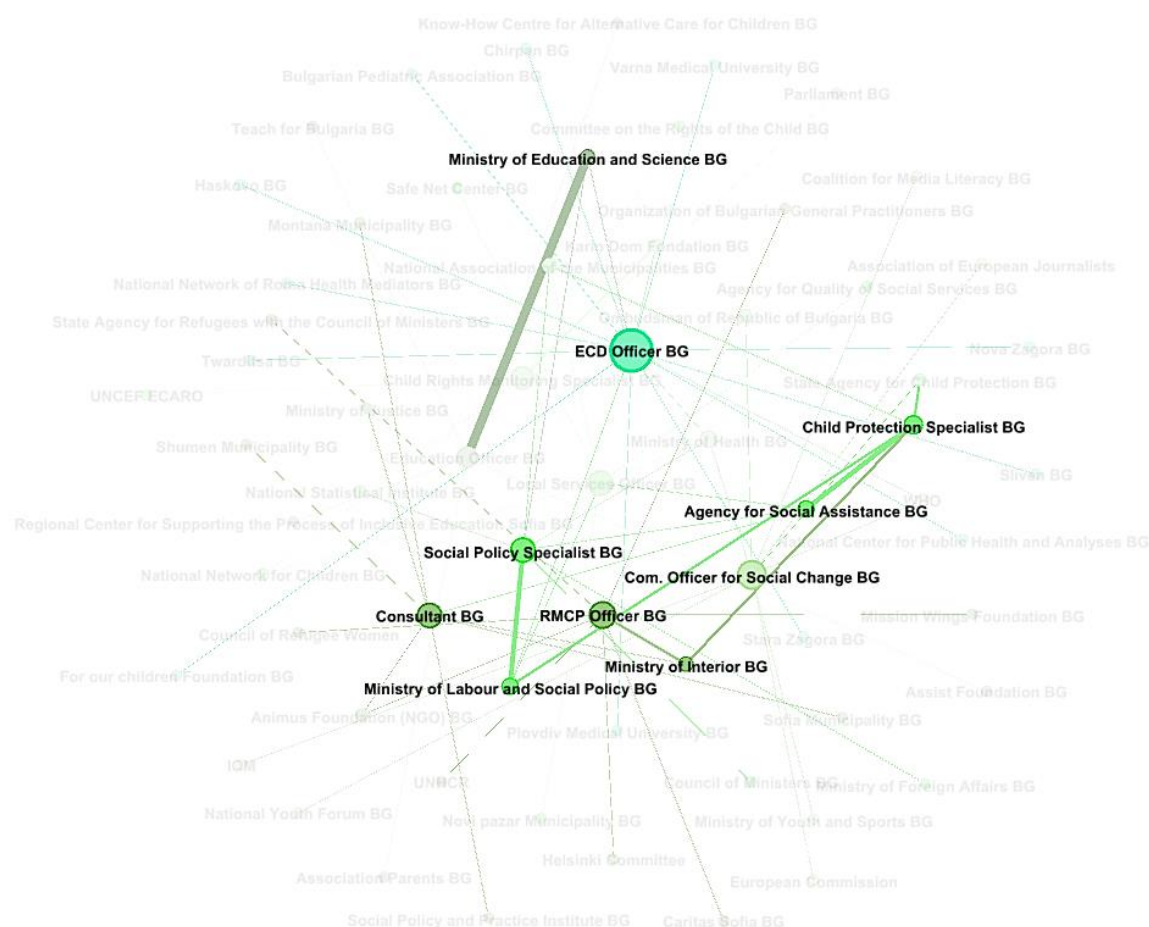
The graph from above highlights the nodes that have more than 4 degrees in UNICEF's network in Bulgaria. The nodes that have the highest number of degrees are all from the CO of UNICEF Bulgaria, as follow: the ECD Officer with 17 degrees, the Com. Officer for Social Change with 10 degrees, the RMCP Officer with 9 degrees, the Local Services Officer with 8 degrees and the Social Policy Specialist with 8 degrees. Concerning the external partners organizations that have the most edges with UNICEF's experts in Bulgaria are the following: the Ministry of Health with 4 degrees, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy with 4 degrees, the Agency for Social Assistance with 4 degrees, the Ministry of Education and Science BG with 3 degrees and the Ministry of Interior with 3 degrees,

Table 6. Top 5 nodes in number of degrees in UNICEF network in the Republic of Bulgaria

Node	Degrees
ECD Officer	17
Com. Officer for Social Change	10
RMCP Officer	9
Local Services Officer	8
Social Policy Specialist	8

Source: Data collected through a survey conducted in the Republic of Bulgaria

Figure 11. Social Network of UNICEF in Bulgaria filtered by betweenness centrality



Source: Data collected through a survey conducted in Bulgaria

The graph from above presents the nodes that have the highest betweenness centrality coefficients in UNICEF's network in Bulgaria. The following table from presents the nodes that have the highest betweenness centrality coefficient.

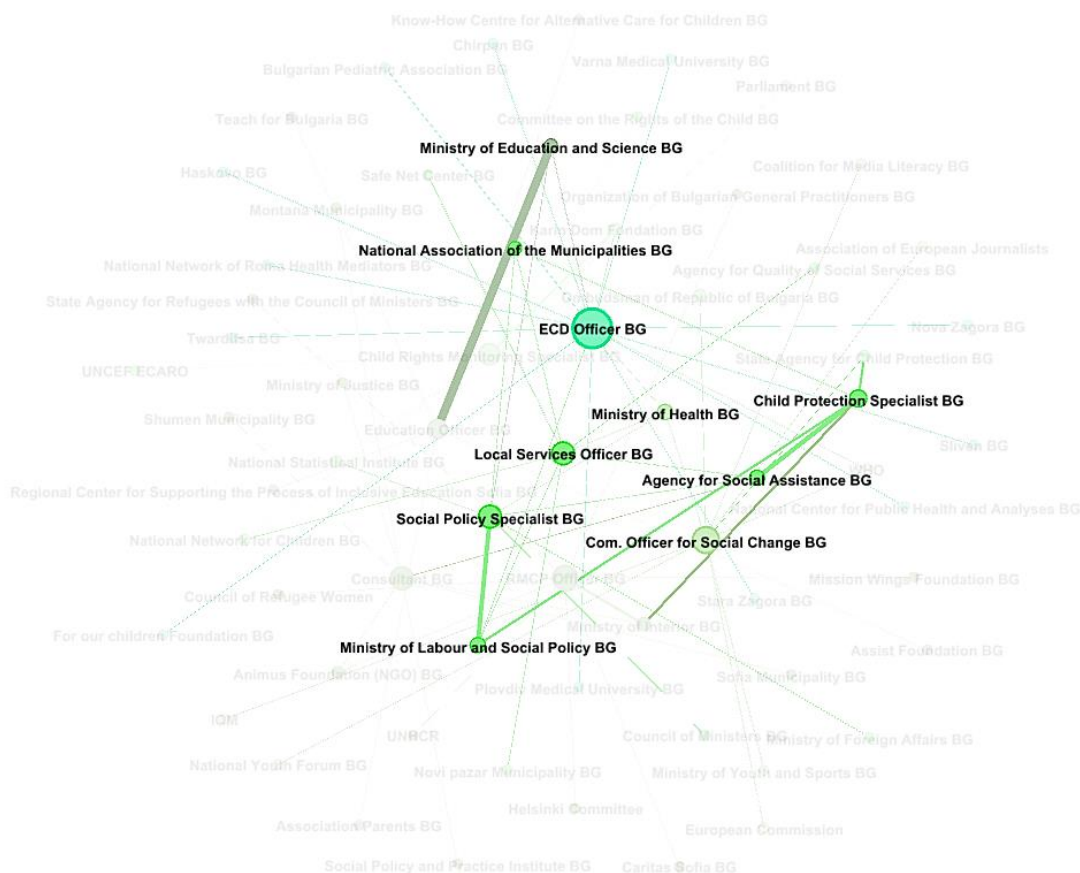
Table 7. Top 5 nodes in betweenness centrality in UNICEF network in Bulgaria

Node	Betweenness centrality	Degrees
ECD Officer	0.421805	17
Social Policy Specialist	0.242444	8
Child Protection Specialist	0.230474	5
Com. Officer for Social Change	0.217699	10
Ministry of Interior	0.210968	3

Source: Data collected through a survey conducted in Bulgaria

The ECD Officer has the highest betweenness centrality coefficient (0.42), which indicates that this expert has the most influence in the flow of information in UNICEF's network in Bulgaria, representing a bridge for the most actors from the network in trying to reach other actors from the network. Besides the ECD Officer, other nodes from UNICEF's network in Bulgaria that have high between centrality coefficients are the Social Policy Specialist of UNICEF (0.24), the Child Protection Specialist of UNICEF (0.23), the Communication Officer for Social Change (0.22) and the Ministry of Interior (0.21).

Figure 12. Social Network of UNICEF in Bulgaria filtered by closeness centrality



Source: Data collected through a survey conducted in Bulgaria

The graph from above highlights the nodes that have the highest coefficient in closeness centrality in UNICEF's network in Bulgaria. The following table presents the five nodes with the highest closeness coefficient. The table include the coefficients for the number of degrees and betweenness centrality as well.

Table 8. Top 5 nodes in closeness centrality coefficients in UNICEF network in Bulgaria

Node	Closeness centrality	Degrees	Betweenness centrality
ECD Officer	0.355556	17	0.421805
Social Policy Specialist	0.347826	10	0.242444
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	0.345946	7	0.174192
Ministry of Health	0.338624	4	0.151451
Child Protection Specialist	0.329897	10	0.230474

Source: Data collected through a survey conducted in Bulgaria

The ECD Officer, the Social Protection Specialist and the Child Protection Specialist, all from UNICEF, are the nodes that have both the highest betweenness centrality and closeness centrality. In addition to these three nodes, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Health have one of the highest coefficient in closeness centrality.

The ECD Officer is the node that has the highest coefficients in all three metrics: degree, betweenness centrality and closeness centrality. This node is the best positioned node in UNICEF's network in Bulgaria. The ECD Officer is connected with the Ministry of Health (betweenness centrality: 0.15, closeness centrality:

0.34), Ministry of Education and Science (betweenness centrality: 0.19, closeness centrality: 0.31), Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (betweenness centrality: 0.17, closeness centrality: 0.35) and WHO (betweenness centrality: 0.04, closeness centrality: 0.28). As well, the ECD Officer is connected with many municipalities and NGOs from Bulgaria.

Partnerships for **Early Childhood Development** were seriously impaired by the resistance on the part of well-established ministries to accept and adapt to the inter-sectoral, multi-disciplinary approaches. Furthermore, the unfavourable social-political environment put on hold the anticipated progress and impaired the scaling up and mainstreaming pilot projects. On the other hand, partnerships at the local level, initially established in the previous programme cycle and extended to this programme cycle within the framework of pilot projects are reported to contribute to good cooperation between different service units. Combining several services targeting young children and families have improved access to health services, better parenting practices in the most vulnerable and marginalized communities and in turn, motivated the service providers to partner with the parents to provide comprehensive care.

Effective examples of partnerships include the cooperation between UNICEF and WHO to support for revising the National Recovery Plan that led to the incorporation of ECD in the document and the cooperation between the academic institutions and CSOs for the training and supervision of nurses within the framework of home visiting services.

At the local level the pilot projects have supported the municipalities to perform their tasks efficiently, persuaded them to scale up the services to allow transition from an entirely child-oriented model to a family-oriented model. It is also stated that the specialists are transforming from being narrow specialists into become broad specialists in early childhood intervention. It is worth noting that the Haskovo Municipality is working on several large projects for marginalized groups and currently implementing a project for the construction of social housing, which will only be used if the parents find a job on the condition that the children attend kindergarten/school.

Notwithstanding the fact that the improvements are limited mainly to individuals and families benefitted from pilot interventions and that there still is the need to reach out to all families and caretakers and all children; UNICEF has made an important contribution to deinstitutionalization, the capacity of services providers and parents is reported to have improved.

The partnership structure under the outcome area **Inclusive Education** is simpler with clear roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder and therefore reported to conducive for mainstreaming the project achievements ed into the routine procedures and practices as well as pre- and in-service training curricula.

The introduction of the screening test at the entrance to the kindergarten, to determine the aptitudes as well as the needs for additional support of the child requires transition to a new system, which radically different from the previous one. As an organization that combines health and social assistance and education UNICEF's role in this transition through the introduction and application of screening tests, the provision of pedagogical specialists, the improvement of the material and technical base, the introduction of high- technologies to improve communication in children with certain disorders or disabilities, and for the role of various NGOs, is perceived as extremely supportive. Changes have been made to many of the bachelor's and master's programs with the introduction of inclusive education classes. Resource teacher training programs have been introduced. Trainings for teachers in the application of screening tests were conducted. The interviews imply increased confidence of teachers in their knowledge and skills related to Inclusive Education and it is reported that principals started to consider such training as essential. A comparative analysis of teacher profiles revealed that longer the support, stronger is self-confidence of teachers. Therefore, Introductory, upgrading training and supervision to provide feedback, is considered a

very effective approach. Nevertheless, the teams in some kindergartens still feel insecure about working with these children, especially in the villages.

Although the number of children with developmental problems in the education system has increased, there it is not possible to assess this as genuine integration where the child is independent in school or kindergarten.

Really effective support for parents in the community is achieved. This UNICEF project offers a completely new philosophy for working with parents of young children, and a new way of providing a social service altogether. There is an increase in the capacity of parents, they are much more informed, they have much more access to different services.

The partnership structure under the outcome area **Protection** with different groups of stakeholders is reported to be effective. The cooperation of the Ministry of Justice and in particular of the Legislative Council Directorate with UNICEF Bulgaria is assessed as extremely fruitful. They jointly drafted and assessed several legislations pertaining children in conflict with the law, during which representatives of UNICEF Bulgaria presented their analyses and opinions on the subject of the activity.

The contribution of UNICEF is related to the introduction of interdisciplinary services, which consolidate the activities of the various departments. UNICEF is part of the coordination mechanism for interaction in cases of children who are victims or at risk of violence and cooperation during crisis intervention.

This generally leads to improved access to justice for children who have experienced violence and crime, and is particularly important for vulnerable and marginalized children, such as the poor and ethnically minority groups.

Zona Zakrrila has demonstrated a very successful model for and integrated service for both child victims and children in conflict with law.

UNICEF and its implementing partners within the project Child Advocacy Centers, have supported the government in the process of drafting the Social Service Act. The evidence gathered from documents and interview highlight the importance of UNICEF's work in this regard. Also, the new legislative document introduces the concept of an integrated approach and thus, facilitates "multi-agency coordination and team work"¹⁵⁹.

The partnership structure under the outcome area **Child Rights Monitoring** is reported to be effective in terms of improved data collection practices and successful campaigns. The interviews revealed that UNICEF has conducted effective communication campaigns, which further strengthened its brand and ensured the ownership of the wider public for child related issues and priorities. The C4BSC interventions, especially within the framework of COVID-19 response, have created opportunities to reach out to and inform the society as a whole on child related issues. The tools developed within this framework have high chances to be used in the future and for new modalities that may be transposed to programmes to support the efforts to improve the health conditions and learning achievement of especially the most vulnerable and marginalized children.

¹⁵⁹ UNICEF, A Situation Analysis of the child rights in Bulgaria, 2020, p. 100.

Annex 5. Data collection instruments

Semi-structured interview guidelines

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Question	UNICEF	Government / Public institutions	Donors	UN agencies	Academia	Services providers / implementing partners
Q1	Did UNICEF contribute to the results at-scale? If yes, how and why did it make a difference and for whom? If no, why not?							
	Bulgaria CP	1. In your opinion, the national and local policies supporting nurturing family and social environment for children in Bulgaria has been improved between 2018 and 2021? 2. Can you give the example of improved national and local policies? How was progress possible? What factors supported the progress? 3. Can you give the example of policies that could not be improved? Why progress was not possible? 4. Based on your professional expertise, which indicators do you have in mind when assessing the policies improvements in order to provide support for nurturing family and social environment for children? 5. Did UNICEF contribute to the policy improvements? If yes, how? Please give examples.	X	X	X	X	X	X
		6. In your opinion, the access to inclusive education for children has been improved between 2018 and 2021? 7. Can you give the example of measures that made education more inclusive? How was progress possible? What factors supported the progress? 8. Based on your professional expertise, which indicators do you have in mind when assessing the inclusive education in Bulgaria? 9. Did UNICEF contribute to the improved access to inclusive education for children? If yes, how? Please give examples.	X	X	X	X	X	X
		10. In your opinion, between 2018 and 2021, children in Bulgaria are better protected from: a. Discrimination b. Violence	X	X	X	X	X	X

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Question	UNICEF	Government / Public institutions	Donors	UN agencies	Academia	Services providers / implementing partners
		<p>c. Exploitation or abuse</p> <p>11. If yes, for each of the three areas, how was progress possible?</p> <p>12. If no, for each of the three areas, why progress was not possible?</p> <p>13. Based on your professional expertise, which indicators do you have in mind when assessing the child protection?</p> <p>14. Did UNICEF contributed to the progress observed? If yes, how? Please give examples for different areas.</p>						
		<p>15. In your opinion, the capacity of parents to fulfil their obligation for realization of child rights and for child protection has been improved between 2018 and 2021? How was progress possible? What factors supported or hindered the progress?</p> <p>16. Based on your professional expertise, which indicators do you have in mind when assessing the capacity of parents to fulfil their obligation for realization of child rights</p> <p>17. In your opinion, the mass media and general public have a better understanding of child rights in 2021 compared to 2018? How was progress possible? What factors supported or hindered the progress?</p> <p>18. Based on your professional expertise, which indicators do you have in mind when assessing the mass media and general understanding of child rights?</p> <p>19. Did UNICEF contributed to the increased capacity parents and media? If yes, how? Please give examples.</p> <p>20. In your opinion, the level of participation of children and young people to the social life in Bulgaria improved 2018 and 2021? How was progress possible? What factors supported or hindered the progress?</p> <p>21. Based on your professional expertise, which indicators do you have in mind when assessing the participation of children and young people?</p> <p>22. Did UNICEF contributed to the increased participation of children and young people? If yes, how? Please give examples.</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Question	UNICEF	Government / Public institutions	Donors	UN agencies	Academia	Services providers / implementing partners
	Inclusive education for children, including children with disabilities	<p>Please give examples about UNICEF contribution to inclusive education in Bulgaria. Please refer especially to:</p> <p>23. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to the implementation of the pilot kindergartens?</p> <p>24. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to the functional assessment of disability?</p> <p>25. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to the educational training programmes for teachers, relevant for IE?</p> <p>26. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to awareness raising about the importance of inclusive education among:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">a. teachers?</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">b. parents?</p> <p>27. Based on your professional expertise, how much are methodologies and tools for inclusive education used in schools in Bulgaria?</p> <p>28. Based on your professional expertise, which is the attitude towards including children with disabilities in mainstream education in Bulgaria? Did it improved In the last years?</p> <p>29. What other stakeholders contributed to the progress observed?</p> <p>30. Based on your professional expertise, which indicators do you have in mind when assessing the acceptance of children with SEN and CwD in the mainstream schools and kindergartens?</p> <p>31. What other stakeholders contributed to the progress observed?</p>	X	X				X
	Early childhood development	<p>Please give examples about UNICEF contribution to early childhood development in Bulgaria. Please refer especially to:</p> <p>32. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to the ECD strategy?</p> <p>33. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to the draft national strategy for inclusion and participation of Roma for 2021-2030?</p> <p>34. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to the community-based parenting support program?</p> <p>35. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to the Centers for Maternal and Child Health and the Home Visiting Service (HVS)?</p> <p>36. In your opinion, the capacity of parents to fulfil their obligation for early childhood development has been improved between 2018 and 2021? How was progress possible? What factors supported or hindered the progress?</p>	X	X				X

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Question	UNICEF	Government / Public institutions	Donors	UN agencies	Academia	Services providers / implementing partners
		<p>37. Based on your professional expertise, which indicators do you have in mind when assessing the capacity of parents?</p> <p>38. In your opinion, the access of young children from isolated or disadvantaged communities/most vulnerable children to social, health and education services for early childhood development has been improved between 2018 and 2021?</p> <p>39. How was progress possible? What factors supported or hindered the progress?</p> <p>40. Based on your professional expertise, which indicators do you have in mind when assessing the access of young children from isolated or disadvantaged communities/most vulnerable children to services for early childhood development?</p> <p>41. What other stakeholders contributed to the progress observed?</p>						
	Protection from violence and access to justice	<p>Please give examples about UNICEF contribution to protection of Bulgarian children from violence and access to justice. Please refer especially to:</p> <p>42. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to the improvement of child protection policies, including the National Strategy for the Child and its action plan?</p> <p>43. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to the amendments to the Law for Foreigners?</p> <p>44. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to the improvement of statistics and a database on children in conflict with the law and child victims of violence?</p> <p>45. how would you describe UNICEF contributions to the child advocacy centres?</p> <p>44. In your opinion, the access to integrated services for prevention and response to violence against children has been improved between 2018 and 2021?</p> <p>46. How was progress possible? What factors supported or hindered the progress?</p> <p>47. Based on your professional expertise, which indicators do you have in mind when assessing the access to integrated services for prevention and response to violence against children?</p> <p>48. In your opinion, the cross-sector coordination for child protection from violence has been improved between 2018 and 2021?</p> <p>49. How was progress possible? What factors supported or hindered the progress?</p> <p>50. What other stakeholders contributed to the progress observed?</p>	X	X				X

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Question	UNICEF	Government / Public institutions	Donors	UN agencies	Academia	Services providers / implementing partners
Q2	Did UNICEF identify and reassess bottlenecks throughout programme implementation?	51. Based on your professional opinion, which are the most important bottlenecks and barriers on the realisation of CP outcomes? (for each country the CP outcomes will be restated if needed)	X	X	X	X	X	X
		52. How is UNICEF CO identifying and analysing the bottlenecks and barriers on the realisation of CP outcomes?	X					
		53. What are the most important measures taken by UNICEF to cope with barriers and overcome challenges and bottlenecks on the realisation of CP outcomes?	X	X	X	X		
		54. How is UNICEF CO identifying and analysing risks?	X					
		55. What are the most important measures taken by UNICEF to manage the identified risks?	X					
		56. What activities implemented by UNICEF to cope with barriers and overcome challenges and bottlenecks on the realisation of CP outcomes and to manage risks have been the most successful? What about the less successful ones?	X	X	X	X		
		57. In your opinion, how effective is UNICEF CO in managing challenges, bottlenecks and risks?						
Q3	Did different groups, including children and the most marginalised, benefit in different ways from the Country Programme? Are the results likely to be maintained over time?	58. Can you identify and give specific examples of benefits of UNICEF's activities for the most marginalised children?	X	X	X	X		X
		59. Would you say that UNICEF contributed to reduced equity gaps between children in your country? Can you give some examples?						
		60. What strategies have been used by UNICEF to generate results for the most marginalised children? How have this been different the other strategies, concerning all children?	X	X				X
		61. What factors have been supporting or hindering UNICEF COs activities for the most marginalised children?						
		62. What measures have been taken by UNICEF's CO to ensure the sustainability of its results?	X					
		63. What measures have been taken by UNICEF's CO to ensure ownership of institutions in charge / duty bearers concerning the results obtained with UNICEF support?						

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Question	UNICEF	Government / Public institutions	Donors	UN agencies	Academia	Services providers / implementing partners
		<p>64. Please give examples of changes that ensure the sustainability of UNICEF results (mentioned before in the interview). Please think about:</p> <p>a. Concrete changes in national laws, policies, regulations, and plans that can sustain CPC results and strategies</p> <p>b. Scaling-up of pilot/model interventions</p> <p>c. Additional allocations of national budget and/or other donor resources</p> <p>d. Institutional capacity in place to sustain levels of achievement or a strategy/plan exists to indicate how it will be developed and funded</p> <p>e. Adoption of good practices or major lessons learned that led to changes in the strategic and organisational direction of the Government</p>	X	X	X	X	X	
Q5.1	To what extent has UNICEF responded to the (changing) needs of the most vulnerable throughout the programme implementation and	65. In your professional opinion, what are the most important needs of children in your country?	X	X	X	X	X	X
		66. Based on your knowledge about UNICEF CP (in your area of expertise), are there any needs of children that are not taken into consideration by UNICEF?						
		67. Please give examples of CPs interventions tailored to the specific needs of most vulnerable children.	X	X	X	X		X
Q5.2	consistently integrated the equity and gender equality in all aspects of programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy?	68. Please give examples of CPs interventions tailored to promote gender equality.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Q6	To what extent has UNICEF been able to respond to changes in national needs and rights of the beneficiaries especially of the most vulnerable and in national priorities during programme implementation?	69. How is UNICEF COs gathering information about: a) The current needs of children in the country? b) The government priorities?	X					
		70. In your professional opinion, how well is UNICEF CO agenda aligned with national priorities?	X	X			X	
		71. Are there any national priorities not taken into account by UNICEF CO? Why?						
		72. Are there any objectives of UNICEF CO that are not national priorities? Why?						

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Question	UNICEF	Government / Public institutions	Donors	UN agencies	Academia	Services providers / implementing partners
Q7	To what extent has UNICEF been able to respond to the shifts caused by crisis or major socio-economic and political changes?	73. Which are the most important crisis and major socio-economic and political changes that generated an impact on children, adolescents and their families in 2018-2021?	X	X	X	X	X	X
		74. Why and how this impact was generated?						
		75. How did UNICEF respond to these crisis and major socio-economic and political changes?	X	X	X	X	X	X
		76. What changes have been made to UNICEF CO strategies and priorities?						
Q8	To what extent has UNICEF's Country Programme kept true to its mandate and aligned with UNICEF's global and regional strategies as well as UNSDCF and SDGs in any given country?	77. In your professional opinion, how effective was the response? What more could have been done?						
		78. Which are the most important UNSDCF and SDGs taken into account by UNICEF CO when planning the CPD?	X			X	X	
		79. How is UNICEF CO aligned with UNICEF's global and regional strategies?	X					
Q9	To what extent did UNICEF manage to build effective and sustainable partnerships in working towards addressing the predefined bottlenecks, advocating for evidence for equity and contributing to the results at scale?	80. How is UNICEF CO building and sustaining partnerships?	X					
		81. How would you describe your collaboration with UNICEF?		X	X	X	X	X
		82. Please assess your collaboration with UNICEF as effective or ineffective on a scale from 1 to 10.						
		83. Please give examples on your collaboration with UNICEF and jointly solved bottlenecks / advocacy actions triggered or other results obtained due to the collaboration?		X	X	X	X	X
Q10	10.1 What are the comparative advantages of UNICEF	84. How would you describe the UNICEF comparative advantage in relation to other actors in the country, including development partners, the private sector, the non-government sector?	X	X	X	X	X	X

Evaluation questions and sub-questions		Question	UNICEF	Government / Public institutions	Donors	UN agencies	Academia	Services providers / implementing partners
	in relation to other actors in the country, including development partners, the private sector, the non-government sector and							
	10.2 to what extent were they necessary and sufficient for contributing to the results at scale to be achieved?	<p>85. Please give examples of achievements of UNICEF concerning policy reforms, the development of institutional capacity, changes in attitude and behaviours, that could not be generated by other stakeholders.</p> <p>86. <i>Can you recall expected (not achieved) results and can you explain the expected role of UNICEF (where it did not take action)?</i></p>	X	X	X	X		X
Q11	How has UNICEF's approach to strategic partnerships changed over time, if any?	<p>87. What new partners have been identified in the last two years?</p> <p>88. How did the CO revised its approach to strategic partnerships in the last two years, if the case? Why?</p>	X					

Questionnaire for Social Network Analysis

Introduction

We are conducting a Multi Country Programme Evaluation, covering the Country Programmes of UNICEF in Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine. The evaluation methodology includes several methods for the assessment of UNICEF impact, relevance and coherence with global, regional and national strategies and the work of the key stakeholders.

In order to answer evaluation questions on UNICEF work with partners, we are kindly asking you to complete this online survey that will take less than 10 minutes of your valuable time.

1. What is your name?

—

2. What is your position / function within the UNICEF Country Office?

—

3. Please identify up to 10 institutions/organisations that are important to you in your professional network. Please mention in brackets the departments that are relevant for your work in larger institutions/organisations identified. If several departments in an institution/organisation are relevant for different aspects of your work, please insert them in different lines.

1. Institution/organisation 1 (department) _____

2. Institution/organisation 2 (department) _____

...

10. Institution/organisation 10 (department) _____

4. For each institution/organisation (and the respective relevant departments) please identify the person(s) that are more important to you in your professional network.

1. Relevant person for institution/organisation 1 _____

2. Relevant person for institution /organisation 2 _____

...

10. Relevant person for institution /organisation 10 _____

5. For each organisation identified, please indicate the primary benefit that you receive from them

	Information that helps identify problems	Information that helps solving problems	Access to decision makers	Support in accessing and convincing decision makers	Access to target groups (other than decision makers)
Inst./org. 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inst./org. 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inst./org. 10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. For each institution/organisation you identified, please assign a score based on the amount of contact you have with them

	1 (once a year)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 (every day)
Inst./org. 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inst./org. 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inst./org. 10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. For each institution/organisation you identified, please assign a score based on the value of information or other type of support they provide you that helps you in your work

	1 (no value)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Inst./org. 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inst./org. 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inst./org. 10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. How long have you worked for UNICEF? (in years)

9. How long have you worked in your current position? (in years)

10. Please indicate whether your job is

a. Executive management

- b. International Professional
- c. National Officer
- d. General Service
- e. Consultant & individual contractor

Annex 6. List of interviewees

NO.	INSTITUTION	INTERVIEWEE	TITLE/FUNCTION
<i>General</i>			
1	UNICEF CO	Sanja Saranovic	CO Deputy Representative
2		Maria Zlatareva	Socila Policy Expert
3		Ivaylo Spasov	Former C4D officer (transferred to the programming team)
4		Jane Muita	CO Representative
5	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	Daniela Kicheva	State expert
6	State Agency for Child Protection	Tzvetelina Kyoseva; Kovachev	State experts
7	Ombudsman	Eva Zhecheva	
8	National Network for Children	George Bogdanov	Executive director
<i>Result area 1 - Early Childhood Development</i>			
9	UNICEF CO Early Child Development Officer and possibly C4D officer	Snezhana Radeva	ECD Officer
10	WHO	Michail Okoliyski	National Professional Officer
11	Medical University - Varna	Prof. Pancheva	
12	Bulgarian Pediatric Association	Prof. Vladimir Pilosoff	
13	Open society foundation	Boyan Zahariev	Director
14	Karin dom foundation	Borislava Cherkezova	Executive director
15	Haskovo municipalities	Dessislava Stoyanova	Expert
16	Community Center Haskovo	Miroslava Nacheva	Director
17	Medical centre in Sliven	Lilka Koleva	
<i>Result area 2 - Inclusive Education</i>			
18	UNICEF CO Education Officer	Maria Yankova	Inclusive Education Officer
19	Ministry of Education and Science	Borislava Borscheva	State Expert
20	Regional Centre for Supporting the process of Inclusive Education – Sofia and Sliven (sub-structure of MoES)	Yulia Stefanova	Director
	Karin dom foundation	Borislava Cherkezova	Executive director
<i>Result area 3 - VAC & J4C</i>			
21	UNICEF CO Child Protection Specialist	Dani Koleva	Child Protection Officer
22	Ministry of Justice	Donka Avramova; Silviya Sokolova	State experts
23	Animus	Maria Tchomarova	Director
24	Social Activities and Practivies Institute SAPI	Neli Petrova	Executive director
	Open society foundation	Boyan Zahariev	Director

Annex 7. List of documentary evidence

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<https://www.mon.bg/bg/100381>

Terms of Reference Multi-Country Programme Evaluation

Country:	Europe and Central Asia Region (ECAR)
Object of evaluation:	Country Programmes (2018-2021) of Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Ukraine
Time period of evaluation:	December 2020 – August 2021
Geographic coverage:	Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Ukraine
Type of evaluation:	Multi-Country Programme Evaluation using Theory-Based Evaluation approach
Date of preparation of TOR:	October 2020

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ABBREVIATIONS

CCA	Common Country Assessment
CEDAW	Convention on Eliminations of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEP	Costed Evaluation Plan
CO	Country Office
CP	Country Programme
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
CRC	Convention of the Right of Child
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
ECARO	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
ERB	Ethic Review Board
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
EU	European Union
GEROS	Global Evaluation and Research Oversight System
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IP	Implementing Partner
IR	Inception Report
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCPE	Multi-Country Programme Evaluation
MICS	Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey
QA	Quality Assurance
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
PT	Process Tracing
PSN	Programme Strategic Note
RAM	Results Assessment Module
RO	Regional Office
RSEs	Research, Study and Evaluations
SitAn	Situation Analysis
SOPs	Standard Operations Procedures
TBE	Theory-Based Evaluation
ToC	Theory of Changes
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNSCDF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

1. CONTEXT

Country Programme Evaluations (CPEs) in UNICEF fulfil a key role in identifying lessons which can inform the design of the next Country Programme or adjustments in the current Programme, and opportunities to improve UNICEF's performance¹. The CPEs assess (i) the contribution of the Programme of Cooperation to national development results; (ii) UNICEF's contribution to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSCDF) results; and (iii) UNICEF's strategic positioning in relation to its child rights mandate.

Being strategic evaluations, CPEs are mostly used² to inform the direction of Country Programmes (CPs), which is outlined in the country programme documents that are designed and planned every 5 years, on average. At national level, CPEs may also inform the UNSDCF planning and evaluation processes and, at regional and global levels, they may inform multi-country evaluations, synthesis and strategic evaluations undertaken to assess and/or document UNICEF's performance, management decisions and policy and programme development. CPEs in UNICEF align with UNICEF's 2018 Evaluation Policy with which it has become a requirement for Country Offices (COs) to commission CPEs, at least, once every two programme cycles, and once per programme cycle, if monitoring information or audit point to a significant shift in the programme context, or a significant increase in the level of risk. To guard independence, CPEs are managed from Regional office (RO) level in close collaboration with COs and with final quality assurance undertaken by UNICEF's Evaluation Office in New York (Table 1)³.

Table 1. An extract from the revised Evaluation Policy on Country Programme Evaluation

Evaluation	Frequency	Evaluation manager	Quality assurance	Accountability for management response and use of evaluation results
Country programme evaluation	At least once every two programme cycles, sequenced to feed into subsequent country programme document and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). At least once per programme cycle if monitoring and audit information points to a significant shift in the programming context or a significant increase in the level of risk.	Regional Evaluation Adviser	Evaluation Office	Representative, Regional Director

Source: UNICEF Evaluation Policy (June 2018)

According to the COs engaged in CPEs in 2019-2020, CPEs have proven to be useful source for COs to inform their next programme documents. In 2021, ECA Regional Evaluation team will manage country programme evaluations for the country programmes: Bulgaria, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine; which are currently starting a new planning cycle and preparing for their country programme document. For 2021, ECA Regional Evaluation Team proposes a new value proposition in the modality of CPE delivery with the intention of creating economies of scale and generating exchange and collaboration among countries through conducting a Multi-Country Programme Evaluation (MCPE). The new value proposition will focus on results at scale and propose a common ground framework reinforcing the connection of the programmes with UNICEF internal and external coherence and allowing reaching out to regional and global stakeholders in a more strategic manner, and minimizing the efforts required from the counterparts.

2. OBJECT OF EVALUATION

The object of evaluation will be the implementation of UNICEF Country Programmes of the selected countries for a period of at least four years (2016 – 2020)- or longer to ensure that long-term results are captured in the upper middle-income region. Theory of Change (TOC) of each CO's CPD or a Results Matrix

are included in Annex A¹⁶⁰. The Country Programmes (CPs) is UNICEF's contribution to the realization of the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged or vulnerable in a specific country. They reflect the long-term vision of UNICEF to reach out results at scale. CPs are implemented through the change strategies which adapt over the time to meet the needs of the target population in the local context. **This is exactly what the MCPE is sought to explore i.e. contribution of CPs to the results at scale and how those results were achieved (through which change strategies) and who benefitted from them and how.**

The objective of the CP is to accelerate progress towards realization of the rights of all children in each of the four countries. Aligned with the Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on Eliminations of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and reflecting a human rights-based approach, the CP is defined by a strong sector-based approach and an emphasis on up-stream systems strengthening. The primary documents that frame the CP are the Country Programme Document (CPD) and the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) both of which align with key national policy and strategic documents including but not limited to: National Plan of Action to Implement concluding Observation of the UN CRC for each of the country; National Strategies and Programmes. Given that CPDs are developed together with the host governments of the four countries and other partners, there are many stakeholders involved in the implementation of the CPs. While governments have primary responsibility for administration of national development processes and programmes, civil society plays an essential role, particularly in implementation.

The main components of the selected CPs and their respective budgets are as the following:

Current CPD components		Indicative Budget as in the latest CPD ³ (In thousands of US dollars)
Bulgaria	Early childhood development and child care	1,215 (RR) + 4,300 (OR)
	Inclusive education and early learning	750 (RR) + 3,000 (OR)
	Prevention of violence, protection of victims and access to justice for all children	500 (RR) + 2,750 (OR)
	Partnerships for monitoring, communication and promotion of child rights in Bulgaria and globally	500 (RR) + 1,200 (OR)
Kyrgyzstan	Child rights-based monitoring systems and decision-making	1,500 (RR) + 6,000 (OR)
	Equitable access to services for child survival, learning and development	2,200 (RR) + 11,000 (OR)
Moldova	Child protection and access to justice	1,700 (RR) + 5,000 (OR)
	Equitable child-sensitive systems and services	2,520 (RR) + 8,400 (OR)
Ukraine ¹⁶¹	Social change for child rights	1,300 (RR) + 5300 (OR)
	Social inclusion and macro policies for children	900 (RR) + 3,000 (OR)
	Child protection in all settings	850 (RR) + 9,000 (OR)
	All children learn	800 (RR) + 7,000 (OR)
	Healthy early years and beyond	800 (RR) + 7,000 (OR)
	Water and sustainable environment	200 (RR) + 6,600 (OR)
	Independent child rights monitoring	1,100 (RR) + 2,200 (OR)

The main components are implemented through a number of programme and project activities throughout the countries with special focus on some of the geographical areas and demographic groups which will vary from country to country. The budget of each CO as per their CPDs¹⁶² (in thousands of USD) are: Bulgaria

¹⁶⁰ There are also programme specific TOCs which are available but not included in this ToR due to limited space.

¹⁶¹ Other resources (emergency) for the humanitarian response in Eastern Ukraine is estimated at \$15 to \$20 million per year

¹⁶² These are indicative budgets including regular resources, subject to the availability of funds; and other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions during the period of implementation of the CPD. Budgets may differ from the actual expenditure.

(2018-2022) – 15,715 Kyrgyzstan (2018-2022) 31,730; Moldova (2018-2022) - 17, 508; Ukraine (2018-2022) – 41,480.

The current assignment will start in 2021 – a year before the completion of the current CPDs. The timing is important in order to ensure that its results feed into the design of the new CPDs.

3. EVALUATION CONTEXT

The economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic could push up to 86 million more children into household poverty by the end of 2020 globally, an increase of 15 per cent, according to a new analysis released by Save the Children and UNICEF¹⁶³. The analysis highlights that, without urgent action to protect families from the financial hardships caused by the pandemic, the total number of children living below the national poverty line in low- and middle-income countries could reach 672 million by year-end. Countries across Europe and Central Asia could see the most significant increase, up to 44 per cent across the region.

The impact of the global economic crisis caused by the pandemic and related containment policies is two-fold. Immediate loss of income means families are less able to afford the basics, including food and water, less likely to access health care or education, and more at risk of child marriage, violence, exploitation and abuse. When fiscal contraction occurs, the reach and quality of the services families depend on can also be diminished. For the poorest families, lack of access to social care services or compensatory measures further limits their ability to abide by containment and physical distancing measures, and thus further increases their exposure to infection. Hundreds of millions of children remain multidimensionally poor - meaning they lack access to health care, education, proper nutrition, or adequate housing – often a reflection of inequitable investments by governments in social services. For children living in countries already affected by conflict and violence, the impact of this crisis will further increase the risk of instability and of households falling into poverty. In this context, UNICEF continues to work with governments and other national and international partners to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the most disadvantaged in Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine.

Bulgaria¹⁶⁴

Bulgaria is an upper-middle-income country and a member state of the European Union (EU) since 2007. Its population is 7,000,039 people as of end 2018, of which children are 17% of the country's population. Bulgaria is one of the two countries in the EU with highest shares of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, which was 38% in 2018 (around 410,200 children). Poverty and deprivation are more prevalent among Roma families living in marginalized communities: about half of Roma children live in households in the lowest decile of the income distribution, compared to fewer than one in ten Bulgarian non-Roma children. Roma families also tend to have less access to basic social services, and face exclusion and discrimination in education, employment and housing.

There is no complete data on the actual number of children with disabilities in the country, but the estimated number is about 26,000. With respect to the number of children in institutional care, it has dropped from 7,587 in 2010 to 662 in December 2018 (Agency for Social Assistance). At the end of 2019, the number of children in residential care is 3,095 and 45 % of them or 1,415 children are placed in family-type placement centers for children and young people with disabilities (ASA). The number of social services for children and families has almost tripled - from 241 in 2010 to 620 in 2018 (ASA). Despite this progress, the number of children who are separated from their families has not dropped and, annually, some 2,000 children continue to be separated and placed in alternative care.

¹⁶³ <https://www.unicef-irc.org/events/support-for-families-during-covid-19.html>

¹⁶⁴ The text is an extract from 'Proposal_EU Child Guarantee_Bulgaria_FINAL_Submitted April 2020'

Overall, the social protection system in the country is well established. Bulgaria has developed a comprehensive system of services and social benefits intended to support all vulnerable groups and to reduce poverty and social exclusion. However, the system is fragmented with considerable gaps in coverage, especially for the bottom 20% of the population (income -related). Many families are not accessing available services and benefits or the support they are offered is not necessarily adequate to their needs. About 75,000 households belonging to the poorest 20% of the population receive no social benefits at all. More than half of the children from the poorest 20% of the households receive no formal or informal care. As a result, the contribution of services and benefits to reduce poverty and social exclusion is lower compared to other EU countries.

Existing social services have not been developed systematically, and in some municipalities and settlements are unable to provide adequate support. There is a considerable number of medium and small size municipalities without any services for people with disabilities, and in many cases, support is limited to residential type care with no option for day care or consultation services. In other localities, available capacity is lower than demand, and long waiting periods may be common before users receive any kind of service.

Disadvantaged children and families usually require access to a coordinated set of services to mitigate risks of vulnerability, minimize dependency, and avoid falling into the intergenerational cycle of poverty and social exclusion. The newly adopted Social Services Act (2019), aimed at improving the quality, effectiveness, financing and monitoring of social services and delivery mechanisms, will address some of these challenges. The Act introduces changes to the definition, planning, accessibility, quality and funding of social services. It enables a significant shift towards prevention of family separation and social exclusion and provides a basis for the provision of integrated support, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable children and families. The effective implementation of the Act was postponed to July 2020.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in the country, UNICEF in Bulgaria is monitoring closely the situation of children and their families and is working with the Bulgarian Government, UN Agencies, municipalities, service providers, civil society, corporate partners and other partners to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus, strengthen national response capacities and keep children and their families safe with a special focus on the most vulnerable. UNICEF is providing timely communication on the best means of preparedness and prevention, including special guidelines and advice for parents, schools, health and other professionals, children and young people, through community-based communication, mass media and social media. UNICEF is supporting the efforts of the health, education, child protection and social welfare sectors for continuing the provision of services to children and families through the provision of some protective supplies and equipment as necessary to support the functioning of social services, strengthening remote counselling and development of alternative operation modalities.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is a land-locked, lower-middle-income country of 6.5 million people. It has rich endowments, including minerals, forests, arable land, and pastures, and there is significant potential for the expansion of its agriculture sector, hydroelectricity production, and tourism industry. The country has experienced instability since independence in 1991. Corruption and nepotism were suggested to be major stress factors underlying political and social upheavals in 2005 and 2010¹⁶⁵. To prevent the concentration of power, a parliamentary constitution with elaborate checks and balances was adopted in late 2010, making the Kyrgyz Republic the only Central Asian country in which the president is limited to a single term.

Child poverty is a serious issue in Kyrgyzstan. Poverty is on rise (32% per cent) with children overrepresented in poverty statistics (41% in 2015), resulting in poor access to quality services and

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kyrgyzrepublic/overview>

protection, and higher vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters¹⁶⁶. Children living in poverty miss out on pre-school and school education and healthcare, and face malnutrition. The poorest children live mainly in rural areas in the southern regions of the country, many belong to families with three and more children and families with unemployed adults

In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF's Country Programme 2018 - 2022 aims to reach the most disadvantaged children¹⁶⁷. UNICEF works at policy level with the Government to improve the social system, and on the ground to make sure that this system reaches all children, with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable. UNICEF works across sectors of child protection, health, social policy, early childhood development and education, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), response in emergencies, climate change and disaster risk preparedness, children with disabilities and youth.

The global COVID-19 pandemic changed lives in Kyrgyzstan as it did in many parts of the world. In light of the situation and early closure of schools, the Ministry of Education and Science, with the support of UNICEF and other development partners, developed a remote learning platform for all students and preschool children as of April 8. Over 1.7 million children were expected to follow the video lessons via various TV channels across the country, in which teachers conduct their classes according to the school curriculum.

Moldova¹⁶⁸

The Republic of Moldova, which is one of Europe's poorest countries, saw a long-lasting political crisis involving three governments within the last 12 months. This political situation affected the development and implementation of various policies and strategies, including the National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030". In a context of high political instability following parliamentary elections and local elections in the year 2019, the country experienced three different governments in less than one year.

Household consumption accounts for over 80% of GDP and depends strongly on remittances. The lack of opportunity is the main push factor for migration, particularly for rural youth. The Government's fiscal revenue for social services is affected by an estimated one third of the work force being employed informally. Children are the most affected by challenges faced by the social assistance system. As the financial accountabilities attributed to Local Public Authorities (LPAs) do not fully match available capacity to prioritize, finance and plan, social services for children and youth in health, education, child protection, social protection remain underfunded. UNICEF continued to advocate with LPAs to establish community level support services involving day care, family support and family-based placement services, including a minimum social services package

Some 20,000 children, of which 90% are children left behind by both or the only migrant parent were separated from their family in 2018 alone. While the number of institutionalized children decreased six-fold over the past decade, a quarter of those still in institutions are children with disabilities.

Formal education does not fully provide the skills that young people need to transition to gainful adulthood. Moldovan students registered better results in PISA 2018 compared to 2015, however these results were still much below the OECD average, with about half of 15 year-old students not being proficient in reading, mathematics or sciences. In 2018, youth unemployment (15-24 years old) doubled the national average and youth inactivity is affecting about 60 per cent of young people. More than a quarter of unemployed youth is not in education, training nor have a job (NEET), whereas young women are the largest cohort in this category (NBS, 2019). The lack of awareness and opportunities, the exclusion of

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/kyrgyzstan/children-kyrgyzstan>

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/kyrgyzstan/what-we-do>

¹⁶⁸ The text is an extract from UNICEF Moldova Country Office Annual Report 2019.

disadvantaged groups and insufficient funding for Youth Councils and Resource Centres undermine the participation of children and youth.

Notwithstanding the turmoil in the political context and a certain slowdown of the implementation of the Country Programme, still tangible achievements were made in relation to the child rights agenda. The advancement of inclusive education remained at the forefront of the programme. A Joint Evaluation of the Implementation of the Programme for Development of Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova for 2011-2020 was conducted with UNICEF support resulting in recommendations regarding system strengthening and change of social norms towards enrollment of children with disabilities and those with special educational needs in regular schools. The year saw also inclusion of Roma children in selected Roma densely populated communities in education through UNICEF's support for extensive work with all involved stakeholders. During the year, the Government successfully adopted a Decree on Regional Services for Children Victims and Witnesses of Crimes, while also specific legislation on cyber protection of children was enacted. Furthermore, the Secretariat of the Parliament of Moldova accepted to include legislative work on bullying on the Parliament's 2020 agenda by initiating four regional consultations and a national policy dialogue.

Ukraine¹⁶⁹

Ukraine has travelled the path of post-Socialist transformation during its independence years¹⁷⁰. By now, the country has built well-established institutions of democratic society with market-driven economy as well as civil society institutions. Construction of the independent state was going on amid dramatic events and socio-political transformations accompanied by a great number of not only economic but also political crises. Since the "Maidan" uprising in February 2014, the country has witnessed several momentous events, including the outbreak of conflict in eastern Ukraine.

In its sixth year, the situation in the conflict-affected Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in eastern Ukraine continues to take a significant toll on the lives of more than five million people. After nearly four years of conflict in eastern Ukraine, 3.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance – 60% of them are women and children¹⁷¹. Approximately 1.6 million people have been forced from their homes and tens of thousands of civilians have been killed or wounded. More than one half of the Internally Displaced Populations settled in Donetsk and Luhansk regions nearby the line of contact. Every day, the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine forces millions of civilians to make impossible choices whether they eat, buy medicine or send their children to school. UNICEF is supporting health, nutrition, HIV prevention, education, access to safe drinking water, sanitation and protection for children and families caught in the conflict. UNICEF's strategy in Ukraine is about protecting children and realizing child rights on both sides of the contact line. Responding to the urgent needs of 800,000 children and their families, UNICEF continues to strengthen social protection and psychosocial support, as well as health, education and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. The capacities of local professionals, authorities and civil society actors are being enhanced to strengthen preparedness and accountability to affected children. UNICEF is working to improve access to quality, inclusive, age- and gender-sensitive social services for children and families to increase their resilience to protection-related risks, including through cash-based interventions. UNICEF also works with humanitarian partners to target those closest to the contact line, while also strengthening educational and community-based systems to support those impacted by the conflict. This bridging of humanitarian action and development programming is central to UNICEF's approach. As lead agency for the

¹⁶⁹ The text is taken from several sources which are identified in footnotes for each paragraph.

¹⁷⁰ Government of Ukraine 2020 Sustainable Development Goals Ukraine: Voluntary National Report

¹⁷¹ <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/en>

WASH and education clusters and the child protection sub-cluster, UNICEF continues to advocate with parties to the conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and child rights standards.

At the time of COVID-19, the most vulnerable families in terms of socio-economic impact of COVID-19 are the ones who cannot diversify their income¹⁷². Families with both parents and multi-generational households are more like to compensate decline or loss of income by one family member with income or social benefits preserved by other family members. Whereas the following categories are more dependent on single income source and are more likely to fall into poverty as a result of COVID-19: single parents with children, households with children below 3 year old, and single pensioners above 65 year old; as well as families with 3 and more children, who have traditionally the highest rates of poverty.

4. RATIONALE, PURPOSE AND USE OF EVALUATION

Rationale: The key rationale for conducting MCPE and doing so at this stage of CP cycles for the four countries is identified in UNICEF's 2018 Evaluation Policy. According to the Policy, it is a requirement for COs to commission CPEs, at least, once every two programme cycles. Consequently, CPEs are included in the Costed Evaluation Plans (CEPs) of all the four COs to be conducted in 2021 with the view of them feeding into the developing of new CPDs for the next five years. The selected COs have identified an important priority to conduct in this programme cycle the CPEs and agreed on the proposal of this terms of reference as an strategic point of reflection and external view to design and plan for their next CPD.

CPEs have become an integral part of Country Programme management and play a challenge function to ensure that CO staff address strategic-level issues. The CPE process itself is unique bringing together the entire CO, RO, donor community in the country, Government and beneficiaries including young people. Therefore, CPEs are instrumental for facilitating the strategic reflection on how to best prioritize UNICEF efforts in each country and in the region as a whole to deliver the results for children.

The common purposes of the Country Programme Evaluation are to

- Strengthen accountability of UNICEF to national stakeholders by evaluating UNICEF's contribution to the results for children at scale especially for the most vulnerable
- Support the development of the next UNICEF Country Programme Document (CPD) by understanding and evaluating the implementation of the change strategies through which the Country Programme is delivered to better understand the added value of UNICEF in each country context.
- Draw lessons from the previous CPD implementation in order to make the best use of UNICEF's change strategies in each country and in the region as a whole, while considering current circumstances.

Use: The evaluation may be used by a broad range of stakeholders of which some have a direct stake in the evaluation because they are involved in implementation of the CP or programmatic frameworks, plans or strategies towards which the CP contributes. These stakeholders are referred to as Primary Stakeholders. Other stakeholders, i.e. Secondary Stakeholders, refer to rights holders and duty bearers who benefit from the contributions of the CP, and organisations with which UNICEF does not have any formal partnership but that work with similar programmes and on child rights issues for which lessons and good practices drawn from the CPE may be relevant. Primary stakeholders include but may not limited to the:

State Bodies. UNICEF's main Government partners that UNICEF collaborates with relevant state bodies on the coordination and detailed contents of each CP component in each of the four country. The line ministries and state agencies may include: Prime Minister's Office; Ministry of Health,

¹⁷² Nataliya Borodchuk and Liudmyla Cherenko (2020) FIGHTING COVID-19 IN UKRAINE: Initial estimates of the impact on poverty. UNICEF. 15 April 2020

Ministry of Social Protection, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice; different Departments on Youth and Minors; Pre-school and School Education, Teacher Training, Family Support; General Prosecutor's Office; Judges Training Institute, Supreme Court; Committee on Youth Affairs and Sport; Republican Centre of Additional Education; Committee/Agency on Statistics, etc. The government stakeholders will use the findings of MCPE for helping UNICEF design new CPDs.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). UNICEF COs are likely to have collaborated with CSOs, primarily, as implementing partners and in relation to piloting of CP activities. CSOs are the main vehicle in implementing the CPDs and will undoubtedly use the findings in their direct work to improve the services they provide and ensure that the voice of children is heard.

The academia: Through the CP implementation period, UNICEF COs collaborate with a range of academic institutions. Academia will use the findings of MCPE to inform their evidence generation activities.

Donors. UNICEF's multilateral and bilateral donors – without which the CP would not be possible – have a direct stake in the evaluation findings as these will account for UNICEF's performance. Donors include the European Commission (EU); the Department for International Development (DFID), UK; the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI); the Government of Japan; Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation; the Swiss Committee for UNICEF; the UK Committee for UNICEF; the US Fund for UNICEF; and USAID. Donors will use the findings of MCPE for learning purposes and informing their own programming.

UN agencies and international finance institutions. The UN system comprises of UN agencies resident in country and contributing from abroad¹⁷³. The current UNDAF¹⁷⁴ involved inputs from the WHO; the UNDP; the UNFPA; the UNODC; the UNAIDS; the UNESCO; the ILO; the FAO; the UN Women. In addition, UNICEF partners with Bi-lateral donors (USAID, DFID, SIDA, among others), the World Bank, and other IFIs. Similar to UN partners will use the findings of MCPE for learning purposes and informing their own programming.

UNICEF stakeholders. Finally, stakeholders inside UNICEF who have a particular interest in the MCPE include: Staff in UNICEF's COs; the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO), and senior management in UNICEF who can draw upon the evaluation findings for regional and corporate learning and accountability purposes.

5. OBJECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION

Aligned with corporate policy requirements, this formative MCPE serves both accountability and learning purposes. The MCPE will look back and assess the relevance, coherence and impact achieved throughout implementation of the CPs in the four countries to identify good practices, and draw lessons and forward-looking recommendations that can inform the 2023-27 CP planning process, which will commence during the last quarter of 2021¹⁷⁵. The CPE has three objectives, which are to:

- Strengthen accountability of UNICEF to national stakeholders by evaluating UNICEF's contribution to the results for children at scale especially for the most vulnerable in Bulgaria, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine for which inequity and gender are considered to form part
- Support the development of the next UNICEF Country Programme Document (CPD) by understanding and evaluating the implementation of the change strategies through which the

¹⁷³ Resident: UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, FAO, WHO, UNHCR, IOM, UNODC, UNFPA; Non-resident: ILO, UNAIDS, OHCHR, UN Women, UNOPS, UNESCO, UNECE; Regional Center: UNRCCA; Coordination mechanisms to support UN RC: OCHA, DSS

¹⁷⁴ At the time, this was referred to as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

¹⁷⁵ The rolling Country Situation Analysis is expected to be finalized in September to inform the drafting of UNICEF's Programme Strategy Note (PSN) that will begin during the third quarter of 2019 and is expected to be finalized by October 2019. Together with other relevant exercises and documents, the PSN will inform the CPD planning process that is expected to be completed by May 2020.

Country Programme is delivered to better understand the added value of UNICEF in each country context.

- Draw lessons from the CPD 2018-22 implementation in order to make the best use of UNICEF's change strategies in each country, in this group of countries, and in the region as a whole, while considering current circumstances.

Lessons and recommendations should include but not be limited to reflect upon: a) UNICEF's role and strategic position looking back and thinking ahead into the next CPDs; b) the appropriateness of type and combined use of implementation strategies; c) what UNICEF could do better and differently to enhance its contribution in the countries under scrutiny. The recommendations will have a forward-looking approach¹⁷⁶.

6. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

Time and Geographical coverage: The MCPE will be conducted for Bulgaria, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. MCPE will explore the current and previous programme cycles assuming that some results at scale would have required more than one cycle to materialise. The period of scrutiny could potentially span from earlier years depending on the impact of interest given that long-term results require longer time where one CP cycle might not be enough for them to materialise. COs are also welcomed to have a focus on a specific period of time when the CP was implemented e.g. COVID-19 epidemic or change in Government's highest leadership, etc. The final choice of the period to be evaluated will be defined during the inception stage depending on the impact areas that the CO would choose to explore. The geographical scope is flexible suggesting that COs can either focus on a specific spatial dimension of their work or specific target group, again depending on the impact areas selected for scrutiny.

Programmatic coverage: The evaluation will explore UNICEF's contribution to impact through the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance and coherence and take into consideration the UNICEF's eight change strategies as per UNICEF strategic Plan¹⁷⁷ and others that might have needed to put in place:

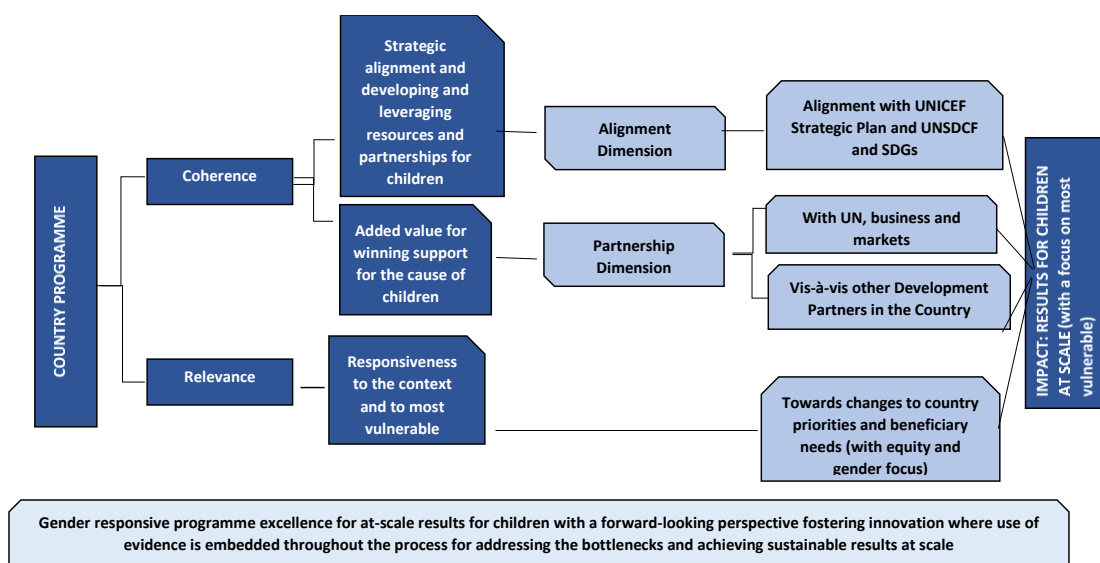
1. Programming excellence for at-scale results for children
2. Gender-responsive programming
3. Winning support for the cause of children from decision-makers and the wider public
4. Developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children
5. Leveraging the power of business and markets for children
6. United Nations working together
7. Fostering innovation in programming and advocacy for children
8. Using the power of evidence to drive change for children.

Figure 1 depicts the visual representation of the MCPE's focus and OECD-DAC criteria together with the UNICEF change strategies.

Figure 1 A Conceptual framework of MCPE focus on Results at Scale

¹⁷⁶ Considering the current circumstances and variables that keep changing overtime, the evaluation exercise will include recommendations that can be applicable in the uncertain and changing context towards the design and implementation of the next CPD.

¹⁷⁷ https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_Strategic_Plan_2018-2021.pdf



In particular, Figure 1 presents the hypothesis that the CP (box in the far left) is delivered through the UNICEF change strategies (middle boxes) that can be conceptualized and aligned with the OECD-DAC criteria of *coherence* and *relevance* leading to *impact* i.e. results at scale (box in the far right). In the process we might identify other strategies that might not be considered in the current UNICEF Strategic Plan. The change strategies act as a catalyst towards achieving the results at scale¹⁷⁸ and are a means to an end which is contributing to the results for children at scale with a special focus on most vulnerable. By exploring the UNICEF change strategies, MCPE will encourage a specific ‘drill-down in detail’ exercise to bring out about *how* UNICEF contributes to the results at scale, what its strategic positioning in each country is and will result in actionable recommendations.

The framework aligns itself with the two objectives of evaluations which are learning and accountability and also fits well with the three OECD-DAC criteria of impact, relevance and coherence as discussed above (with sustainability being embedded throughout and effectiveness being part of impact)¹⁷⁹. Sharing a common framework will allow learning about what is and is not working from the comparative angle and will therefore be helpful for both COs and RO to draw lessons at the country and identify trends at the sub-regional level.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

The project evaluation questions are formulated as per [OECD-DAC evaluation criteria](#) with some adjustment to UNICEF’s change strategies and will explore relevance, coherence and impact. Sustainability and effectiveness are not explicitly scrutinised but are embedded in the selected criteria and their questions. Additional cross-cutting issues such as relevant human rights, including child rights, equity and gender equality are also examined as part of MCPE.

Impact: Impact will explore whether, how, and to what extent the **UNICEF CP has generated or is likely to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended results at scale**. Ideally, the evaluation seeks to identify longer term or broader in scope¹⁸⁰ sustained results in systems or norms, and potential effects on people’s well-being, human rights, and gender equality especially for those who are most vulnerable. At the

¹⁷⁸ UNICEF’s approach to programming for children and young people aims to **achieve sustained results** at scale. That means **maintaining and expanding support** from both the public and private sectors – as well as non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, development agencies and United Nations partners. (UNICEF, Annual Report 2018)

¹⁷⁹ According to the revised UNICEF CPE guidelines, CPEs are not required to focus on all the OECD-DAC criteria. The suggestion is to focus on relevance, coherence and effectiveness. For the purposes of this MCPE, effectiveness is replaced with impact and is considered as part of it.

¹⁸⁰ While this is an ideal aim the evaluation can also identify more localized achievements that are considered worthy of being evaluated.

same time, the evaluation will explore whether or not the CP was designed to reach at scale from the very start. The evaluation of UNICEF's contribution to the results at scale will be conceptualized using a Theory of Change of each specific CO and the CO's staff by identifying both the most *significant positive result* achieved by the CO as well as any *unintended result* that the CP might have led to. The identified results (both intended and unintended) need to be evaluated against the success or failure in addressing pre-identified bottlenecks in order to achieve or not achieve such a result. Investigating impact will require articulating specific claims (both intended and unintended) and identifying the change strategies forming the causal pathways towards the impact.

Key questions **Did UNICEF contribute to the results at-scale? If yes, how and why did it make a difference and for whom? If no, why not?**

Sub-questions: Did UNICEF identify and reassess bottlenecks throughout programme implementation?

Did different groups, including children and the most marginalised, benefit in different ways from the Country Programme? Are the results likely to be maintained over time?

Which strategies or group of strategies were effective in producing results at scale?

Relevance: Relevance examines the extent to which CP objectives and design are sensitive to the socio-economic, political, equity and capacity conditions in which it is implemented and are informed by evidence to identify and address the bottlenecks. It requires analyzing any changes in the context to assess the extent to which CP has been adapted so that UNICEF and its change strategies remain relevant over the time of the CP implementation. The evaluation will be required to examine if the needs of the beneficiaries especially those most vulnerable were assessed throughout the programme cycle and compare them to the situation throughout the implementation (as identified in the CCA and the SitAn). The evaluation will also explore significant changes in the context during programme implementation and the CP adjustments to them to achieve the results at scale.

Key questions: **To what extent has UNICEF responded to the (changing) needs of the most vulnerable throughout the programme implementation and consistently integrated the equity and gender equality in all aspects of programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy?**

Sub-questions: To what extent has UNICEF been able to respond to changes in national needs and rights of the beneficiaries especially of the most vulnerable and in national priorities during programme implementation?

To what extent has UNICEF been able to respond to the shifts caused by crisis or major socio-economic and political changes?

Coherence: Coherence is twofold. First is the alignment dimension which is about examining the extent to which the CP objectives and design *respond to UNICEF's own policies, and priorities, as well as those of the UN* and continue to do so when circumstances changed. UNICEF CP has to be compatible with UNICEF's own regional and global strategies as well as with *the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)*. The latter entails CP's compatibility with the wider UN work in terms of complementarity, harmonization, co-ordination and avoiding duplication of effort and bring the value added of the organization to fulfill its specific mandate. Evaluation can include looking at changes in coherence between the start and end of the period being evaluated. Coherence analysis will also look for synergies or inconsistencies between actions in a related field which are expected to work together.

Second is the partnership dimension where the idea is to explore the *partnerships* of UNICEF in delivering the CP and addressing the meaningful bottlenecks and advocating for evidence for equity to be sustained in national systems to reach the results at scale. Coherence analysis from the point of view of partnership will assess how UNICEF builds partnerships and with whom (e.g. UN, private sector including market and businesses, research and academic, etc.) and how it leverages resources for the results at scale. The evaluation will basically explore the effect of UNICEF strategic partnerships on the delivery of the CP. In addition, the analysis will include exploring the added value and comparative advantage of UNICEF vis-à-vis other development partners in each given context. This element will be explored through the systematic cross case comparison of UNICEF's partnerships where the analysis initially will seek to identify how UNICEF differs from other "players" or "actors" that have a stake in the policy sector at the country level and then identify if UNICEF appears to be important to achieve the results at scale.

Key questions: **To what extent has UNICEF's Country Programme kept true to its mandate and aligned with UNICEF's global and regional strategies as well as UNSDCF and SDGs in any given country?**

To what extent did UNICEF manage to build effective and sustainable partnerships in working towards addressing the predefined bottlenecks, advocating for evidence for equity and contributing to the results at scale?

Sub-questions: What are the comparative advantages of UNICEF in relation to other actors in the country, including development partners, the private sector, the non-government sector and to what extent were they necessary and sufficient for contributing to the results at scale to be achieved?

How has UNICEF's approach to strategic partnerships changed over time, if any?

These evaluation questions are final and are not subject to change. Each CO is able to add up to two questions to this list as/if needed.

8. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The approach and methodology presented is guided by the UNICEF's revised Evaluation Policy¹⁸¹, the Evaluation Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)¹⁸², UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluations and Data Collection and Analysis¹⁸³ and UNICEF's reporting standards.

The proposed approach as a way forward is to design and implement a multi-country programme evaluation (MCPE) for Bulgaria, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. The proposed approach will have the common evaluative elements which are shared by the COs and the elements which will be optional for each CO to add. It is assumed that this design will be effective to strike a balance between the interests of each CO and RO's interest in learning across the region.

The MCPE will take the following general approach:

- Allow for maximum ownership by CO staff and place the least possible burden on UNICEF staff. Strike a balance between CO ownership and multi-country evaluation arrangements allowing some

¹⁸¹ UNICEF 2018 Evaluation Policy <https://undocs.org/E/ICEF/2018/14>

¹⁸² UNEG Norms: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>, UNEG Standards: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/22>

¹⁸³ https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF

standardization of the aspects of the purpose, scope, evaluation questions, an overall methodology and team composition with a certain individualization to meet the varying interests of COs

- Engage country, sub-regional and regional key partners throughout the evaluation process
- Work in a way that will allow sharing good practices and lessons learned across and within countries. All of this toward the ultimate goal of improving UNICEF's the implementation of change strategies and accountability in all country contexts
- Make the maximum use of ongoing and recent evaluations, with a view to reducing duplication (as well as evaluative burden) and to deepening the available data set.
- Identify some key trends in the region that can inform other country programmes and promotes cross-fertilization
- Facilitate the identification of regional and sub-regional trends while the focus will be on the specific countries
- Ensure that current context and forward-looking analyses are formulated based on information and evidence available for a forward-looking recommendations and way forward.

The methodology will be chosen among the evaluation manager, technical committee, and the evaluation team. It will be based on the questions, what additional goals and interests the COs have, and whether various attributes of UNICEF CPs and evaluation process make it feasible to use different methods¹⁸⁴. Taken these considerations into account, the overall evaluative framework proposes a Theory-based Evaluation (TBE) with potentially both quantitative and qualitative methods and data collection and analysis techniques. Considering this double layer approach, it is likely that TBE methods such as process tracing (PT) and Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) or a combination of both would be suitable choices to answer the evaluation questions on impact and relevance (Table 2). The proposed evaluation methodology should reflect a human rights-based and equity-focused approach with data being disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, age, disability, etc., and it should pay diligent attention to ethical issues. Table 2 proposes possible methodological options to answer the evaluation questions and evaluation teams are welcome to suggest an overarching design to make it all work as a holistic framework. The bidders are also required to propose preliminary plans for primary data collection in each country with some level of standardisation across the four countries. More is discussed in the next section.

Table 9 OECD-DAC criteria, evaluation questions and approaches, techniques to answer them

	Questions	Technique, approach
Impact	Did UNICEF contribute to the results at-scale? If yes, how and why did it make a difference and for whom? If no, why not?	Theory-Based Evaluation (for example Process Tracing, Contribution Analysis, Realist Evaluation)
	Did UNICEF identify and reassess bottlenecks throughout programme implementation?	Document review and observation
	Did different groups, including children and the most marginalised, benefit in different ways from the Country Programme? Are the results likely to be maintained over time?	Systematic comparison, Realist Evaluation, QCA
	Which strategies or group of strategies were effective in producing results at scale?	QCA
Relevance	To what extent has UNICEF responded to the (changing) needs of the most vulnerable throughout the programme implementation and	Document review and observation; Systems-based Evaluation

¹⁸⁴ Befani, B. & O'Donnell, M. (2016) Choosing Appropriate Evaluation Methods: A Tool for Assessment and Selection.

	consistently integrated the equity and gender equality in all aspects of programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy?	Document review and observation
	To what extent has UNICEF been able to respond to changes in national needs and rights of the beneficiaries especially of the most vulnerable and in national priorities during programme implementation?	Systems-based Evaluation (several options)
	To what extent has UNICEF been able to respond to the shifts caused by crisis or major socio-economic and political changes?	Systems-based Evaluation (several options)
Coherence	To what extent has UNICEF's Country Programme kept true to its mandate and aligned with UNICEF's global and regional strategies as well as UNSDCF and SDGs in any given country?	Document review and observation
	To what extent did UNICEF manage to build effective and sustainable partnerships in working towards addressing the predefines bottlenecks, advocating for evidence for equity and contributing to the results at scale?	Network Analysis or some other forms of systems-based evaluation
	What are the comparative advantages of UNICEF in relation to other actors in the country, including development partners, the private sector, the non-government sector and to what extent were they necessary and sufficient for contributing to the results at scale to be achieved?	QCA Stakeholder analysis of different partners will be needed
	How has UNICEF's approach to strategic partnerships changed over time, if any?	Document review and observation

Please note that due to the current uncertain circumstances due to the consequences of COVID19 and decisions around it taken place in each country, the recommendations and analysis of questions may include scenario analysis to ensure that recommendations are applicable in the future. It is therefore encouraged the use of evaluative methods such as **participatory systems mapping** when doing a forward-looking stakeholder analysis¹⁸⁵, and/or **Bayesian Belief Networks**, or similar.

The team together with UNICEF evaluation team will clarify strategies for conducting analyses and disaggregation of data with a view to assess UNICEF's contribution to diverse beneficiary groups. The team will, furthermore, review the TOCs for the individual programme components with a view to verify evaluability, device strategies for how to manage possible data limitations. The team will be expected to explain its approach to triangulation and quality assurance of all evaluation deliverables and to clarify, how it plans to engage key evaluation stakeholders to promote participation, ownership and utilization of the evaluation.

Available data include a number of relevant evaluation and research which have been completed in each CO (Annex 2) that will inform, particularly, the contextual analysis to be undertaken during the Inception Phase. In addition, all COs have been reporting annually on output indicators in UNICEF's Results Assessment Module (RAM), but challenges in accessing data for selected outputs and outcomes prevail in relation to some programme sectors. The output level indicators mainly rely on the project-level data. The evaluation team will also find that disaggregation of data, at times, is limited, and baseline data unavailable, which will influence assessment of changes.

¹⁸⁵ The map can be used to run through potential scenarios of change. For example, if there is a factor stakeholders have high control over, we may explore how a range of different changes in that factor affect the rest of the map, using the map to walk through these changes step by step.

9. MCPE PROCESS

Once the evaluation team is on board, the evaluation will be structured in the following main phases defined by accompanying activities as described below:

A Desk Review: The evaluation team will commence the evaluation with a document review for which an electronic library will be established for each CO comprising relevant documentation that will be updated on an ongoing basis during the evaluation process. Documentation made available to the team may include but will not be limited to: CP financial information; programme monitoring data covering the timeframe for the evaluation; work plans; available TOCs for CP components; management plans and strategy notes; situation analyses; Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and other relevant surveys; donor reports; needs assessments; corporate key policies, strategies and normative guidance that has informed the development of the CP; reports and studies relevant for the operational context; and Government and partner key policy and strategy documents. It is important that the evaluation team develops a framework for the desk review. It will be a useful stage for identifying the first glimpse of potential results that COs may be interested in focusing on and identifying the boundaries of MCPE. Desk review will also be instrumental for identifying the areas of focus, based on the evaluation questions based on existing data.

Initial Briefings; In addition to the desk review, brief introductory skype interviews with staff from UNICEF's Regional Office and the COs will inform the detailed planning of the evaluation methodology. Once the initial desk review is completed, there will be a joint and separate call(s) with wider MCPE stakeholders to introduce the evaluation and the team to the entire CO staff and key evaluation stakeholders, including members of an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) established as a sounding board for the evaluation to foster transparency and participation and to review key evaluation deliverables.

An Inception Report (IR) An inception report (a joint report for the entire MCPE) will be submitted that demonstrates impartiality, and that aligns with UNICEF's quality standards¹⁸⁶. The IR will be subject to quality assurance, a review conducted by internal evaluation stakeholders and the ERG, an ethical review – should proposed data gathering involve vulnerable groups, sensitive subjects and/or use of confidential data – and, finally, quality assurance by ECARO that requires a satisfactory rating for the field mission to proceed and be considered an acceptable product¹⁸⁷. The approval of the IR marks the completion of the Inception Phase. Based on the desk review, the IR will provide a contextual description and focus; justifications of proposed changes to the evaluation ToRs; an a detailed methodology (including sampling strategies for all primary data collection activities; and analytical evaluative methods at the country and regional level); proposed impact areas for scrutiny; refined theoretical framework; a description of the quality assurance mechanism of the evaluation team. The IR will also outline evaluation team strategies for management of data gaps, or data reliability issues, and it will include ethical considerations relating to primary data generation and use, as per UNICEF guidelines. Attached to the IR will be an evaluation matrix outlining evaluation questions, sub-questions, judgement criteria/indicators, data sources and instruments/methods; a preliminary regional and in-country stakeholder analysis¹⁸⁸ ([example](#)) that will be refined for the Evaluation Report; the MCPE TOC overall and one per participating CO; a work plan with a timeline; and an overview of the division of labour between the evaluation team members. IR could add the evaluation team's assumptions of "ideal evidence" to test their theories/hypotheses of what evidence would conclusively prove (or strengthen considerably) and what evidence would conclusively disprove (or weaken considerably) their theories.

Virtual data collection: Following the inception phase, a three-week virtual data collection with full participation of all team members will be organised during which primary and, if relevant, secondary data will be generated and collected. Important to note that the **international evaluation team members are not expected to travel**. National consultants hired in each country

¹⁸⁶ Please refer to Annex D

¹⁸⁷ For details on UNICEF's external quality assurance review, please refer to Annex D

¹⁸⁸ <http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/anticorrupt/PoliticalEconomy/stakeholderanalysis.htm>

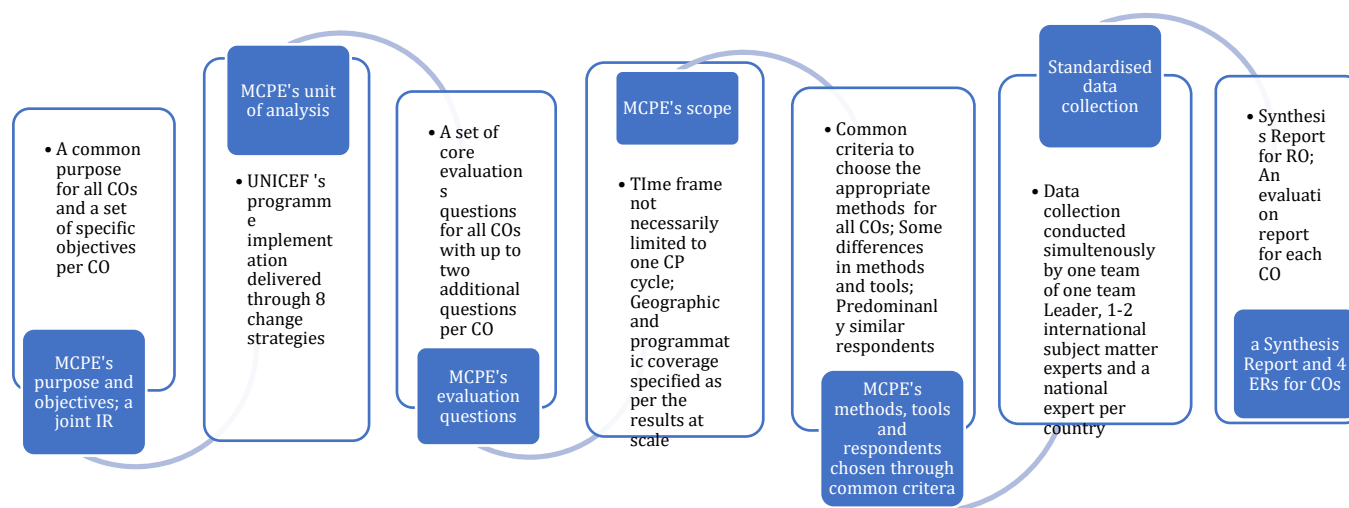
will be the primary vehicle for data collection, analysis and in-country validation and do so either face to face or virtually depending on the COVID-19 situation in each country.

An Evaluation report (ER) and a brief Synthesis Report (SR): The evaluation team will prepare a draft evaluation report (one per CO) that will be subject to a review undertaken by CO staff, members of the ERG and the evaluation manager; an external quality assurance that requires a satisfactory rating and, if required, an ethical review. Following the first review of the draft report and the initial quality assurance, the evaluation team will incorporate the comments provided as appropriate and prepare a final report. Approval of the ER as a product will be subject to quality assurance by the ECARO evaluation team. Once a final draft report has been approved, the evaluation Team Leader together with the national consultants will present the evaluation findings and recommendations to each CO staff, the ERG and, if relevant, other national stakeholders. The Team Leader will, furthermore, present the evaluation findings to relevant stakeholders from UNICEF's RO and, if required, selected headquarter staff. The regional report as well as each of the four country offices reports will comply with UNICEF's reporting standards and be no longer than 40-60 pages excluding annexes, each. Upon completions of the evaluation report (including the regional and the 4 country office reports), it will be rated in UNICEF's Global Evaluation and Research Oversight System (GEROS)¹⁸⁹, and it will be published on UNICEF's global website. A brief synthesis report is also expected to be produced compiling the key findings, conclusions and recommendations for the RO.

10. SPECIAL CONDITIONS AND LIMITATION

There are two special conditions. First, it is a multi-country evaluation. Figure 2 illustrates the aspects of the CPE which are standardized for all the COs and those which are flexible and can be adjusted by COs. As shown, most of the areas are flexible to accommodate the COs' interests and needs.

Figure 2 Key milestones of the MCPE



The MCPE will answer a set of core evaluation questions suggested above for all the COs as well as some additional questions added by COs (up to eight). MCPE will explore the current and previous programme cycle assuming that some results at scale would have required more than one cycle to materialize. However, COs are also welcomed to have a particular focus on a specific timing e.g. COVID-19

¹⁸⁹ https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_GEROS.html

epidemic or change in Government's highest leadership, etc. depending on the results that the CO would choose to explore. The geographical scope is flexible suggesting that COs can either focus on a specific spatial dimension of their work or specific target group, again depending on the results selected for scrutiny. The overall methodology will be the same to all COs i.e. criteria to choose the appropriate methods to answer the evaluation questions. All the methods and tools will be predominantly the same but can differ depending on the limitation and possibilities available in each country. Institutions/organisations and respondents can be similar i.e. equivalents of the same institution across the countries with some specific ones added in any given context, for example, some countries may have more NGOs/CSOs partners. Respondents will vary from country to country. It is envisaged that there will be one central team conducting MCPE with an international team leader, one or two experts and one national expert per each country (CO will help to identify national experts). The team will be selected and managed by RO. The outputs will include a joint inception report (IR), a joint synthesis report and four individual evaluation reports for the four COs.

Second, the special condition is around the COVID-19 restrictions. Considering the current travel restrictions, the bidders should prepare technical and financial proposal accordingly.

Limitations include

- Lack of systematic documentation of the design and implementation of some programme interventions may limit the evaluation.
- Due to ongoing structural reforms in some of the governments e.g. Ukraine, a high staff turn-over has been observed in recent years, which does influence availability of institutional memory.
- Not all key informants might be available or reachable at the time of evaluation.
- Evaluation should be conducted without travelling to the country, which will have certain challenges associated with it.

11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Considering UNICEF's strategic agenda to harness innovation and deepen and widen the evidence base to drive and sustain global progress towards the realization of children's rights, ensuring ethical conduct in evidence generation is imperative. This is necessary both in its own right and as a significant contributor to ensuring quality and accountability in the evidence generation process, especially when it involves children. The evaluation team remain in strict adherence with UNEG ethical guidelines and code of conduct. The team leader will be in charge of leading the entire process and be responsible for timely and quality deliverables of the entire process as well as of the evaluation outputs.

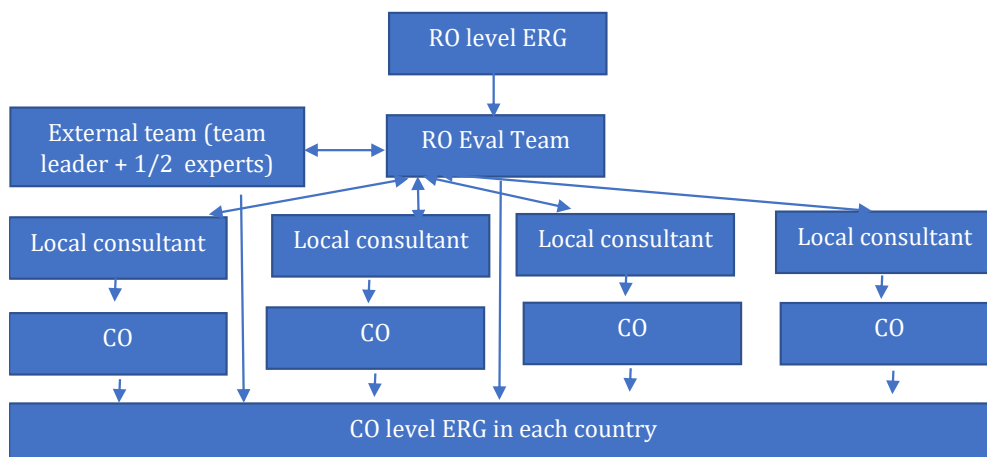
Evaluation methodology should be based on UNEG Ethical considerations and respond to UNEG ethical guidance to evaluation as guiding principle to ensure quality of evaluation process (<http://www.uneval.org/search/index.jsp?q=ETHICAL+GUIDELINES>) as well as on Standard Operations Procedures (SOP) for Quality Assurance and Ethical Standards in UNICEF-supported Research, Studies and Evaluations (RSEs) towards Measurable Results for Children in the CEE/CIS Region and UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis. UNICEF will use its existing LTA for external ethical approval to get a clearance. Annex 3 lists the sources for the ethical guidelines.

Evaluation team members should identify any potential ethical issues and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process in their proposal. At this stage, it is not anticipated that MCPE will engage children under 18 and other vulnerable groups of the population in data collection. However, should bidders propose otherwise, all MCPE deliverables will be subject to ethical approvals through the regional LTA holder.

12. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The activity will be managed by the RO and conducted by external contractors (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN RO, CO AND EVALUATION TEAMS



The activity will be managed by the RO and conducted by external contractors (Figure 4). The RO will be responsible for the day-to-day oversight and management of the evaluation and for management of the evaluation budget. A form of cross-divisional stakeholder / advisory group (e.g. Evaluation Steering Committee, Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)) will be required both at the RO level as well as for each country. Further discussion is needed on the form and membership of such a group at the country level. At the top-level ERG will consist of RO advisers and chaired by the Regional Director. The top-level ERG will provide guidance and supervision to the CPEs. UNICEF Regional Evaluation Team¹⁰ will work closely with the external evaluation team headed by a MCPE team leader and supported with other team members including local experts. The team leader will be working with local consultants based in each of the MCPE country who will be a local specialist¹¹. Each CO will have a focal point (CRM/M&E/Evaluation focal point) to be the first line of contact on behalf of the CO who will work with the CO staff and ERG. The RO will assure the quality of the evaluation and guarantee its alignment with UNEG Norms and Standards and Ethical Guidelines and provide quality assurance checking that the findings and conclusions are relevant and proposed adaptations are actionable. All major deliverables will be reviewed firstly by RO (zero draft) and then by the ERG and COs. The MCPE process will be collaborative, transparent and effective to the extent possible. Table 3 outlines the key tasks and roles of RO and COs.

Table 3 RO and CO roles against key milestones

Key milestones	RO	COs
Concept Note	To draft a CN, organize a workshop to discuss it with COs, finalise it based on comments/feedback	To participate in the workshop, provide comments
Terms of References	To turn a CN into a ToR, get QA done, advertise for a tender or select an LTA holder	To provide comments; organise consultation within the CO and identify CO's own interest areas, provide details of the aspect of CPE which are adjustable to local contexts i.e. light green (table 1)
Selection of external company and local consultants	To identify a team leader and evaluation team, raise a contract	To identify local consultants

Budgets and human resources	To manage CPE budget, ensure MCEs and Advisers have availability to undertake this assignment	COs transfer their financial contribution to the RO account ¹⁹⁰ ; make sure CRM/M&E/Evaluation focal point is available to work with RO on CPE and that programme staff are available for interviews and reviewing CPE outputs as required
Preparing a library of all programme documents:	To identify a space for library, to provide a list of necessary materials for desk review	To share materials as requested
Setting up a two-layered ERG	To identify and set up ERG at the RO level, call for meetings, facilitate the commenting process	To identify members of ERGs and set up the CO level ERG, call for meetings, facilitate the commenting process
Data collection	To manage and oversee the process to ensure that it is timely and as per the inception plan.	To make themselves available for interviews, workshops, meetings; to identify respondents for data collection, provide their details for remote data collection
MCPE outputs (inception and evaluation reports)	To make sure they are of good quality, share with COs for comments	To provide comments
Dissemination	To make sure that CPE has management responses for each CO, to produce additional communication materials; to conduct internal and external-looking dissemination events	To contribute to and lead some of the dissemination events
Management Response	To make sure evaluation reports provide actional recommendations	To develop MR based on the recommendations

UNICEF as a commissioner takes the accountability of the evaluation and ECARO Evaluation Adviser is designated as supervisor for this evaluation. Support for this evaluation will be provided by ECARO Evaluation team which will perform a managerial function for this evaluation (Evaluation Manager).

The Evaluation Manager will have the following responsibilities:

- Lead the management of the evaluation process throughout the evaluation (design, implementation and dissemination and coordination of it follow up);
- Convene the ERG meetings; Facilitate the participation of those involved in the evaluation design;
- Coordinate the selection of the Evaluation Team;
- Safeguard the independence of the exercise and ensure the evaluation products meet quality standards;
- Connect the Evaluation Team with the wider programme units, senior management and key evaluation stakeholders, and ensure a fully inclusive and transparent approach to the evaluation;
- Facilitate the Evaluation Team's access to all information and documentation relevant to the intervention, as well as to key actors and informants who should participate information-gathering methods;
- Provide the evaluators with overall guidance as well as with administrative support; Oversee progress and conduct of the evaluation, the quality of the process and the products;
- Manage/support relationship between COs, partners, etc
- Approve the deliverables and evaluate the team's work in consultation with ERG

¹⁹⁰ Financial arrangements will be discussed and agreed by COs and RO.

- Take responsibility for disseminating and learning across evaluations on the various programme areas
- Ensure that all deliverables are submitted to external QA review conducted by external institution;
- Disseminate the results of the evaluation.

The RO and CO ERGs will:

- Review and provide comments and feedback on the quality of the evaluation process as well as on the evaluation products (comments and suggestions on the TOR, draft reports, final report of the evaluation).
- Facilitate the communication/presentation of results to COs and relevant partners at the regional and country level

The Evaluation Team will report to Evaluation Manager and conduct the evaluation by fulfilling the contractual arrangements in line with the TOR, UNEG/OECD norms and standards and Ethical Guidelines; this includes developing of an evaluation (implementation) plan as part of the inception report, drafting and finalizing the final and synthesis reports and other deliverables, and briefing the commissioner on the progress and key findings and recommendations, as needed. The **Evaluation Team** should also adhere to UNICEF's Evaluation Policy, to UNEG's ethical guidelines for UN evaluations and to UNICEF Reporting Standards. Evaluation team members will sign a no conflict of interest attestation. Annex 4 presents the technical requirements of the team. The **Evaluation Team** must demonstrate personal and professional integrity during the whole process of the evaluation. The Evaluation Team must respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced to its source. Further, the team must respect ethics of research while working with children including using age appropriate consent forms, age appropriate data collection, and principle of do no harm. Furthermore, the team and its members must take care that those involved in the evaluation have an opportunity to examine the statements attributed to them. The evaluation process must be sensitive to beliefs, manners, and customs of the social and cultural environment in which they will work. Especially, the team must be sensitive to and address issues of protection, discrimination and gender inequality. Furthermore, the team members are not expected to assess the personal performance of individuals and must balance an assessment of management functions with due consideration of this principle.

13. WORKPLAN AND DELIVERABLES

A tentative time frame for the evaluation is provided below. The evaluation is expected to be completed within **nine months upon signing the contract**.¹⁹¹ This might be subject to change depending on the prevailing situation on ground at the time of the evaluation.

Table 10 WorkPlan

Activity	Duration
Signature of contract	Two weeks
Desk review and planning phase to start the reviews and explore possibilities for data collection and identify impact areas	Four weeks in total
Producing a detailed Inception Report (IR) describing initial findings based on the preliminary desk review, the evaluation methodology, detailed implementation plan, the outline of the Evaluation Report, dissemination plan.	Four weeks
External and Internal quality assurance (QA) review process of Inception Report; ethical review process if required	Two weeks
Incorporation of received feedback and revising tools for field work	One week

¹⁹¹ interested companies/institutions should indicate the expected time to complete the assessment in their proposals

Remote data collection (taking into account the risks related to COVID-19) in Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine	Three weeks in each country taking place concurrently
Data analysis and writing of the first draft of four country-evaluation report in English (four in total i.e. one report per country)	Five weeks spent concurrently
External and Internal quality assurance (QA) review	Two weeks
Incorporation of received feedback and finalising four country-evaluation reports	One week
Synthesis report	Three weeks
External and Internal quality assurance (QA) review	Two weeks
Incorporation of received feedback and finalising synthesis report	One week
Preparation of the PowerPoint Presentation in English	One week
Submission of the country-evaluation reports, a synthesis report and a PowerPoint Presentation in English to UNICEF and presentation of the Evaluation Report findings at UNICEF organized events	One week
TOTAL	Approx. 32-35 weeks within 9 months duration

The evaluation process at all stages should follow UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis.

The Evaluation Team is responsible to submit the following **Deliverables**

Inception Report in English - Electronic version to be submitted within two months after signing a contract and initial briefing with the Evaluation Manager. This report should be 30 to 35 pages in length and should be in line with UN standards for IRs. The IR should outline detailed scope, evaluation framework; methodology; sampling, field visit timing and modality, data collection methods, timeline for activities and submission of deliverables, dissemination plan). A draft will be shared in advance for comments and approved by the ERG. Final inception report will be presented by the Evaluation Team to the CO and ERG and quality assured by Regional Evaluation Advisor and external QA institution. Draft report should be finalised within maximum of three weeks after submitting the first draft.

Sample: Inception Report – Content . *Note: This is a sample, and can be adapted to the needs of this exercise*

1. Presentation of the context and object of evaluation
2. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation
3. Theory of change or construction of the theory of change (if absent) (1 generic ToC and 1 ToC per CO – 5 in total)
4. Evaluation framework (evaluation criteria and questions), with an evaluation matrix (disaggregating each evaluation criterion, with evaluation questions, indicators, information sources and methods of gathering information)
5. Preliminary stakeholder analysis, analytical framework and preliminary positioning of stakeholders
6. A complete methodology with:
 - an explanation and rationale of the methodological design and analytical framework;
 - sample and list of people to interview and sites to visit;
 - data collection tools (questionnaire, interview guidelines, etc.);
 - limitations and mitigation measures;
 - ethical considerations;

- data analysis (how the data will be analysed, what technique and approach will be used, software, etc.); forward-looking methodology for recommendations;
 - dissemination of the evaluation;
7. Work plan and description of the role and responsibilities of each team member.
 8. Deliverables and quality assurance

Country-Evaluation Reports in English - Electronic version of the first drafts should be submitted after completion of a three-week data collection conducted concurrently and should be in line with UNICEF adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standards and be maximum of 40 pages in length (excluding annexes) answering all the evaluation questions per country. It will also contain an executive summary of no more than 5 pages that includes a brief description of the context and current situation, the purpose of the evaluation, its methodology and its main findings, conclusions and recommendations. It should fairly and clearly represent the views of the different actors/stakeholders. It should clearly give the conclusions and forward-looking recommends in a way that is substantiated by evidence. The draft will be shared with the ERG to seek their comments. Although particular for each concept, the reports will have common components, and same analytical framework as described in these ToRs, which should allow for a systemic analysis. The drafts report will be quality assured by the Evaluation Manager. The final draft will be quality assured by external QA institution, if needed. There will be four Country-specific evaluation reports in total (one per country). All supporting evidence will be shared with the ECARO's Evaluation Team.

Synthesis Report in English - Electronic to be submitted after Country-Evaluation Reports are complete). Synthesis report should synthesise key findings of the four Country-Evaluation reports. The synthesis report will enable regional office to have a comparative systemic view of how strategies have been implemented in each participating country under a specific context. It will describe strategic positioning of UNICEF among regional and national stakeholders and regional support in COs' country programme implementation. The Final Report should be submitted along with the Power Point presentation or similar electronic means in English (electronic version). Presentation should be based on the finalized evaluation report summarizing the entire process, purpose, objectives, methodology, findings. It will have specific recommendations and conclusions for the overall view of the four countries. All supporting evidence will be shared with the ECARO's Evaluation Team.

Dissemination plan and advocacy approaches should be developed as part of the IR and then discussed/agreed with the CO. Primarily, the result will be disseminated to the CO senior management. The findings will be discussed at the management team meetings, programmatic reviews to inform the CO's programming. The plan for dissemination and advocacy of the Evaluation result will be cleared by the Evaluation Manager.

The Evaluation Team should propose a timeline to submit the deliverables in their implementation plan (in proposals). Necessary and adequate time (at least two weeks) should be allocated for review and quality assurance processes of the deliverables by the Regional Evaluation Advisor and External Institution.

All reports should follow the structure and detailed outlines discussed and agreed with UNICEF (Annex 5)

14. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Proposer(s) must submit a technical and a price proposal (in separate documents) that will be split between technical and commercial (price proposal) scores (an 70/30 split).

A) The **technical proposal** (70 points) should include the following information:

- Cover letter
- Presentation of the firm/research institution/consulting group and experiences

- Understanding of the ToRs and Evaluation needs
- Team composition (incl. identification of team leader), with complete CVs
- Matching the team skills with the required skills
- Proposed methodology and rationale for it
- Detailed Timeline/Chronogram and level of effort by each team member (role of each team member)
- Sample(s) or link(s) of previous Evaluation(s) by the team members

The technical proposal will be assessed with the following criteria:

Technical criteria	sub-	Description	Maximum Points
Completeness of technical requirements (5 points)		Overall conformity of the proposal, including appropriate referencing and supporting documents (description of institution and key personnel, understanding of ToRs, matching team skills with required skills, proposed methodology, detailed timeline, references and written sample)	5
Qualifications of team (35 points)		Overall conformity with requirement of the Team leader	20
		International Evaluation specialists	10
		National consultants	5
Quality of technical proposal (30 points)		Understanding of the ToRs (match between the proposed approach and requested scope of evaluation)	4
		Quality of the methodology and methods proposed, innovative design, rationale for the methodology	20
		Realistic work plan and level of efforts of team	2
		Understanding of ethical considerations and integration of such in the methodology	4
Maximum Score for technical criteria			70
Minimum Score for technical compliance			60

Total Maximum points for the technical proposal is **70** points. Only proposals which receive a minimum of **60** points will be considered further.

B) **Financial Proposal** should include:

1. Detailed budget as per the Financial Proposal template
2. Explanation of budget assumptions with regard to planning, team composition, field work, etc.

The total amount of points allocated for the price component is **30**. The maximum number of points will be allotted to the lowest price proposal that is opened and compared among those invited firms/institutions which obtain the threshold points in the evaluation of the technical component. All other price proposals will receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest price; e.g.:

Score for price proposal X = (Max. score for price proposal (**30** Points) * Price of lowest priced proposal) / Price of proposal X

Total obtainable Technical and Price score: **100**

The Proposer(s) achieving the highest combined technical and price score will (subject to any negotiations and the various other rights of UNICEF detailed in this LRPS) be awarded the contract(s).

All interested institutions are requested to include in their submission detailed costs including:

- a) Daily rate including hours per day
- b) Expenses associate with remote data collection, and translation etc. Please include all relevant costs that are required for this exercise) to be agreed prior to commencing project
- c) Any additional requirements needed to complete project(evaluation) or that might have an impact on cost or delivery of products
- d) The consultants would be required to use their own computers, printers, photocopier etc.

Payment is contingent on approval by the Evaluation manager and will be made in three instalments:

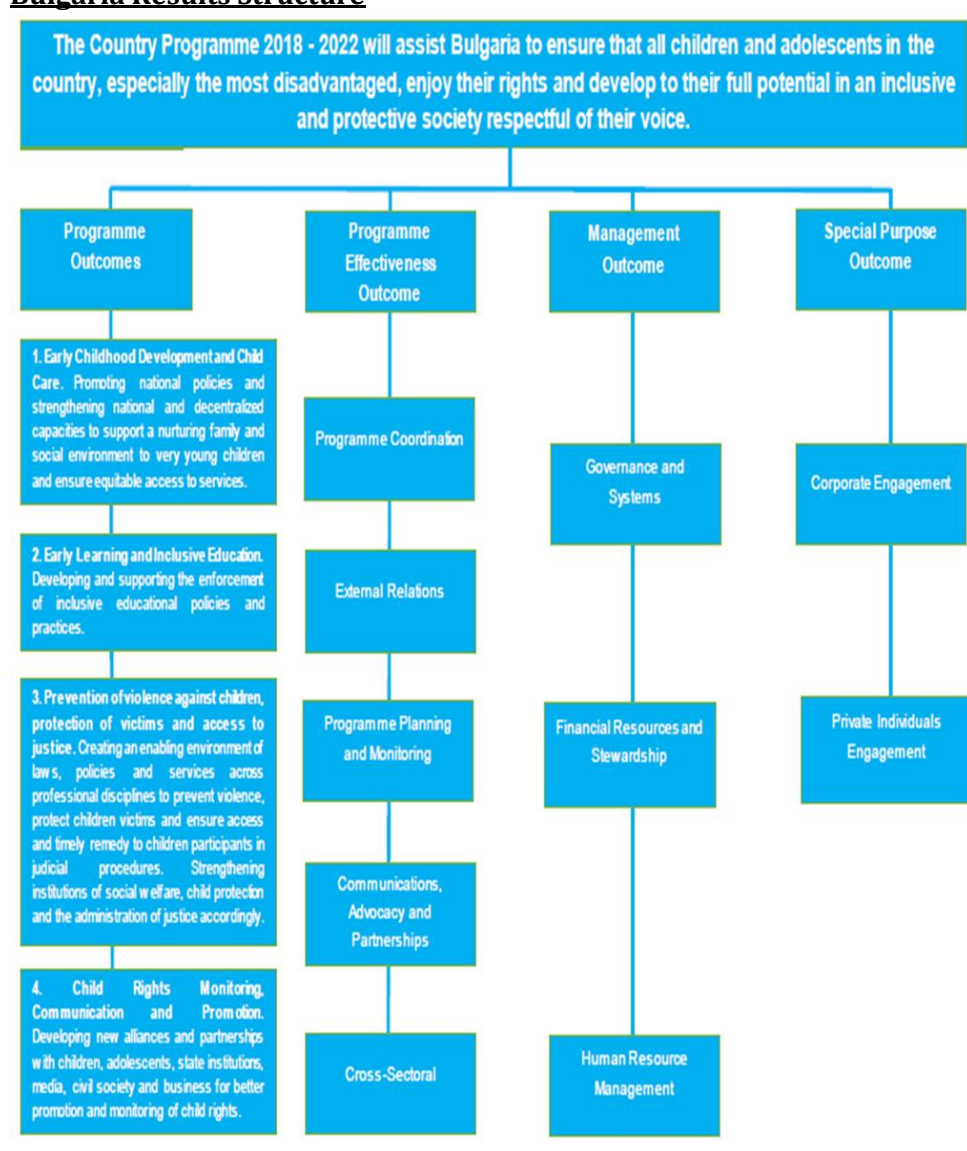
- a) 30% upon clearance of an Inception Report
- b) 40% upon clearance of the finalized Country-Evaluation Reports
- c) 30% upon clearance of a Synthesis Report

The institutions may propose different payment schedules that will be considered during the assessment of the proposal.

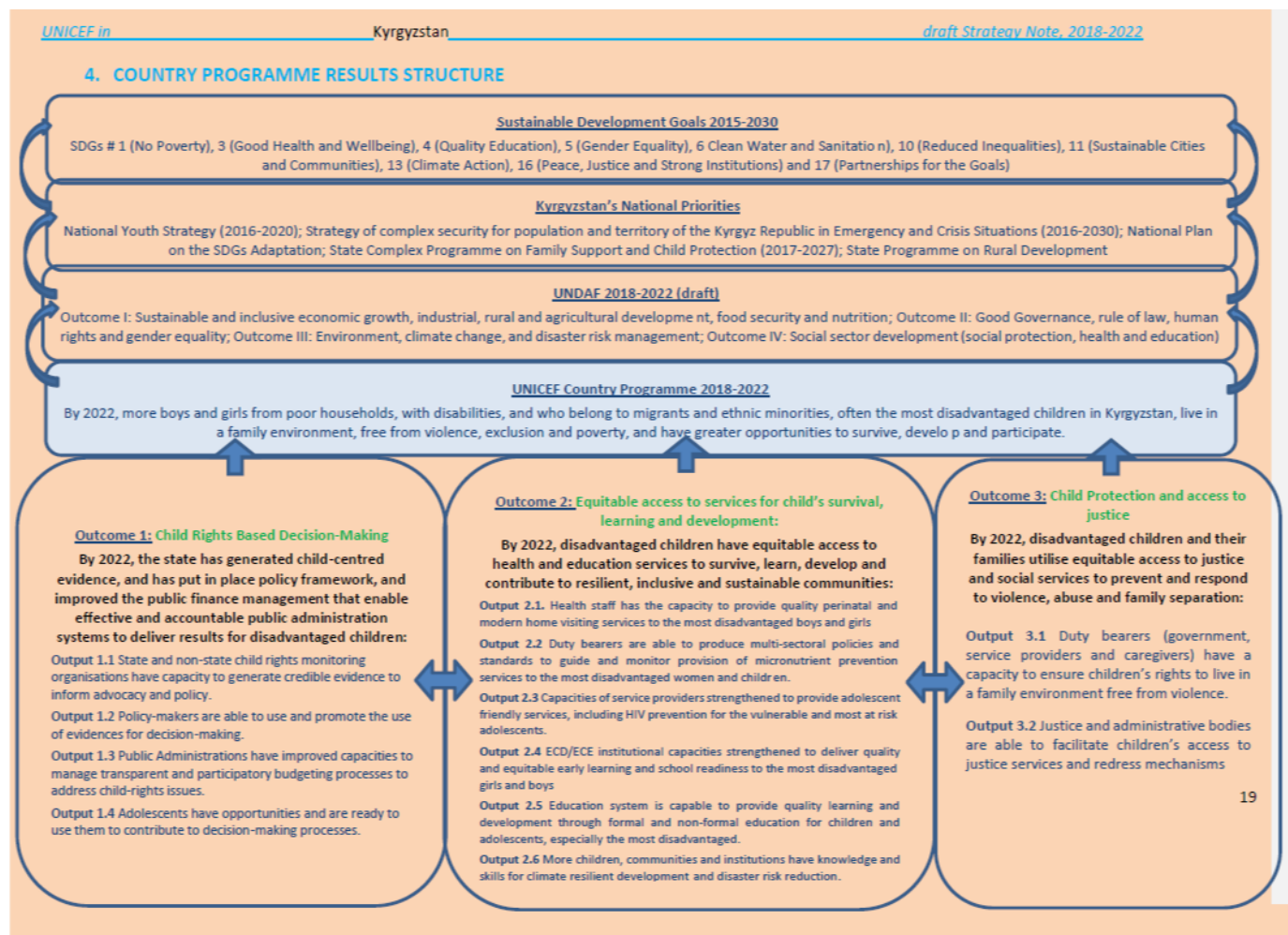
15. ANNEXES

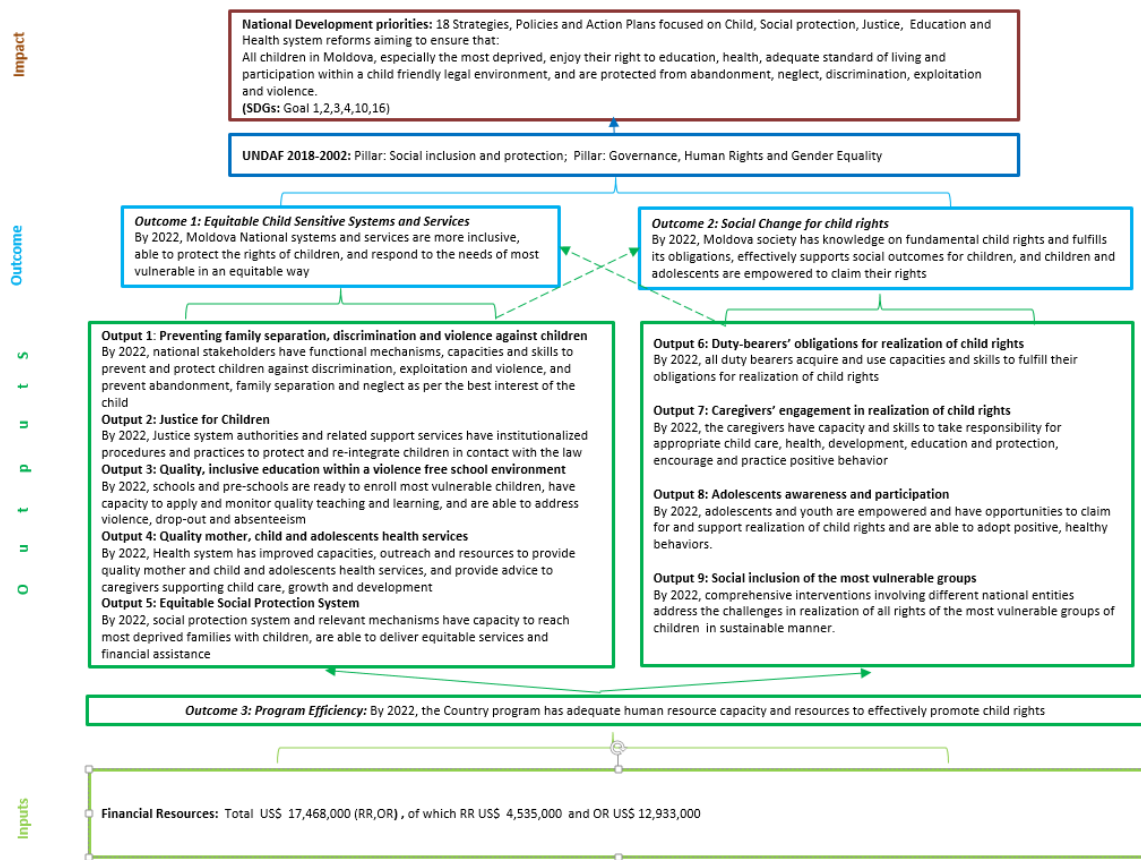
Annex 1 TOC OR RESULTS MATRIX BY COUNTRY OFFICE

Bulgaria Results Structure



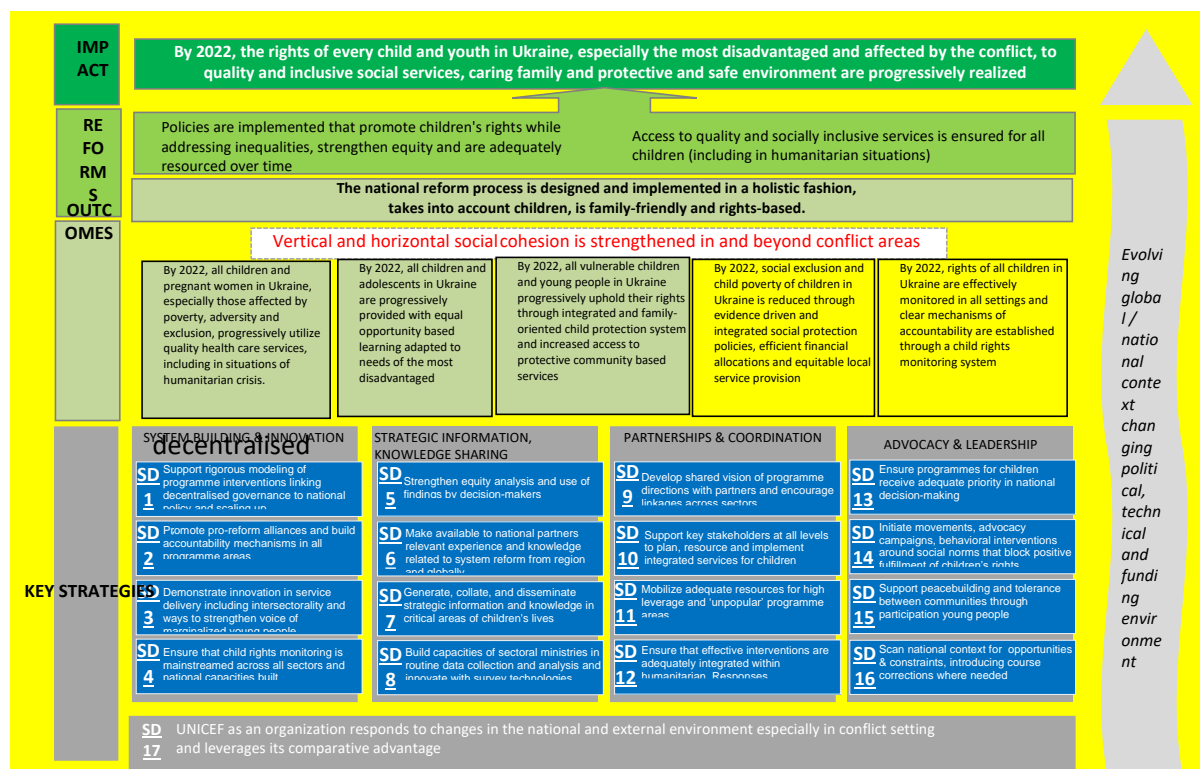
Kyrgyzstan Results Structure





¹⁹² There are TOCs for each programme sector available but not copied here due to space.

Ukraine



Annex 2 LIST OF PREVIOUSLY CONDUCTED AND ONGOING EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

Type	Office	Title	Year
Evaluation	Bulgaria	Evaluation of the UNICEF demonstration Home Visiting services for families with young children	2019
Evaluation	Bulgaria	EVALUATION OF THE CHILD ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT CENTERS FOR CHILDREN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE	2020
Evaluation	Bulgaria	FINAL EVALUATION of the UNICEF 'CHILDREN AT RISK BEHIND BARS' PROJECT	2018
Evaluation	Kyrgyzstan	Summative evaluation of implementation of the State Programme on Justice for Children in Kyrgyzstan 2014-2018	2019
Research	Kyrgyzstan	Early Childhood Development Contributions to Social Cohesion and Integration	2020
Research	Kyrgyzstan	Research on attitude towards children with disabilities in the Kyrgyz Republic	2019
Research	Kyrgyzstan	Reducing Prejudice among Teachers, Parents and Children through	2017
Evaluation	Moldova	Joint evaluation of implementation of the Programme for	2019
Evaluation	Moldova	Mid-term evaluation of implementation of the Child Protection	2019
Research	Moldova	Cash-Based Social Protection for Children in the Republic of Moldova	2018
Evaluation	Moldova	Evaluation of the Government of Moldova - UNICEF 2013-2017	2017
Research	Ukraine	Child Poverty in Ukraine (SDG1)	2020
Evaluation	Ukraine	Evaluation of UNICEF's WASH programme in response to the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine (2014-2018)	2020
Evaluation	Ukraine	Ukraine - In-depth case study of the UNICEF humanitarian response since 2014	2019
Research	Ukraine	Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) for Ukraine	2017
Evaluation	Ukraine	Evaluation of the Country Programme of Cooperation between the Government of Ukraine and UNICEF 2012-2016	2017

Annex 3. ETHICAL GUIDELINES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The evaluation process should adhere to the United Nations evaluation norms and standards and Ethical Guidelines for evaluation available at:

- http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc_cat_source_id=4.
- <http://www.uneval.org/search/index.jsp?q=ETHICAL+GUIDELINES>
- <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/library>

The evaluation process should adhere UNICEF. Core Commitment for Children in Humanitarian Action (http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_21835.html).

The evaluation should be consistent with The Procedure for Ethical Standards in UNICEF Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis and is complemented by, and builds on, the pre-existing Strategic Guidance Note on Institutionalizing Ethical Practice for UNICEF Research and the Evaluations Technical Note No. 1, Children Participating in Research, Monitoring And Evaluation (M&E) — Ethics and Your Responsibilities as a Manager, UNICEF Evaluation Office, 2002.

Reference documents:

- UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis CF/PD/DRP/2015-001(UPES).
- UNICEF Evaluation Office “UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards”, July 2010
- UNICEF Evaluation Office “Guidance on equity-focused evaluations - Strengthening equitable results for children”, September 2011
- UNICEF Evaluation Office “Internal guidance for management response to evaluations – Enhancing critical engagement for the strategic use of evaluations” December 2009
- UNEG “Guidance Document - Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations” August 2014

Annex 4. TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

Object of the contract. UNICEF is seeking to contract a Consultancy company, corresponding to the following requirements:

- Duly registered in the country of residence, without limitation as to the countries of registration.
- Proven experience in evaluation using TBEs mentioned in Table 2 (not less than ten years) are a must.
- Consulting experience on evaluation programme evaluations in post-soviet countries is an asset.

The Consultancy company shall provide the Evaluation Team. The Evaluation Team should be comprised of Team Leader (international), Evaluation Specialist (1 or 2) and national experts (one in each country i.e. 4 in total).

The Evaluation Team Leader should have the following qualifications:

- Advanced university degree, preferably in evaluation, social studies or a related field. A combination of relevant academic background and relevant work experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree;
- At least ten years’ experience in evaluation, including experience of programme evaluations and familiarity with UNICEF and the UN system (CVs required);
- Previous solid experience of designing and leading Theory-Based and Systems-Based Evaluation designs.
- Previous experience of evaluation of humanitarian programmes is an asset
- Geographical scope of professional experience in four MCPE countries

- Understanding of Sustainable Development Goals and its relation to UNICEF work in ECAR;
- Familiarity with UNICEF and procedures (possible but not necessary);
- Strong analytical skills and statistical data analysis experience;
- Ability to produce content for high standard deliverables in English;
- Language skills (English is a must and Russian is a strong asset)
- Sensitivity towards ethics with regards to human and child rights issues, different cultures, local customs, religious beliefs and practices, personal interaction and gender roles, disability, age and ethnicity.

Evaluation Team Leader should have the following qualification in addition to the above:

The Team Leader must have documented professional experience in conducting rigorous independent evaluations that meet professional evaluation standards - and more than 10 years of professional experience. The Team Leader should, furthermore, have a strong development background with a profound understanding of development and Human Rights-Based programmes. It is also a requirement that the Team Leader has expertise in strategic planning, and evaluation experience from the Europe and Central Asian Region. In addition, he/she must have expertise relating to one or more of the sectors in which UNICEF works. As the Team Leader of the evaluation, the candidate will demonstrate previous experience in managing a multi-disciplinary team and delivering quality evaluation outputs. The proposed Evaluation team must correspond to the minimum criteria – team composition and minimum experience of the proposed staff. In case of deviation, the offers may be considered technically not compliant.

Evaluation Specialist

Evaluation specialists should have relevant higher academic/post-graduate degrees and a minimum of five years of relevant professional experience in evaluation, and sector expertise in two, ideally more, of the following five sectors:

- 1) education (formal/informal)
- 2) mother and child health and wellbeing (ECD) and WASH;
- 3) evidence generation and social policy;
- 4) communication for social change
- 4) child protection; and
- 5) gender
- 6) disaster risk reduction

Evaluation Specialists must have specialised evaluation expertise and experience in any of the evaluation techniques and approaches mentioned in Table 2. A knowledge of Russian language by one of the Evaluation Specialists will be an advantage. It will be ideal if the team can cover almost all of the techniques and approaches specified in Table 2 among themselves.

National Experts

National Experts should have relevant higher academic/post-graduate degrees and a minimum of five years of relevant professional experience in research especially in conducting data collection activities (in English and local language(s)), analysing collected primary and existing secondary data and writing up the analysis in English. Each National Expert should speak a relevant local language and be knowledgeable of the local context. For Ukraine, a local expert with the knowledge of both humanitarian and development work will be considered as highly suitable.

Annex 5. STRUCTURE OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

The Evaluation Report is proposed to have the following structure, to be reviewed once the Evaluation Team is selected:

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Object, Purpose, Objectives, and User
- 1.2. Methodology
- 1.3. Key Findings
- 1.4. Conclusions
- 1.5. Lessons Learned
- 1.6. Recommendations

2. Background

- 2.1. Object of the Evaluation
- 2.2. Theory of Change
- 2.5. Context
 - 2.5.1. Political, Socio-Economic and Legal Context

3. Purpose, Objectives, and Scope

4. Methodology

- 4.1. Conceptual Framework
- 4.2. Evaluation Criteria
- 4.3. Evaluation Questions
- 4.4. Data Sources, Collection Methods and Sampling
- 4.5. Data Analysis
- 4.6. Ethics
- 4.7. Risks and Limitations
- 4.8. Work plan

5. Evaluation Findings

- 5.1. Relevance
- 5.2. Coherence
- 5.3. Effectiveness
- 5.4. Impact
- 5.5. Sustainability

6. Conclusions and Lessons Learned

- 6.1. Conclusions
- 6.2. Lessons Learned

7. Recommendations