

EVALUATION OF LESOTHO COUNTRY PROGRAMME 2019–2023

FINAL REPORT
1 December 2022

Prepared by Angela Bester
Evaluation Consultant

EVALUATION OF LESOTHO COUNTRY PROGRAMME 2019–2023

FINAL REPORT

1 December 2022



CONTENTS

CONTENTS	II
TABLES AND FIGURES.....	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
ACRONYMS.....	V
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	VII
1 CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION	1
1.1 DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT	1
1.2 SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS	3
1.3 THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.....	7
2 OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION	9
2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME	9
2.2 RESULTS FRAMEWORK OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME	10
2.3 RIGHTS HOLDERS.....	12
2.4 GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE	12
2.5 THEORY OF CHANGE	13
2.6 STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS.....	16
2.7 RESOURCES.....	19
3 PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION	21
3.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE	21
3.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	22
3.3 EVALUATION SCOPE	23
3.4 METHODOLOGY	24
4 FINDINGS.....	32
4.1 RELEVANCE	32
4.2 COHERENCE	37
4.3 EFFECTIVENESS	40
4.4 EFFICIENCY	59
4.5 SUSTAINABILITY	62
5 CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT.....	65
5.1 CONCLUSIONS	65
5.2 LESSONS LEARNT	66
6 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	68
6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT COUNTRY PROGRAMME	68
6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CURRENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME.....	70

ANNEX A: TERMS OF REFERENCE	73
ANNEX B: EVALUATION MATRIX.....	1
ANNEX C: DOCUMENTS CONSULTED.....	5
ANNEX D: PERSONS CONSULTED	8
ANNEX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS.....	11
ANNEX F: COUNTRY OFFICE ORGANIZATION CHART.....	17
ANNEX G: THEORIES OF CHANGE.....	19

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Selected human development indicators for Lesotho	2
Table 3: Comparison of progress on selected SDGs – Pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 4: UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme 2019–2023	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 7: Evaluation audiences	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 8: Evaluation criteria and questions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 10 Stakeholders interviewed.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 11: Project site visits	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 13: UNICEF support of education response to COVID-19	47
Table 14: Outcome indicators progress against targets 2021	53
Figure 1: Children in Lesotho headcount poverty rate (%)	4
Figure 2: High-level theory of change of the Country Programme	16
Figure 3: Funds allocated and utilized by resource type 2019–2022	20
Figure 4: Funds allocated and utilized by programme outcome 2019–2022.....	20
Figure 5: Allocation of funds by Country Programme output	60
Figure 6: Resource allocation by Country Programme output by resource type	60

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) report was produced with the support of UNICEF Lesotho and the participation of officials of the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, civil society organizations and the United Nations in Lesotho. Angela Bester, an international evaluation consultant, conducted the evaluation, assisted by Celine Sieu, Research and Evaluation Specialist in the Lesotho Country Office (LCO), in the accessing of secondary data. Bikul Tulachan and Penjani Kamudoni, both from the evaluation office of the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO), provided valuable guidance and oversight of the evaluation process. The support of the Deputy Representative, Kimanzi Muthengi, is acknowledged with great appreciation.

ACRONYMS

ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
AWPs	Annual work plans
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGP	Child Grants Programme
CPD	Country Programme Document
CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSD	Child Survival and Development
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early childhood education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESARO	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GAVI	Global Vaccine Alliance
HDI	Human Development Index
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IYCF	Infant and young child feeding
LCO	Lesotho Country Office
LCP	Lesotho Country Programme
LDC	Least Developed Country
LNFOOD	Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled

MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MNCH	Maternal, newborn and child health
NECC	National Emergency Command Centre
NECDOL	Network of Early Childhood Development of Lesotho
NISSA	National Information System for Social Assistance
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PMTCT	Prevention of mother-to-child transmission
PPIP	Perinatal Problem Identification Programme
RAM	Results Assessment Module
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communications
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMR	Strategic Moments of Reflection
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health rights
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a small, landlocked country in Southern Africa, with a population of 2.1 million people of which 38 per cent are children and adolescents. The United Nations classifies Lesotho as a Least Developed Country (LDC) – defined as having low income levels and facing severe structural impediments to sustainable development. Lesotho is vulnerable to the impact of climate change, and over the past decade it has experienced successive climate shocks in the form of recurrent droughts and floods. Lesotho falls within the low human development category, with a Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.514 in 2021, placing it at 168 out of 191 countries in 2021.

Almost all children in Lesotho experience at least one deprivation, and nearly half of Lesotho's children aged 0–17 years are multi-dimensionally poor. Child mortality, though declining since 2017, remains high. There are geographic and socio-economic disparities in vaccination rates of children under 24 months, with lower coverage for children in rural areas and from poor households. Nearly one-third of children under 5 years are stunted and malnutrition is reported to have increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lesotho has made significant progress in its HIV response, achieving the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) 90-90-90 targets, but progress has been made fragile by the onset of COVID-19. Achieving quality education outcomes is a persistent challenge for the country. With free and compulsory education, primary school enrolment is high, but drops at secondary level. Enrolment levels at pre-primary facilities are low, with only one-third of children accessing any form of pre-primary education. Violence against children persists, with girls experiencing sexual violence from partners and schoolmates. Girls and boys experience overlapping emotional and physical violence.

The UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme 2019–2023 seeks to support the Government of Lesotho in addressing the multiple challenges experienced by children, and attain progress against national targets for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Country Programme has the vision "to reach every child, everywhere, with opportunities to survive, develop and reach her or his full potential."

UNICEF implements the country programme through three programme components, namely:

- a) Component I: Young children survive, thrive and attain learning outcomes.
- b) Component II: Children and adolescents are protected from violence and HIV and have improved learning outcomes.
- c) Component III: Reducing child poverty and enhancing equity and social protection.

These components are underpinned by programme effectiveness measures, including programme performance monitoring and evaluation; the application of results-based management to ensure rigour in planning and monitoring; evidence-based advocacy and partnerships; and the use of communication for development.

Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope

UNICEF commissioned the evaluation of the 2019–2023 Country Programme between UNICEF and the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho. The evaluation was conducted between February and September 2022 and serves the dual purpose of learning and accountability. Specifically, the purpose of the evaluation is to identify best practices, results and lessons from the design and implementation of the

Country Programme, and so inform the development of the UNICEF Country Programme Document (CPD) 2024–2028. The evaluation is also expected to contribute to the development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2024–2028. The evaluation also serves to establish accountability to national and international stakeholders and the Executive Board for the results achieved with the resources that have been invested in implementing the Country Programme.

The objectives for the evaluation as set out in the Terms of Reference were:

- (a) To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability of the Lesotho Country Programme from its inception to the present, with particular attention on equity, gender equality, behavioural and social change for development, risk-informed programming, convergence of programme components and achieving results at scale, as well as UNICEF's strategic positioning in relation to its child rights mandate.
- (b) To identify and document key lessons learned, good practices and innovations in implementing the current 2019–2023 Country Programme, which can inform and support advocacy efforts for scale-up and replication.
- (c) To provide a set of forward-looking and actionable recommendations to strengthen programmatic strategies in the design of the next Lesotho Country Programme, taking into consideration national development priorities and plans and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the country.

The scope of the evaluation included all UNICEF activities implemented under the Country Programme, including emergency and humanitarian activities. The period covered by the evaluation is from January 2019 to August 2022. The formal Country Programme Document approved by the Executive Board was used as the basis for the evaluation. It took into consideration changes the Country Office made to the outputs, indicators and targets of the Country Programme at its Strategic Moment of Reflection (2021).

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation followed a theory-based approach, assessing the results of the interventions against the theories of change developed for each of the programme components and the targets set for the outputs of each programme component. The evaluation also considered the assumptions and risks underpinning the theories of change to explain the factors that may have influenced the results. To ensure that the evaluation would be useful to the Country Office, staff was consulted at all critical stages of the evaluation. The evaluation observed the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.¹ Informed consent was obtained from key informants prior to the start of each interview, and confidentiality was observed.

The evaluation followed a phased approach – inception, data collection, data analysis and reporting. During the inception phase, the evaluation consultant conducted stakeholder mapping and document review, and consulted the Country Office to refine the draft evaluation questions. The primary data collection entailed conducting remote interviews from June to August, and carrying out a field mission in

¹ United Nations Evaluation Group, 'Norms and Standards for Evaluation', UNEG, New York, 2016, www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914 and United Nations Evaluation Group, 'UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation', New York, 2008, www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102.

August 2022. The evaluation interviewed or consulted a total of 57 persons, 55 per cent female and 45 per cent male.

In addition to interviewing UNICEF staff, the evaluation interviewed persons from the following organizations:

- (a) *Government*: Ministry of Development Planning, Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Law and Ministry of Social Development.
- (b) *Civil society organizations*: Help Lesotho, Lesotho National Federation of Organisations for the Disabled, Lesotho Red Cross Society and Lesotho Schoolnet Camara.
- (c) *United Nations in Lesotho*: UN Resident Coordinator's Office, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO).
- (d) European Union Delegation to Lesotho.

The evaluation consultant shared the emerging findings and areas of recommendation with the Country Office at a workshop that provided an opportunity for the Country Office to interrogate these findings and potential recommendations. In addition to presentations made at the workshop, the Country Office provided written inputs on the emerging findings. The feedback from the Country Office was taken into consideration in preparing the draft evaluation report. The draft report was circulated to the Country Office for comment, and the report was finalized, taking these comments into account.

The evaluation has the following limitations:

- (a) The evaluation was unable to secure interviews with all the intended stakeholders listed in the inception report, even though the data collection period was kept open for three months, and the Country Office and evaluation consultant made several follow-ups. The data collection period coincided with a busy period for government officials.
- (b) The evaluation comprised 10 key evaluation questions, which had been reduced from the larger number of questions in the Terms of Reference. Even though the number of questions was reduced, each question was made up of two or three sub questions. The evaluation did not seek to answer all the sub questions, as this would make the analysis and reporting unwieldy. Instead, the findings reflect the main thrust of the evaluation questions.
- (c) The lack of updated national data is a major limitation to assessing progress at the outcome level. Most outcome indicators require statistics from government sources, and in many instances, the latest data is 2018. The Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) was scheduled to be conducted during the current country programme cycle, but was postponed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Main findings

Relevance

The evaluation found that the Country Programme was well aligned with national priorities as set out in Lesotho's National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II) and in sector plans of the relevant ministries. The key components of the Country Programme fall mainly within the *NSDP II Key Priority Area II: Strengthening Human Capital* and the NSDP II crosscutting issues of children, youth and gender. The

Country Programme is also aligned with Key Priority Area IV: Strengthening national governance and accountability systems; the strategic objectives of which are as follows: (i) enhancing the efficiency of the justice system; and (ii) strengthening national monitoring and evaluation systems. Other national priorities reflected in the Country Programme include NSDP II strategic objectives to improve the efficiency of the social protection system and increase access to sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene.

UNICEF Lesotho responded rapidly and effectively to the changing context of the COVID-19 pandemic, mobilizing additional resources to support the national response, and adapting programme interventions. It adjusted its mix of strategies to respond to the needs of the changing context, and also adjusted its internal operations. Although the COVID-19 pandemic was a disruption, UNICEF also used the opportunity to do things differently and use the COVID-19 response interventions as a foundation for building long-term resilience.

The evaluation found that UNICEF Lesotho made good use of its comparative strengths to influence policies and implementation. Examples include the support UNICEF provided in the procurement and cold chain storage of vaccines; its use of its convening power in the UN Nutrition network to influence nutrition policy process through the development of an investment case for nutrition; its support in the development of new guidelines for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV; the development of the Inclusive Education Policy; and the development of the National Social Protection Strategy.

Coherence

The evaluation found that the Country Programme is aligned with UNICEF's Gender Action Plan (2018–2021) and NSDP II priorities to address gender inequality. Examples of UNICEF interventions addressing gender inequality include support to the Ministry of Education and Training to strengthen the gender-responsiveness of national education sector plans and policies; capacity strengthening of law enforcement officials to identify and respond to cases of gender-based violence; and the Joint UN programme 2gether 4 SRHR (sexual and reproductive health rights) empowering adolescent girls and young women. The Country Office, however, lacks an overarching gender strategy, and so interventions addressing gender inequality lack coherence. The evaluation identified the need for gender technical capacity in the Country Office.

UNICEF collaborated with other UN agencies in the response to COVID-19, and plays an important role in UN coordination. Other UN agencies commented positively on UNICEF's collaboration, but also pointed to the need for more effective collaboration and coordination among UN agencies in the next UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

Effectiveness

Programme component I: Young children survive, thrive and attain learning outcomes

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health and health care workers to deliver quality, integrated services to strengthen the survival of mothers and newborns. This capacity strengthening contributed to an expansion in facilities providing primary emergency obstetric and newborn care and health facilities implementing newborn care packages, as well as enabling hospitals to implement the Perinatal Problem Identification Programme system (PPIP). UNICEF support to the Expanded Programme on Immunization continued during the period under review, helping to sustain good immunization coverage. Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) was further strengthened with the adoption of new guidelines and training of health care workers to implement these.

UNICEF supported interventions aimed at improving community practices in nutrition and hygiene, using a combination of policy advocacy, strengthening coordination mechanisms and supporting service delivery, and working in partnership with civil society organizations. With the already poor state of nutrition of children worsening as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, nutrition will require more attention going forward.

In the area of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), UNICEF helped to strengthen systems for ECCD. The number of trained ECCD facilitators and teachers receiving formal training increased with support from UNICEF. The subsector however is still challenged by the lack of adequate budgetary provision and the insufficient numbers of qualified teachers.

UNICEF contributed to increasing access to drinking water services, improving hygiene in schools and communities and improving sanitation in schools. This contribution was important during the COVID-19 pandemic, as it enabled the Government to reopen schools safely. UNICEF also contributed to strengthening systems in the water sector through providing technical and financial support to the Office of the Water Commissioner to strengthen coordination of the sector. While UNICEF's support to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) takes place against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges of WASH in Lesotho are longstanding ones. UNICEF has an ambitious agenda for the remaining period of the Country Programme, including supporting the Department of Rural Water Supply in rehabilitating water supply systems in areas most affected by climate shocks, developing a management information system to overcome the existing fragmentation of data systems and improve data governance and influencing policies to mainstream gender and disability in WASH services.

Programme component II: Children and adolescents are protected from violence and HIV and have improved learning outcomes

UNICEF contributed to the national HIV response through interventions aimed at addressing the infection rates of HIV among adolescents and young people, especially adolescent girls and young women who account for a disproportionate number of new infections. The support includes technical assistance to the Ministry of Health to revise the Antiretroviral Guidelines and Strategy for Accelerated Health of Adolescents; and technical and financial assistance for the development of national, district and facility-level HIV targets for improving programme efficiency. HIV services for adolescents and young people have also been strengthened. UNICEF's contribution to HIV interventions is made as a member of the UN Joint Task Team on AIDS and technical working groups of the Ministry of Health, such as the technical working group on adolescent health.

In the education sector, UNICEF contributed to strengthening systems and capacities of the Ministry of Education and Training. In addition to advocacy on early childhood education, UNICEF supported policy development for non-formal education and inclusive education, and provided support for strengthening the Education Management Information System (EMIS). With the onset of COVID-19, UNICEF supported the development of the national education response to COVID-19, and mobilized resources for implementation of the response. UNICEF supported the provision of materials for distance learning to ensure continuity of learning during COVID-19 restrictions, and aided with the rollout of the Learning Passport. Children in Lesotho effectively lost two years of schooling and it will require a mammoth effort from the Government and its development partners to address the learning crisis. The updating of information on the EMIS is taking longer than expected and there is a risk that information will not be timely for planning purposes.

To improve access and quality of child protection services, UNICEF contributed to strengthening the capacities of the Ministries of Home Affairs, Social Development, Justice and Law, and Education and

Training. Achievements include the re-establishment of the Child Helpline in the Ministry of Social Development, which provides 24-hour access for children in need of support; the launch of the Violence Against Children Survey report and the development of the National Response Plan to address key findings of the survey; strengthening national and community level child protection structures; and training of village child justice committees to increase alternative dispute resolution measures for children at the community level justice system. UNICEF support to the Ministry of Home Affairs to strengthen the birth registration system contributed to an increase in registration of births in Lesotho. Social and Behaviour Change Communications (SBCC) underpinned Child protection measures. Some key informants expressed the view that, the magnitude of child protection challenges demands that this aspect of the Country Programme should be prioritized and allocated adequate resources.

Programme component III: Reducing child poverty and enhancing equity and social protection

Building on the previous Country Programme, UNICEF contributed to enhancing social protection for children in Lesotho through strengthening policies and strategies, and supporting the development and rollout of shock-responsive social protection. Key results achieved under the current Country Programme include the development of the National Social Protection Strategy that was adopted by the Government in 2022 and the updating of the National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA). This system is the Government's single registry of socio-economic data on households, and is used for planning services and targeting beneficiaries of social protection services. Ministries used the database during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify vulnerable households in need of government assistance. UNICEF's technical and financial assistance to the Ministry of Social Development enabled the development and implementation of a cash transfers plan to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on existing Child Programme Grant beneficiaries. Key informants have expressed concern that the updating of the NISSA is time-consuming and delays may render the information out-of-date.

UNICEF's support to the Ministry of Finance has enabled the ministry to implement pre-budget public consultations with the aim of improving the quality and transparency of the public finance budget process. In addition, UNICEF built capacities in the Ministry of Finance to develop budget briefs for the national budget, education and social protection. The ministry proposes to extend the development of budget briefs to other sectors of government, subject to the availability of resources to do so. In the area of child rights monitoring, UNICEF supported the Government to produce the Child Poverty Report and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report 2022. UNICEF's work in this area is at an early stage and will be expanded once it has mobilized necessary resources.

Results at outcome level

Assessment of UNICEF's contribution at the level of outcomes was made difficult by the lack of updated national data for measuring outcome level indicators. Where data were available, the evaluation found positive changes in outcome indicators for social protection, health and children and adolescents' access to services. Learning outcomes for children and access to pre-primary education have not progressed. In the case of learning outcomes, it should be noted that learning outcomes were last rated in 2019 as "not achieved" and updated data were not available at the time of the evaluation.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a key factor affecting the results of the Country Programme. Implementation slowed down during periods of restrictions, and attention and resources had to be diverted to respond to the immediate crisis. Risk factors identified in the theories of change also emerged. The country experienced political instability during the period under review, with the coalition government replaced by a new coalition government in 2020. A new government following the elections held on 7 October 2022 has now replaced this coalition government. Like other countries in the sub-region, Lesotho

is experiencing macro-economic challenges and fiscal constraints worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the COVID-19 pandemic saw an increase in resources mobilized by the Government and its development partners, the larger proportion of resources was directed to the COVID-19 response. Resources were also redirected/repurposed from other sectors to support the health sector.

Programme effectiveness

The Country Office has adopted sound tools for effective programme management, and diligently tracks progress against key indicators and targets for programme outputs. The absence of an overarching theory of change for the Country Programme is a missed opportunity for strengthening programmatic coherence. UNICEF is contributing to strengthening the policy environment for monitoring and evaluation, as well as capacities of government officials responsible for monitoring and evaluation. The demand for strengthening national monitoring and evaluation capacities is large and requires a joint effort with other UN agencies.

UNICEF has prioritized SBCC but lacks an overarching SBCC strategy, and SBCC initiatives have not been evaluated to assess their effectiveness. UNICEF has made good use of partnerships as a tool for achieving results for children. There is scope for strengthening existing partnerships and increasing the diversity of partners. The Country Office is developing a partnership strategy with this aim in mind.

Efficiency

UNICEF allocated its financial resources to outputs that were prioritized by the Government for the response to COVID-19 and for continuity of essential services. A significant proportion of the allocation went to the social protection output, which achieved positive results for children. Allocations to outputs for child protection and ECCD-pre-primary education are among the smallest of allocations of the three main Country Programme outcomes, and these are two areas where progress has been limited. Although staff resources have been deployed efficiently, the Country Office should explore alternative models for staffing the Country Office. The decade structure/life cycle approach has largely been effective in supporting delivery of the Country Programme, and has to some extent fostered programmatic coherence. There is however a need to strengthen programmatic coherence by crafting an overarching theory of change for the next Country Programme and an office-wide resource mobilization strategy.

Sustainability

Prospects for the sustainability of results are mixed. The evaluation found examples of interventions that have good prospects for sustainability. For example, by strengthening the systems and capacities for the procurement and storage of COVID-19 vaccines, the Ministry of Health is able to use these strengthened systems for managing other vaccines, including those for routine immunization. The evaluation also found examples of government ownership, such as the Ministry of Social Development taking over the funding of two full-time positions in the Child Protection Coordination Unit in the Ministry of Social Development, which were established with financial support from UNICEF. UNICEF's partnerships with civil society organizations also increased the probability of sustainability as these organizations have integrated the UNICEF interventions into their work programmes.

Fiscal constraints present a major challenge to scaling up interventions and/or institutionalizing in the budgets of the relevant ministries. The evaluation notes that partnership agreements make provision for partners to outline sustainability plans once project funding ends. There is however the huge burden of expectation from government partners that UNICEF will continue to mobilize resources on their behalf to fund important activities.

Conclusions and lessons learnt

The evaluation concludes that UNICEF Lesotho has achieved commendable results in a context challenged first by drought and then by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The agility of the Country Office, the technical expertise of staff and the relationships with partners have been key enablers of results. There are areas that can be improved in the current Country Programme, and in anticipation of the next Country Programme.

UNICEF ensured the relevance of the Country Programme by adapting its mix of strategies to the changing demands of the country context. While responding to the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, the development agenda was not forgotten – UNICEF advocated for continuity in delivery of essential services for children and adolescents.

Internal coherence of the Country Programme can be improved. The Country Programme lacks an overarching theory of change, and so synergies between country programme outcomes are not obvious. Gender equality has not been addressed coherently within the Country Programme, and there is an absence of office-wide strategies for SBCC, partnerships and resource mobilization. Coherence and collaboration with other UN agencies, though strong during the implementation of the UN Social and Economic Response Plan for COVID-19, can be improved.

Overall, the Country Programme is effective, and is likely to achieve at least 75 per cent of the output targets by the end of 2023. Where achievement of output targets is lagging, there is sufficient time to address blockages to progress before the end of the current programme cycle. Assessing progress at the level of outcomes is made difficult by the lack of updated national data, particularly in the health and education sectors.

While outputs for social protection have mobilized a large volume of resources, other areas such as child protection have not mobilized sufficient resources to achieve the intended results. In the absence of an office-wide strategy, resource mobilization is driven by siloed priorities rather than by integrated programming. The Country Office has utilized staff resources efficiently, but there is scope for considering alternative models of staffing the Country Office and providing technical assistance to government partners.

Several results achieved under the Country Programme have good prospects for sustainability as UNICEF is strengthening systems and the Government has strong ownership of these systems. UNICEF's strategies of strengthening existing capacities in government and partnering with civil society organizations have also contributed to the sustainability of results. While there are examples of the Government institutionalizing UNICEF-supported programmes and taking over the financing of these, the budgetary constraints that will remain for the foreseeable future limit the prospects for the Government to scale up successful interventions.

Key lessons learned from the implementation of the Country Programme are:

1. Focusing on an issue where UNICEF can make a difference, and investing significant resources on that issue is likely to be more impactful than spreading thinly over a large number of interventions.
2. Responding effectively to a national crisis requires good planning, coordination and collaboration, even under the extremely difficult conditions such as those experienced during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Crosscutting issues such as gender equality, partnerships and social behaviour change and communication can benefit from specific strategies to guide how they are implemented in the Country Programme.
4. While technology is an important enabler for development and during periods of crisis, the practicalities associated with introducing new technology should be considered carefully, and attention paid to the sustainability of the technology.
5. Quality, disaggregated data are essential for the effective planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting progress of the Country Programme.

Recommendations

The evaluation makes strategic and operational recommendations, which should be acted upon within the next six months (short-term) or within the next 12 months (medium-term). These recommendations are for the consideration of and implementation by UNICEF Lesotho, with the support of UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa. Partners in Government, development partners and civil society partners may also wish to reflect on these recommendations to shape their future partnerships with UNICEF.

	Priority	Time frame
Recommendations for the next Country Programme		
Recommendation 1: UNICEF should improve the design of the next Country Programme by developing a theory of change for the Country Programme and nested theories of change for the components of the Country Programme.	High	Short-term
Recommendation 2: UNICEF should develop a gender strategy for the next Country Programme, and start the process by conducting a gender programmatic review.	High	Short-term
Recommendation 3: UNICEF should retain the life cycle approach in the design and implementation of the next Country Programme. The Country Office should be more deliberate in pursuing programmatic coherence and collaboration across work sections or units.	High	Medium-term
Recommendation 4: UNICEF should identify one or two issues as a focus for the next Country Programme. This does not lessen the importance of other issues, and is intended to serve as a flagship for positioning UNICEF to play a key influencing role and have a significant impact.	High	Medium-term
Recommendations for the current Country Programme		
Recommendation 5: UNICEF should review the current programme portfolio, identify projects or activities that could be scaled down at the end of the current Country Programme cycle, and put in place action plans for their sustainability. The review should also identify areas that could be scaled up and are likely to continue in the next Country Programme. UNICEF should also address the challenges identified with two important systems, namely, the NISSA and the EMIS.	High	Short-term

Recommendation 6: UNICEF should develop strategies for enabling and enhancing programme effectiveness. This includes developing a Country Programme monitoring framework, finalizing the partnership strategy, developing a resource mobilization strategy and ensuring that SBCC strategies are embedded in programmes.	High	Medium-term
Recommendation 7: UNICEF should conduct an internal review of all outcome and output indicators to ensure that they are consistent with the CPD, the annual work plans (AWPs) and the Results Assessment Module (RAM) report	Medium	Medium-term

1 CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION

1.1 Development context

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a landlocked country situated within the borders of South Africa. Geographically, Lesotho is small (30,355 square kilometres) with a high altitude. It has a population of 2.1 million, of which about 38 per cent are children and adolescents.²

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy, with King Letsie III as Head of State and the Prime Minister as Head of Government. Parliament comprises a National Assembly with 120 members and a Senate with 33 members. A general election was held on 7 October 2022.³

Lesotho's national development aspirations and priorities are expressed in the National Vision 2020 and the NSDP II (2018/19–2022/23). The National Vision states, **"By the year 2020 Lesotho shall be a stable democracy, a united and prosperous nation at peace with itself and its neighbours. It shall have a healthy and well-developed human resource base. Its economy will be strong, its environment well managed and its technology well established"**.⁴ Employment creation and the achievement of inclusive economic growth are overarching targets of NSDP II. It is envisaged that the achievement of macro targets will lead to poverty reduction, social inclusion and protection of the environment.

The United Nations classifies Lesotho as a LDC – defined as having a low income and facing severe structural impediments to sustainable development. The classification is based on gross national income, assessment of human assets and assessment of Lesotho's economic and environmental vulnerability.⁵ Yet the World Bank classifies Lesotho as a lower middle-income country.⁶

Lesotho's national poverty line (2017/18) is Lesotho loti 648.88 and its poverty rate is 49.7 per cent.⁷ The poverty rate is higher in rural areas (60.7 per cent) than urban areas (28.5 per cent). Poverty reduction between 2002/03 and 2017/18 favoured urban areas (which have reduced from 41.5 per cent in 2002/03) whereas there has been little change in poverty rates in rural areas (61.3 per cent in

² Lesotho Bureau of Statistics, Lesotho Census, 2016.

³ The Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho declared that the Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) party won the most seats in the National Assembly, but did not achieve a two-thirds majority. The RFP will therefore govern in coalition with other parties: www.gov.ls/rfp-wins-the-2022-national-assembly-elections.

⁴ United Nations Lesotho, *The Kingdom of Lesotho Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Report*, UN Lesotho, 2019, p.12.

⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The Least Developed Country Category: 2021 Country Snapshots*, UN/DESA, 2021, www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/Snapshots2021.pdf.

⁶ The World Bank classifies lower middle-income countries as those with a Gross National Income (GNI) of 1,460–4,095 USD per capita (July 2021 income classification threshold). GNI per capita only reflects national average income and does not take into account how governments spend income, nor does it measure the impact of government spending on human development.

⁷ Lesotho Bureau of Statistics, www.bos.gov.ls.

2002/03).⁸ The poverty levels of Lesotho are higher than those of other member countries of the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), namely Botswana, Eswatini, Namibia and South Africa.

Lesotho's modest economic growth in 2019 slowed down further in 2020, primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, business closures and border closures. Real GDP growth is estimated to have contracted by 1.2 per cent, 0.4 per cent and 9.5 per cent in 2018, 2019 and 2020, respectively.⁹ Lesotho has a high fiscal deficit mainly due to massive health spending in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This deficit is likely to remain high if revenues from the SACU continue to decline. The economy began to recover in 2021/22, and GDP growth is projected at 2.3 per cent for 2022/23 and 2.5 per cent for 2023/24, averaging 2.8 per cent over the medium term.¹⁰

Lesotho is vulnerable to the impact of climate change, and over the past decade it has experienced successive climate shocks in the form of recurrent droughts and floods. These climate shocks impact negatively on livelihoods and food security, as nearly 75 per cent of the population rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. Climate change also exacerbates existing environmental stresses such as land degradation and loss of biodiversity.¹¹

Lesotho falls within the low human development category, with a HDI value of 0.514 in 2021, positioning it at 168 out of 191 countries in 2021. Table 1 shows the comparison between the 2019 and 2021 human development indicators for Lesotho. Most indicators show a regression, undoubtedly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 Human Development Report states that this decline is evident globally as the world face new kinds of uncertainty that layer and interact to form a new uncertainty complex.¹²

Table 1: Selected human development indicators for Lesotho

Indicators	Values	
	2019	2021
Human Development Index Value	0.527	0.514
Inequality adjusted Human Development Index Value	0.382	0.372
Gender Development Index	1.014	0.985
Life expectancy at birth	Females = 57.6 Males = 51.2	Females = 55.9 Males = 50.4
Mean years of schooling	Females = 7.2 Males = 5.8	Females = 6.6 Males = 6.0
Estimated GNI per capita (2017 PPP \$)	Females = 2,471 Males = 3,849	Females = 2,107 Males = 3,310
Gender Inequality Index	0.553	0.557

⁸ *The Kingdom of Lesotho Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Report 2019*, p.27.

⁹ World Bank, 'The World Bank in Lesotho', World Bank, 2022
www.worldbank.org/en/country/lesotho/overview#1.

¹⁰ Minister of Finance Budget Speech to the Parliament of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the 2022/23 Fiscal Year, 2 March 2022, <https://www.gov.ls/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2022-2023-Budget-Speech-Wednesday-02-03-2022.pdf>.

¹¹ *The Kingdom of Lesotho Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Report*, p.80.

¹² United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2021-22: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*, UNDP, New York, 2022, <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22>.

Adolescent birth rate (births per 1,000 women aged 15–19 years)	2017 90.8 [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2018]	89.6
Women's Share of seats in parliament (%)	23.0	22.9
Population with at least some secondary education (% , ages 25 years and older)	2015–2019 Females = 33.0 Males = 25.5	Females = 27.2 Males = 24.6
Labour force participation rate (% , ages 15 years and older)	Females = 60.2 Males = 75.9	Females = 56.1 Males = 71.3

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2020 and Country Briefing Note, UNDP Human Development Report 2021.

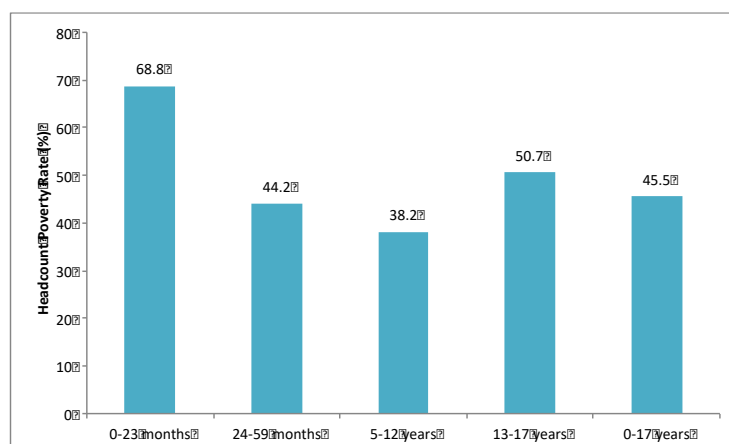
1.2 Situation of children and adolescents

According to the 2020 study on multi-dimensional child poverty in Lesotho, almost all children in Lesotho experience at least one deprivation, and as many as 45.5 per cent of Lesotho's children aged 0–17 years are multi-dimensionally poor – they experience three or more deprivations out of eight, simultaneously.¹³ When disaggregated by age group, children 0–23 months are more likely to be multi-dimensionally poor than those in the older age category. As many as 68.8 per cent of Basotho children under 24 months are multi-dimensionally poor, compared to 38.2 per cent of children 5–12 years. The most common deprivations experienced by children 0–23 months are protection from violence, housing and nutrition. The lack of birth registration, lack of access to electricity and frequency of meals were found to be the main causes of deprivation for this age group. Housing, sanitation and education are the most commonly experienced deprivations for children of school-going age (5–17 years). The study also found that children in rural areas, particularly children living in the mountain ecological zone, experience more deprivations than their urban counterparts.¹⁴ The study is based on data collected in 2018, predating the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely that child poverty has worsened since then.

¹³ These dimensions are water, sanitation, housing, access to information, education, nutrition, health and protection from violence.

¹⁴ Bureau of Statistics, *Multidimensional Child Poverty in Lesotho – Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis*, Bureau of Statistics, Lesotho, 2020.

Figure 1: Children in Lesotho headcount poverty rate (%)



Source: *Multidimensional Child Poverty in Lesotho*.

Child mortality (children under 5 years) has declined slowly since 2017, but remains high at 89.5 per 1,000 live births in 2020, and is much higher for boys (96.8) than for girls (81.9). Infant mortality and neonatal mortality are 70 and 44 per 1,000 live births, respectively. Common causes of death amongst children include prematurity, birth asphyxia, pneumonia and malnutrition¹⁵. Maternal mortality is 554 per 100,000 live births (2017). Despite the high rates of skilled birth attendance, there are wide disparities between urban and rural areas (90 per cent vs. 73 per cent) and wealth quintiles (richest, 94 per cent; poorest, 60 per cent).¹⁶ Registration of births of children under 5 years is low at 43.5 per cent and 45.5 per cent for females and males, respectively.¹⁷

According to the DHS 2014, more than two-thirds (68.6 per cent) of children aged 12–23 months had received all the basic vaccinations, however there were geographical and socio-economic disparities.¹⁸ For instance, only 47.5 per cent children in Mokhotlong, one of the highland districts with very hard to reach areas, and only 59.7 per cent of children in the lowest wealth quintile had received all the basic vaccines. Routine immunization has been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, shifting the focus of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) to the COVID-19 vaccination rollout since the second half of 2021. The country witnessed a 5 per cent decrease in MCV1 and stagnation in DTP3 coverage compared to 2020.¹⁹

Lesotho has a very high prevalence of stunting of children under 5 years (estimated at 32.1 per cent for 2020). It is well established that persistent malnutrition can cause long-term irreversible physical and cognitive damage to children. Iron deficiency anaemia is the most common micronutrient deficiency amongst children aged 6–59 months. Food insecurity in Lesotho was exacerbated further by the COVID-19 pandemic, directly impacting the nutritional well being of children. A computerized

¹⁵ United Nations Children's Fund Lesotho, *Lesotho Situation Analysis 2015*, UNICEF Lesotho, 2015.

¹⁶ Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, *Annual Joint Review 2015–2016*, Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Lesotho.

¹⁷ UNICEF database, accessed April 2022.

¹⁸ *Lesotho Demographic and Health Survey*, 2014.

¹⁹ Figures provided by UNICEF Lesotho.

SMS-based survey conducted by UNICEF in Lesotho between June and August 2021 showed that only one in three children were fed with the minimum meal frequency and at least 40 per cent of children were fed smaller quantities of nutritious foods, such as vitamin A-rich fruits and vegetables, pulses, dairy, eggs, meat, poultry and fish due to the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁰

Lesotho has the second-highest HIV prevalence in the world and the impact of HIV on women and children continues to be significant. Young women (10–24 years) and adolescent girls (10–19 years) in particular account for a disproportionate number of new HIV infections. In 2019, HIV incidence in young women stood at 1.5 per cent, nearly three times that of young men (0.6 per cent), while over 12,000 children in Lesotho are estimated to be living with HIV and 1,000 children were newly infected with HIV.²¹ The rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV is 8 [5-10] per cent in 2021.²²

Lesotho has made significant progress in its HIV response, including in achieving the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets; 90 per cent of people living with HIV are now aware of their HIV status; 97 per cent of those who know their HIV status are on lifelong antiretroviral therapy (ART); and 92 per cent of those on ART are virologically suppressed. Lesotho is categorized as a country at national epidemic control, defined as the point at which new HIV infections have decreased and fall below the total number of deaths among HIV-infected individuals.

The root causes of poor health outcomes, particularly among mothers, newborns and children in Lesotho are directly linked: uneven access and poor-quality of primary health care and social determinants, such as poverty, socio-economic and geographical inequalities.²³

While Lesotho provides free and compulsory primary education, with a net enrolment rate of 85 per cent prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, at the pre-primary level the enrolment rate is low. The main service providers are private and/or faith-based organizations such as churches. Only 3 out of 10 children attend any form of pre-primary education.²⁴ Despite high levels of enrolment at the primary level, completion rates drop drastically at secondary level.²⁵ At primary level the completion rate is 80 per cent, which drops to 33 per cent at lower secondary level and even further to 13 per cent at higher secondary level. Achieving quality education outcomes is a persistent challenge for Lesotho, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 15 per cent of children aged 7–14 years demonstrated foundational numeracy skills and 45 per cent demonstrated foundational reading skills in English or Sesotho.²⁶ The last Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) for Grade 6 also highlighted that while an average child gets over 8 years of schooling, in effect the learning adjusted period is only 5.5 years. School closures during 2020 due to COVID-19 are likely to have had a negative impact on education outcomes in the short and medium-term. The NSDP II highlighted the mismatch between learning and skills as one of the key challenges.

²⁰ Remote surveys on the potential impacts of COVID-19 on the diets of young children, adolescents and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers in Eastern and Southern Africa region, UNICEF ESARO, unpublished data, August 2021.

²¹ Lesotho Spectrum Modelling Estimates, 2020.

²² UNAIDS, 2021. <https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>

²³ *The Kingdom of Lesotho Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Report*; World Bank Statistics, 2020, <http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/home.aspx>.

²⁴ Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Lesotho, 2018.

²⁵ 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.

²⁶ 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, cited in CPE Terms of Reference.

According to the Violence Against Children and Youth Survey 2018, 7.3 per cent of females aged 13–17 had experienced sexual violence in the 12 months preceding the survey. For the most recent incident of sexual violence, former intimate partners (42.6 per cent); classmates or schoolmates (22.0 per cent); friends (12.5 per cent); neighbours (10.7 per cent); and strangers (10.3 per cent) were commonly the perpetrators of the violence. Estimates for sexual violence against males were found by the study to be unreliable. Males were slightly more likely to experience physical violence than females. Among the 13–17 year olds surveyed, 21.1 per cent of females reported experiencing physical violence in the 12 months preceding the survey, and this was the case for 27.1 per cent of males. Among 13–17 year olds, 6.9 per cent of females experienced emotional violence by a parent or caregiver, compared to 3.8 per cent of males; 22.4 per cent and 20.4 per cent of females and males, respectively, experienced peer emotional violence.²⁷ Children also experience overlapping violence; for example, they may experience emotional violence as well as physical violence. The survey highlighted health conditions associated with violence, including the risk of HIV.

According to the 2018 MICS, 31.9 per cent of 5–17 year olds were engaged in child labour.²⁸ Two-thirds of children engaged in economic activities were engaged in herding animals, and in most instances (82.3 per cent), these were males.

Table 2: Selected indicators for children and adolescents in Lesotho

Indicators		2017	2018	2019	2020
Under-five mortality rate: per 1000 live births	Female	82.9	82.7	83.2	81.9
	Male	98.4	97.9	98.3	96.8
	All	91.0	90.6	90.9	89.5
Infant mortality rate: per 1000 live births	Female	65.82	64.85	64.35	62.91
	Male	80.02	78.73	78.18	76.56
	All	73.13	72.07	71.42	69.88
Neonatal mortality rate: per 1000 live births	All	45.25	45.07	-	44.26
Children under 5 whose births are registered (percentage)	Female	-	43.5	-	-
	Male	-	45.5	-	-
Percentage of children 36–59 months attending early childhood education programmes	Female	43.0	46.4	36.3	-
	Male	40.8	45.2	36.8	-
	All	41.6 ²⁹	45.48	36.6	-
Adjusted net attendance rate for children of primary school age (percentage)	Female	-	-	-	-
	Male	-	-	-	-
	All	-	97	-	-

Completion rate for children of primary school age (percentage)	Female	-	91.8	-	-
	Male	-	68.6	-	-
	All	-	80	-	-

²⁷ Lesotho Ministry of Social Development, 'Lesotho Violence Against Children and Youth Survey 2018', 2020. This is the first nationally representative survey of violence against children and youth.

²⁸ The MICS classifies child labour as economic activities and household chores above the age-specific number of hours. Children working under hazardous conditions are excluded from the MICS classification of child labour, for comparability with International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF definitions of child labour.

²⁹ 2017 and 2019 statistics published in the Education Statistical Bulletin 2019.

Completion rate for children (lower secondary) ³⁰	Female	-	55	-	-
	Male	-	44	-	-
	All	-	33	-	-
Completion rate for children (upper secondary)	Female	-	37	-	-
	Male	-	27	-	-
	All	-	32	-	-
Percentage of pregnant women living with HIV receiving effective antiretroviral treatment for PMTCT		93.7	> 95	91.9	> 95
Reported number of children 0–14 years receiving antiretroviral treatment	All	8600	8400	8300	7300
Estimated number of new HIV infections (children aged 0–19 years)	Female	1600	1300	1300	1100
	Male	<560	<500	<500	<500
	All	2100	1800	1800	1600
Height for age – stunting children under 5 years (percentage)	Female	-	32.7	-	-
	Male	-	36.6	-	-
	All	-	34.6	-	32.1
Maternal mortality ratio (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)		554	-	-	-
Mother-to-child transmission rate (per 100 population)	All	7.33	6.75	7.29	5.98

Source: UNICEF database, accessed 22 September 2022.

1.3 The COVID-19 pandemic

The Government of Lesotho declared a state of emergency on 18 March 2020, with a national lockdown for all non-essential services. The Government of Lesotho also established the National Emergency Command Centre (NECC) in early 2020. Led by a cabinet sub-committee and the Ministry of Health, the centre developed and managed the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic.³¹ The structure included government officials, as well as partners from civil society and the United Nations in Lesotho. The Disaster Management Authority (DMA) is responsible for coordinating the NECC. The National COVID-19 Secretariat supported the work of the NECC, and was dismantled in April 2022. Lesotho recorded 34,490 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 706 deaths between 3 January 2020 and 26 September 2022. A total of 1,102,069 vaccine doses have been administered, 872,661 persons were fully vaccinated, and 1,631,364 persons received at least one dose of vaccine.³²

The early impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is evident when reviewing Lesotho's progress on the Agenda 2030. Table 2 shows a comparison of progress on SDGs relevant to the Country Programme, pre-COVID 19 and during COVID-19. Lesotho's VNR report (2019) was prepared prior to the onset of COVID-19, and showed that Lesotho was improving moderately on SDGs 2, 4, 5 and 6, and significant challenges for SDGs 1, 3 and 16. Furthermore, there was no regressing on any SDGs prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

³⁰ The data on secondary completion rates were obtained from the UNICEF Education Fact Sheet 2021. The figures are based on the 2018 MICS data and are therefore reflected in the 2018 column of the table.

³¹ Lesotho COVID-19 National Emergency Command Centre (NECC) Governance Structure, Government of Lesotho, www.gov.ls/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NECC-Revised-adopted-Structure-by-Sub-Committee.pdf.

³² WHO database, <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/ls>.

The updated Common Country Analysis (CCA, 2020) shows Lesotho regressed in five SDGs 1, 2, 3, 6 and 16),³³ and experiencing major challenges in SDG4. Prior to 2019, there was moderate progress in SDG 2 (Zero hunger) and SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), but these areas experienced major challenges during the COVID-19 period. On the positive side, Lesotho is on track with SDG 17 (Partnerships). Also, SDG 5 (Gender equality) is experiencing some challenges, but to a lesser extent than the other SDGs.

Lesotho's VNR report (2022)³⁴ found that, while the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to setbacks in progress towards the 2030 Agenda, the pandemic provided opportunities for the country to 'build back better'. The opportunities for building back are found in the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government and its partners, including UNICEF, in addition to addressing the immediate health crisis, sought to strengthen the social protection system and provide continuity in teaching and learning, as well as investing in improving access to clean water.

Table 3: Comparison of progress on selected SDGs - Pre-COVID-19 and during COVID-19

	VNR 2019 (Progress)	Common Country Analysis (CCA) 2020 (Challenges)
SDG1 – No poverty		
SDG2 – Zero hunger		
SDG3 – Good health and well-being		
SDG4 – Quality education		
SDG5 – Gender equality		
SDG6 – Clean water and sanitation		
SDG10 – Reduced inequalities	Not assessed	Not assessed
SDG16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions		
SDG17 – Partnerships for the goals		

Source: Adapted from United Nations Common Country Analysis 2020.

KEY				
VNR Report	On track	Moderately improving	Stagnating	Decreasing
CCA	SDG achieved	Some challenges	Significant challenges	Major challenges

³³ SDG1, SDG2, SDG3, SDG4, SDG6, SDG7, SDG8, SDG9, SDG11 and SDG12 show regression since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

³⁴ Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, *Kingdom of Lesotho Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*, Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, 2022. Note that the report does not cover all SDGs. It provides in-depth reviews of SDGs 1, 4, 5, 15 and 17.

2 OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

The UNICEF Country Programme 2019–2023 is the object of the evaluation.

2.1 Overview of the Country Programme

The vision of the Country Programme 2019–2023, as set out in the CPD, is "to reach every child, everywhere, with opportunities to survive, develop and reach her or his full potential". The Government of Lesotho is UNICEF's main partner in achieving the vision of the Country Programme. UNICEF uses the following mutually reinforcing strategies to implement the Country Programme:

- (a) Addressing data and evidence gaps, and using data and evidence for policy advocacy
- (b) Using sector platforms to enhance the delivery of multisectoral interventions, and in turn, improve service delivery, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized populations
- (c) Accelerating low-cost, high-impact interventions using primary health care and health systems strengthening approaches
- (d) Refocusing on equity and its contribution to the realization of child rights while maximizing space for innovative strategies in under-served areas
- (e) Leveraging resources through innovative financing models for effective and efficient public finance for children

UNICEF implements the Country Programme through three programme components, namely:

Component 1: Young children survive, thrive and attain learning outcomes. This component supports (a) integrated maternal and newborn health interventions including HIV prevention, treatment, care and support; (b) interventions towards reducing stunting in children; (c) access to early childhood development, pre-primary and primary education particularly for children with disabilities and children in marginalized and disadvantaged communities; (d) strengthening the civil registration system, in particular, birth registration; and (e) strengthening the child protection system.

Component 2: Children and adolescents are protected from violence and HIV and have improved learning outcomes. This component comprises three elements, namely, ensuring the right of children and adolescents to protection from violence and exploitation, reducing HIV infections among adolescents with a focus on girls and helping children to achieve optimal learning outcomes through access to quality education options.

Component 3: Reducing child poverty and enhancing equity and social protection. Specific priorities of UNICEF under this component are (a) strengthening public finance for children, so that all children benefit optimally from government budgets at the central and decentralized levels; (b) supporting the establishment of an integrated child-sensitive, gender and shock-responsive social protection system; and (c) supporting robust evidence generation to inform social and economic policies and programmes for children.

The Country Programme sets out measures to ensure that it achieves impactful results for children. These **programme effectiveness** measures include programme performance monitoring and evaluation, the application of results-based management to ensure rigour in planning and monitoring, evidence-based advocacy and partnerships and the use of communication for development.

The Country Programme is aligned with the development priorities set out in NSDP II 2019–2023, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(CRPD), the SDGs, the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021, and the regional priorities of UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa. The Country Programme is expected to contribute to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Lesotho.

2.2 Results framework of the Country Programme

Table 4 shows the outputs and outcomes of the Country Programme approved by the Executive Board in 2018. Although the CPD delineates the three programme components, the programme components are interrelated and it is expected that activities from different components be linked programmatically for more impactful results. This convergence can be thematic, for example, different programme components involved in birth registration, or it can be geographic, such as different components working in the same community so that their respective interventions are mutually reinforcing.

Table 4: UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme 2019–2023

Country Programme 2019–2023	
Programme Component 1: Young children survive, thrive and attain learning outcomes	
Outcome 1: By 2023, young children (0 to 9 years), particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from gender responsive health, nutrition and early learning services.	<p>Output 1.1: By 2023, the capacity of the Ministry of Health and the cadre of health workers is improved to deliver quality integrated maternal, neonatal and child health (MNCH) and HIV services.</p> <p>Output 1.2: By 2023, parents and caregivers have increased capacity to practice and demand quality MNCH, infant and young child feeding (IYCF) and hygiene interventions.</p> <p>Output 1.3: By 2023, improved capacity of the Government (Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development) to provide high quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education.</p> <p>Output 1.4. By 2023, WASH systems are strengthened and WASH service delivery enhanced for sustained access to and use of safe water, sanitation and hygiene services and practices for all.³⁵</p>
Programme Component 2: Children and adolescents are protected from violence and HIV and have improved learning outcomes	
Outcome 2: By the end of 2023, adolescents (10 to 19 years), particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from gender-responsive quality health, HIV, learning and protection services.	<p>Output 2.1: Adolescents living with or at risk of HIV have increased capacity to demand quality prevention, identification, care and support services.</p> <p>Output 2.2: Improved capacity of the Ministry of Education and Training to provide high quality education, including alternative pathways.</p> <p>Output 2.3: Law enforcement officials have an increased capacity to identify, prevent and report violence against children and child marriage.</p>

³⁵ Output 1.4 did not appear in the original approved Country Programme Document. The Country Office decided at its 2021 Strategic Moment of Reflection to have an output that reflected the WASH activities implemented through the Country Programme.

Programme Component 3: Reducing child poverty and enhancing equity and social protection	
Outcome 3: By 2023, all children, particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from gender-responsive social policies for the sustainable and equitable realization of their rights.	<p>Output 3.1: By 2023, the Government of Lesotho has an improved child- and gender-sensitive, shock-responsive social protection system.</p> <p>Output 3.2: By 2023, the Government and citizens have increased awareness and capacity to enhance participation, transparency, accountability, equity and quality of public investment in children.</p> <p>Output 3.3: By 2023, quality evidence and data are generated through UNICEF-supported government programs to ensure child rights monitoring.</p>
Programme Effectiveness	
Outcome 4: The Country Programme is efficiently designed, coordinated, managed and supported to meet quality programme standards for achieving results for children.	<p>Output 4.1: Guidance, tools and resources to effectively and efficiently design and manage the programme of cooperation are available to UNICEF and its partners.</p> <p>Output 4.2: Guidance, tools and resources to effectively generate, analyse and utilize statistical and qualitative information for Child Rights System Monitoring are available in the country.</p> <p>Output 4.3: Guidance, tools and resources for effective communication on child rights issues with stakeholders are available to UNICEF and its partners.</p>

The Country Office monitors and reports on the progress towards achievement of outputs and outcomes through 13 outcome indicators and 37 output indicators, as shown in Table xx. The number of indicators is not onerous, and the perusal of the Country Office RAM report found that the Country Office has managed to report against the output indicators. Assessing progress on outcome indicators however presents a challenge. The outcome indicators are standard indicators for UNICEF and have baselines and targets to be achieved by the end of the country programme cycle. The evaluation observed that the main sources for measuring the indicators for Outcome 1 are national sources, namely, the District Health Information System 2, the Demographic and Health Surveys, and Education Sector reports. Outcome 2 has an indicator that depends on national education sector reports. If these national sources do not have updated information, as was the case, it presents a challenge for assessing progress at the level of outcomes.

The evaluation observed shortcomings in the reporting of some of the output indicators. The reporting in many instances did not include sex-disaggregated data where it would have been useful to have disaggregated data. There were also several instances where reporting only referred to the number, for example, the number of adolescents reached or the number of districts covered. Reporting the number only does not give a sense of the scale of the result. For example, coverage of three districts could either be 100 per cent coverage if the target was three districts, or it could be 30 per cent if the intention was to cover all 10 districts.

Table 5: Distribution of indicators in the Country Programme

	Number of outcome indicators	Number of output indicators
Outcome 1	6	9
Outcome 2	4	9
Outcome 3	2	9
Outcome 4	1	10

2.3 Rights holders

The Country Programme seeks to enable duty bearers (the Government and its ministries) meet their obligations to ensure that the needs and rights of children and their parents/caregivers are met. Children as rights holders are the primary beneficiaries of the interventions under the Country Programme. Outcome 1 addresses the needs and rights of children 0-9 years to quality health care that will ensure their survival at birth, their right to health and nutritious food that will enable them to grow into healthy adults, and their needs for early stimulation and development to serve as a solid foundation for learning. Outcome 1 also has mothers, including young mothers, as rights holders to quality maternal health and HIV services, to ensure their survival and the survival of their children in childbirth, and the prevention/elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Under Outcome 2, the rights holders are children and adolescents (10-19 years). The outcome addresses the rights of children to education, health services, including sexual health reproduction, and protection against all forms of violence. The rights holders under Outcome 3 are children as beneficiaries of a responsive social protection system and social policies for the realization of their rights.

While the Country Programme seeks to support the realization of the rights of all children in Lesotho, it also emphasizes the importance of gender-responsiveness in the design and implementation of interventions. The interventions therefore take into account the different needs of girls and boys, for example, in the learning environment, in child protection, and in health services.

Section 1.2 of the Country Programme Evaluation report provides information on the status of children and adolescents in Lesotho. The Country Programme seeks to address, for example, the needs and rights of the 45.5 per cent of children 0-17 years who are multi-dimensionally poor, the estimated 32 per cent of children under-five years whose growth has been stunted by food insecurity and the lack of good nutrition, and address the different forms of violence experienced by girls and boys in Lesotho.

2.4 Geographic coverage

The Country Programme has a national coverage, that is, all 10 administrative districts of Lesotho. It seeks to benefit all children primarily through strengthening national policy frameworks and systems, hence the national coverage. In testing service delivery approaches and interventions, or responding to humanitarian emergencies, the Country Programme targets particular districts in the country. For example, the rehabilitation of water facilities targeted the seven most drought affected districts in

Lesotho, and the training of early childhood educators targeted three rural districts, namely, Mafeteng, Maseru, and Barea. These districts are less developed than the districts of Maseru and Barea.

2.5 Theory of change

2.5.1 Theories of change for programme components

UNICEF Lesotho prepared detailed strategy notes for each programme component, in accordance with UNICEF requirements. The strategy notes provide a detailed description of the situation of children in Lesotho, the bottlenecks that need to be addressed, and the strategies to deliver the outputs that contribute to the achievement of the outcomes of the Country Programme. The strategy notes include a narrative of the theory of change for the respective programme components. The diagrammatic representations of the theory of change are included in Annex G.

Theory of change: First Decade (0 to 9 years)

The theory of change posits the following: If children are fully vaccinated, and together with the mother receive quality care during and immediately following birth including treatment to prevent HIV transmission, children's births are registered, children are treated for illnesses, children are exclusively breastfed, stimulated and are given diversified nutritious diets for the first two years of life, and beyond three years of age children receive quality education, then children in Lesotho will survive (under-five mortality reduced), thrive (under-five stunting reduced) and achieve age appropriate learning outcomes.

This overarching theory of change for the First Decade (Outcome 1) has nested theories of change for each output that contributes to Outcome 1, and these in turn inform the strategies and approaches to achieving the intended results for each of the outputs. For example, the theory of change for Output 1.1 proposes that UNICEF Lesotho supports systems strengthening for the expansion of immunization and early infant diagnosis, enhance capacities for the storage and distribution of vaccines, and support the Ministry of Home Affairs with innovative technology to enable the registration of children, including those who live in hard-to-reach areas.

For Output 1.2, the theory of change proposes strategies that include capacity strengthening of a range of service providers involved in addressing infant and young child feeding and reducing micronutrient deficiencies, and support for the multi-sectoral Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) platform. The theory of change for Output 1.2 identifies synergies between positive nutrition outcomes and access to and use of safe water and sanitation facilities and good hygiene. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) became more prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic, and was confirmed as a separate output in 2021.

For Output 1.3, the theory of change proposes that if parents are engaged in positive parenting including stimulation, play and development for children 0-2 years, and children 3-5 years have access to pre-primary education and quality school readiness interventions, then they will perform well in subsequent years of school, repetition rates and early school-leaving rates are reduced, and children are more likely to complete their secondary education. The theory of change also emphasizes the necessity for education that is inclusive of children with disabilities, and children from marginalised and disadvantaged communities.

Theory of change: Second Decade (10-19 years)

The theory of change logic at the Outcome level is: If UNICEF addresses key issues and blockages that influence the well-being of children and adolescents, including their education, skills development, protection from violence, in an integrated manner, this will contribute to the overall development of children and adolescents in Lesotho. Furthermore, if the capacities of duty bearers in health, education, and child protection systems are strengthened, duty bearers can provide accessible, quality, gender-responsive services to children and adolescents. If children and adolescents are aware of and experience these services as child- and adolescent-friendly, the demand for quality services will increase, and duty bearers in turn will change and improve their services to respond to the demand for services.

The theory of change is further elaborated that the level of outputs. For Output 2.1, if adolescent have the knowledge and understanding of their rights, health, especially on HIV, they can be empowered to demand SRH and HIV services that are responsive to their needs. If the demand for HIV prevention among adolescents at risk is increased, then the risk of new infections among adolescents is reduced. If the demand for treatment adherence among adolescents living with HIV is increased, then AIDS related deaths would be reduced. If new infections and AIDS related deaths among adolescents are reduced, then Lesotho will move closer towards having an AIDS-free generation.

The logic underpinning Output 2.2 is: If the school environment, governance and parental engagement are strengthened or improved, the quality of teaching and learning is improved, which in turn improves the learning outcomes for children. Specifically, if teachers are capacitated with the knowledge and skills they need to be effective teachers, then the quality of teaching improves, and in turn improves the quality of learning and learning outcomes. If the most disadvantaged adolescents including those with disabilities have access to learning, and if adolescents who are out of school have access to quality alternative education solutions and alternative pathways to education, they can achieve learning outcomes.

The logic for Output 2.3 is: If the knowledge and skills of children/adolescents, caregivers, law enforcement and other government officials including teachers, and civil society organizations and community organizations are enhanced, then they will be able to identify and report cases of sexual violence and child marriage to the appropriate authorities, and law enforcement authorities will respond within the standard operating procedures and legal prescripts. If religious leaders, teachers, community leaders and other gatekeepers and decision-makers in local communities are persuaded to promote positive socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices, this will contribute to prevention and reduction of violence against children and adolescents.

Theory of change: Reducing child poverty, enhancing equity and social protection

At the Outcome level, the theory of change can be summarized as: If the capacities of the Government are strengthened to improve social policies, strategies and programmes, then children in Lesotho, especially the most vulnerable children, will benefit from a system of social protection that is gender-responsive, and have their rights realized in a sustainable manner. The theory of change is expanded upon at the level of outputs. Output 3.1 proposes that: If the Government is supported to establish and integrated social protection system, then an appropriate mechanism for the identification of vulnerabilities will be in place, there will be appropriate policies and laws for social protection, there will be an institutional and administrative structure in place to effectively identify vulnerable populations, particularly children and their families, the social protection system will be multi-faceted and coordinated, enabling the Government and partners to address multiple and compounding vulnerabilities of children and families, in emergency and non-emergency situations.

The second leg of the theory of change (Output 3.2) addresses the issue of public finance for children. The logic is that; If Government officials have their capacities strengthened, and if advocacy to strengthen public finance for children is pursued, then policy makers and decision-makers will pay attention to children's issues when decisions on budget allocation are made. This attention will contribute to increasing the size of, and equity of the allocation, improve transparency and accountability of the national budget for basic social services, and enhance spending efficiency and value for money.

Effective decision-making requires reliable, quality data. The logic for Output 3.3 is: If the capacities of Government institutions, research organizations and civil society organizations are strengthened, then they will be able to generate real-time data and evidence to monitor the situation of children in Lesotho. This monitoring in turn will contribute to evidence-led advocacy for the adoption of policies, strategies and the equitable investment public resources.

Assumptions and risks

The theories of change in the strategy notes identified assumptions and risks. The common assumptions were the commitment of the Government and the adequacy of financial and human resources in Government to implement the interventions needed to achieve the outputs and contribute to the outcomes of the Country Programme. The issue of Government financial resources is especially pertinent for the sustainability of the results achieved under the Country Programme.

The strategy notes also identified major risks, namely, political instability, macro-economic instability and climate change. As mentioned in the country context section of the evaluation report, political instability in the period preceding the current programme cycle and during the programme cycle is a key consideration as it affects the pace of implementation, as well as the extent to which the Government is willing to adopt reforms to systems and legal frameworks. Lesotho's economic vulnerability is another major risk as it limits the availability of public resources for development, including, public resources for children. The risk of climate change and natural disasters are high, as discussed under the section on the country context.

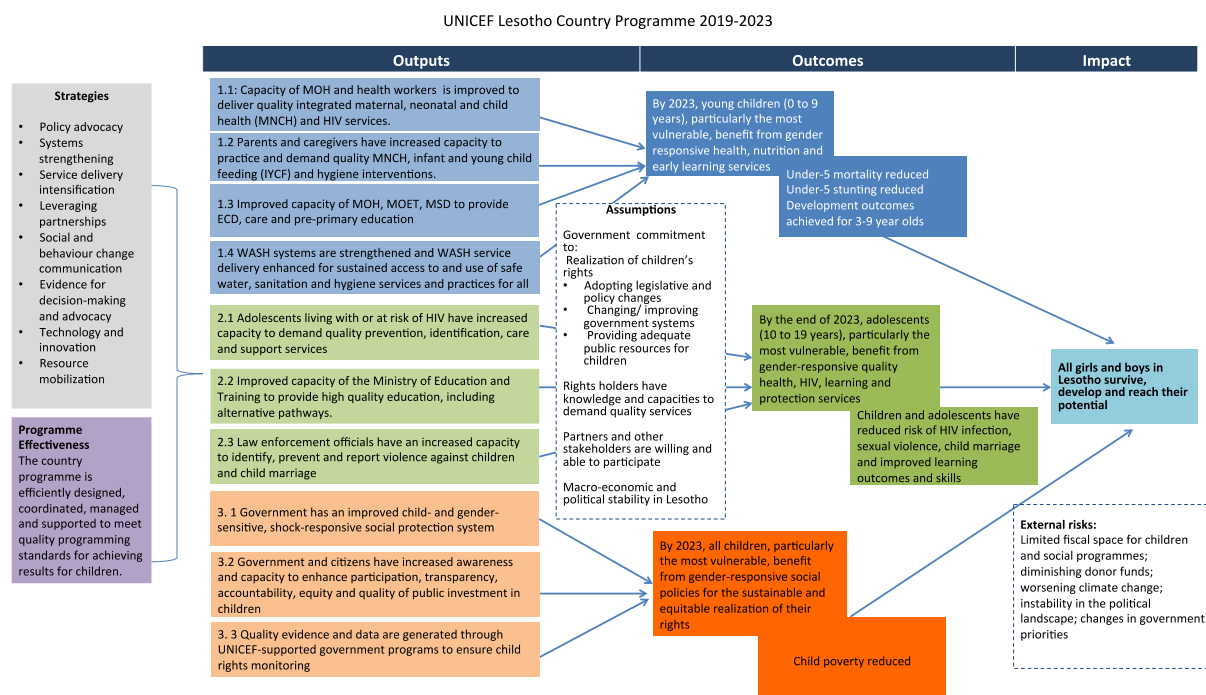
2.5.2 Assessment of the theories of change

The theories of change for the programme components have an internal logic that links the outputs of the particular programme component to the outcome of that programme component. Individually, the theories of change are sufficiently detailed to use in the analysis of the effectiveness of the Country Programme, and understanding the enablers and constraints to the results achieved.

The theories of change for Component 1 and Component 3 usefully identify synergies between the outputs in the component and it is clear how the outputs collectively contribute to the outcome of the programme component. The synergies between outputs for Component 2 are not as explicit, and the outputs appear as three discrete programmes.

Although the theories of change for each programme component broadly follow a similar outline, they differ markedly in the level of detail, presentation and the diagrammatic representation of the theory of change. It is clear that each programme team in the Country Office was responsible for the preparation of the theory of change for their respective components. However, the three theories of change were not consolidated into an overarching theory of change for the Country Programme. This is a missed opportunity to identify synergies between the programme components and improve the internal coherence of the Country Programme. The evaluation constructed a high-level theory of change summarizing the key elements of the theories of change of the three programme components. (Figure 2) and in Annex G.

Figure 2: High-level theory of change of the Country Programme



2.6 Stakeholders and partners

The Government of Lesotho is UNICEF's main partner. UNICEF works in partnership or collaborates with other development partners including United Nations agencies and civil society organizations. Table 6 identifies the main partners and stakeholders for the country programme. The evaluation interviewed representatives from these organizations. Annex D contains the list of key informants.

Table 6: Stakeholders' roles and interest in the Country Programme

Stakeholder/partner and outputs to which they mainly contribute	Role/interest
Government of Lesotho	
Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (Output 1.2)	Nutrition (with Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Training on school feeding). Interaction with UNICEF is primarily through the multi-sectoral Scaling Up Nutrition platform.
Ministry of Development Planning (including the Bureau of Statistics) (Output 3.3)	Strengthening national monitoring and evaluation; child poverty analysis, MICS, collaboration on VNR (2022). Is responsible for coordination of development cooperation and is the entry point for the UN system in Lesotho.

Ministry of Education and Training (Output 2.1, 2.2)	A significant partner for Outcome 2 of the Country Programme. ECCD; pre-primary, primary and secondary education; Education Information Management System; mainstreaming inclusive education; out-of-school children; capacity strengthening of educators; emerging issues (digital skills for adolescents, distance learning; resilient school and education systems); WASH in schools
Ministry of Finance (Output 3.2)	Joint Programme on Economic and Financial Management Integration for achievement of SDGs; improvements on budget transparency and participation; joint collaboration that can drive value for money analysis and equity analysis that can lead to better spending for children. Received technical and financial support for budget transparency processes and preparation of budget briefs.
Ministry of Health (Output 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4)	A significant partner for Outcome 1 of the Country Programme. Primary Health Care, MNCH; community health services; immunization; nutrition; WASH; Health Management Information System; PMTCT and adolescent HIV and health systems strengthening
Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sport and Recreation	The Ministry has had no direct involvement in the Country Programme, but UNICEF expressed interest in expanding its engagement with the Ministry.
Ministry of Home Affairs (Output 1.1)	Received support from UNICEF to strengthen the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System
Ministry of Justice and Law (Output 2.3)	Capacity building on child protection systems, services to children and women victims of violence
Ministry of Social Development (Output 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and Output 1.3)	A significant partner for Outcome 3 of the Country Programme. Received financial and technical support for strengthening the social protection system, developing National Social Assistance Strategies and Policy, sector coordination and information systems and payment systems.
Ministry of Water and the Water Commission (Output 1.4)	WASH. UNICEF provided financial and technical support to improve coordination in the water sector.
Non-governmental organizations	
Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) (Output 2.2)	Rights of children with disabilities, mainstreaming of disability into services and programmes for children. Advocacy on inclusive education with support from UNICEF (enactment of Disability Equity Act 2021) paving way for implementation of the inclusive education policy. Partnered UNICEF in making education materials accessible to learners during COVID-19 school closures.
Lesotho SchoolNet Camara	ICT for education. Implemented Learner Passport. Have a

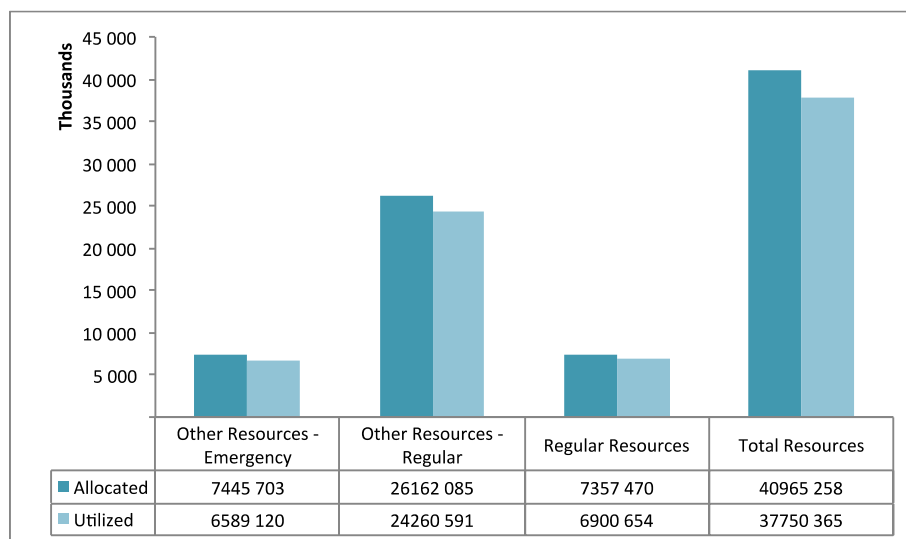
(Output 2.2)	national footprint and implement other online education programmes.
Lesotho Red Cross Society (Output 1.4 and Output 2.3) (Gender-responsive)	Health and social services, food security, emergency responses, social behaviour change (SBC). Have a national footprint and able to reach communities in remote areas. Implemented WASH interventions of the Country Programme in three districts. Also implemented risk communication and engagement on GBV and violence against children.
Catholic Relief Services (Lesotho)	Play a significant role in education, ECD, child protection, HIV prevention, poverty reduction, nutrition.
Network of Early Childhood Development of Lesotho (NECDOL) (Output 1.3)	Inclusive education in ECD and early learning. Trained teachers in Early Childhood Education with UNICEF support in three districts. Is an important partner for advocacy to increase budget allocations for early childhood development.
Sentebale (Output 2.1) (Gender-responsive)	Access to vital services for vulnerable children and young people (health, education, skills development). Implementing partner for the Together for Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (2Gether4SRHR)
Skillshare (Output 2.1) (Gender-responsive)	Reducing poverty, injustice and inequality. the Together for Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (2Gether4SRHR)
Help Lesotho (Output 2.1) (Gender-responsive)	Life skills training and support to young people affected by HIV, poverty and gender-based violence. Have a strong focus on gender and empowerment of young women. Implementing the Together for Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (2Gether4SRHR)
World Vision International (Output 1.4) (Gender-responsive)	WASH, gender-based violence, COVID-19 top-up usage survey. Partnered with UNICEF to implement WASH interventions in schools.
International Budget Partnership (Output 3.2)	Public Finance for Children, Open Budget Survey
Other stakeholders	
United Nations organizations in Lesotho including Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); International Organization for Migration (IOM); UNAIDS; UNDP; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); UNFPA; WFP; WHO	Collaborate with UNICEF on UNDAF and UN Response to COVID-19. Results of CPE will be used as input to develop the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the evaluation of the current UNDAF
European Union delegation	WASH, Social Protection and COVID-19 vaccination rollout.

(Output 3.1)	Contributed US\$6 million
GAVI (Output 1.1 and COVID-19 response)	Routine immunization and COVID-19 vaccination
Embassy of Japan	COVID-19 vaccination and cold chain management
President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)/United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implementing partners (e.g., Baylor and Elizabeth Glaser Paediatric AIDS Foundation) (Output 2.1)	Collaborating on HIV and AIDS interventions and partnering on COVID-19 vaccination among adolescents
Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria (Output 2.1) (Gender-responsive)	HIV prevention, treatment and support and provision of technical assistance to Global Fund grantees around Adolescent Girls and Young Women livelihoods programming
Global Partnership for Education (Output 2.2) (Gender-responsive)	Quality education (learning, system strengthening, EMIS) and COVID-19 response. Contributed US\$3.7 million

2.7 Resources

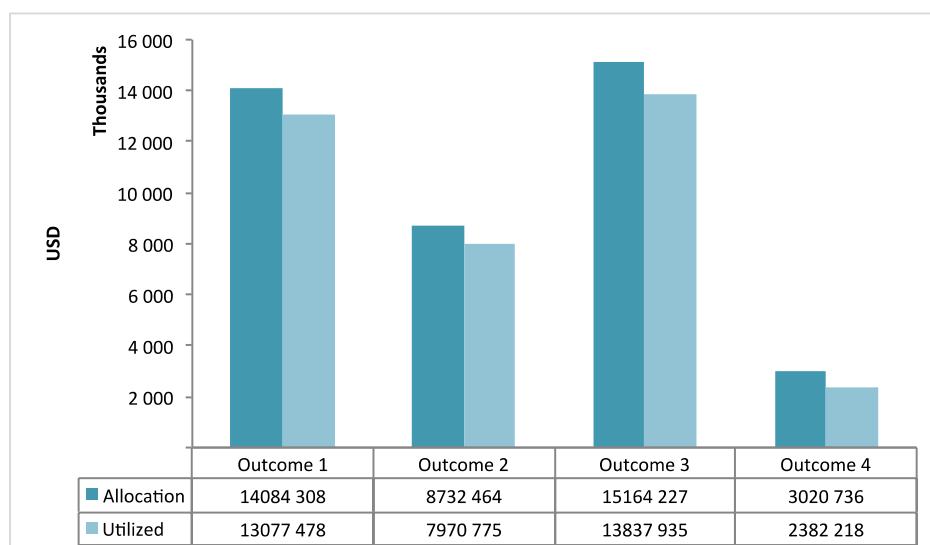
The Country Office has a budget allocation of US\$42,068,768. Figure 2 shows the allocation and utilization of resources by main resource type and Figure 3 shows the allocation and utilization by programme outcome. The largest proportion of the allocation comes from Other Resources – Regular, and Outcome 3 received the largest share of the allocation.

Figure 3: Funds allocated and utilized by resource type 2019–2022



Source: UNICEF Lesotho, May 2022.

Figure 4: Funds allocated and utilized by programme outcome 2019–2022



Source: UNICEF Lesotho, May 2022.

UNICEF Lesotho is operating on a staff complement of 30, with an additional 4 vacancies as of January 2022. Of the 30 posts, 22 are involved in programmes, and 8 are in operations. The current organizational chart is in Annex F. The Country Office receives support in operations and human resources management from the BNLE Hub (Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho and Eswatini) based at the ESARO sub-regional office in Johannesburg.

3 PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

3.1 Evaluation purpose

The evaluation serves the dual purpose of learning and accountability. Specifically, the purpose of the evaluation is to:

- Identify best practices, results and key lessons learned from the design, planning and implementation of the Country Programme. The intention is to use the results of the CPE to inform the development of the next UNICEF CPD.
- Strengthen accountability of UNICEF to national and international stakeholders.
- Strengthen accountability of UNICEF to the Executive Board.

Discussions with UNICEF Lesotho indicated that the evaluation would be used to inform the forthcoming evaluation of the UNDAF, the development of the UNSDCF and the Country Programme for UNICEF 2024–2028. They also indicated that the results of the evaluation could assist in making improvements to current Country Programme for the remaining 18 months of current project cycle.

Table 7 shows the main audiences for the CPE and their interests and potential use of the results of the CPE. The potential uses of and interest in the evaluation are based on the inception consultations with the Country Office. The consultation included individual discussions with the Representative and Deputy Representative to ascertain the most important issues they wished the evaluation to cover or matters that required emphasis. These discussions were followed by a discussion with the Country Management Team to outline the evaluation process and proposed methodology, and to solicit their views on the key evaluation questions.

Table 7: Evaluation audiences

User	Potential uses/interest
UNICEF Lesotho	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Input development of next CPD and UNSDCF• Refining or redesigning implementation strategies• Make improvements to current Country Programme• Accounting to national stakeholders and partners• Accounting to UNICEF Executive Board
Government of Lesotho	Evidence of results achieved through the Country Programme and recommendations for improvement by UNICEF and Government. Specifically, the Ministries of Health, Social Development and Education and Training as the main partners of UNICEF can use the results of the evaluation to strengthen their responses to the gaps and challenges identified in the evaluation, and build on the results achieved to date. The results of the evaluation can also be used by other ministries, for example, Home Affairs, Justice and Development Planning to develop strategies and mobilize resources to address gaps and challenges in areas related to their mandates.

Civil society organizations	The organizations that have partnered with UNICEF in the implementation of the Country Programme can use the results of the evaluation to strengthen implementation of their programmes and to plan and mobilize resources for scaling up or expanding interventions.
Development partners	Development partners, including the EU Delegation, the Global Partnership for Education and PEPFAR can use the evaluation results for their own assessment of their partnerships with UNICEF. There are other development partners who may not have contributed financially to UNICEF but play an important role in the development cooperation in Lesotho. They can use the results of the evaluation to identify areas opportunities for partnership with UNICEF, and coherence with other development partners in Lesotho.
UN Country Team Lesotho	The UN Country Team has an interest in the results of the evaluation. The results will serve as input to the UNDAF evaluation, and therefore reduce the need to cover the same ground as the UNICEF evaluation. The results of the evaluation will also be used in development of the UNSDCF.
UNICEF ESARO	UNICEF ESARO can use the results of the evaluation to identify areas where the Lesotho Country Office requires additional technical support. It can also use the results of the evaluation in the ESARO contribution to the Lesotho UNSDCF process.
UNICEF Executive Board	Evidence of results achieved through the Country Programme and recommendations for improvement/consideration in the next CPD

3.2 Evaluation objectives

The objectives for the evaluation as confirmed by the Lesotho Country Office in the inception phase are:

- (a) To assess the **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability** of the Lesotho Country Programme from its inception to the present, with particular attention on equity, gender equality, behavioural and social change for development, risk-informed programming, convergence of programme components and achieving results at scale, as well as UNICEF's strategic positioning in relation to its child rights mandate.
- (b) To identify and document key lessons learned, good practices and innovations in implementing the current 2019–2023 Country Programme, which can inform and support advocacy efforts for scale-up and replication.
- (c) To provide a set of forward-looking and actionable recommendations to strengthen programmatic strategies in the design of the next Lesotho Country Programme, taking into consideration national development priorities and plans and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the country.

These evaluation objectives coincide with objectives set out under Section 4 of the Terms of Reference. There was a discrepancy between these objectives and the objectives on the first page of

the Terms of Reference that included an objective to reflect on UNICEF's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for building resilience. During the inception phase this discrepancy was clarified and the objectives under Section 4 of the Terms of Reference were confirmed as the main objectives of the evaluation. UNICEF's responsiveness to the COVID-19 pandemic would be covered by key evaluation question 4 and integrated into findings for other questions, as may be appropriate.

3.3 Evaluation scope

The scope of the evaluation included all UNICEF activities implemented under the Country Programme (2019-2023), including emergency and humanitarian activities. The period covered by the evaluation is from January 2019 to August 2022. The formal Country Programme Document approved by the Executive Board was used as the basis for the evaluation. It took into consideration changes the Country Office made to the outputs, indicators and targets of the Country Programme at its Strategic Moment of Reflection (2021).

The evaluation scope was comprehensive, inclusive of all activities and funding sources. It assessed each programme component and related outputs in terms of the programme strategies: policy advice, systems strengthening, and service delivery intensification, and the appropriate mix of these strategies for the country context. While the evaluation was not expected to assess the impact of the Country Programme, it was required to make an assessment of progress towards the targets set for the outcomes of the Country Programme. The evaluation did not examine the operational activities of the Country Office in detail, and instead reflected on these under the questions relating to the efficiency of the Country Programme in the allocation and use of financial and human resources.

In the case of humanitarian action, the evaluation assessed UNICEF's response to the emergency aspect of the COVID-19 response, noting that the COVID-19 emergency was also used as a basis for developmental interventions. The humanitarian action in response to the 2019 drought also formed part of the scope of the evaluation.

The evaluation paid particular attention to UNICEF's strategic positioning as the agency with the mandate on child rights, within the development community in Lesotho. Here the evaluation paid close attention to the views of national partners in Government and civil society, about UNICEF's strategic positioning in relation to other UN entities, UNICEF's added value and its use of its comparative strengths.

The Terms of Reference required the evaluation to examine issues of equity, gender equality and convergence of programme components. The evaluation covered gender equality as a crosscutting theme and included gender equality in the key evaluation questions, and in specific questions used in the key informant interviews. Where available, the evaluation results used sex-disaggregated data in reporting. The evaluation sought to address the issue of equity in the design of the evaluation by identifying field mission project sites that included highly disadvantaged districts in the rural areas of Lesotho. Inclusion was also covered in the evaluation, paying attention to the issue of children with disabilities and the necessity for their inclusion in the education system.

The evaluation paid attention to the issue of coherence and synergy. Here, it examined coherence within the Country Programme, if and how the components of Country Programme connected to generate results, and coherence how the teams in the Country Office collaborated across their respective sections. The evaluation also assessed the alignment of the Country Programme with UNICEF's global commitments expressed in the Gender Action Plan 2018-2021, the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 Evaluation approach

The evaluation followed a theory-based approach, assessing the results of the interventions against the theories of change developed for each of the programme components and the targets set for the outputs of each programme component, assessing the extent to which the assumptions for achieving results held true and also taking into account the risks that materialized during the implementation of the Country Programme.

Given the objectives of the evaluation, it was essential that the evaluation be designed, conducted and reported in a way that would ensure its use by the Country Office and interested stakeholders. The evaluation therefore consulted and sought the inputs of the Country Office at all critical stages of the evaluation. The Country Office made inputs to the draft Terms of Reference. To launch the evaluation, the evaluation consultant made a presentation to the Country Office Management Team on the objectives, purpose and scope of the evaluation, and to obtain their comments on the draft key evaluation questions. The presentation also sought to mobilize their support for the evaluation. The Country Office was also given the opportunity to provide comments on the draft inception report, and their comments were taken into consideration in finalizing the inception report. Each section of the Country Office was consulted on the list of potential key informants and made inputs to the sampling of projects for the field mission. The preliminary findings and areas of recommendation were shared with the Country Office at a workshop, and they were also given the opportunity to provide written comments on the preliminary findings. The draft evaluation report was shared with the Country Office, and they were given a substantial period (three weeks) to submit written comments on the draft evaluation report. There were further follow-ups with the Country Office to verify information and clarify their inputs.

The evaluation observed the norms and standards of UNEG and the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.³⁶ The inception report identified ethical considerations for the evaluation and these were adhered to in the main phase of the evaluation. Prospective key informants received a letter (email) invitation informing them of the evaluation and inviting them to participate in an interview. On receiving their written agreement (email confirmation) to participate, the interviews were scheduled and key informants received questions in advance. At the beginning of each interview, key informants were reminded that their participation was voluntary, and they could opt out if they wished. The evaluation consultant outlined the interview process, and the conditions of confidentiality and anonymity, and only proceeded once they confirmed that they were satisfied to proceed. UNICEF officials were not present in interviews conducted with stakeholders and partners. The evaluation did not interview rights holders (children and adolescents) and thus no ethical clearance was required.

The evaluation aimed to be gender-responsive in its design and implementation. The interview guides contained questions on gender equality, asking for examples of how interventions contributed to gender equality. The selection of project sites for field visits included those where young women were the direct beneficiaries of the project (2Gether4SRH) and Updating of the NISSA at community level, where participants were most likely to be women with children benefiting from the Child Grants

³⁶ United Nations Evaluation Group, 'Norms and Standards for Evaluation' and United Nations Evaluation Group, 'UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'.

Programme. The initial sample of key informants were selected on the basis of their involvement in the Country Programme, and gender was not an explicit consideration. The sex distribution in the final sample of key informants is a result of those who were willing to participate, and not a result of using sex as a selection criterion. The evaluation did however record the sex of all key informants as this could assist in interpreting their responses to questions relating to gender equality.

3.4.2 Evaluation framework

The Terms of Reference set out key evaluation questions, which were discussed with UNICEF Lesotho and refined. Table 8 shows the final evaluation questions. An evaluation matrix was developed to guide the data collection and analysis. The matrix sets out the judgment criteria for each evaluation question and the data sources and methods of collection. The evaluation matrix is contained in Annex B.

Table 8: Evaluation criteria and questions

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions
1. Relevance	<p>1. To what extent is the Country Programme guided by national priorities, clear programme theories and relevant programme strategies appropriate to the changing context and emerging issues, and does it have the capacity to respond and adjust as necessary? Has UNICEF LCO employed a mix of policy advice, systems strengthening and service delivery intensification appropriate for the country context?</p> <p>2. To what extent has UNICEF been able to position itself as a strategic partner in the country context? What are UNICEF's comparative strengths in the country – particularly in comparison to other UN agencies and development partners – and how were these harnessed to help achieve the results?</p>
2. Coherence	<p>3. To what extent have Lesotho Country Programme strategies to address gender equality and equity, particularly the alignment of the Lesotho Country Programme with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and UNICEF's GAPs (2014–2017 and 2018–2021), been consistently integrated in all aspects of programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy? Did the Country Office's strategic approach to addressing the challenges of equity and gender equality play a complementary role to that of government and other development actors?</p> <p>4. To what extent is the Country Programme linked to and achieving synergies and coordination with other UN agencies, particularly in response to emergencies, such as COVID-19?</p>
3. Effectiveness	<p>5. To what extent has the Country Programme achieved its outcomes and outputs, or is likely to achieve them, including any differential results across gender, income, ethnicities, etc.? What results have been achieved through convergence, and what are the other major factors influencing the achievement (or not) of Country Programme outcomes?</p> <p>6. Did the Country Programme contribute to the reduction of inequities and exclusion and progress towards the achievement of greater gender equality? To what extent are programmes, communications and advocacy efforts gender responsive/transformational, and, relatedly, are UNICEF LCO staff capacitated to integrate and implement gender responsive/transformational programmes? How effectively has UNICEF LCO integrated social and behavioural change in its work and</p>

	that of its partners?
4. Efficiency	<p>7. Were resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) allocated and utilized strategically to track and achieve results, including equity and gender-related objectives?</p> <p>8. To what extent have the convergence strategy, the programme structure, including the life cycle approach, the office structure and the matrix management approach supported the delivery of the Country Programme? Were the chosen strategies and approaches the most cost effective and efficient? Were there alternatives that would have worked better and what are those?</p>
5. Sustainability	<p>9. To what extent are the positive changes and effects of the Country Programme sustainable at the relevant levels (e.g., community, provincial/state, national)? To what extent have the programme strategies adopted by UNICEF contributed to, or been designed in a way that they will contribute to, sustainability of results, especially equity and gender-related results?</p> <p>10. To what extent have the programme strategies, plans and tools, particularly those with an equity and gender focus, been institutionalized in systems, policies, mechanisms and strategies among government, NGO/civil society, and other partners and stakeholders? Will the strategies/plans/tools be more widely replicated or adapted? What's the scalability of models introduced by UNICEF?</p>

3.4.3 Data collection

Primary data collection: The evaluation collected primary data through semi-structured interviews with government officials, civil society organizations, UNICEF staff and staff in other UN agencies in Lesotho. The evaluation adopted a purposive (non-probability) sampling strategy. It selected key informants who were directly involved in the implementation of the Country Programme, key informants representing development partners (donors), and key informants from the UN system in Lesotho. The long list of key informants was constructed from the list of participants in UNICEF's Strategic Moments of Reflection meetings held in 2021, as they were likely to have an intimate knowledge of the Country Programme. The evaluation consultant obtained additional suggestions for key informants from the Country Office programme staff. As can be seen from Table 8, the evaluation was not successful in obtaining interviews with all the organizations identified in the proposed sample. The most significant gap was the Ministry of Health, a key partner in the implementation of the Country Programme. Of the 13 potential key informants, the evaluation only secured and interview with one official in the Ministry of Health. The evaluation also did not secure interviews with the Ministry of Water and the Bureau of Statistics. It is noted that the Terms of Reference called for consideration of participatory methods, especially with regard to rights holders. During the inception phase it was agreed that rights holders would not form part of the primary data collection.

Table 9: Proposed sample of key informants versus realized sample of key informants

Category	Number of key informants/organizations proposed in inception report	Number of key informants / organizations consulted in main phase of evaluation
Government of Lesotho	34 key informants from 9 ministries/departments	15 key informants from 7 ministries/departments
UNICEF Country Office	20	17
UN system in Lesotho	7 organizations	5 organizations
Civil society organizations	8 organizations	4 organizations
Development partners	3 organizations	1 organization

Most of the interviews were conducted virtually, using the Teams and Zoom platforms. The interviews lasted one hour on average, and lasted 90 minutes for group interviews. The evaluation developed a set of questions for each category of key informants, and these questions were sent in advance of the interview to enable the informants to prepare if they felt the need to do so. The questions were supplemented with probing questions in the course of each interview. The interviews were not recorded, and instead, handwritten notes were taken. During the inception phase the evaluation consultant discussed the issue of recording and concluded that key informants would be more at ease without recording the interviews. This is understandable in the case of government officials and civil society as the interviews were conducted immediately prior to the elections, when tensions and uncertainty about the election outcome were high. The evaluation conducted 34 interviews, involving a total of 57 individuals, 55 per cent female and 45 per cent male. Table 10 shows the number of key informants and number of interviews. The interviews were conducted over the period from June to August 2022.

Table 10: Stakeholders interviewed

Category	Organizations	Number of key informants	Number of interviews
Government	Ministries: Health (1); Finance (1); Home Affairs (1); Development Planning (2); Education and Training (4); Social Development (5); Justice and Law (1)	15	12
United Nations	UNDP (1), UNFPA (1), WFP (2), WHO (7), United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) (1)	12	5
	UNICEF Lesotho	17	12
Civil society	LNFOOD (1), Lesotho SchoolNet Camara (2) Lesotho Catholic Relief Services (2), HELP Lesotho (6)	11	4
Development partners	European Union Delegation (1)	1	1

In addition to the key informant interviews, the evaluation consultant undertook a field mission to Lesotho from 15–19 August 2022, as COVID-19 travel restrictions had eased. The field mission entailed visits to two field sites and a group interview with a civil society organization implementing a UNICEF-supported programme. The selection of the sample of projects and sites was done during the inception phase. The Country Office submitted a short list of potential projects (five projects for

Outcome 1, five projects for Outcome 2 and three projects for Outcome 3). The final sample of three projects were selected, guided by the following criteria:

- Coverage of each programme component
- Projects implemented by the Government
- Projects implemented by civil society organizations
- Budget allocated to the projects
- A mix of performance
- Projects in remote areas (subject to logistics) as well as projects in peri-urban and more accessible areas

The projects selected covered the three programme components and were considered large in monetary terms. The time required to reach the sites was also taken into consideration. The evaluation consultant also used the opportunity to conduct in-person interviews with stakeholders who had not been interviewed prior to the field mission.

Table 11: Project site visits

Project	Criteria met	Details
2gether 4 SRHR project supporting adolescent girls and young mothers, funded by Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation	Civil society implementers, budget in excess of US\$1 million, implemented in 7 rural districts, performance rated by Country Office as 'on track' (Programme component 1)	Group discussion at Help Lesotho head office in Maseru with field officers joining remotely. Received a presentation on the project and its achievements and had an opportunity to discuss the project.
Education response to COVID-19 in Roma	Government implementers, part of large project budget US\$3.7 million, peri-urban setting, performance rated by Country Office as 'on track' (Programme component 2)	Interviewed school principal on support received from UNICEF. Interviewed WASH focal point and demonstration of WASH facilities. Interviewed teacher about training received.
NISSA updating Community Based Categorization process in the Leribe district	Government implementers, pilot in rural district, part of large project budget US\$6 million, performance rated by Country Office as 'moderate' (Programme component 3)	Observed social workers facilitating a Community Based Categorization exercise aimed at updating the NISSA registry. Had an opportunity to discuss the process with social workers and NISSA official.

Secondary data: The evaluation drew on UNICEF documents: programme strategy notes, country office annual reports, country office programme report (RAM), UNICEF global documents; UNDAF documents and annual reports; government documents (national plan, VNR reports); and databanks of UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO and the World Bank. It also drew on government strategy documents and plans, reports relevant to the sectors covered by the Country Programme, and official statistics from the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics. While the Country Office provided several documents, the evaluation consultant conducted internet searches to supplement the initial batch of documents received from the Country Office. The list of main documents consulted is in Annex C.

The review of the secondary data was conducted in two phases. The first phase was conducted in preparing the inception report. This entailed reviewing the country context information and the

situation of children and adolescents in Lesotho, and updating these with the latest information available. It included a review of Country Programme Document, Strategy Notes, Country Office Annual Work Plans and Country Office Annual Reports to gain insights into the details of the Country Programme and theory of change, and the nature of the data used in reporting progress and results. Notes were made on each major document to briefly state the contents of the document and relevance for particular evaluation questions. In the main phase of the evaluation, the secondary data were used to triangulate, as far as possible, the primary data collected through the key informant interviews.

Data analysis and reporting: The evaluation assessed the primary and secondary data against the evaluation matrix. The analysis also assessed the data against the theories of change for the three main programme components and in particular, whether the strategies proposed in the theories of change were used, and the extent to which the assumptions made in the theories of change held true. The interview data was extracted from the interview notes and tabulated against the questions contained in the evaluation matrix. The common responses and themes were extracted from these data tables and complemented by information contained in the country office annual reports and RAM report. An assessment was then made using the judgment criteria set out in the evaluation matrix.

For questions on relevance, government documents, particularly the National Strategic Development Plan II, the UNDAF 2019-2023 and UNICEF corporate documents were used to validate the data from the interviews. The analysis entailed checking the sections of these documents to ascertain how the interventions under the Country Programme aligned with priorities set out in these documents. In the case of alignment of the Country Programme, the wording of the Country Programme Outcomes was assessed against the relevant sections of the UNDAF. The evaluation also looked for changes made to the Country Programme outputs and results framework and other changes proposed at the Strategic Moment of Reflections sessions. In analyzing the data pertaining to the relevance of the Country Programme in the context of change and crises, the evaluation analyzed the Country Office's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and its Humanitarian Action for Children responses.

The analysis of coherence focused on UNICEF's collaboration with other UN agencies in Lesotho, particularly though not exclusively in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation looked for documentary evidence of the examples provided by UNICEF and other UN agencies of their collaboration. The evaluation was able to access and review the list of joint programmes of the United Nations in Lesotho, but was not able to access comprehensive information on all joint programmes.

The analysis of the effectiveness (results at output and outcome levels) formed the largest of the data analysis. Here, the data for each output and outcome of the Country Programme was analyzed and secondary data, preferably from Government sources and other sources external to Country Office, were sought to triangulate the interview data and the information extracted from Country Office documents. The analysis, as far as possible, sought sex disaggregated data and data on inclusion, for the indicators used to assess progress or achievement of the outputs and outcomes. Triangulating the data on the results at output and outcome levels was hampered by the lack of updated, national data. This limitation is discussed further in section 3.4.4 of the evaluation report. In assessing the effectiveness of the Country Programme, the evaluation also referred to the theory of change for each of the programme components (Annex G) to assess the strength of the linkages between the interventions, the outputs and the outcomes, and the extent to which the assumptions held true.

The analysis of the efficiency of the Country Programme in the allocation and use of resources relied on the financial data from the Country Office. The evaluation was able to obtain data on budget allocations and utilization by programme outputs and by types of financial resources. This enabled the evaluation to analyze the allocation financial resources across the all the outputs of the Country

Programme. The financial data were not sufficiently disaggregated to conduct a detailed assessment of the gender-responsiveness of the budget allocations.

The analysis of sustainability of the Country Programme considered evidence on the extent of country ownership in the form of the Government institutionalizing the interventions or policy frameworks, and assuming full responsibility for the financing of interventions. Sustainability also considered the extent to which systems have been strengthened, and examples where the Government and/or other partners have continued or scaled up the interventions that UNICEF has supported.

The final stage of the data analysis involved the preparation of preliminary findings that integrated the data from the document analysis with the primary data from the interviews and field visits. The evaluation presented these preliminary findings to the Country Office in workshop. The Country Office worked in their component teams to reflect on the preliminary findings and areas of recommendation, and provided feedback in plenary. The feedback as well as the written inputs from the workshop assisted the evaluation consultant to refine the preliminary findings and areas of recommendation and address the data gaps. The draft report was shared with the Country Office for their review and written feedback. The comments received were taken into account in finalising the report.

3.4.4 Limitations

The evaluation has limitations that should be taken into consideration in interpreting the main findings.

At the time of planning the evaluation, COVID-19 restrictions were in place, and in the inception phase it was agreed that data collection interviews would be conducted remotely, via Zoom or Teams platforms. These interviews were to be complemented by a brief field mission towards the end of the data collection phase. Remote interviews and meetings have become the norm for government officials and other key informants in Lesotho and the evaluation consultant has conducted remote interviews for other evaluations since 2019. However, remote interviews are not a completely satisfactory substitute for in-person interviews. They do not provide the evaluation consultant with the non-verbal information that can be obtained from in-person interviews. Where group interviews were held, it was also challenging to ensure that all voices in the group were heard. Poor internet connectivity presented a problem in some interviews.

The field mission conducted following the remote interviews greatly assisted in promoting a more participatory approach. The evaluation consultant was able to meet most of the Country Office staff and the Representative, and this contributed to strengthening the dialogue on the emerging findings and securing additional information to strengthen the evaluation. The visits to the three selected projects gave the implementers an opportunity to engage directly and in-person with the evaluation consultant in their work settings.

The evaluation was unable to secure interviews with all the intended stakeholders listed in the inception report, even though the data collection period was kept open for three months. Interviews with key government partners did not materialize despite several follow-ups. The period of July to August was a busy one for government officials. Securing interviews with international partners also proved challenging because of the holiday period.

The small number of interviewees per organization, in instances only one person per organization, presented a challenge to maintaining anonymity. It is difficult to reference key informants as sources of information in the findings section of the report, as this would breach the undertaking made by the evaluation consultant that statements or views would not be attributed to individuals.

The evaluation comprised 10 key evaluation questions, which had been slightly modified from the compounded questions in the Terms of Reference. Even though the key evaluation questions were modified, each evaluation question was made up of two or three sub questions. The evaluation did not seek to answer all the sub questions, as this would make the analysis and reporting unwieldy. Instead, the findings reflect the main thrust of the evaluation questions.

The Terms of Reference called a strong focus on gender-responsiveness in the evaluation methodology and in reporting the results of the Country Programme. Questions relating to gender and gender-responsiveness were included in all interview guides, and the selection of project sites for field visits also took gender into consideration. However, the evaluation was not able to report sex-disaggregated results for all outputs of the Country Programme, as this information was not always available from reports of UNICEF Lesotho and its partners.

There are other data limitations that should be taken into consideration. The lack of updated national data is a major limitation to assessing progress at the Outcome level. Most outcome indicators require statistics from government sources, and in many instances, the latest data is 2018. The Demographic and Health Survey was scheduled to be conducted during the current Country Programme cycle, but was postponed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Voluntary National Review reports of 2019 and 2022 illustrate the gaps in Lesotho's national data for effectively monitoring progress towards achieving the national targets of the SDGs.

The manner in which the Country Office reports its results is another limitation. In most instances, results record only the number of beneficiaries, etc., which is reported without a denominator. The results reported therefore do not give an indication of the scale of the results.

4 FINDINGS

Discussion of the findings of the evaluation is organized around the main evaluation criteria, namely, **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability**; and the evaluation questions for each criterion.

The context within which UNICEF Lesotho implemented the Country Programme was unprecedented as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of the evaluation, two of the three-and-a-half years of the Country Programme implementation were of necessity focused on supporting the national response to and the recovery from the pandemic. While the evaluation findings frequently make reference to the COVID-19 pandemic, this is not all that UNICEF has done under the Country Programme. There are areas where UNICEF continued to focus on the development agenda and advocated continuity of essential services for children, adolescents, mothers and caregivers.

4.1 Relevance

Evaluation question 1. *To what extent is the Country Programme guided by national priorities, clear programme theories and relevant programme strategies appropriate to the changing context and emerging issues, and does it have the capacity to respond and adjust as necessary? Has UNICEF LCO employed a mix of policy advice, systems strengthening and service delivery intensification appropriate for the country context?*

Finding 1: The Country Programme is well aligned with national priorities as set out in Lesotho's NSDP and in the sector plans of relevant ministries.

There is clear alignment between the Country Programme and Lesotho's national priorities. The key components of the Country Programme fall mainly within the NSDP II Key Priority Area II: Strengthening Human Capital and the NSDP II crosscutting issues of children, youth and gender. In the case of the latter, there is alignment between the Country Programme and the NSDP II strategic objectives: (i) promote development of children and protect their rights; (ii) promote gender equality; and (iii) improve youth participation in development.

NSDP II strategic objectives for health and nutrition include: (i) strengthen disease prevention interventions; (ii) increase access, coverage, effectiveness and quality of health care service delivery for all; (iii) sustain health care services; and (iv) strengthen and scale up nutrition interventions. The Country Programme Component I addresses strengthening the quality of health care services, disease prevention and strengthening nutrition interventions.

Within the education sector, NSDP II strategic objectives include: (i) improve access and quality of early childhood care and development, primary and secondary education; and (ii) promote an inclusive and equitable education system. The NSDP II objectives are well reflected in the Government's Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016–2026. The Country Programme is aligned to both of these key documents, and includes inclusion- and equity-integrated support for improving the access and quality of early childhood care and development, as well as primary/secondary education, out-of-school children and adolescents.

For social protection, NSDP II strategic objectives include: (i) improve efficiency of the social protection system; and (ii) promote income enhancing social protection programmes, and these are reflected in the Country Programme.

The Country Programme is also aligned with areas of the NSDP II, namely, Key Priority Area IV: Strengthening national governance and accountability systems, the strategic objectives of which are: (i) enhancing efficiency of the justice system; and (ii) strengthening national monitoring and evaluation systems.

Within the water sector, NSDP II has the strategic objective to increase access to sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene. The Country Programme's WASH interventions are in line with this strategic objective.

Government partners, namely, the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development confirmed the alignment of the Country Programme with the priorities of the sector/ministry and indicated that UNICEF's consultation in preparing the Annual Work Plans and regular engagement with government partners contributed to ensuring alignment with the priorities of their respective ministries. The Ministry of Health identified several interventions under the Country Programme that are highly responsive to the health sector, for example, immunization, health systems strengthening and improving the quality of care for mothers, newborns and children.

Key informants from the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Health noted that child protection and nutrition, respectively, are not receiving sufficient attention in the implementation of the Country Programme. In the case of child protection, government partners appreciated UNICEF's support, but felt that child protection needs are increasing and require more support from UNICEF and development partners. Although the NSDP prioritizes nutrition, the Ministry of Health acknowledged the lack of attention to nutrition, which was primarily due to the Ministry focusing on the health response to COVID-19.³⁷

Finding 2: UNICEF Lesotho has demonstrated its ability to respond rapidly and effectively to the dramatically changing context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The country office mobilized additional resources to support the national response, and adapted programme interventions to respond to the pandemic. It adjusted its mix of strategies to respond to the needs of the changed country context, and also adjusted its internal operations. While COVID-19 was a disruption, UNICEF was agile and used the opportunity to do things differently. UNICEF is also using the COVID-19 response interventions as a foundation for building long-term resilience.

UNICEF contributed to all five main categories of outputs of the UN COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan, with its main contributions being to: (i) Health First: protecting health services and systems during the crisis; and (ii) Protecting People: social protection and basic services. UNICEF's contribution to the COVID-19 response in 2020 resulted in 22,501 children immunized despite the pandemic, 361,162 people benefiting from improved access to WASH services, and 4,195 adolescents and young people benefiting from SRH services, as well as HIV prevention, diagnosis and treatment. In education, 116,957 girls and 107,960 boys benefited from distance learning solutions including the 12,000 pre-school children that benefitted from age-appropriate books, and households benefited from inclusive social protection programmes and cash transfers.³⁸ Details of these results are discussed further in the section on Effectiveness.

³⁷ The official responsible for nutrition in the Ministry of Health was not available for interviews to explore the issue further. The data on child nutrition in Lesotho indicate that nutrition remains a serious challenge for the country.

³⁸ United Nations Lesotho, *2020 UN Country Annual Results Report*, UN Lesotho, March 2021.

The evaluation found several examples of UNICEF's responsiveness, and its leadership during the COVID-19 crisis. While many of its activities were focused on the immediate response to COVID-19, UNICEF also sought to ensure that the interventions served as the foundation for building/strengthening systems for resilience.

- (a) UNICEF played a key role in the procurement, storage and distribution of vaccines for COVID-19. The country office supported the Government to develop the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP), undertake the district planning and roll-out of vaccines, and upgrade cold chain systems at national and district health facilities. The benefits of strengthening the system for vaccines go beyond COVID-19 vaccines and extend to other vaccines and related medical products. UNICEF did not lose sight of the necessity for continuity of other health services for children and advocated for continuity of routine immunization services. UNICEF was also successful in leveraging COVID-19 investments to support broader health systems, such as in developing community health information systems and assessing health care waste management.
- (b) Mobilizing resources from the Global Partnership for Education, UNICEF provided extensive support for the Ministry of Education and Training to shift to online learning when the detrimental impact of school closures was becoming evident. UNICEF supported the Ministry to introduce the Learning Passport for online learning and learner packs for children unable to access online learning.³⁹ UNICEF also supported the Ministry to phase in the safe re-opening of schools by providing financial assistance for the procurement of personal protective equipment for schools, the installation of hand washing stations and the training of school focal points in COVID-19 prevention and mitigation.⁴⁰ The introduction of alternative methods of learning and teaching is already serving as the basis for developing a comprehensive learning strategy to support children and adolescents in and out of school to ensure continuity in all contexts and to improve education outcomes and skills. The hand washing stations in schools are potentially a catalyst for improving other aspects of WASH in schools and communities. Using its own resources, UNICEF supported the improvement of online pedagogy at the Lesotho College of Education through procurement of ICT equipment. In addition, UNICEF improved the learning and teaching environment at the college through installation of hands-free hand-washing stations for both the lecturers and students.
- (c) Social protection formed an important element of the Government's response to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on poor households. UNICEF's technical and financial assistance to the Ministry of Social Development enabled the development and implementation of additional cash transfers to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on existing Child Grants Programme (CGP) beneficiaries (47,974 beneficiaries) and enrol an additional 8,162 new CGP beneficiaries.⁴¹ The support has enabled the Government of Lesotho to have a functional shock-responsive social protection system in place, and will assist the Government in responding to future shocks.
- (d) The COVID-19 context put the spotlight on the vulnerability of children to violence, particularly during the period of restricted movement and continued school closures, hence UNICEF

³⁹ Key Informants 5, 18 and 32.

⁴⁰ Key Informants 5, 6 and 18 and field observations at secondary school, Roma.

⁴¹ United Nations Children's Fund Lesotho, *UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Full Approved Report 2021*, UNICEF Lesotho, 2021 and Key Informants 4, 8, and 24.

supported the Government through the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Justice and Law to ensure continuity of essential protection services including birth registrations. UNICEF supported the capacity building child protection teams to enable them to identify, report and respond to any form of violence against women and children. These included the strengthening of education sector personnel for safe schools' operations, community council protection teams and village child justice committees to increase alternative dispute resolution measures for children at community level. UNICEF further supported the reactivation of the Child Helpline as the main channel for children to report violence and provide referral to other service providers, and the development of Standard Operating Procedures and referral mechanisms for ease of child protection case management.⁴² The Government was supported with the provision of personal protective equipment to the entire front-line Social Service Workforce to continue provision of essential services including the provision of psychosocial support services to children and parents.

- (e) SBCC formed an important part of UNICEF's response. UNICEF supported the national COVID-19 Risk Communication and Engagement group that was critical to driving communication awareness about COVID-19 and debunking misinformation about the disease and vaccines.

UNICEF demonstrated agility in changing or modifying its modalities during COVID-19 lockdowns. Where feasible, it held virtual meetings and consultations, provided financial assistance to, for example, community health workers to purchase airtime and data for their participation in virtual meetings. UNICEF also used U-Report⁴³ and telephone surveys to solicit views of programme beneficiaries during the COVID-19 lockdown periods.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented several challenges to the operations of UNICEF in Lesotho, and the Country Office demonstrated agility in meeting these challenges. Staff was provided with equipment to enable them to work remotely, and flexible, blended work arrangements were introduced with the reopening of the office. Office procedures were modified, for example, the use of electronic signatures. Senior management is reported to have paid attention to the health and well being of staff through constant communication and regular meetings. UNICEF also supported government staff with airtime to enable them to continue work relations, remote supervision and attending meetings.

COVID-19 was not the only emergency in the current programme cycle. In 2019 when the Government declared a drought emergency affecting over 500,000 people. UNICEF mobilized US\$868,485 for the response to the crisis and supported the Government to develop the National Drought Response Plan, as well as strategies on nutrition, WASH, social protection and child protection.⁴⁴ Over 2,000 children with severe and acute malnutrition received nutritional supplies, over

⁴² Key Informants 3 and 27.

⁴³ U-Report is a messaging tool used by UNICEF to engage young people on issues that affect them. It gathers information on the views of young people on a range of topics and the data collected and insights generated are shared with policy makers and with the young people who participate in the polls.

⁴⁴ UNICEF Lesotho, Humanitarian Action for Children, 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/media/75036/file/2020-HAC-Lesotho.pdf>

300,000 people benefited from WASH interventions, and over 3,000 child victims of violence were referred to psychosocial support and legal and health services.⁴⁵

The Country Office adjusted its mix of strategies in response to the changes in the country context. The COVID-19 crisis called for an emphasis on service delivery intensification, while in the recovery phase there is an appropriate emphasis on systems strengthening to build resilience to future shocks.

The CPD and the theories of change for the three main components of the Country Programme indicate a clear intention to focus on policy advocacy and capacity development to strengthen systems. However, the context of the COVID-19 pandemic saw UNICEF supporting service delivery in critical areas of health, education and social protection, as illustrated in Finding 2. This is what the context demanded. This does not mean that the other strategies were not used – in supporting service delivery, UNICEF also sought to strengthen capacities and systems. UNICEF's ability to mobilize financial resources for service delivery was a critical factor – without the financial resources mobilized specifically for the COVID-19 response, UNICEF would probably have emphasised 'upstream' strategies.

Evaluation question 2. *To what extent has UNICEF been able to position itself as a strategic partner in the country context? What are UNICEF's comparative strengths in the country – particularly in comparison to other UN agencies and development partners – and how were these harnessed to help achieve the results?*

Finding 3: UNICEF has made good use of its comparative strengths to influence policies and implementation to achieve results for children.

UNICEF used its comparative strength on procurement and logistics to great effect, being in the forefront of supporting the Government to initially prevent infection (through promotion of hygiene practices and improving access to water) and to procure vaccines for COVID-19. Its technical expertise in cold chain storage enabled the Government to enhance its cold chain capacity. This is discussed further in the section on Effectiveness.

Other United Nations agencies in Lesotho acknowledge UNICEF as the foremost agency on matters pertaining to children and shared examples of how they benefit from UNICEF's comparative strengths. WHO, the lead agency for normative and policy guidance on health issues, acknowledged UNICEF's expertise in community engagement and relies on UNICEF to support the implementation of these norms and guidelines. Another UN agency described UNICEF's good relationships with the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Education and Training as an advantage for other agencies, which ordinarily do not have access to these ministries.

The evaluation found examples of UNICEF using its convening role to achieve results for children. For example, UNICEF chairs the UN Nutrition network, which has facilitated nutrition policy processes, including the development of an investment case for nutrition to guide policy on the level of investments required to reduce the burden of malnutrition in the country.⁴⁶ UNICEF also used its

⁴⁵ United Nations Children's Fund Lesotho, *UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Annual Report 2019*, UNICEF Lesotho, 2019.

⁴⁶ United Nations Children's Fund Lesotho, 'Nutrition Brief: Case for increased investment in nutrition in Lesotho', prepared by Oxford Policy Management, UNICEF Lesotho, 2022.

convening power to advocate and facilitate better coordination among the ministries of Home Affairs, Health and Social Development on matters pertaining to birth registration.

As the lead agency on the rights of children, ministries value the technical expertise, advice and resources that UNICEF brings to the table. UNICEF is therefore well placed to influence the content of policies and their implementation. Examples of this influence include the National Vaccine Deployment Strategy; the revision of PMTCT guidelines; the development of the Inclusive Education Policy; and the development of the National Social Protection Strategy. These examples are discussed in more detail in the section on Effectiveness.

4.2 Coherence

Evaluation question 3. *To what extent have Lesotho Country Programme strategies to address gender equality and equity, particularly the alignment of the Lesotho Country Programme with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and UNICEF's GAPs (2014–2017 and 2018–2021), been consistently integrated in all aspects of programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy? Did the Country Office's strategic approach to addressing the challenges of equity and gender equality play a complementary role to that of government and other development actors?*

Finding 4: The Country Programme is aligned with UNICEF's GAP (2018–2021) and interventions under the Country Programme are among the priority interventions of NSDP II to address gender inequality. The evaluation found examples of the integration of gender equality in results and priorities to empower adolescent girls, complementary to the work of other UN agencies in Lesotho. However, UNICEF's work in addressing gender inequality tends to be projectized and lacks coherence.

Gender-responsiveness is reflected in the outcome statements of the Country Programme, and the evaluation found specific outputs that are aligned with the UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2018-2021⁴⁷ as illustrated in Table 12.

⁴⁷ UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2018-2021, July 2017, <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/sites/unicef.org/rosa/files/2020-06/UNICEF%20Gender%20Action%20Plan%202018%20-%202021.pdf>

Table 12: Alignment between Country Programme outputs and UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2018-2021

	Track 1 Gender equality (a) for girls and boys (b) in care and support for all children	Track 2 Adolescent girls' well-being and empowerment
Strategic Plan Goal 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender equitable health care for girls and boys Quality maternal care <i>CPD Output 1.1</i> <i>CPD Output 1.2</i> <i>CPD Output 3.1</i>	Promoting adolescents girls' nutrition and pregnancy care, preventing HIV/AIDS and HPV <i>CPD Output 2.1</i>
Strategic Plan Goal 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender equality in access, retention and learning in education for girls and boys Gender equality in teaching and education systems <i>CPD Output 2.1</i> <i>CPD Output 2.2</i>	
Strategic Plan Goal 3	Gender-based prevention of violence against girls and boys <i>CPD Output 2.3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preventing and responding to child marriage and early unions Preventing gender-based violence in emergencies <i>CPD Output 2.3</i>
Strategic Plan Goal 4	Gender responsive WASH systems <i>CPD Output 1.4</i>	Accessible and dignified menstrual hygiene management <i>CPD Output 1.4</i>

There are several examples of UNICEF interventions addressing gender inequality. UNICEF's support for advocacy to eliminate early, forced and child marriages in Lesotho, which is also a priority reflected in NSDP II, is one such example. Within the education sector, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Training to strengthen gender-responsiveness of national education sector plans and policies. In the case of child protection, UNICEF supports capacity strengthening of law enforcement officials to identify and respond effectively to cases of gender-based violence and prevent violence, as well as supporting the implementation of the Gender and Development Policy Implementation Plan (2019–2024). UNICEF's support in the areas of Sexual Reproductive Health for adolescents and young girls, HIV prevention, and menstrual health all contain elements of addressing gender inequality. The joint UN 2gether 4 SRHR programme in Lesotho targeting pregnant and breastfeeding adolescent girls and young women is a major intervention supported by UNICEF to empower adolescent girls. UNICEF is a member of the UN Gender-Based Violence Forum and is tasked with focusing on issues relating to Gender-Based Violence and children.

There is no doubt that UNICEF is addressing the issue of gender inequality. However, there appears to be little coherence among these interventions, and they are reported as discrete projects or interventions in UNICEF's annual reports for 2019, 2020 and 2021. The Country Office reports sex-disaggregated results where such data are available. The Country Office does not have an overarching gender strategy. Such a strategy would enable the Country Office to achieve coherence among the various gender-related projects. The evaluation also found that the Country Office does not have a partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sport and Recreation. The Department of

Gender in the ministry is the lead entity in Government responsible for coordinating efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence through the Anti-GBV Coordination Forum. The mandate of the department is to ensure equality of opportunities for women and men, girls and boys, so that development efforts have an impact on gender on all gender issues.⁴⁸ The Country Office, in its 2021 Strategic Moments of Reflection indicated that it would expand the partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sport and Recreation.

The evaluation observed that while the Country Office has a gender focal point, it does not have a gender specialist. It is also noted that UN Women does not have a physical presence in Lesotho as the organization operates from the multi-country office in Pretoria, South Africa. There appears to be no collaboration between UN Women and UNICEF in the country. This further underscores the need for gender technical capacity in the Country Office.

Evaluation question 4. *To what extent is the Country Programme linked to and achieving synergies and coordination with other UN agencies, particularly in response to emergencies, such as COVID-19?*

Finding 5: UNICEF collaborated with other UN agencies in the response to COVID-19, and plays an important role in UN coordination. Other UN agencies commented positively on UNICEF's collaboration, but also pointed to the need for more effective collaboration and coordination among UN agencies in the next UNSDCF.

As mentioned under Finding 2, UNICEF contributed to all five main categories of outputs of the UN COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan. Key informant interviews of external stakeholders and UN agencies confirmed that there was good collaboration among UN agencies during the COVID-19 response. UNICEF and WHO, as joint focal points for the COVID-19 response, are reported to have collaborated extensively during this period. UNICEF also broadened its partnerships with non-traditional partners, such as the Embassy of Japan and USAID, and started working with other government institutions within and outside the Ministry of Health.

All agencies are expected to collaborate in order to deliver on the development agenda as expressed in the UNDAF 2019–2023. UNICEF has a large country office relative to other UN agencies in Lesotho, and other agencies look to UNICEF to take up the coordination role. UNICEF chairs the Programme Coherence Team and the Communication Group, and has used these platforms for fostering synergies and coherence among the UN agencies. The Country Office and UN agencies interviewed identified examples of good collaboration: the Transforming Education summit with UNESCO; collaboration with WFP on school feeding; and the UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS. UNICEF collaborated with FAO on linking food security to social protection, a collaboration that began in 2013 with piloting the integration of food security and the Child Grants Programme and ended in 2016, producing a successful cash plus model focused on nutrition that has been evaluated and continues to be the basis of UNICEF work on Community Based Nutrition Interventions.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Department of Gender, Lesotho website. <https://gender.gov.ls/>

⁴⁹ Pace, N., Daidone, S., Bhalla, G. and Prifti, E, *Evaluation of Lesotho's Child Grants Programme (CGP) and Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and Access to Government Services (SPRINGS) project*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and United Nations Children's Fund, Rome, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4862en>.

The joint UN Nutrition network reprogrammed funds from the global UN-REACH (Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger) programme and developed a livelihoods intervention to address the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns among 2000 households with children under the age of 5 years. The Prime minister launched the intervention and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office also officiated at the event.⁵⁰

While other UN agencies appreciate the role that UNICEF plays in coordination, more than one agency raised the concern that UNICEF does not always acknowledge or leverage the comparative strengths of other UN agencies, and that collaboration among UN agencies in the country could be improved.

4.3 Effectiveness

Evaluation question 5. *To what extent has the Country Programme achieved its outcomes and outputs, or is likely to achieve them, including any differential results across gender, income, ethnicities, etc.? What results have been achieved through convergence, and what are the other major factors influencing the achievement (or not) of Country Programme outcomes?*

Evaluation question 6. *Did the Country Programme contribute to the reduction of inequities and exclusion and progress towards the achievement of greater gender equality? To what extent are programmes, communications and advocacy efforts gender responsive/transformational, and, relatedly, are UNICEF LCO staff capacitated to integrate and implement gender responsive/transformational programmes? How effectively has UNICEF LCO integrated social and behavioural change in its work and that of its partners?*

The evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the Country Programme, using the results framework and indicators reflected in the Country Programme Full Report 2021 and the results reported for the period up to 31 December 2021. The Strategic Moments of Reflection (SMR) report of December 2021 suggested modifications to indicators and targets, and these have been taken into account in the discussion of results.

4.3.1 Results achieved

Outcome 1: By 2023, young children (0 to 9 years), particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from gender responsive health, nutrition, WASH⁵¹ and early learning services.

Output 1.1: By 2023, the capacity of the Ministry of Health and the cadre of health workers is improved to deliver quality integrated MNCH and HIV services.

Finding 6: UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health and health care workers to deliver quality, integrated services to strengthen the survival of mothers and newborns. This capacity strengthening contributed to an expansion in facilities providing primary emergency obstetric and newborn care and the implementation of newborn care packages in health facilities, while

⁵⁰ Information provided by UNICEF Lesotho.

⁵¹ WASH does not appear in the CPD Outcome 1 statement. It is included here based on the proposal made at UNICEF Lesotho SMR meeting in December 2021. Outputs related to WASH are discussed as a new set of outputs, separate from the other outputs for Outcome 1, as proposed at the SMR discussions.

also enabling hospitals to implement the Perinatal Problem Identification Programme (PPIPP). UNICEF support to the Expanded Programme on Immunization continued during the period under review, helping to sustain good immunization coverage. PMTCT was further strengthened with the adoption of new guidelines, which health care workers were trained to implement.

Through UNICEF's support, the Ministry of Health was able to designate 90 per cent of facilities as providing primary emergency obstetric and newborn care by 2021, while 100 per cent of health facilities are implementing the essential newborn care package. With UNICEF's support, the Ministry has established Kangaroo Mother Care units in seven hospitals in 2021, and 18 hospitals (17 district and one tertiary) are implementing the PPIP system. This latter system tracks the quality of services by identifying the causes of inpatient deaths and factors that can be modified to ensure the survival of mothers and newborns.⁵² As is evident from the available data, the decline in neonatal mortality rates has been stagnant; it was 45.25 per 1,000 live births in 2017 and declined slightly to 44.26 in 2020⁵³. This is mainly due to poor quality care services during antenatal care, delivery and postnatal care.⁵⁴ A key informant from the Ministry of Health indicated that neonatal mortality has not improved and that medical staff needed to be better skilled at identifying risks to newborns as early as possible.

UNICEF's continued support to the Expanded Programme of Immunization contributed to maintaining good immunization coverage, which risked being reduced during the period of COVID-19 movement restrictions. WHO-UNICEF estimates of the coverage of MCV1 for 2021 is 90 per cent, and 82 per cent for MCV2, while coverage for DTP3 is estimated at 87 per cent.⁵⁵

Lesotho continues to make progress in eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV. UNICEF supported the revision of PMTCT guidelines and the review of national and subnational targets for PMTCT. New guidelines for elimination of mother-to-child transmission (e-MTCT) were adopted and health care workers were trained to ensure quality implementation of the new guidelines. The MTCT rate has declined slightly from 6.75 per 100 population in 2018 to 5.98 in 2020,⁵⁶ and the percentage of pregnant women living with HIV and receiving ART for PMTCT has increased to 93 per cent in 2021.⁵⁷

Community interventions continue to be a significant part of health services in Lesotho and village health workers (VHWs) remain a critical link between community and health facilities. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to develop a community monitoring and evaluation framework, indicators, a monitoring and evaluation tool and the Community Health Information System (CHIS) to ensure tracking of basic curative, promotion and preventive health care services provided at community level. This intervention was implemented through integrated Child Survival and Development (CSD) programming using nutrition, HIV and MNCH funding.⁵⁸

⁵² UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Full Approved Report 2021.

⁵³ UNICEF database, accessed 18 November 2022.

⁵⁴ UNICEF database, accessed 18 September 2022.

⁵⁵ WHO/UNICEF estimates of immunization coverage, 2021 revision, <https://immunizationdata.who.int/pages/coverage/mcv.html?CODE=LSO&ANTIGEN=MCV1&YEAR=>>.

⁵⁶ UNICEF database, accessed 18 September 2022.

⁵⁷ UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Full Approved Report 2021.

⁵⁸ UNICEF CSD Team

Output 1.2: By 2023, parents and caregivers have increased capacity to practice and demand quality MNCH, IYCF and hygiene interventions.

Finding 7: UNICEF supported interventions aimed at improving community practices in nutrition and hygiene, using a combination of policy advocacy, strengthening coordination mechanisms, supporting service delivery and working in partnership with civil society organizations. With the already poor state of nutrition of children worsening as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, nutrition will require more attention going forward.

Through UNICEF support to the Ministry of Health, all 10 districts in the country are implementing programmes aimed at improving the diversity of diets for children. A total of 26,919 mothers and caregivers benefited from nutrition and education counselling, slightly below the target of 35,000, and 17,842 children received micronutrient powders.⁵⁹ Health workers (148) and community leaders (287) also benefited from training in IYCF and HIV, field officers were trained to increase the uptake of nutrition and HIV services and social accountability scorecard training was given to health and nutrition workers (15) and peer educators (35) to improve service delivery access and quality in two districts. UNICEF also supported continuity in essential health care services for pregnant women and children, providing iron-folate supplements to about 30,000 pregnant women receiving antenatal care services, while vitamin A was administered to 22,661 children aged 6–11 months and 58,579 children aged 12–59 months. Children experiencing severe acute malnutrition received treatment at health facilities in all 10 districts (2,300 children).⁶⁰

To address the burden of malnutrition and its consequences, the Government developed the 2019–2023 Lesotho Food and Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan (LFNSAP).⁶¹ UNICEF provided technical support in the development of the strategy. This costed plan identifies eleven (11) key results areas with 39 goals and 105 strategies to be implemented at an estimated cost of US\$239 million over five years (2019–2023). However, this cost represents nearly 20 per cent of total current health expenditure and implementation was delayed due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶²

As a result of joint resource mobilization and leveraging the role of the monarch, His Majesty King Letsie's Nutrition Champion Lesotho received a loan of US\$18 million and a US\$4 million grant from the World Bank and the Power of Nutrition, respectively, to implement nutrition specific intervention and strengthen the coordinating role of the Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office.⁶³ UNICEF Lesotho continued to chair the joint UN Nutrition network to provide further coordinated implementation of nutrition support to government. Nutrition falls within the responsibility of four major ministries, namely, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Cabinet-Prime Minister's Office. UNICEF, through the UN Nutrition network, has sought to mobilize high-level engagement of the national coordination structure of the Food and Nutrition

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, *Lesotho Food and Nutrition Strategy and Costed Action Plan 2019–2023*, prepared by the Food and Nutrition Coordination Office, Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Maseru, Lesotho, March 2019.

⁶² 'Nutrition Brief: Case for increased investment in nutrition in Lesotho'.

⁶³ Information provided by UNICEF Lesotho.

Coordinating Office, but this remains a challenge. The World Bank support has just begun addressing the coordination issues.⁶⁴

Output 1.3: By 2023, improved capacity of the Government (Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development) to provide high quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education.

Finding 8: UNICEF supported systems strengthening in the ECCD sub-sector, and the results are moving in a positive direction with an increasing number of ECCD facilitators and teachers receiving formal training. The curriculum, revised with support from UNICEF, is expected to benefit over 47,000 children in pre-schools. The sub-sector, however, continues to face many challenges, notably, the lack of adequate budgetary provision, insufficient numbers of qualified early childhood education (ECE) teachers, and the decline in enrolments in pre-primary education since 2018.

The revision of the ECCD curriculum is a significant result of UNICEF's support and coordination. The revised curriculum, which has begun rolling out in pre-primary facilities attached to primary schools, according to a key informant in the Ministry of Education and Training, shows promise in improving the quality of ECE. The curriculum will also be rolled out to private ECE centres that will receive guidance from the Ministry, but they will have the latitude to implement as they see fit. The Ministry of Social Development has finalized guidelines for day-care centres, with support from UNICEF, and these guidelines are expected to improve the quality of services at day-care centres.

UNICEF supported the training of ECE teachers. Through supporting NECDOL, a cumulative total of 2,309 ECE teachers were trained, benefiting 9,484 children (5,288 female) aged 3–5 years. UNICEF also supported the Lesotho College of Education with protective equipment so that ECE teacher trainees could continue to learn. There is a long way to go in ensuring that ECE teachers have the requisite qualifications, as currently less than 20 per cent of ECE teachers are qualified.

There is concern about the decline in pre-primary enrolments reflected in the EMIS data. Gross enrolment declined from 38.2 per cent in 2018 to 36.6 per cent in 2019. As the decrease predates the COVID-19 pandemic, it cannot be attributed to the pandemic. The Ministry of Education and Training is aware of the decline and has begun investigating its causes.

Budget provision for pre-primary historically has been a challenge. UNICEF, in partnership with NECDOL, has been advocating for increasing the budget share for pre-primary education from 0.21 per cent in 2019 to 2 per cent in 2021. However, the pre-primary education share of the education budget declined to 0.13 per cent in 2021, reportedly due to pressures on the national budget to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and increased marginally to 0.14 per cent in the 2022 fiscal year.⁶⁵ Key informants from the Ministry of Education and Training indicated that financial support from UNICEF would be critical going forward if the Ministry is to make progress in the ECCD subsector.

Output 1.4: By 2023, WASH systems are strengthened and WASH service delivery enhanced for sustained access to and use of safe water, sanitation and hygiene services and practices for all.

Finding 9: UNICEF contributed to increasing access to drinking water services, improving hand hygiene in schools and communities and improving sanitation in schools. It also

⁶⁴ UNICEF CSD Team

⁶⁵ Ministry of Education and Training multi-year budget data.

contributed to strengthening systems in the water sector. The water sector is vital to the social and economic progress of Lesotho. The sector faces challenges that also present an opportunity for UNICEF to play an influencing role at the policy level.

Even though WASH is not identified as a distinct output under Outcome 1, nor is it reflected in the Outcome 1 statement, UNICEF understood the importance of WASH in achieving results for children and adolescents, and for the communities in which they live. UNICEF achieved notable results in WASH in the period under review.

UNICEF supported the construction/rehabilitation of 79 water supply systems in drought-affected areas, benefiting 101,321 people, giving them access to clean water supply in communities (22), schools (69) and health care facilities (12). To strengthen the management of these water supply systems, which were reconstructed on climate resilience principles, UNICEF supported the training of over 400 sector stakeholders and community members.⁶⁶ An additional 163,820 people in health care facilities benefited from water supplied by trucks.⁶⁷

Schools and communities benefited from UNICEF's support to improve hand hygiene. Hand hygiene stations were installed at 745⁶⁸ schools, benefiting 251,100 learners. Training and awareness to improve hand hygiene practices were rolled out in 858 schools with established WASH clubs. This training benefited over 16,000 learners and 956 teachers and school board members.⁶⁹ Communities and health care facilities also benefited from behaviour change communication (423,234 people).⁷⁰ UNICEF worked in partnership with World Vision and the Lesotho Red Cross Society to achieve these results.

UNICEF supported improved sanitation in schools, with 9 completed inclusive toilet blocks (7 in progress) and 22 menstrual hygiene management rooms.⁷¹

In systems strengthening, UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Office of the Water Commissioner to strengthen coordination of the water sector. This entailed facilitating policy dialogues on WASH in schools and hand hygiene, as well as supporting engagement with external bodies, for example, Sanitation and Water for All (SW), the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) water sector. UNICEF supported the development of the National Hand Hygiene Strategy (2021) and the Hand Hygiene market analysis with the Ministry of Health, along with the National WASH in School Guidelines (2021) with the Ministry of Education and Training. UNICEF also supported the Department of Rural Water Supply to improve data and monitoring in the sector.

While UNICEF's support to WASH takes place against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges of WASH in Lesotho are longstanding ones. The coverage of WASH services, especially in rural areas, though improving since 2000, is not adequate. Less than half the population (45.82 per

⁶⁶ *UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Full Approved Report 2021*. Figures taken from RAM report and are different to figures quoted in UNICEF WASH presentation to SMR, December 2021, which stated 104 water supply systems constructed/rehabilitated and 335,490 people benefited.

⁶⁷ UNICEF WASH presentation to SMR, December 2021.

⁶⁸ Reporting of results does not indicate if these are primary schools, secondary schools or both.

⁶⁹ *UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Full Approved Report 2021*.

⁷⁰ UNICEF WASH presentation to SMR, December 2021.

⁷¹ Ibid.

cent) use safely managed sanitation services, 27.86 per cent of the population use safely managed drinking water services (the proportion is higher in rural areas) and 51.32 per cent of the population have no hand washing facility at home.⁷² The country experiences recurrent droughts and 6 of the 10 districts are rated as high drought risk areas.

UNICEF intends to intensify systems strengthening and service delivery in the remaining period of the Country Programme cycle. This includes exploring the WASH financing landscape and opportunities for innovative financing; mainstreaming climate resilience in WASH; the development of strategies to end open defecation; influencing policies to ensure mainstreaming of inclusion (gender and disability) in WASH; and the development of a sector management information system to overcome the existing fragmentation and improve data governance. On service delivery, UNICEF intends to continue work with the Department of Rural Water Supply to rehabilitate water supply systems in areas most affected by climate shocks, scale up WASH in schools, work with partners to end open defecation and improve access to safely managed sanitation services.⁷³ Completion of this ambitious agenda will require resources, and it is likely that the work will continue into the next Country Programme cycle.

Outcome 2: By the end of 2023, adolescents (10–19 years), particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from gender-responsive quality health, HIV, learning and protection services.

Output 2.1: Adolescents living with or at risk of HIV have increased capacity to demand quality prevention, identification, care and support services.

Finding 10: UNICEF contributed to the national HIV response through interventions aimed at addressing the infection rates of HIV among adolescents and young people, especially adolescent girls and young women who account for a disproportionate number of new infections. There has been a small decline in the rate of new infections and the number of adolescents and young people living with HIV since 2018, and an increase in the percentage of children living with HIV who receive antiretroviral treatment.

UNICEF's contribution to the national HIV response was primarily at the level of generating evidence through proof of concepts to inform strategies, guidelines and plans for improving adolescent HIV services. This includes technical assistance to the Ministry of Health to revise the 2021 Antiretroviral Guidelines and the Strategy for Accelerated Action for Health of Adolescents; and technical and financial assistance for the development of national, district and facility-level HIV targets for improving programme efficiency. The work on target setting at health facility level enabled UNICEF to contribute to the review of the 2019–2023 National Strategy and Plan Monitoring & Evaluation Framework and the PEPFAR 2022 Operational Plan.

In the area of strengthening HIV services for adolescents and young people, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to provide at least three high impact HIV prevention interventions (testing, treatment and behaviour change interventions) in all 10 districts of Lesotho, and additional SRHR/HIV messaging in two districts, reaching 1,870 adolescents and young people.⁷⁴ In total, UNICEF's

⁷² UNICEF Datawarehouse, accessed 19 September 2022. Figures for 2019 are from the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (2021).

⁷³ UNICEF WASH presentation to SMR, December 2021.

⁷⁴ UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Full Approved Report 2021.

SRH/HIV messaging reached nearly 50,000 adolescents in 2021. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to implement the social accountability initiative aimed at improving the quality of adolescent friendly health services. This enabled the Ministry to monitor access to these services; they found a 40 per cent reduction in HIV testing among young people between 2020 and 2021. The evidence generated was used to develop interventions to increase the uptake of services.⁷⁵

HIV was also integrated into the 2gether 4 SRHR programme which has components led by UNFPA, UNAIDS and WHO. Through this programme implemented by Help Lesotho, adolescent mothers (433) and their caregivers/partners received counselling and psychosocial support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2gether 4 SRHR programme provides integrated services that include nutrition awareness and referrals, income generation assistance, reintegration into education, food relief and gender-based violence. The programme has been implemented in four sites in two rural districts and targets unemployed, rural pregnant girls and young mothers 12–24 years, as well as their parents and caregivers. It has produced positive results, namely: 99 per cent of mothers know their HIV status, 89 per cent make autonomous decisions to use contraceptives, 87 per cent use modern contraceptives, 80 per cent negotiate condom use with their partners and 98 per cent of HIV-exposed infants have a HIV-free status at 18 months.⁷⁶

UNICEF's contribution to HIV interventions is made as a member of the UN Joint Task Team on AIDS and its membership of technical working groups of the Ministry of Health, for example, the Technical Working Group on adolescent health. These provide an opportunity for UNICEF to influence the agenda on HIV. The approach of influencing agendas and leveraging stakeholders is appropriate in view of UNICEF's limited resources, and can be more effective than spreading limited resources thinly to work more 'downstream' in HIV.

Output 2.2: Improved capacity in the Ministry of Education and Training to provide high quality education, including alternative pathways.

Finding 11: UNICEF contributed to strengthening systems and capacities in the education sector in Lesotho. The direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning has been profound, and it will require a concerted effort to regain the ground lost during the pandemic.

UNICEF provided extensive support to the Ministry of Education and Training during the period under review. As the coordinating agency for the Local Education Group, UNICEF's support in 2019 focused on advocacy on ECE,⁷⁷ policies for non-formal education and inclusive education and strengthening the EMIS. The nature of the support changed dramatically in 2020 when the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic became evident. UNICEF's contributions included:

- Convening stakeholders to develop the national education sector response plan and mobilizing US\$3.5 million from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).
- Supporting the development of distance learning through radio, television and learner packs to ensure continuity in learning during COVID-19 restrictions.
- Supporting the rollout of the Learning Passport.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Help Lesotho presentation to CPE, 16 August 2022, and Help Lesotho Project Brief: Empowering Young Mothers in Rural Lesotho.

⁷⁷ Refer to findings on ECE under Output 1.3 of Outcome 1.

In 2021, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Training to reopen schools safely – supporting the procurement of masks for children, the installation of hand washing stations, the training of teachers in accelerated learning to enable children to make-up for learning lost during COVID-19 restrictions and on-going improvements on EMIS. The table below summarizes the support provided and the number of schools, teachers and children who benefited.

Table 13: UNICEF support of education response to COVID-19

Support provided	End beneficiaries
Procurement of masks	934,370 masks for 500,000 children in school
Training of teachers in accelerated learning	851 teachers from 399 schools (representing 23% of all teachers and 22% of all schools), 34,040 learners benefited
Catch up classes	22% of planned target of 44,000 benefited, includes 5,654 girls
Learning Passport digital platform	40% (2,200) of secondary teachers registered
Fee subsidies to lessen economic impact of COVID-19	3,483 children (87% of target of 4,000) benefited

Source: UNICEF Country Office Annual Report, 2021.

At the level of policy and plans, UNICEF supported the Ministry in reviewing the National Education Sector Plan (2020–2023), with particular attention on addressing the issues of access and retention of boys in school; drafting the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy Policy; and developing the inception report of the National Skills Audit study.

Key informants raised the following key challenges:

- (a) The EMIS system is not living up to its promise of quality and timely data. There have been serious delays in capturing data and the current data collected in 2020 is, according to the Ministry, becoming out-dated, which is limiting its effective use in planning. Connectivity problems and insufficient devices for data collection represent challenges to collecting data at school and district levels. The EMIS is in transition and is not yet able to provide data on individual learners that the Ministry is ultimately aiming for.
- (b) The Ministry of Education and Training has adopted the Learner Passport well for those who have access to devices and data. The poorest children do not have devices and data outside school premises is not free as the relevant regulatory authority has not yet made a decision on zero rating of data for Learner Passport. UNICEF has supported the Ministry to develop learner packs for children in pre-primary to Grade 4 who cannot access online platforms.
- (c) An Inclusive Education Policy is in place, but resources for implementation are limited. There is also a lack of data on children with disabilities.⁷⁸

Children in Lesotho have effectively lost two years of schooling, and when this is added to the poor learning outcomes that predate the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation presents difficulties for the

⁷⁸ Reported by Key Informant 31.

education sector. Harnessing the lessons learned from implementing alternative teaching and learning platforms can help to address these difficulties and improve learning outcomes.

Output 2.3: Law enforcement officials have increased capacity to identify, prevent and report violence against children and child marriage.

Finding 12: UNICEF contributed to strengthening the capacities of key ministries, namely, Home Affairs, Social Development, Justice and Law and Education and Training to improve access and quality of child protection services. This was especially critical during the period of COVID-19 restrictions. Systems and institutional strengthening at the level of government ministries were complemented by SBCC and strengthening community-based structures for child protection.

UNICEF reported notable achievements for the period under review. These include:

- (a) The launch of the Violence Against Children Survey report and subsequent development of the National Response Plan to address key findings. The survey generated evidence to inform strategies and programmes aimed at preventing and responding to violence against children.
- (b) The Child Helpline was re-established in the Ministry of Social Development. The helpline, previously run by a non-governmental organization, had closed for some time and was reactivated under the auspices of the Ministry and provides 24-hour access for children in need of support.
- (c) Partnering with the Lesotho Red Cross Society, national- and community-level child protection structures were strengthened, benefiting 15,679 children (females: 8,273 and males: 7,406) with community-based mental health and social support services. Caregivers (10,5200) received psychological support and positive parenting guidance to better support their children.
- (d) To date, 52 village child justice committees have been trained to increase the alternative dispute resolution measures for children at the community-level justice system. These committees include children as members, and deal with crime prevention.⁷⁹
- (e) Support to the Ministry of Justice and Law for compilation of a training manual for justice personnel dealing with child protection issues, including prosecution of children, labour issues, etc.; the development of Standard Operating Procedures and referral mechanisms for ease of child protection case management.
- (f) Support to the Ministry of Home Affairs to implement the Civilian Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Strategic Plan 2020–2024 to make civil registration accessible to all, especially people in hard-to-reach areas, and to introduce innovative approaches to civil registration. With the implementation of improvements to the system, establishing registration facilities in health care centres and community outreach, the Ministry has achieved an improvement in the percentage of children under 5 years whose births are registered, reaching 49 per cent in 2021.
- (g) Child protection messaging for advocacy formed a significant part of UNICEF's interventions, with a total of 537,528 child protection messages sent to 13,400 subscribers. Other UN agencies, government ministries and civil society organizations also use these messages. There were other

⁷⁹ Figures from Key Informant 34.

campaigns led by the Minister of Social Development to address harmful practices and promote positive prevention strategies – these campaigns reached 18,120 people (10,900 females).

- (h) UNICEF's support enabled Lesotho to meet state party reporting obligations on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Key informants expressed the view that, while UNICEF is making a valuable contribution, the magnitude of child protection challenges demands that this aspect of the Country Programme should be prioritized and allocated adequate resources.⁸⁰ Some of the challenges facing child protection include:

- (a) The Government adopted the Child Friendly Schools approach in the previous Country Programme cycle. There are significant implementation challenges, including lack of funding, and the training of teachers in violence prevention and response was disrupted during COVID-19 restrictions, as many teachers did not have access to online facilities.⁸¹
- (b) Challenges in reaching village child justice committees in remote rural areas, making monitoring and capacity building difficult. The Ministry of Justice and Law has ambitions to have these village committees across the country, but lacks the financial resources to do so, as well as evidence of the effectiveness of these community-based structures.
- (c) Challenges in changing entrenched attitudes and behaviours of justice sector professionals (magistrates, judges and court officials) so that their engagement/processing of child matters is consistent with child rights principles and more modern approaches to children's issues.

Outcome 3: By 2023, all children, particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from gender-responsive social policies for the sustainable and equitable realization of their rights.

Output 3.1: By 2023, the Government of Lesotho has an improved child- and gender-sensitive, shock-responsive social protection system.

Finding 13: UNICEF contributed to enhancing the social protection for children in Lesotho through strengthening policies and strategies and supporting the development and rollout of shock-responsive social protection. NISSA has played a central role in targeting, planning and coordination of social assistance. There are however challenges with updating the information on NISSA.

UNICEF provided significant technical assistance as well as financial assistance to enhance social protection for children in Lesotho. Key results achieved during the Country Programme cycle include:

- (a) The development of the National Social Protection Strategy, which was presented to the Informal Cabinet in early 2022 and was adopted on 2 August 2022. The strategy is reported to be an improvement on its predecessor as it includes a monitoring and evaluation framework/plan that

⁸⁰ Views were expressed by Key Informants 3, 3, 25 and 34

⁸¹ See United Nations Children's Fund Lesotho, *Evaluation of Child Friendly School implementation in Lesotho*, UNICEF Lesotho, October 2019.

was previously lacking. UNICEF support also enabled the Ministry of Social Development to finalize the Social Assistance Integration Strategy and develop an operations manual to support strategy implementation.

- (b) UNICEF's technical and financial assistance to the Ministry of Social Development enabled the development and implementation of a cash transfers plan to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on existing CGP beneficiaries (47,974 beneficiaries) and enrol an additional 8,162 new CGP beneficiaries. A total of 53,089 households received humanitarian cash transfers in 2021. The support has enabled the Government of Lesotho to have a functional shock-responsive social protection system in place.
- (c) UNICEF supported the Ministry of Social Development to develop NISSA in 2010 when the CGP was introduced. Since then, UNICEF has been supporting the population of the NISSA database and improvements needed for the system to function effectively as the Government's single registry on socio-economic data of all households. The data in NISSA is used in planning and managing delivery of social assistance payments, targeting beneficiaries for social assistance programmes, case management and monitoring and evaluation of social assistance programmes. By 2021, the NISSA database contained 477,563 households, including 157,309 urban households. In 2022, UNICEF is supporting the Ministry to update the NISSA data, and this is currently being done on a pilot phase in rural districts. NISSA has been used by other government agencies, for example, the Disaster Management Authority to target households during the drought emergency and in the COVID-19 response.

UNICEF was able to achieve these results through the large volume of resources (€21 million from 2015 to 2022) it mobilized from the European Union, and this is testimony to the confidence that the European Union and the Ministry of Social Development have in UNICEF as a partner.

In 2022, the World Bank approved a loan of US\$26.5 million to the Government to strengthen the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable households in selected communities and to improve the efficiency and equity of selected social assistance programmes through the Pathways to Sustainable Livelihoods Project.⁸² The loan follows the World Bank's 2021 review of Lesotho's social protection programmes and systems. The review made wide-ranging recommendations that have direct relevance to UNICEF's work in social protection, for example, scaling up coverage and increased benefits for the CGP; scaling up digital payments; linking the CGP to health, education and nutrition at local level; introducing a grievance system for all social assistance programmes; and using NISSA for targeting for means testing for tertiary bursaries.⁸³

There is uncertainty among some key informants about the delineation between the World Bank and UNICEF, and concern that the two organizations may be duplicating work. The Ministry of Social Development has indicated that it is discussing the delineation internally and will be engaging with UNICEF and the World Bank to give clarity.

Key informants have expressed concerns about the current state of the NISSA system. The process for updating the NISSA is time-consuming, and there are concerns that the data is rapidly becoming

⁸² World Bank, 'Lesotho: World Bank Approves a \$26.5 Million Loan to Strengthen the Livelihoods of the Most Vulnerable', World Bank, 24 June 2022, <www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/27/lesotho-world-bank-approves-a-26-5-million-loan-to-strengthen-the-livelihoods-of-the-most-vulnerable>, accessed 20 September 2022.

⁸³ World Bank, *Lesotho Social Protection Program and Systems Review*, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2021, <<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/996831624982907050/pdf/Lesotho-Social-Protection-Programs-and-Systems-Review.pdf>>.

out-dated and limiting its usefulness. The evaluation observed the pilot updating process in one community – the community facilitation process took five hours and is used in addition to the door-to-door enumeration process to capture data on each household. The community process is intended to promote transparency and community participation. It involves community members discussing the classification of each household (ultra-poor, poor, middle or able) whether or not they are present, and appears intrusive. It also has potential to be divisive in communities. Social workers facilitating the community process confirmed that there were often complaints from community members in the days following the community process. Key informants also expressed scepticism about obtaining comprehensive coverage of urban households as enumerators experience difficulties in gaining access to urban households.

The NISSA system has had technical difficulties, for example, the inability to download data on urban households. IT systems are developed by external consultants due to a lack of internal capacity in the Ministry. This dependency on external consultants creates difficulties when there are problems with the systems or when they have to be modified.

Output 3.2: By 2023, the Government and citizens have increased awareness and capacity to enhance participation, transparency, accountability, equity and quality of public investment in children.

Finding 14: UNICEF's support has enhanced the capacity of the Ministry of Finance to adopt and institutionalize participatory public finance processes. Through UNICEF's support, the Ministry is progressively strengthening its medium-term expenditure framework and its capacities to prepare budget briefs.

UNICEF has supported the Ministry of Finance to implement pre-budget public consultations in a bid to strengthen the quality and transparency of the public finance budget process in four districts (out of a target of eight districts) for the 2022/23 budget. UNICEF also procured technical assistance to capacitate the Ministry of Finance to develop sector (cluster of ministries) medium-term expenditure frameworks. Four pilot sectors (education, social development, health and gender) have been identified. UNICEF, in collaboration with UNDP, IOM and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, is supporting the Government to establish an architecture for financing the acceleration of the attainment of the SDGs in Lesotho.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Finance co-authored budget briefs on the national budget, education, and social protection for the 2020–2021 financial year. The Ministry prepared a mid-year budget brief and has signalled its desire to assume full ownership of the budget brief preparation. UNICEF has provided training to 20 government officials to facilitate full ownership by the Ministry. According to the Ministry, the budget briefs are used to inform the Budget Department in their preparations of the next budget.

The Ministry believes that budget briefs have great potential as evidence to inform decision-making and is keen to extend the development of budget briefs to other sectors. The difficulty the Ministry faces is that the sectors to which they wish to expand fall outside the main focus of UNICEF and are uncertain about the extent to which UNICEF will support them with capacity building and production of the budget briefs.

Output 3.3: By 2023, quality evidence and data are generated through UNICEF-supported Government programmes to ensure child rights monitoring.⁸⁴

Finding 15: Lesotho produced two key reports, namely, the Child Poverty Report and the VNR report 2022, with the assistance of UNICEF. The Country Office envisages further activities under this output, should it mobilize the necessary resources.

UNICEF provided support to the Bureau of Statistics to conduct and publish the Child Poverty Report. This is an important result as the Poverty Report uses the Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA), which provides updated and detailed analysis of the deprivations experienced by children in Lesotho. This will enable the Government, UNICEF and other partners to design better-targeted interventions. The Child Poverty Report updates the 2018 baseline report that was based on the 2014 DHS.

The Government, with the support of UNICEF and other UN agencies in Lesotho, presented its 2022 VNR report to the United Nations Development Cooperation Forum. This report follows on the 2019 VNR report and presents progress towards attainment of the SDGs. The 2022 report focuses on five SDGs, namely, SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 15 (Life on land) and SDG 17 (Partnerships), and how progress has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The VNR process reinforces the importance of periodic monitoring and reporting on the SDGs for learning and fostering greater coordination among ministries, departments and agencies. The report also highlighted the need for strengthening capacities within government to set priorities within available resources and align budgets to priorities.⁸⁵ The report will serve as an important input to planning, not only for the Government, but also for the United Nations system as it begins the process of developing the new UNSDCF. UNICEF also produced the poverty estimation to fill the data gaps for the VNR reporting on Goal 1. It is worth noting that UNICEF spearheaded the use of the U-Report for the first time, to sensitize and consult youth about SDG progress. This is a promising start to involving youth more actively in Child Rights Monitoring.

4.3.2 Progress at outcome level

Finding 16: Results at the level of outcomes of the Country Programme are mixed. Social protection for children, health and children and adolescents' access to services show positive changes at indicator level. Learning outcomes for children and access to pre-primary education have not progressed.

The evaluation assessed progress at the level of Country Programme outcomes using data reported in the UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Report and the latest available data accessed from the UNICEF database and UNAIDS. Table 14 shows the status of indicators as of December 2021, assessed against targets and baselines. Assessing progress against outcome indicators is a challenge as the last DHS for Lesotho was reported in 2018, as the survey planned for 2019 was postponed due to COVID-19. In the case of data relating to education outcomes, the last national assessment was conducted in 2019.

⁸⁴ This output statement replaces the output statement 3.3 of the CPD to better reflect child rights monitoring. The research and monitoring and evaluation activities under the original output statement 3.3 were moved to Outcome 4: Programme Effectiveness.

⁸⁵ *Kingdom of Lesotho Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022.*

Indicators for social protection are positive, with an increase in the proportion of the national budget allocated to the social sector and in the proportion of children in poor families benefiting from direct cash transfers. This increase is undoubtedly a reflection of the additional resources that the Government directed to the social sector to respond to and mitigate the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF played a significant role in supporting the Ministry of Social Development to expand the number of households benefiting from cash transfers and increasing the size of cash transfers. Indications from the Ministry of Social Development are that the Government remains committed to expanding and strengthening the system of social protection subject to the availability of resources.

Table 14: Outcome indicators progress against targets 2021

	Baseline	Target 2021	Target 2023	Actual 2021
Indicators for Outcome 1				
Proportion of pregnant women living with HIV with lifelong access to ART for PMTCT and their own health	69% (2017)	85%	90%	93% (UNAIDS data say 86%)
Proportion of children <1 year receiving DTP-containing vaccine at national level	64%	Not stated	90%	WHO/UNICEF estimate 87%
Newborns receiving postnatal care within two days of birth	18% (2014)	Not stated	60%	82.3% (MICS 2018)
Percentage of children 0–23 months who are put to the breast within one hour of birth	65%	Not stated	75%	56.4% (MICS 2018)
Gross enrolment of children in pre-primary education	42% (2017)	47%	38%	36.6%
Proportion of children under five whose births are registered	43%	78%	75% (CPD) 95% (RAM)	50%
Indicators for Outcome 2				
Number of girls and boys who have experienced violence reached by health, social work or justice/law enforcement services	394 (2018)	2000	Not stated	3906
Average learning outcomes for core subjects (Grade 6)				Last rated as not achieved in 2019
Percentage of children 0–14 years living with HIV that are receiving ART	76.8% (2018)			83.5% (2020)
Percentage of adolescent girls and boys (15–19 years) living with HIV that are receiving ART				No data
Indicators for Outcome 3				
National social sector budget as a percentage of GDP	14.5% (2018)	18%	20%	20.3%
Percentage of monetarily and multidimensionally deprived children in poor families that are directly benefiting from child grant (cash)	32.77% (2018)	40% (2020)	60%	60%

Source: UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Full Approved Report 2021.

As the Country Programme was developed prior to 2019, it does not have indicators for the COVID-19 health response. As of 14 August 2022, the country had administered 1,102,069 doses of COVID-

19 vaccine.⁸⁶ As of 17 July 2022, 38.25 per cent of the population had completed the initial vaccination protocol (i.e., were fully vaccinated) and 2.26 per cent of the population was partly vaccinated.⁸⁷ UNICEF contributed to this result through its support in areas of procurement, logistics, cold chain storage and SBCC to address vaccine hesitancy. This contribution is alongside the support to routine immunization, PMTCT and neonatal care – all indicators which show progress at the outcome level.

Results at the outcome level show an increase in the number of children who experienced violence being reached by health, social work or justice/law enforcement services. The percentage of children living with HIV and receiving ART has increased from the 2018 baseline, and there has been a modest increase in the proportion of children under 5 years whose births have been registered.

Outcome indicators for education are not moving in a positive direction. The decline in gross pre-primary enrolments and no improvement in learning outcomes are areas of concern. Although UNICEF made a significant contribution to supporting continuation of learning during the COVID-19 lockdowns and also supported learning in the recovery phase, this was not sufficient to address the problem of poor learning outcomes that pre-date the pandemic and have been compounded by the pandemic.

Finding 17: Results of the Country Programme have been affected by several factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the risks identified in the theories of change emerged during the period under review, and certain assumptions on which the Country Programme was based did not hold true.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on Country Programme results; the impact was negative in some areas but also presented opportunities for positive or improved results. Social protection is a case where coverage of social protection was increased at a faster rate than might have been the case in the absence of the pandemic. Improvements in WASH, including hand hygiene in schools and communities, are another example of positive outcomes from the pandemic. In the case of education, the pandemic contributed to two years of lost learning, notwithstanding the efforts made to provide distance learning and accelerated learning once schools reopened. While the pandemic is reported to have contributed to an increase in gender-based violence and violence against children, it also spurred on the reactivation of the Child Helpline.⁸⁸

The period under review also saw the country experience political instability. The coalition government collapsed in May 2020 and a new coalition government, headed by a new Prime Minister was formed. Elections conducted on 7 October 2022 resulted in a new party leading the government. In times of political uncertainty, decision making in ministries tends to slow down and there is slower progress on matters that require the approval of the cabinet, ministers, or at the level of the Principal Secretary. In his inauguration speech, the new Prime Minister committed to major reforms of the public sector, to make it more efficient, effective, transparent and accountable, including the introduction of performance contracts for Ministers and Principal Secretaries, revised legislation and

⁸⁶ WHO COVID-19 database, <<https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/ls>>, accessed 24 September 2022. WHO data do not show the proportion of the population fully vaccinated.

⁸⁷ Our World in Data, 'Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations', <<https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations?country=LSO>>, accessed 24 September 2022.

⁸⁸ Key Informants 3 and 27

policies for the deployment of government officials, and the introduction of citizen-based monitoring.⁸⁹ These changes are likely to impact the pace of implementation of programmes in the coming year.

The theories of change of the three programme components identified macro-economic stability as a key assumption for the Country Programme strategies to contribute to the achievement of the outputs, and in turn contribute to progress at the level of outcomes. This assumption did not hold true. Like other countries in the sub-region and globally, Lesotho has been experiencing macro-economic challenges and fiscal constraints.⁹⁰ Although the COVID-19 pandemic saw an increase in resources mobilized by the Government and its development partners, the larger proportion of resources was directed to the COVID-19 response. Resources were also redirected/repurposed from other sectors to support the health sector. Government partners believed that the resources available for the COVID-19 response and for routine services were insufficient.⁹¹

The decline in the HDI score for 2021 for Lesotho and most countries globally is testament to the impact of the pandemic and the increasing uncertainty and complexity of the national, regional and global environment.⁹²

4.3.3 Programme effectiveness

Outcome 4: The country programme is efficiently designed, coordinated, managed and supported to meet quality-programming standards for achieving results for children.

Output 4.1: Guidance, tools and resources to effectively design and manage the programme of cooperation are available to UNICEF and its partners.

Finding 18: The Country Office has adopted sound tools for effective programme management, and diligently tracks progress against key indicators and targets for programme outputs. The absence of an overarching theory of change for the Country Programme is a missed opportunity for strengthening programmatic coherence.

The Country Office bases its work on annual work plans that have been agreed to with government partners, based on prior discussions on key results planned and the resources available. The mid-term reviews of progress, held with government partners and civil society partners, provide an opportunity to adjust the programme where necessary. The Country Office is able to track implementation of programmes by partners through the Partner Reporting Portal. A series of internal meetings with documented follow-up actions, including monthly programme management team meetings, enable the Country Office to monitor and report on progress. The Country Office uses a donor reporting workflow to ensure timely submission and quality of reports to donors. Field

⁸⁹ Speech by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister, the Honourable Samuel Tsokoane Matekane at his inauguration as the 10th Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, 28th October 2022, Maseru, <https://www.gov.ls/download/speech-by-the-right-honourable-the-prime-minister-hon-samuel-ntsokoane-matekane-at-his-inauguration-as-the-10th-prime-minister-of-the-kingdom-of-lesotho-held-at-setsoto-stadium-on-28th-october-2022/>

⁹⁰ See Country Context section for data on slow GDP growth.

⁹¹ Key informants in Government highlighted the difficulty in obtaining resources for implementing programmes as the Government's own financial resources are limited and there are few donors in the country as Lesotho is a small low middle-income country.

⁹² See Country Context section for data on the decline in the HDI score for Lesotho.

monitoring, which was halted in 2020, resumed in 2021, enabling UNICEF to track implementation progress and challenges, perform quality assurance checks, and collect monitoring data for reporting to donors.

The Country Programme design is informed by a theory of change for each outcome: the First Decade, Second Decade and Social Inclusion. While these are useful for understanding the rationale underpinning the choice of interventions in each of the three outcome areas, they are not embedded in an overarching theory of change for the Country Programme that shows the connections or coherence of the three outcomes. Each theory of change is presented differently in a diagrammatic form, suggesting different thought processes and approaches to developing the theory of change. This makes it all the more difficult to see the linkages between the theories of change and how the three outcome areas “add-up” to contribute to the vision of the Country Programme as stated in the CPD: *“to reach every child, everywhere, every time, with opportunities to survive, develop and reach her or his full potential.”*

The evaluation observed some inconsistencies between the indicators in the CPD, Annual Work Plans and RAM report. There is also missing target information in the RAM report and changes proposed at the SMR December 2021 have not yet been made in the RAM reporting system.

Output 4.2: Guidance, tools and resources to effectively generate, analyse and utilize statistical and qualitative information for Child Rights System Monitoring are available in the country.

Finding 19: UNICEF is contributing to strengthening the policy environment for monitoring and evaluation, as well as capacities of government officials responsible for monitoring and evaluation. The demand for strengthening national monitoring and evaluation capacities is large and requires a joint effort with other UN agencies.

Following on the Lesotho Monitoring and Evaluation Situation Analysis (MESA) completed in 2017 with support from UNDP, UNICEF is contributing to strengthening national monitoring and evaluation capacities. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Development Planning to lead the process of developing the national monitoring and evaluation policy, with its accompanying implementation strategy and action plan, as well as evaluation guidelines. The Government is expected to approve the policy during the current Country Programme cycle. UNICEF also supported the Ministry of Development Planning to secure training in monitoring and evaluation for 40 government staff from various ministries, departments and agencies. The national monitoring and evaluation policy, evaluation guidelines and training represent a good start to building a robust national monitoring and evaluation system in Lesotho. Strengthening the national monitoring and evaluation system can also encourage government ministries, departments and agencies to improve the quality of their programme and administrative data. The Ministry of Development Planning is appreciative of the support received from UNICEF, but expressed concern that the resources available for strengthening the national monitoring and evaluation system are insufficient to match the scale of the task. UNICEF has been working in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office and UNDP on strengthening national capacities, and this is probably an area of work that will be continued under the next UNSDCF.

UNICEF contributed to the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessments (LVAC), participating in the development of data collection tools for these assessments; as well as supporting the mapping of 400 high-risk schools in seven districts trained on infection prevention and control.⁹³

⁹³ UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Full Approved Report 2021.

The Country Office has made good use of U-Report as a tool for collecting data on the views of programme beneficiaries. This was especially useful during the COVID-19 lockdown periods. For example, UNICEF using U-Report, supported the Ministry of Health to poll health workers. The responses from 400 health workers were used to inform the messaging for the first phase of vaccine introduction. UNICEF also supported the Ministry of Health to conduct a social listening exercise, analysing conversations on COVID-19 in 5 of 10 districts and using these to inform the subsequent phases of the national vaccine strategy.

During the period under review, UNICEF launched its research and evaluation agenda. One evaluation on the Child Friendly Schools programme was completed in 2019, while two evaluations commissioned are to be completed in 2022. The Country Office also collaborated with the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti and a national consultancy firm to conduct a research study on children's views and experiences of COVID-19 in Lesotho, as part of a global study.

Output 4.3: Guidance, tools and resources for effective communication on child rights issues with stakeholders are available to UNICEF and its partners.

Finding 20: UNICEF has utilized SBCC in several Country Programme interventions. The Country Office however does not have a SBCC strategy, nor have SBCC initiatives been evaluated to assess their effectiveness.

UNICEF utilized SBCC in the implementation of the Country Programme. The evaluation found examples of SBCC in all three Country Programme outcomes. The COVID-19 context reinforced the importance of SBCC in programme implementation and achieving sustainable results.

SBCC featured strongly in the COVID-19 response. UNICEF supported the national COVID-19 Risk Communication and Engagement group that was critical to driving communication awareness about COVID-19 and debunking misinformation about the disease and vaccines.⁹⁴ SBCC was used in the national deployment of COVID-19 vaccines – to collect data to understand perceptions, misperceptions and concerns about vaccines, and to design and implement communication messages and engagement processes to respond to these. SBCC also played an important role in WASH in schools and communities – in communicating and practicing hand hygiene and the use of tippy taps that had been installed – through collaboration with community water committees and WASH clubs in schools.⁹⁵

While SBCC played an important role in the response to COVID-19, SBCC was not confined to COVID-19. SBCC was also used in the WASH emergency response to the 2019 drought, and was also used to mobilize communities/mothers to ensure that young children continue to receive routine immunization during the pandemic. In child protection, UNICEF engaged in SBCC with campaigns on child marriages.⁹⁶ Other examples of SBCC are found in campaigns to address taboos around menstrual hygiene; campaigns for male family planning; and empowering young mothers and their in-laws to relate to one another.

Discussions at the 2021 SMR indicated that the Country Office attached importance to SBCC. However, the SBCC interventions pursued to date did not emerge from an overarching strategy, nor

⁹⁴ Key Informants from CSD team.

⁹⁵ Key Informant 6.

⁹⁶ Key Informants 3 and 12.

have they been evaluated for their effectiveness or impact.⁹⁷ Such a strategy might guide how best to use SBCC in supporting purposeful implementation of the Country Programme and in utilizing SBCC resources required for implementation, as well as revealing how the effectiveness of SBCC interventions will be assessed. The SMR meeting urged each section to ensure that it made provision for SBCC in its budget.⁹⁸

Finding 21: UNICEF has made good use of partnerships as a tool for achieving results for children. There is scope for strengthening existing partnerships and increasing the diversity of partners. The Country Office is developing a partnership strategy with this aim in mind.

Civil society partnerships. UNICEF works in partnership with a number of civil society organizations in Lesotho, for example, the Lesotho Red Cross Society, LNFOD, the Network of Early Childhood Development of Lesotho, Help Lesotho and the Catholic Relief Services. These partners have enabled UNICEF to extend its reach into communities and have implemented programmes on behalf of UNICEF. Partnerships with civil society organizations have focused on service delivery, though not exclusively so. The evaluation noted an example of partnering on advocacy for inclusive education with LNFOD. In-country civil society organizations have access to the communities they serve and a nuanced understanding of the country context. They are able to bring another lens or perspective on a particular issue and should be used more in advocacy on the rights of children. A platform or forum for engaging civil society organizations can also assist in coordination and building synergies in implementation of programmes. In doing so, the Country Office will need to be mindful of the resource constraints that civil society organizations have, and that joint advocacy with civil society organizations may require UNICEF to provide some financial support. A concern expressed by civil society partners was that UNICEF and donors agree on performance indicators, but third parties (e.g., civil society organizations) are not always involved in determining the performance indicators. This results in inappropriate indicators or unrealistic performance targets set.

Private sector. UNICEF's partnerships with the private sector are nascent or sporadic. The Country Office has held discussions with mobile network providers for support to the Learning Passport and obtained financial support from a life insurance company to pilot a nutrition intervention. The private sector in Lesotho, a low middle-income country, includes South African companies with operations in Lesotho and does offer potential as a partner. The private sector can be leveraged for technical expertise, not only for financial resources. UNICEF can also build partnerships with the private sector for advocacy on child rights.

There are few donors in Lesotho and UNICEF works with USAID/PEPFAR, the European Union, and the Global Partnership for Education. UNICEF has also mobilized resources from two private philanthropic foundations.

The evaluation found that the partnerships are pursued and managed by the respective sections and/or individuals within the Country Office, without the guidance of a partnership strategy to coordinate UNICEF's partnerships. This was evident from the interviews with the Country Office teams and confirmed by stakeholders who urged UNICEF to adopt a more coordinated approach to its partners to build synergies and avoid duplication of effort.⁹⁹ The Country Office runs the risk of missed opportunities for truly strategic partnerships – where there is a shared vision of the results to

⁹⁷ Key Informant 12.

⁹⁸ UNICEF Strategic Moments of Reflection report 2021.

⁹⁹ Key Informants 22 and 32

be achieved by the partnership, with each partner contributing according to their comparative strengths. Partnerships then remain ad hoc, driven by individuals, and are limited in diversity.

4.4 Efficiency

Evaluation question 7. *Were resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) allocated and utilized strategically to track and achieve results, including equity and gender-related objectives? How did the country office approach implementation of programme areas that were not well resourced?*

Finding 22: UNICEF allocated its financial resources to outputs that were prioritized by the Government for the response to COVID-19 and for continuity of essential services. A significant proportion of the allocation went to the social protection output, which achieved positive results for children. Allocations to outputs for child protection and ECCD-pre-primary education are among the smallest of allocations of the three main Country Programme outcomes, and these are two areas where progress has been limited.

The Country Office has been effective in mobilizing resources for the Country Programme, mostly earmarked to specific programmes. Resource mobilization is the responsibility of the staff in the various sections of the Country Office, and is not left to a single resource mobilization officer. This is a sound approach, as each section understands best what is needed. However, in the absence of a resource mobilization strategy to guide resource mobilization, there is a risk that different sections of the office could approach the same potential resource partner, or staff jealously guard their relationship with their resource partners and are reluctant to share them with other sections in the office which could benefit from support. There is also the risk that resource mobilization becomes fragmented and inefficient and opportunities to mobilize resources are missed. There are other UN agencies competing for the attention of the same resource partners. The limited number of potential donors in Lesotho makes it essential to have a clear strategy for resource mobilization. In addition, an office-wide resource mobilization strategy could facilitate better development of integrated programmes, as often programme integration is explored after individual siloed programmes have been developed and funded.

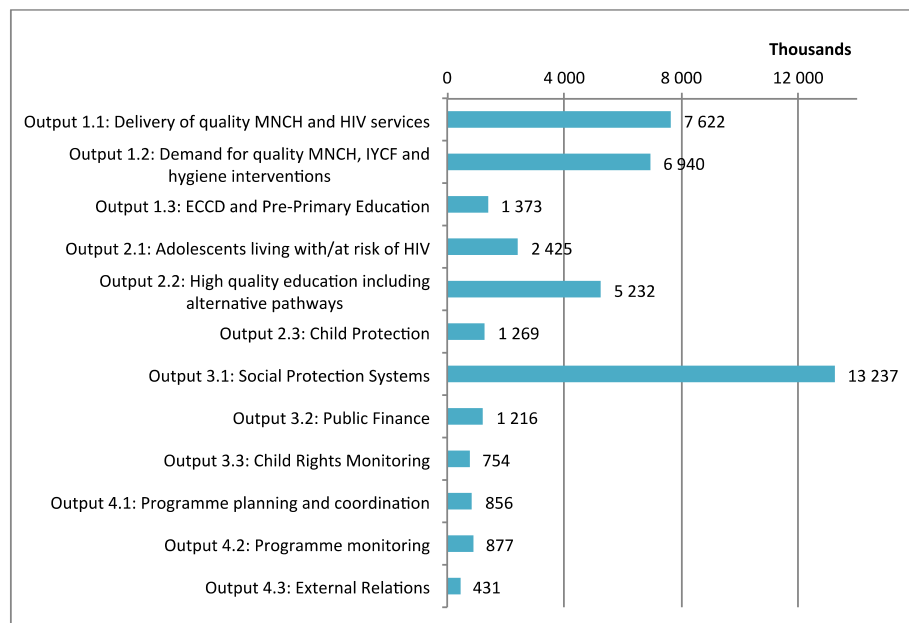
Most of the Country Office resources are from Other Resources (OR–Regular = 64 per cent and OR–Emergency = 12 per cent), with Regular Resources representing 18 per cent of the resource allocation for Country Programme. There is therefore limited discretion that the Country Office can apply in the allocation of resources to the various outputs. That is, funds mobilized (Other Resources) must be used for the intended purpose. The volume of resources that are mobilized for a particular output determines the allocation of funds to outputs.

As can be seen from Figure 4, nearly one-third of the resource allocation was to Output 3.1 Social Protection, reflecting the success with which the Country Office has been able to mobilize resources for social protection. The resources for Output 3.1 were largely in the form of Other Resources–Regular (over US\$12.5 million), while the allocation from Regular Resources for this output was less than US\$4,000,000 (Figure 5).

Sizeable volumes of resources were mobilized and allocated for Output 1.2 and Output 2.2, for health and education, respectively. The largest share of resources for these two outputs were from Other Resources–Emergency, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 5). The volume of resources allocated to child protection and ECCD-pre-primary education is small. The allocation for child protection seems not to be commensurate with the intended results for this output. Key informants point to the limited finance in the face of the high costs associated with reaching existing village

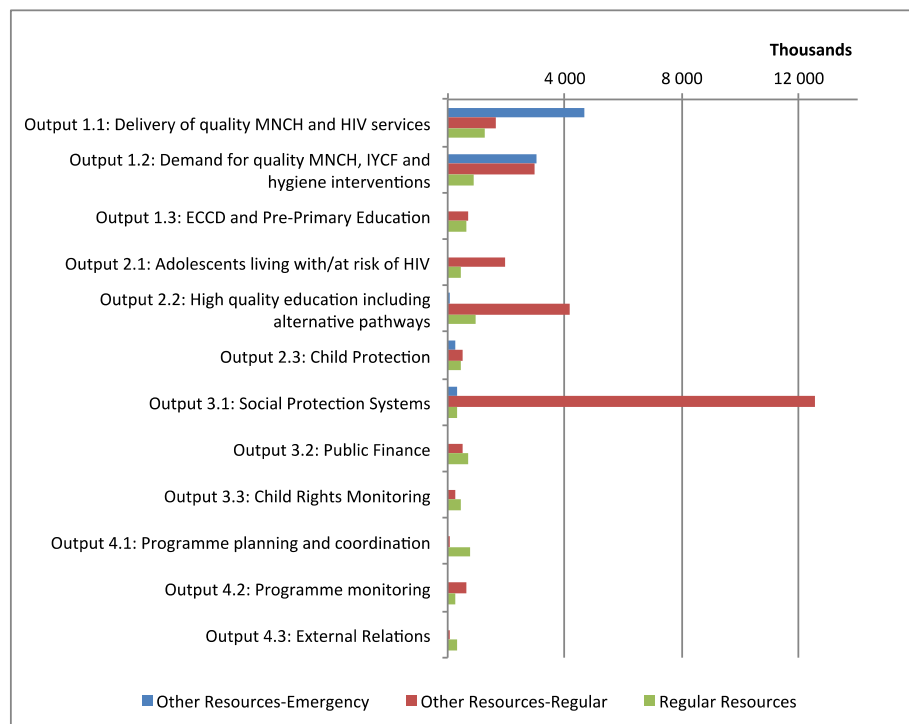
justice committees and the Government's plans to significantly increase the number of village justice committees.

Figure 5: Allocation of funds by Country Programme output



Source: UNICEF Lesotho, September 2022.

Figure 6: Resource allocation by Country Programme output by resource type



Source: UNICEF Lesotho, September 2022.

Financial resources from UNICEF are meant to be catalytic and attract resources from other sources, including the Government. This has happened to a limited extent, as there are very few donors in Lesotho. On the side of the Government, UNICEF's financial contributions complement what the Government already funds – for example, in social protection, or funding technical assistance to develop or review a strategy or policy. However, there are also examples of UNICEF funding activities that seem not to be strategic, for example, venues and catering for meetings.

While partners are generally satisfied with the efficiency of UNICEF procedures, concerns were expressed about the system of drawing down funds on a quarterly basis – it is difficult to spend all the funds in one quarter and a block is placed on the next draw down. There is however acknowledgement on the part of these partners that perhaps there is a problem with how they plan, and that they are requesting too much for their capacity to spend.

The evaluation was not able to make a detailed assessment of the gender-responsiveness of the budget allocations, as the budget information is not disaggregated. The evaluation could only infer from the budget allocation to some outputs. The allocations to Outputs 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1 for example, are intended to primarily benefit women and adolescent girls, and the (very small) allocation to Output 2.3 is intended in part to respond to gender-based violence. However, for the remaining outputs, it is difficult to assess gender-responsiveness of the allocations.

Finding 23: Staff resources have been deployed efficiently. Staff however do feel that the Country Office is under-staffed to meet the demands of the country.

The Lesotho Country Programme is small in terms of the volume of resources mobilized and spent, and the staff size is commensurate with the size of the Country Programme. The prevailing view in the Country Office is that the staffing is insufficient for what the Country Programme is expected to achieve, and that while Lesotho is a low middle-income country, the capacity and resource limitations in government ministries require a much more hands-on approach than would be the case in an upper middle-income country. The Country Office contracts consultants to fill gaps in its own staffing and capabilities. A concern raised by staff is that while the contracting model increases the capacity of the Country Office, there is the risk that contracted experts engaging directly with ministries develop relationships with these ministries to the exclusion of UNICEF, raising questions about the value-added of UNICEF beyond provision of funding. Related to this is the view that if the Country Office increased the number of senior national officers and made effective use of their expertise and local knowledge, this could be more cost effective than engaging consultants, while also providing continuity in the work and relationships with government partners and strengthening UNICEF's influencing role. The model of funding Technical Advisers within government ministries, with the view to the Government eventually taking over funding of these positions, was raised by government partners as a more efficient model for providing technical assistance to ministries than appointing consultants.

Operations staff play an important role in providing the enablers for programme delivery. The Country Office has a small operations staff component, which is complemented with support from the BLNE Hub in Johannesburg. There is good collaboration between operations and programmes functions, with operations issues discussed as a standing item on the monthly Country Management Team meetings, and joint monitoring of key management indicators that include monitoring of grants, reporting, resource mobilization and monthly direct cash transfers. Financial management is reported to have improved as a result of the close collaboration between operations and programme

functions.¹⁰⁰ Operation staff raised concerns about being under-staffed, and these were noted at the December SMR discussions. Since then, a position to deal with human resource administration matters has been filled in the Country Office.

Evaluation question 8. *To what extent have the convergence strategy, the programme structure, including the life cycle approach, the office structure and the matrix management approach supported the delivery of the Country Programme? Were the chosen strategies and approaches the most cost effective and efficient? Were there alternatives that would have worked better and what are those?*

Finding 24: The decade structure/life cycle approach has largely been effective in supporting the delivery of the Country Programme and has to some extent fostered programmatic coherence. Coherence can be improved. The Country Office operates partly on a matrix management, but for the most part, the Country Office operates in a conventional hierarchical management arrangement.

The decade structure of the Country Programme requires sections of the Country Office to collaborate and ensure that they contribute to a particular outcome, irrespective of the section in which they are located. The evaluation found a few examples of coherence that were planned. Although WASH falls programmatically under the CSD section, WASH in schools is based on close collaboration with the Basic Education and Adolescent Development section (BEADS) of the Country Office. Child protection located under this section contributes to the work of the CSD in respect of birth registration.

Monthly programme management team meetings, biweekly meetings of section heads and biweekly meetings of all staff not only help the Country Office to track progress with the implementation of the Country Programme, but also assist in allowing sections and teams to draw in staff from other sections or teams for a specific piece of work. There is room for improving programmatic coherence and general agreement among Country Office staff that coherence should be institutionalized rather than left to individuals to decide when and with whom to collaborate.

4.5 Sustainability

Evaluation question 9. *To what extent are the positive changes and effects of the Country Programme sustainable at the relevant levels (e.g., community, provincial/state, national)? To what extent have the programme strategies adopted by UNICEF contributed to, or been designed in a way that they will contribute to, sustainability of results, especially equity and gender-related results?*

Evaluation question 10. *To what extent have the programme strategies, plans and tools, particularly those with an equity and gender focus, been institutionalized in systems, policies, mechanisms and strategies among government, NGO/civil society and other partners and stakeholders? Will the strategies/plans/tools be more widely replicated or adapted? What's the scalability of models introduced by UNICEF?*

¹⁰⁰ See discussion on Operational Effectiveness in *UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Full Approved Report 2021*.

Finding 25: UNICEF's strategy of systems strengthening, fostering government ownership and partnerships with civil society organizations contributes to the sustainability of results. There are also interventions with limited prospects for sustainability given the financial constraints in government ministries.

The evaluation found examples of interventions that have good prospects for sustainability. By supporting systems strengthening, UNICEF is improving the prospects for the sustainability of results. Examples include strengthening the capacities and systems for vaccines; part of the COVID-19 response was supporting the Ministry of Health in the provision of systems managing different vaccines, including those needed for routine immunization and health management information systems. UNICEF's support for strengthening the Civil and Vital Statistics Registration is another example of sustainability. The system has the capability to be rolled out at hospitals, and with the training and manuals provided, births can be registered at hospitals. Strengthening the system of social protection, including NISSA, will contribute to a sustainable social protection system for Lesotho.

There are examples of government ownership, which augur well for sustainability. The Child Protection Coordination Unit in the Ministry of Social Development was established with financial support from UNICEF. The Ministry has taken over the funding of the two full-time positions in the unit. The Government has officially adopted the Learning Passport as its online platform for learners and teachers, and the civil society organization that has been working with UNICEF and the Government on the Learning Passport has incorporated it into the online learning programmes. Although there are still challenges related to data charges, the Learning Passport has good prospects for sustainability. The budget briefs are another example of sustainability. There is a clear interest from the Ministry of Finance in replicating the budget briefs beyond the social sector and taking full ownership of the budget analysis and drafting of these briefs. The co-authorship of the past budget briefs and the training provided to government officials serves as a foundation for the Ministry to scale up the budget briefs (subject to the availability of financial resources).

Partnering with established civil society organizations is another strategy that contributes to the sustainability of results. For example, the Lesotho Red Cross Society continues to deliver on projects after UNICEF funding has ended, integrating the UNICEF-funded initiatives into other projects.

There are projects or initiatives where donor funding will be ending in the current programme cycle, including the HIV and Nutrition integrated programme funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and 2gether 4 SRHR, funded by the Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation. These will require advocacy for integration into the budget lines of the relevant ministries. The Child Helpline has been taken over by the Ministry of Social Development with donor funding for two years and will need a plan to sustain its operations once the donor funding ceases. The micronutrients project will see donor funding coming to an end, and the Government is negotiating a loan for its continuation.

Government partners identified the lack of adequate finance as the main obstacle to implementing policies and/or scaling up interventions. The WASH interventions in schools, for example, could only reach a limited number of schools with the available budget. There is a huge unmet need for improving WASH in schools, but the Ministry of Education and Training and related ministries do not have the funds to scale up.

UNICEF's support has a beginning and an end, and how support ends is an important consideration in ensuring that results achieved are sustainable. The evaluation notes that partnership agreements make provision for partners to outline sustainability plans once project funding ends. There is however

the huge burden of expectation from government partners that UNICEF will continue to mobilize resources for them and fund the important activities.

UNICEF support has generated important knowledge products, for example, the budget briefs and the Child Poverty Study. Creating greater awareness of knowledge products, beyond the initial launch, is a strategy for scaling up knowledge. The evaluation did not find use of this strategy by UNICEF. It may be that there has been limited opportunity to do so because of the COVID-19 restrictions.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

5.1 Conclusions

The implementation of the Country Programme 2019–2023 takes place against the backdrop of an environment that is challenging and uncertain. The drought in early 2019, followed by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, has seen the first half of the Country Programme cycle dominated by humanitarian responses. As the immediate threat of COVID-19 has begun to subside, the social and economic impact of the pandemic, coupled with the on-going climate change crisis, place greater pressure on UNICEF to support the Government of Lesotho as it tries to recover from the pandemic. While COVID-19 has exposed the shortcomings and gaps in government policies, systems and delivery of services for children, it has provided UNICEF with the opportunity to test alternative approaches, strengthen existing systems and develop new partnerships.

UNICEF Lesotho has delivered commendable results for children and adolescents in this very challenging period. The results achieved are testimony to the agility and resilience of the Country Office, the technical expertise of its staff, good management practices and strong relationships with its partners. There are areas for improvement that can be addressed within the current Country Programme and in anticipation of the next Country Programme.

Relevance

The Country Programme has been highly relevant to addressing the multiple and overlapping deprivations that children and adolescents in Lesotho experience, and it is well aligned with the priorities for children and adolescents set out in the NSDP II. UNICEF ensured the relevance of the Country Programme by adapting its mix of strategies to the changing demands of the country context. Its focus on service delivery intensification in the immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis is appropriate, as is its shift in emphasis to systems strengthening to build resilience to future shocks. The development agenda was not forgotten in the period of the humanitarian crisis as UNICEF advocated for continuity in delivery of essential services for children and adolescents.

Coherence

The Country Programme is aligned with the UNDAF 2019–2023, and UNICEF contributes to coherence within the UN system in Lesotho, through chairing the Programme Coherence Team and the Communications Group. Collaboration among UN agencies under the UN Social and Economic Response Plan was strong, but there are calls from UN agencies to strengthen collaboration further, and for UNICEF to recognize and make better use of the comparative strengths of these agencies.

The internal coherence of the Country Programme can be improved. The theories of change for each Country Programme component or the three core outcomes were not nested in an overarching theory of change, and so the synergies and connections between the outcomes are not obvious. The absence of a theory of change for the Country Programme as a whole may also explain the projectized rather than coherent approach to addressing gender inequality, ECD and adolescent programming task forces, as well as the absence of crosscutting strategies for SBCC and partnerships.

Effectiveness

The Country Programme is effective, and is likely to achieve at least 75 per cent of the output targets by the end of the country programme cycle. UNICEF has made important contributions, including strengthening the social protection system; maintaining the reduction in mother-to-child transmission

of HIV; ensuring continuity in routine immunization; contributing to continuity in teaching and learning; strengthening capacities in the ECCD sector; and aiding in the provision of psychosocial support children and caregivers.

Output targets have been achieved in all four outcomes of the Country Programme. UNICEF's ability to mobilize resources for its partners, the use of SBCC and strong partnerships have been important enablers of results achieved, along with effective monitoring of the implementation of the Country Programme.

There are areas where the achievement of output targets was lagging at the end of December 2021, and there is sufficient time for the Country Office to address the blockages to progress before the end of the current Country Programme. These include working with government partners to resolve challenges with the updating of NISSA and the delays in data capture for the enhanced EMIS, as well as updating health sector data (through surveys and administration data).

When assessing the results at the level of outcomes of the Country Programme, there are good results for social protection, HIV and immunization. Nutrition of young children and adolescents remains a challenge. Assessing progress at outcome level for aspects of health and education has been challenged by the lack of updated national data. There is a need to strengthen national data systems, and this is an issue that could benefit from joint action on the part of UN agencies in Lesotho. Climate change will continue to require attention in the next Country Programme.

Efficiency

UNICEF has allocated resources to the outputs for which the resources have been mobilized. The Country Office has been especially effective in mobilizing resources for social protection and education. The volume of resources mobilized and allocated for child protection is insufficient to achieve the intended results of this programme output. The office lacks an office-wide resource mobilization strategy that could assist in mobilizing resources for under-funded programme components and facilitating programme integration at the early stages of programme design. The Country Office has utilized staff resources efficiently, but there is scope for considering alternative models of staffing the Country Office and providing technical assistance to government partners.

Sustainability

Several results achieved under the Country Programme have good prospects for sustainability as UNICEF is strengthening systems and the Government has strong ownership of these systems. UNICEF's strategies of strengthening existing capacities in government and partnering with civil society organizations have also contributed to the sustainability of results. While there are examples of the Government institutionalizing UNICEF-supported programmes and taking over the financing of these, the budgetary constraints that will remain for the foreseeable future limit the prospects for the Government to scale up successful interventions.

5.2 Lessons learnt

The implementation of the Country Programme, especially against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, generated several lessons learnt, and the most pertinent of these are mentioned below.

1. A relentless focus on, and investing significant resources on one particular issue where UNICEF can make a major difference, can be more impactful than spreading investments and resources

across a myriad of small-scale interventions. UNICEF's success in the area of social protection is a good example of this approach.

2. Responding effectively to a national crisis requires good planning, coordination and collaboration, even under the extremely difficult conditions such as those experienced during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF was able to plan under conditions of crisis and mobilize the resources required to support the national response to the pandemic. It was necessary to have detailed plans on how to deliver its support under conditions of restricted movement, for example, the logistics, storage and distribution of vaccines, and the rapid development of teaching and learning materials. Collaboration with government partners, civil society organizations and other UN agencies was essential for the effective implementation of the COVID-19 response. A related lesson is the importance of psychosocial support and equipment to enable Country Office staff to work remotely. Staff received such support that enabled them to continue their work under very stressful conditions.
3. Crosscutting issues such as gender equality, partnerships and social behaviour change and communication can benefit from specific strategies to guide how they are implemented in the Country Programme. Strategies for these cross-cutting issues can facilitate coherence and synergies of interventions, lend specificity to the results to be achieved in these cross-cutting areas and the monitoring of results, and clarity on the division of labour in the Country Office for these cross-cutting issues.
4. Technology is an important enabler for development and during periods of crisis. However, the introduction of technology should give careful consideration to the practicalities of using the technology and the issue of sustainability. The introduction of the Learning Passport is a good example of excellent technology, which is hampered by the lack of devices for children who cannot afford their own devices, and the cost of data outside of school premises. Another example is the limited number of computers at district level to capture data for the new EMIS, resulting in delays in capturing and uploading data to the EMIS.
5. Quality, disaggregated data are essential for the effective planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting progress of the Country Programme. National data systems have significant data gaps and this has presented difficulties for UNICEF to assess progress at the level of programme outcomes. The lack of adequate data presents a major challenge to the Government in monitoring progress towards attainment of the SDGs, and a challenge to other UN agencies and development partners for assessing the effectiveness of their contributions to the development of Lesotho.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report outlines the recommendations, categorized into recommendations for the next country programme and recommendations for the current country programme. Short-term recommendations are those that should be acted upon within the next 6 months, and medium-term recommendations are those that should be acted upon within the next 12 months to the end of the country programme cycle.

Early ideas for recommendations were shared with the Country Office, and these were refined based on the feedback from the Country Office. The recommendations are for action by UNICEF Lesotho. However, government partners and the UN Country Team may wish to take cognizance of the recommendations in preparation for the forthcoming UNSDCF. Civil society organizations are important partners in the implementation of the Country Programme and may wish to take cognizance of the recommendations for their internal planning and strategies on their future engagement with UNICEF.

6.1 Recommendations for the next Country Programme

Recommendation 1: UNICEF should improve the design of the next Country Programme by developing a theory of change for the Country Programme and nested theories of change for the components of the Country Programme. (Priority: high; time-frame: short-term)

The current Country Programme has theories of change, but these are not nested in an overarching theory of change, thus making it difficult to see the linkages between the components and how their convergence contributes to Country Programme outcomes. An overarching theory of change will assist the Country Office in developing a shared understanding of the change pathways, assumptions and risks, and identifying cross-cutting strategies to address risks. It will also assist the Country Office in presenting a coherent picture of the Country Programme to its partners in government, civil society, the UN system in Lesotho and other stakeholders.

UNICEF should test or validate the draft theory of change with its partners in government and civil society. This will enable the Country Office to test the assumptions and risks in the draft theory of change, identify data gaps and improve the selection of indicators for the Country Programme. Involvement of government partners and civil society can also foster a greater sense of national ownership of the Country Programme and support sustainability.

UNICEF should engage other UN agencies in discussions on the draft theory of change. Not only is this useful for validation, it can also serve to identify opportunities for joint programmes and collaboration. The theory of change can also serve as UNICEF's input to the design of the UNSDCF.

The draft theory of change for the Country Programme should guide the development of theories of change for the programme components. The process should be iterative, making adjustments to the Country Programme theory of change where required.

The Country Office should use the theories of change during its annual review to test assumptions and risks and take appropriate action.

Recommendation 2: UNICEF should develop a gender strategy for the next Country Programme and start the process by conducting a gender programmatic review. (Priority: high; time-frame: short-term)

Although the various interventions under the current Country Programme are gender-responsive, the Country Programme lacks coherence in its approach to gender inequality. The Country Office should develop a gender strategy for the next Country Programme that is transformative and brings coherence to UNICEF's gender-related initiatives. A gender programmatic review can provide UNICEF and its partners with a detailed evidence base on the progress in addressing gender inequalities in Lesotho to inform the development of gender-transformative policies for the next Country Programme. The gender programmatic review process is also an opportunity for UNICEF and its partners, especially government partners, to jointly interrogate the current strategies and approaches to addressing gender inequality and to enhance the capacities of the Country Office and government and civil society partners for gender analysis and the application of a gender lens. UNICEF should consider conducting this review jointly with other UN agencies such as UNFPA, with which it has a joint gender-related programme. The review also presents an opportunity to involve UN Women and the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation.

Recommendation 3: UNICEF should retain the life cycle approach in the design and implementation of the next Country Programme. The Country Office should be more deliberate in pursuing programmatic coherence and collaboration across work sections or units. (Priority: high; time-frame: medium-term)

The life cycle approach in the design of the Country Programme is a useful approach to ensure that interventions are appropriate for the age and development stage of children and adolescents. The approach has to some extent allowed staff in the Country Office to work outside their section boundaries. The life cycle approach should be retained.

The Country Office should be more deliberate in integrated cross-sectoral programming, delivery and reporting in the next Country Programme. This involves setting out clear procedures to be followed for integrated interventions within UNICEF. Not all interventions need to be integrated interventions, and the Country Office should only pursue integrated programmes where the results delivered will be significantly better than not having an integrated programme.

As part of the Country Programme design process, the Country Office should review its management and coordination mechanisms and align these to the new Country Programme. It should ensure that reporting lines are clear where programmes are integrated. The Country Office should also review the staffing mix to ensure that the Country Office is 'fit for purpose' for the next Country Programme.

Recommendation 4: UNICEF should identify one or two issues as a focus for the next Country Programme. This does not lessen the importance of other issues and is intended to serve as a flagship for positioning UNICEF to play a key influencing role and have a significant impact. (Priority: high; time-frame: medium-term)

Focusing on a specific issue where UNICEF has the potential to make a significant impact is one of the key lessons from the implementation of the Country Programme. Building on its past work in social protection, UNICEF seized the opportunity to advance the social protection agenda and made a difference to the children and households that benefited from the social protection response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The choice of priority issues is for the Country Office to decide, using UNICEF's guidance on prioritization in developing Country Programme documents, along with guidance from ESARO. The evaluation does however recommend that addressing the learning crisis in Lesotho should be considered as one of the top priorities. As the country moves to the post-pandemic era, UNICEF should consider focusing its attention on building forward, and here the learning of children and adolescents presents an opportunity. The education of children and adolescents is in crisis, and

UNICEF is well placed to make a significant contribution. Transforming education and learning offers an opportunity for integrating a range of issues, for example, child mental and physical health, WASH, climate change action, nutrition of school-aged children, social protection, child protection, SRHR and HIV. It is also an opportunity to address the issues of disability and children marginalized by virtue of living in remote areas, gender inequality, strengthen the use of technology and innovation and put into place SBCC. The focus on learning can serve as a platform for partnerships with the private sector, which tends to favour education programmes in their corporate social investment. This approach does not lessen the importance of the other work of UNICEF, as all should contribute to improving learning outcomes.

6.2 Recommendations for the current Country Programme

Recommendation 5: UNICEF should review the current programme portfolio and identify projects or activities that could be scaled down at the end of the current Country Programme cycle and put in place action plans for their sustainability. The review should also identify areas that could be scaled up and are likely to continue in the next Country Programme. UNICEF should also address the challenges identified with two important systems, namely, the NISSA and the EMIS. (Priority: high; time-frame: short-term)

UNICEF should avoid the carry over of projects by default into the next country programme. It should review the current portfolio and identify the projects and activities that could be scaled down, scaled up or maintained. This portfolio review should take into account the current performance of the project and changes in the country context and situation of children that might indicate the need to continue. For example, nutrition is one area that requires more attention and is an area of work that could be scaled up, focusing on one or two high impact interventions.

The review process should start as soon as possible and should involve government partners and civil society implementing partners. In this way, the Country Office is better placed to manage expectations and also identify options or action plans for the sustainability of these interventions.

The NISSA is an important system for the Government, and has enormous potential for an integrated, comprehensive approach to social protection in Lesotho. On completing the piloting of the update of the NISSA, UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Development should agree on the most efficient methodology for updating the NISSA and ensuring that the data remain relevant. UNICEF should engage the NISSA staff to better understand the technical difficulties with updating the database, including the issue of updating the urban household data.

It is understood that the EMIS is in a transition phase. However, progress has been very slow and there is a risk that the Ministry of Education and Training loses confidence in the new EMIS. It is essential that UNICEF engage the Ministry to understand the root causes of the problem and assist the Ministry to put workable solutions in place, which may include supporting the Ministry in advocacy for sustainable financing for EMIS from the Ministry of Finance.

Results for children are dependent on the quality and volume of public finance allocated for the health, education, and protection of children. In the current economic climate in Lesotho, public finance resources are severely constrained. UNICEF should step up its advocacy on public finance for children. It should seek to influence decisions on where the Government can make the most impactful investment for children, within its constrained resources envelope. This may require more detailed analytical work beyond the budget briefs, as well as specialist expertise that may not be available currently in the Country Office.

Recommendation 6: UNICEF should develop strategies for enabling and enhancing programme effectiveness. This includes developing a Country Programme monitoring framework, finalizing the partnership strategy, developing a resource mobilization strategy and ensuring that SBCC strategies are embedded in programmes. (Priority: high; time-frame: medium term)

Partnerships, SBCC and resource mobilization have been important enablers of results for the Country Programme. UNICEF's approach, however, has been opportunistic rather than the result of strategy.

The Country Office is embarking on the development of a partnership strategy to enhance the effectiveness of its partnerships and to increase the diversity of its partners. The strategy should be completed in this current programme cycle and updated for the next Country Programme, if required. In developing the partnership strategy, UNICEF should consider the following:

- (a) Reviewing its portfolio of existing partners and partnerships to identify the value that each brings to achieving results for children, identifying which partnerships can benefit from additional investment and identifying new partnerships, for example, in the private sector.
- (b) Considering the capacities and available resources of partners to contribute to the partnership.
- (c) Ensuring the objectives and outputs of the partnerships are mutually agreed, with a clear division of labour and indicators to assess the partnership. Joint investment (monetary and in-kind) should be documented, as should decision-making processes and conflict or dispute resolution processes.

The Country Office has already flagged the necessity for better integration of SBCC in its interventions, including ensuring that all programmes make budgetary provision for SBCC. The Country Office should prioritize which programme and interventions require SBCC, and ensure that social and behaviour change interventions are evaluated to assess their effectiveness.

The Country Office should develop a strategy and action plan to guide its resource mobilization. In doing so, it should consider the following:

- (a) The strategy should clarify the roles and responsibilities of Country Office staff in resource mobilization. Staff should be trained to identify and use opportunities to engage existing and potential resource partners.
- (b) It may be useful to establish a small resource mobilization task force to drive the development of the strategy and monitor its implementation.
- (c) Communication for the purposes of resource mobilization should be tailored for different audiences and adopt a multi-media approach.
- (d) Joint resource mobilization within the Country Office should be pursued where there are clear advantages in doing so. The strategy should also make provision for guidance on joint resource mobilization with other UN agencies.

Recommendation 7: UNICEF should conduct an internal review of all outcome and output indicators to ensure that they are consistent with the CPD, the AWP, and the RAM report. (Priority: medium; time-frame: medium-term)

The evaluation found inconsistencies between the indicators stated in the CPD and the indicators reported in the RAM report and AWP. There were also proposals to change targets. The Country Office should check all indicators and targets in its planning and reporting documents and ensure that

they are consistent. Where changes to targets and indicators have been agreed, the Country Office should ensure that the changes are captured as soon as systems permit.

While this recommendation addresses the current Country Programme, a review of indicators should serve as input to the selection of indicators for the next Country Programme. Consideration should be given to the appropriateness of the indicators and the availability of reliable, quality national data to monitor progress and evaluate results.

ANNEX A: TERMS OF REFERENCE

DRAFT Terms of Reference

Country Programme Evaluation of the Government of Lesotho and UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation 2019–2023

Summary

Type of Contract	Individual Contract
Title of the Evaluation	Evaluation of Lesotho-UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation (2019–2023)
Purpose	<p>Identify best practices, results and key lessons from the ongoing Country Programme to inform the development of the next Lesotho CPD.</p> <p>Reinforce accountability of UNICEF to national and international stakeholders.</p> <p>Reinforce accountability of UNICEF to the Executive Board.</p>
Objectives	<p>To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability of the Lesotho Country Programme from its inception to date, with particular focus on equity, gender equality, the convergence of programme components and achieving results at scale, as well as UNICEF's strategic positioning in relation to its child rights mandate.</p> <p>To reflect on how UNICEF responded/adapted to a changing environment (COVID-19) that impacted on the implementation of the Country Programme and had implications for the development of shock resilience.</p> <p>To identify and document key lessons learned, good practices and innovations in implementing the current (2019–2022) Country Programme that can inform and support advocacy efforts for scale-up and replication.</p> <p>To provide a set of forward-looking and actionable recommendations to strengthen programmatic strategies in the design of the next Lesotho Country Programme, considering national development priorities and plans and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the country.</p>
Location	Lesotho
Duration	Six months
Start Date	January 2021
Reporting to	UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO)
Grant reference	Non-grant (RR)

Activity and WBS details	2520/A0/05/883/003
---------------------------------	--------------------

Introduction

As per UNICEF's Evaluation Policy 2018, every UNICEF Country Programme must be evaluated at least once every two country programme cycles. Such Country Programme Evaluations (CPEs) are conducted by the Evaluation Section of the respective UNICEF Regional Office.

CPEs intend to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNICEF's contributions to development results at the country level and the effectiveness of UNICEF's strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results. Their purpose is to:

Identify best practices, results and key lessons from the ongoing Country Programme to inform the development of the next UNICEF CPD

Strengthen accountability of UNICEF to national and international stakeholders

Strengthen accountability of UNICEF to the Executive Board

The CPE will be managed by the Evaluation Section of UNICEF's East and Southern Africa Regional Office, under the overall oversight of the ESARO Regional Director, and in close collaboration with the UNICEF LCO, the Government of Lesotho and development partners. Quality assurance will be provided by UNICEF's Evaluation Office, which reports directly to UNICEF's Executive Director, and is functionally independent within the organization. The CPE will be conducted in accordance with the provisions of UNICEF's 2018 Evaluation Policy and the norms and standards of UNEG.

The terms of reference outline a brief description of the Country Programme; the evaluation's scope, objectives and key questions; evaluation methodology; stakeholder involvement; roles and responsibilities; evaluation process; deliverables; and evaluators' qualifications.

National Context

Lesotho is a high-altitude and landlocked country of 2.1 million people, encircled by South Africa. With a gross national income per capita of US\$1,390, Lesotho has been classified as a lower middle-income country by the World Bank. However, poverty remains higher than neighbouring countries and Lesotho faces frequent shocks, which include severe droughts, widespread HIV/AIDS and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. While the country has been making consistent, though slow, progress in reducing poverty and child mortality, and improving access to social services, the COVID-19 pandemic and strict lockdowns had a serious impact on households and the well-being of children. The prolonged global economic slowdown will adversely impact the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, directly affecting children and adolescents who make up 38 per cent of the population.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Lesotho Census, 2016.

Economic growth was expected to contract by 4.8 per cent in 2020¹⁰² due to the national lockdown which resulted in restricted movement, closed borders and closure of businesses. COVID-19 is expected to increase the poverty rate by 1.2 to 1.9 per cent by the end of 2020. Mitigating the impact will require a massive increase in spending, including for social protection and humanitarian assistance. Overall, 28 per cent of the population of Lesotho live on less than US\$1.90 a day, while 50 per cent of the population live below the national poverty line.¹⁰³ People living in rural areas, women and children are disproportionately poor. Despite numerous child-focused poverty reduction programmes, children remain the hardest hit by poverty in Lesotho: 65 per cent of all children in Lesotho are simultaneously deprived of at least three basic social services.

COVID-19, prolonged strikes and ad hoc “go slow” movements in the health sector, coupled with lockdown restrictions, had a serious negative impact on Lesotho’s already weak health system. Lesotho has the second highest HIV prevalence in the world and the impact of HIV on women and children continues to be significant. Young women (10–24 years) and adolescent girls (10–19 years) in particular account for a disproportionate number of new HIV infections. In 2019, HIV incidence in young women stood at 1.5 per cent, nearly three times that of young men (0.6 per cent), while over 12,000 children in Lesotho are estimated to be living with HIV and 1,000 children were newly infected with HIV.¹⁰⁴ Lesotho has made significant progress in the HIV response, however, children fair more poorly than adults in terms of access to treatment and viral suppression.

There are high national levels of antenatal care (95 per cent for the first visit) and delivery in a health facility (77 per cent).¹⁰⁵ However, under-five mortality remains a challenge, especially for boys (102 per 1,000 live births). Common causes of death amongst children include prematurity, birth asphyxia, pneumonia and malnutrition.¹⁰⁶ Maternal mortality is also extremely high, at 1,024 deaths per 100,000 live births,¹⁰⁷ and skilled birth attendance displays wide disparities between urban and rural areas (90 per cent vs. 73 per cent) and wealth quintiles (richest, 94 per cent; poorest, 60 per cent).¹⁰⁸

In 2020, COVID-19 further exacerbated serious food insecurity, which had a direct impact on the nutritional well-being of children. One third of children in Lesotho are stunted (92,000 children under the age of 5), a number that has increased in recent years from 33 per cent in 2014 (DHS) to 35 per cent in 2018 (MICS). The persistent nutritional deprivation that causes stunting also causes long-term irreversible physical and cognitive damage. Micronutrient deficiencies amongst children aged 6 to 59 months stands at 51 per cent; iron deficiency anemia is the most common deficiency.

Primary education is free and compulsory, and before COVID-19, Lesotho was close to achieving universal primary education with a primary net enrolment at 85 per cent and a good retention until completion of primary school.¹⁰⁹ For Basotho learners, 2018 and 2020 can be characterized as two

¹⁰² International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook*, IMF, October 2020.

¹⁰³ World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, World Bank, 2020.

¹⁰⁴ Spectrum Estimates, 2020.

¹⁰⁵ *World Development Indicators*, 2020.

¹⁰⁶ UNICEF Situation Analysis 2015.

¹⁰⁷ *Annual Joint Review 2015–2016*.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training, *Education Statistics Bulletin*, Ministry of Education and Training, Lesotho, 2018.

years of education loss. School disruptions due to teachers on strike then school closures due to COVID-19 have affected over 500,000 learners.¹¹⁰ This will have short- and long-term consequences for children and the country, as educational outcomes were already low in Lesotho: only 45 per cent of children aged 7–14 demonstrate foundational reading skills in English or Sesotho and only 15 per cent demonstrate foundational numeracy skills.¹¹¹

In terms of child protection, Lesotho launched the Violence Against Children Survey in 2020. The survey showed that girls and boys experience unacceptably high rates of sexual and physical violence, with more than half of boys and almost one in three girls experiencing physical violence.¹¹² On birth registration, fewer than half of children under 5 are registered (45 per cent of boys and 43 per cent of girls were registered). This varies widely across districts and increases with household wealth quintile (poorest, 34 per cent; richest, 63 per cent).

As households struggle to make ends meet, as caregivers' capacity to care for children in a nurturing environment is diminished due to illness and stress, there are early indications of an increase in negative coping mechanisms, including early marriage and child labour. The impact of COVID-19 on health, livelihoods, food security, learning and well-being is profound. As part of delivering as One UN, UNICEF Lesotho continues to highlight issues affecting children in joint advocacy and resource mobilization efforts.

The Government of Lesotho is highly committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and recognizes the transformative goal of the agenda. Lesotho has mainstreamed regional and international commitments, including the SDGs, into national priorities, defined through the NSDP II 2018/19–2022/23. The UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme 2019–2023 is aligned with the NSDP II, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the SDGs and the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021. Recently, contributing to the COVID-19 response and recovery has become our priority, with specific emphasis on saving lives, enhancing household coping capacities and improving community resilience.

UNICEF Programme in Lesotho

The vision of the Country Programme, 2019–2023, is to reach every child, everywhere, every time, with opportunities to survive, develop and reach her or his full potential. The UNICEF Country Programme 2019–2023 was developed in alignment with the Lesotho NSDP II, 2019–2023, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the SDGs and the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021. It also contributes to the governance, human capital development and economic growth pillars of the Lesotho UNDAF. Since early 2020, contributing to the COVID-19 response and recovery has become a priority, with specific emphasis on saving lives, enhancing household coping capacities and improving community resilience.

UNICEF's work in Lesotho is anchored in an integrated approach around the first and second decades of a child's life. To do so, our Country Programmes are implemented through three programme components:

¹¹⁰ Based on EMIS enrolment data from 2019 as 2020 data is not yet available.

¹¹¹ 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.

¹¹² Lesotho Violence Against Children and Youth Survey, 2018.

1. Young children survive, thrive and attain learning outcomes
2. Children and adolescents are protected from violence and HIV and have improved learning outcomes
3. Reducing child poverty and enhancing equity and social protection

This first component envisions that by 2023 young children, particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from gender-responsive equitable social programmes. The component supports multiple SDGs, particularly Goals 1 (End poverty in all its forms, everywhere) to 6 (Ensure access to water and sanitation for all) and underpins national efforts to reduce maternal and under-five mortality and improve learning outcomes.

This second component focuses on: (a) ensuring the right of adolescents and children to protection from violence and exploitation; (b) reducing new HIV infections among adolescents, with a focus on girls; and (c) helping children to achieve optimal learning outcomes through access to quality education options, including alternative pathways that enable transfer between formal and non-formal education. It aligns closely with SDG 4 (Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning); 6 (Ensure access to water and sanitation for all); and 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all).

The third component works towards the realization of nearly all the SDGs, particularly Goals 1 to 5, 10, 16 and 17. To realize the Country Programme vision, UNICEF works to strengthen strategic partnerships to leverage resources and influence policy implementation. The specific priorities of this programme component include: (a) strengthening public finance for children to ensure that all children, including the most vulnerable, benefit optimally from government budgets at the central and decentralized levels; (b) supporting the establishment of an integrated child-sensitive and gender- and shock-responsive social protection system; and (c) supporting robust evidence generation to inform social and economic policies and programmes for children.

Additionally, the focus of the country programme is to meet quality standards in achieving impactful results for children under the programmatic components above. This is achieved through several strategic areas that include programme performance monitoring and management, following UNICEF policies and procedures. UNICEF applies results-based management to ensure rigour in planning and monitoring, with regular annual and mid-year reviews, which provide opportunities to adjust for acceleration and scaling up. Evidence-based advocacy and partnerships strengthen child-sensitive policies, strategies, plans and programmes. UNICEF also uses communication for development to create and sustain demand for basic social services and to overcome harmful traditional norms and cultural practices, particularly child marriage and violence against children. UNICEF enhances cross-sectoral and multisectoral programming to achieve more impactful results.

All the above components collectively aim to secure the well-being and future potential of children in Lesotho.

Evaluation Objectives

The **overall objectives** of the CPE are:

1. To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability of the Lesotho Country Programme from its inception to the present, with particular focus on equity, gender equality, convergence of programme components and achieving results at scale, as well as UNICEF's strategic positioning in relation to its child rights mandate.

2. To identify and document key lessons learned, good practices and innovations in implementing the current (2019–2023) Country Programme that can inform and support advocacy efforts for scale-up and replication.
3. To provide a set of forward-looking and actionable recommendations to strengthen programmatic strategies in the design of the next Lesotho Country Programme, taking into consideration national development priorities and plans and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the country.

Scope of the Evaluation

The proposed CPE will cover the Lesotho Country Programme (LCP) from 2019–2023, capturing and demonstrating evaluative evidence of the effectiveness of UNICEF in both the leveraging of national efforts and the organization's direct contributions in achieving development results for children at the country level. It is anticipated to begin in January 2021, with the inception phase, and take 60 days over a span of five months to complete. As a country-level evaluation of UNICEF, the CPE will focus on the formal UNICEF CPD approved by the Executive Board but also consider any changes/revisions from the initial CPD during the period under review. Subject to specific areas of focus identified below, the scope of the CPE includes the entirety of UNICEF's engagement in the country, and therefore covers interventions funded by all sources. The CPE will also cover any humanitarian or emergency response supported by UNICEF Lesotho during the period under evaluation.

The CPE should have a particular focus on UNICEF's positioning within the development community and its national partners in relation to its child rights mandate. The CPE will also examine the following areas of concern:

- Equity;
- Gender Equality;
- Convergence of programme components.

While the unit of analysis will be the LCP as a whole, each of the components making up UNICEF's programme will be assessed with a focus on how equity, gender and programme convergence have been approached. The CPE will also have a strong focus on gender as a cross-cutting theme across evaluation criteria and evaluation questions. It will also specifically examine the coherence of the LCP with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and the GAPs (2014–2017 and 2018–2021).

The LCP is entering year four of a five-year cycle. It is not expected that programmatic results will manifest sufficiently to draw conclusions about the impact of the present LCP. The CPE aims to foster learning of what has worked, what has not and why, in the current LCP with a view to designing the next LCP.

Evaluation Criteria and Preliminary Evaluation Questions

The CPE will be guided by key evaluation criteria and aim to answer the following evaluation questions:

Relevance: The CPE will seek to assess the extent to which the objectives of the Country Programme and its design were and remain appropriate within the country context, as well as whether UNICEF's approach towards addressing them was the most suitable considering its mandate, resource base, comparative advantages, and operational structures. It will assess both whether UNICEF has identified the most relevant goals or strategies to solve the programme challenges posed and whether these are equity focused and gender responsive.

1. To what extent is the Country Programme guided by national priorities, clear programme theories and relevant programme strategies appropriate to the changing context and emerging issues, and does it have the capacity to respond and adjust as necessary?
2. To what extent has UNICEF been able to position itself as a strategic partner in the country context? What are UNICEF's comparative strengths in the country – particularly in comparison to other UN agencies and development partners – and how were these harnessed to help achieve the results?

Coherence: The CPE will assess policy consistency with key UNICEF strategies and international commitments including gender equality and women's empowerment, equity for children and the human rights-based approach; as well as UNICEF's coordination and convening role, within the UN, and with government sectors and donors in Lesotho.

3. To what extent have LCP strategies to address gender equality and equity, particularly the alignment of the LCP with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and UNICEF's GAPs (2014–2017 and 2018–2021), been consistently integrated in all aspects of programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy? Did the Country Office's strategic approach to addressing the challenges of equity and gender equality play a complementary role to that of government and other development actors?
4. To what extent is the Country Programme linked to and achieving synergies and coordination with other UN agencies, particularly in response to emergencies, such as COVID-19?

Effectiveness: The CPE will assess the extent to which the Country Programme results were achieved and whether the adopted strategies by UNICEF, particularly the convergence of programme components, were gender responsive/transformational and demonstrated a reasonable contribution at the outcome level, including any differential results across groups.

5. To what extent has the Country Programme achieved its outcomes, or is likely to achieve them, including any differential results across gender, income, ethnicities, etc.? What results have been achieved through convergence, and what are the other major factors influencing the achievement (or not) of Country Programme outcomes?
6. Did the Country Programme contribute to the reduction of inequities and exclusion and progress towards the achievement of greater gender equality? To what extent are programmes, communications and advocacy efforts gender responsive/transformational, and, relatedly, are UNICEF LCO staff capacitated to integrate and implement gender responsive/transformational programmes?

Efficiency: The CPE will measure how resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) were converted into and affected results. It is also understood as the way in which UNICEF manages its partnerships, to operationalize its strategies, implement activities and deliver outputs.

7. Were resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) allocated and utilized strategically to track and achieve results, including equity and gender-related objectives?
8. To what extent have the convergence strategy, the programme structure and the office structure supported the delivery of the Country Programme? Were the chosen strategies and approaches the most cost effective and efficient? Were there alternatives that would have worked better and what are those?

Sustainability: The CPE will assess the extent to which continuation of benefits from Country Programme interventions was ensured, including the likelihood of and risks to continued long-term benefits, and the potential for scale-up and/or replication.

9. To what extent are the positive changes and effects of the Country Programme sustainable at the relevant levels (e.g., community, provincial/state, national)? To what extent have the programme strategies adopted by UNICEF contributed to, or been designed in a way that they will contribute to, sustainability of results, especially equity and gender-related results?
10. To what extent have the programme strategies, plans and tools, particularly those with an equity and gender focus, been institutionalized in systems, policies, mechanisms and strategies among government, NGO/civil society and other partners and stakeholders? Will the strategies/plans/tools be more widely replicated or adapted? What's the scalability of models introduced by UNICEF?

To answer these overarching questions, the evaluator will be expected to develop sub questions as part of the evaluation matrix to further focus the evaluation, not expand the scope, during the inception phase, which will be reviewed with all stakeholders during the inception period.

Evaluation Approach and Methods

The evaluation methodology will adhere to the UNEG Norms & Standards.¹¹³ The detailed evaluation design will be developed by the external evaluators or evaluation consultancy firm to be contracted to conduct the evaluation during the inception phase, in close consultation with the ESARO Evaluation Section managing the evaluation and key evaluation stakeholders. The design should specify how data collection and analysis methods integrate gender considerations throughout the evaluation process, including to the extent possible, inclusion of girls and boys and women and men, as well as a range of Country Programme stakeholders.

The CPE will be conducted at the outcome level. A theory of change approach (including reconstructing a theory of change for the entire Country Programme) will be used in consultation with stakeholders, as appropriate, to better understand how and under what conditions UNICEF's interventions are expected to lead to improved well-being of children in Lesotho. Discussions of the theory of change will focus on mapping the assumptions behind the programme's desired change(s) and the causal linkages between the intervention(s) and the intended Country Programme outcomes. As part of this analysis, the implementation of the Country Programme over the evaluation period will also be examined, covering UNICEF's capacity to adapt to the changing context in Lesotho; its responsiveness to changing needs and priorities will also be looked at. Where possible and appropriate, the evaluation should seek to obtain evidence as to what may or may not have occurred in the absence of UNICEF's programme.

The effectiveness of UNICEF's Country Programme will be analysed to understand the extent to which the Country Programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives. This will include an assessment of the achieved results and the extent to which these results have contributed to the intended CPD objectives. In this process, positive and negative, direct and indirect, and unintended results will be identified, as well as the contribution of programme strategies to the development of these results.

To better understand UNICEF's performance, the specific factors that influenced performance – positively or negatively – and the sustainability of results in Lesotho will be examined. In addition to country-specific factors that may explain UNICEF's performance; the utilization of resources to deliver results (including managerial practices); the extent to which LCO fostered partnerships and synergies

¹¹³ United Nations Evaluation Group, 'Norms and Standards for Evaluation'.

with other actors; and the integration of equity and gender in the design and implementation of the CPD are some of the aspects that will be assessed.

It is expected that the CPE apply a strong equity and gender focus by: i) including equity and gender in evaluation criteria and evaluation questions; ii) making evaluation methodology, data collection and analysis methods equity- and gender-responsive; and iii) reflecting equity and gender analysis in evaluation findings, conclusions, concrete recommendations and action points that can be addressed in the design of the next CPD, both for a better integration of equity and gender in the office and programming efforts, and for strengthened results for children.

The CPE should rely on a mix of quantitative and qualitative information that will need to be triangulated. Primary data gathering from implementing partners via key informant interviews and/or focus group discussions is highly advisable. Participatory methods, especially those involving adolescents and children, should be considered along with any potential ethical issues and approaches (see section 10 below).

The stakeholders for this evaluation are relevant government partners, NGO partners implementing programmes with UNICEF through cooperation agreements and rights holders who are targeted by UNICEF programmes. A stakeholder analysis that goes beyond government and NGO implementing partners to ensure the views of all relevant stakeholders are incorporated in the evaluation and the reconstructed theory of change will be part of the approach and will be undertaken during the inception phase.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation approach will have to be adaptive to the evolving situation.¹¹⁴ For now, it is expected that the inception phase will likely need to be conducted remotely, and how to proceed with data collection will be assessed during the inception phase.

Assessment of data availability and data constraints

As part of the inception phase, the evaluator will conduct an assessment to ascertain the available information, identify data constraints, and determine the data collection needs and methods. The methodology should be aware of and be prepared to take advantage of the accumulated and in-process evidence generated through research, studies, surveys and evaluations conducted within the UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme.

With respect to indicators, the CPD results framework is updated annually during the annual reporting to show progress towards outputs. A Country Office Annual Report (COAR) is produced annually, covering all the programme components and implementation strategies and their status. Other relevant programmatic surveys and studies will be availed to the evaluator.

The following secondary data will be reviewed, among others: background documents on the national context; documents prepared by international partners during the period under review and documents prepared by UN system agencies; programme plans and frameworks; progress reports; monitoring self-assessments such as the UNICEF Country Office Annual Reports; national surveys (e.g., MICS); national reports; and evaluations conducted by the country office and partners. Sex-disaggregated data will be collected, where available, and assessed against programme outcomes.

¹¹⁴ For UNICEF guidance on undertaking evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic, please see the UNICEF Technical Note on Evaluation and the COVID-19 response: www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2804.

This evaluation will take place during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluator will maintain continuous consultations with the Country Office and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) regarding the preparation of the in-country mission to determine the feasibility of accessing project sites and carrying out in-person meetings with key stakeholders during the data collection phase. UNICEF will facilitate, wherever feasible, the contact of the evaluator with staff that have transferred from the LCO to other duty stations or employers.

Data collection methods

The evaluation will use data from primary and secondary sources, including a desk review of documentation and information as well as interviews with key informants. A multi-stakeholder approach will be followed, and interviews will include government representatives, civil society organizations, private sector representatives, UN agencies, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors and rights holders under the programme. Focus group discussions may be used to consult different groups of rights holders and duty bearers as appropriate.

At the time of commissioning, it is uncertain when, or if at all, face-to-face data collection will take place. Sufficient flexibility has been built into the Terms of Reference to allow for adjustment and immediate feedback during the course of the evaluation. While face-to-face contact may not be possible, the evaluation may also rely on remote data collection through remote meetings and remote interviews (phone calls and online conferencing calls). This may be supplemented by online/email questionnaires and surveys or computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) according to the necessity.

It is expected that programme sites in two to three select districts where UNICEF has a concentration of initiatives (in several programme areas), as well as those where critical projects are being implemented, will be considered for field visits, if allowed. Coverage should include a sample, as relevant, of both successful initiatives and those reporting difficulties where lessons can be learned, both larger and smaller initiatives, as well as both completed and ongoing initiatives. The evaluator should propose alternative working modalities should international travel and/or domestic travel not be permitted.

Validation. The evaluation will use triangulation of information collected from different sources and/or by different methods to ensure that the data is valid.

Stakeholder Involvement. A participatory and transparent process will be followed to engage with multiple stakeholders at all stages of the evaluation process. During the inception phase a stakeholder analysis will be conducted to identify all relevant UNICEF partners, including those that may have not worked with UNICEF but play a key role in the outcomes to which UNICEF contributes. This stakeholder analysis will play a key part in informing the reconstructed theory of change, serving to identify key informants for interviews during the main data collection phase of the evaluation, and will examine any potential partnerships that could further improve UNICEF's contribution to the country.

Specific Tasks, Deliverables and Timeline

The CPE is anticipated to begin in January 2021 with the inception phase and take 60 days over a span of five months to complete.

Timeline	Activity	Deliverable	Other elements to be aware of or link to
----------	----------	-------------	------------------------------------------

Timeline	Activity	Deliverable	Other elements to be aware of or link to
5 days	<u>Preparatory phase</u> Secondary data collection and desk review Preliminary stakeholder analysis Preparation for the inception phase	1. Plan for inception phase Recipients: members of the evaluation reference group	Evaluation Reference Group is formed. UNICEF and other stakeholders are informed to secure cooperation for the effort. Documentation and data are assembled by UNICEF for use by the evaluator.
10 days	<u>Inception phase</u> May include an inception mission to Maseru, Lesotho (Re)Construction of Theory of Change Preparation of draft inception report (see Annex 2 for the indicative table of contents) and data collection tools Engagement with stakeholders on inception report Ethical approval process Finalization of inception report	2. Draft inception report Recipients: members of the Evaluation Reference Group 3. Presentation of the draft inception report and instruments – in person or via video link – to the Evaluation Reference Group 4. Final inception report (plus completed audit trail addressing all comments) Recipients: members of the Evaluation Reference Group	
25 days	<u>Data collection phase</u> Preparation for data collection, including piloting of instruments Mission in Lesotho to collect data and meet with stakeholders Preparation of interview reports Population of evaluation matrix Preparation and delivery of Country Mission Debrief	5. Country Mission Debrief with key LCO staff at the end of the in-country mission	
20 days	<u>Drafting, validation and completion phase</u> Data analysis and drafting Preparation of a PowerPoint presentation on emerging findings, conclusions and recommendations	6. Presentation of preliminary findings – in person or via video link – on emerging findings, conclusions and recommendations, with key evaluation stakeholders, including the Evaluation Reference Group	Presentations of key findings and recommendations need to be ready for the UNICEF Lesotho Strategic Moment of Reflection (preparation of the next Country Programme) and other identified events in Q2 of

Timeline	Activity	Deliverable	Other elements to be aware of or link to
	Engagement with stakeholders on draft report Finalization of report and summary PowerPoint presentation	<p>Recipients: members of the Evaluation Reference Group</p> <p>7. A complete first draft evaluation report</p> <p>Recipients: members of the Evaluation Reference Group</p> <p>8. Presentation of the findings, conclusions and recommendations at the LCO Strategic Moment of Reflection</p> <p>9. A final evaluation report (plus completed audit trail addressing all comments). The final report should be illustrated with data and infographics. Detailed recommendations on each theme should be presented in a separate concluding chapter. Equity and gender should also be included as cross-cutting themes throughout the findings.</p> <p>Recipients: members of the Evaluation Reference Group</p> <p>10. Final PowerPoint presentation that summarizes the evaluation findings</p> <p>Recipients: members of the Evaluation Reference Group</p> <p>11. Other agreed dissemination products including: evaluation brief, two or three thematic evaluation briefs, evaluation poster etc., are completed.</p>	<p>2022.</p> <p>The report structure, format and quality should adhere to the UNICEF Evaluation Report standards¹¹⁵ and the Geros Quality Assessment System.¹¹⁶</p> <p>Dissemination and use strategy commence as deliverables are received.</p>
60 days	TOTAL		

Important notes:

¹¹⁵ www.unicef.org/evaluation/media/816/file/UNICEF-Adapted-UNEG-Evaluation-Report-Standards.pdf.

¹¹⁶ www.unicef.org/media/54781/file.

Data archive: Data gathered in the exercise is transferred in an organized archive that will permit follow-on users to replicate or extend the analysis. Suitable care to be taken in assuring the anonymity of respondents and documentation in inception and final reports.

Monitoring work progress on deliverables which are not listed in the Terms of Reference will be periodically required.

The format of and page limits for the final deliverables will be decided in the inception period. A high value will be placed on products that are concise and communicate well with different audiences. Thus, the final products should be edited and produced to include infographics and print layout in an easy to read format.

Management Arrangements and Quality Assurance

The evaluator will be recruited by and report to the ESARO Evaluation Section under the overall oversight of the ESARO Regional Director. For the day-to-day management of the CPE, the Evaluation Section will appoint an Evaluation Manager who will be accountable to the Regional Evaluation Adviser. Quality assurance will be provided by UNICEF's Evaluation Office.

LCO will appoint an Evaluation Focal Point who will act as the primary liaison with the Evaluation Manager and will facilitate the data collection and evaluation process at the country level.

The Evaluation Manager will work with LCO to constitute an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), comprising key stakeholders of the CPE, including government counterparts; several senior LCO and ESARO staff members; select development, civil society and private sector partners; and, if possible, adolescents. The ERG's responsibilities are described in the ERG terms of reference. The ERG has an advisory capacity whose primary role is to review evaluation milestones (terms of reference, inception report, draft evaluation report) and to provide comments. The ERG Secretariat will maintain a written record, as part of an audit trail, of all ERG comments, which the evaluator is expected to respond to in writing (agree – actions taken; disagree – justification).

The ERG will, by default, be chaired by the Evaluation Manager. Upon the request of the LCO Representative, the ERG may be chaired by the Regional Evaluation Adviser or the Regional Director.

Reports are also required at each payment schedule. Inception report and draft final report will be subject to a satisfactory rating by an external quality assurance facility, using quality assurance checklists provided in Annexes 3 and 4, before payment can be made.

Ethical Considerations

The evaluator should adhere to the following UN and UNICEF norms and standards and is expected to clearly identify any potential ethical issues and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process in their proposal, owing to the envisaged participation of human subjects in the evaluation. Copies of all these documents will be provided upon request:

UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the UN System

UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, including impartiality, independence, quality, transparency, consultative process

Ethical Guidelines for UN Evaluations and the UNICEF procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis will guide the overall process

UNICEF adapted evaluation report standards and GEROs

The evaluation should incorporate the human rights-based and gender perspective and be based on results-based management principles and logical framework analysis.

Expected Background and Experience of the Evaluator

It is envisioned that the CPE can be completed by one experienced individual. However, if the consultant proposes a team, the number of team members shall be determined by the consultant, as considered to be most suitable for the successful completion of the assignment, and the level of involvement of each team member must be specified in the proposal. However, UNICEF will not be involved in the contractual and financial agreement between the team leader and team members.

The consultant shall minimally meet the following requirements:

- Advanced university degree in one or more of the disciplines relevant to evaluation (social policy, economics, demography, anthropology, public health).
- Minimum of ten years of experience in conducting similar or related strategic programme evaluations or evaluative reviews, including proven track record of evaluation or evaluative review of similar large multisectoral and multi-stakeholder Country Programmes supported by United Nations or UNICEF.
- Demonstrated expertise in evaluating institutional support systems including operations and the human resource function.
- Knowledge of programming theories and strategies employed in each of the programme outcome components.
- A work record in a Middle Income Country in Africa.
- Excellent command of English, with a proven ability to prepare high-quality reports.
- Strong quantitative and qualitative analytical skills.
- Demonstration of capacity to carry out the CPE and complete deliverables.
- The evaluator must submit samples (at least two) of similar work they have conducted.
- Significant advantages:
- Proven ability to develop attractive evidence products that present complex information via infographics and other communication means.
- Knowledge of the social, economic, and political context of Lesotho.
- Record of top ranked evaluation reports by GEROs.

Administrative issues

This consultancy will be carried in 60 working days. The individual consultant is expected to provide their own space and equipment to carry out the work.

As per UNICEF Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) policy, payment is made against approved deliverables. No advance payment is allowed unless in exceptional circumstances against bank guarantee, subject to a maximum of 30 per cent of the total contract value in cases where advance purchases, for example for supplies or travel, may be necessary.

The candidate selected will be governed by and subject to UNICEF's General Terms and Conditions for individual contracts.

Annexes

- Annex 1. Lesotho Country Programme document results and resources framework
- Annex 2. Inception report outline
- Annex 3. UNICEF quality review checklists for inception reports
- Annex 4. UNICEF quality review checklist for draft evaluation reports

TOR Clearance and Approval

Name	Urs Nagel	Anurita Bains
Designation	Regional Evaluation Adviser, UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office	Representative, UNICEF Lesotho
Date		
Signature		

ANNEX B: EVALUATION MATRIX

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria/Indicators	Data sources and data collection methods
Relevance		
1. To what extent is the Country Programme guided by national priorities, clear programme theories and relevant programme strategies appropriate to the changing context and emerging issues, and does it have the capacity to respond and adjust as necessary? Has UNICEF LCO employed a mix of policy advice, systems strengthening and service delivery intensification appropriate for the country context?	<p>Consistency/alignment between Country Programme outcomes and outputs and national priorities set out in the NSDP II, the issues identified in the VNR 2019 and key policy documents of the Government</p> <p>Adjustments to priorities in view of COVID-19 and other emergencies, disasters</p> <p>Evidence of updating programme theories and risk assessment at mid-term</p>	<p>Interviews with government partners</p> <p>Interviews with other development partners and stakeholders</p> <p>Interviews with LCO</p> <p>Desk review of CPD and national development strategy (NDS) and relevant sector strategies</p> <p>Desk review of Strategy Notes</p>
2. To what extent has UNICEF been able to position itself as a strategic partner in the country context? What are UNICEF's comparative strengths in the country – particularly in comparison to other UN agencies and development partners – and how were these harnessed to help achieve the results?	<p>Confirmation by UN agencies of UNICEF's value added in terms of (i) policy advice; (ii) systems strengthening; (iii) intensification of service delivery</p> <p>Confirmation by other partners and stakeholders of UNICEF's value added in terms of (i) policy advice; (ii) systems strengthening; (iii) intensification of service delivery</p> <p>Level/mix of interventions (policy advice, systems strengthening or intensification of service delivery) is aligned with UNICEF's comparative strengths in Lesotho</p>	<p>Interviews with government partners</p> <p>Interviews with other development partners and stakeholders</p> <p>Interviews with LCO</p> <p>Interviews with other UN agencies</p> <p>Desk review of UN Country Results Annual Reports</p>

Coherence		
3. To what extent have Lesotho Country Programme strategies to address gender equality and equity, particularly the alignment of the Lesotho Country Programme with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and UNICEF's GAPs (2014–2017 and 2018–2021), been consistently integrated in all aspects of programming and implementation, including policy and advocacy? Did the Country Office's strategic approach to addressing the challenges of equity and gender equality play a complementary role to that of government and other development actors?	<p>UNICEF's Gender Action Plans and Core Commitments are reflected in UNICEF's interventions in terms of (i) policy advice; (ii) systems strengthening; (iii) intensification of service delivery</p> <p>Stakeholders confirm complementary role played by UNICEF in addressing challenges of equity and gender equality and illustrate with examples</p>	<p>Interviews with government partners</p> <p>Interviews with LCO</p> <p>Interviews with other UN agencies</p> <p>Desk review of programming and strategy documents and UNICEF Global and ESARO documents</p>
4. To what extent is the Country Programme linked to and achieving synergies and coordination with other UN agencies, particularly in response to emergencies, such as COVID-19?	<p>Alignment of Country Programme outcomes and outputs with UNDAF results framework</p> <p>Stakeholders identify specific interventions planned and implemented collaboratively or jointly and results achieved</p> <p>Stakeholders confirm UNICEF's role and contribution to COVID-19 national response and recovery in terms of (i) policy advice; (ii) systems strengthening; (iii) intensification of service delivery</p>	<p>Desk review of Country Office Annual Reports, UN Country Results Annual Reports, Government reports on COVID-19 response and recovery</p>
2. Effectiveness		
5. To what extent has the Country Programme achieved its outcomes and outputs, or is likely to achieve them, including any differential results across gender, income, ethnicities, etc.? What results have been achieved through convergence, and what are the other major factors influencing the achievement (or not) of Country Programme outcomes?	<p>Outputs achieved against planned targets: (i) achieved; (ii) partially achieved; (iii) not achieved, for each year of CPD implementation</p> <p>Progress against outcome indicator targets in CPD: (i) achieved; (ii) partially achieved; (iii) not achieved</p> <p>Extent to which risk mitigation strategies were implemented and adjusted</p>	<p>Interviews with government partners</p> <p>Interviews with other development partners and stakeholders</p> <p>Interviews with LCO</p> <p>Interviews with other UN agencies</p> <p>Desk review of Country Office rolling work plans, annual reports, internal reviews, evaluations, implementing</p>

		'partners' progress reports RAMS report 2021
6. Did the Country Programme contribute to the reduction of inequities and exclusion and progress towards the achievement of greater gender equality? To what extent are programmes, communications and advocacy efforts gender responsive/transformational, and, relatedly, are UNICEF LCO staff capacitated to integrate and implement gender responsive/transformational programmes? How effectively has UNICEF LCO integrated social and behavioural change in its work and that of its partners?	<p>Changes (positive and negative) in situation of children (multi-dimensional child poverty) in different geographic regions, disaggregated by sex</p> <p>Actual vs. planned targets for equity and gender equality at outcome level</p> <p>Extent to which equity and gender equality considerations are reflected in design of interventions</p> <p>Stakeholder perceptions of gender responsiveness/transformational nature of UNICEF programmes, communications and advocacy, illustrated with examples</p> <p>Evidence of integration of social and behavioural change considerations in design of interventions and advocacy, results indicating behaviour change</p>	<p>Interviews with government partners</p> <p>Interviews with other development partners and stakeholders</p> <p>Interviews with LCO</p> <p>Interviews with other UN agencies</p> <p>Desk review of Country Office rolling work plans, annual reports, internal reviews, evaluations, implementing 'partners' progress reports</p> <p>RAMS report 2021</p> <p>Evaluation/assessment reports on communications and advocacy work</p>
3. Efficiency		
7. Were resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) allocated and utilized strategically to track and achieve results, including equity and gender-related objectives?	<p>Outcome budgets are broadly commensurate with scale and scope of expected results</p> <p>Expected vs. actual resource mobilization</p> <p>Perceptions of stakeholders of efficiency of resource use (costs vs. benefits) and efficiency of implementation modalities (avoiding waste or duplication)</p>	Desk review of financial reports and resource mobilization strategy
8. To what extent have the convergence strategy, the programme structure, including	Examples of collaboration or joint activities across	Interviews with government partners

the life cycle approach, the office structure and the matrix management approach supported the delivery of the Country Programme? Were the chosen strategies and approaches the most cost effective and efficient? Were there alternatives that would have worked better and what are those?	<p>programme components (convergence) and results achieved</p> <p>Perceptions of LCO on efficiency and effectiveness of matrix management approach as applied in LCO</p>	<p>Interviews with other development partners and stakeholders</p> <p>Interviews with LCO</p> <p>Interviews with other UN agencies</p> <p>Desk review of Country Programme Strategy Notes, Country Office rolling work plans, annual reports, internal reviews, evaluations, implementing 'partners' progress reports</p>
4. Sustainability		
9. To what extent are the positive changes and effects of the Country Programme sustainable at the relevant levels (e.g., community, provincial/state, national)? To what extent have the programme strategies adopted by UNICEF contributed to, or been designed in a way that they will contribute to, sustainability of results, especially equity and gender-related results?	<p>Evidence of sustainability strategies implemented by UNICEF: (i) exit strategies in project documents/agreements; (ii) capacity building; (iii) advocacy and communication; (iv) partnership strategies</p> <p>Examples of sustainability at levels of (i) policy; (ii) systems strengthening; (iii) intensification of service delivery, by different categories of stakeholders (national government, subnational governments and communities)</p>	<p>Interviews with government partners</p> <p>Interviews with other development partners and stakeholders</p> <p>Interviews with LCO</p> <p>Interviews with other UN agencies</p>
10. To what extent have the programme strategies, plans and tools, particularly those with an equity and gender focus, been institutionalized in systems, policies, mechanisms and strategies among government, NGO/civil society and other partners and stakeholders? Will the strategies/plans/tools be more widely replicated or adapted? What's the scalability of models introduced by UNICEF?	<p>Extent to which Government and other partners have continued with development activities in areas supported by UNICEF</p> <p>Evidence where Government has scaled up interventions, acted on policy/legislative proposals and programme improvements flowing from UNICEF support and advocacy</p> <p>Evidence of communities' adoption of new or improved practices</p>	<p>Interviews with government partners</p> <p>Interviews with other development partners and stakeholders</p> <p>Interviews with LCO</p> <p>Interviews with other UN agencies</p> <p>Field visits to sample of community-based projects</p> <p>Desk review of reports on emergency response, minutes of meetings, reports on post-emergency situation in affected communities supported by UNICEF</p>

ANNEX C: DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Bureau of Statistics, Lesotho Population and Housing Census, 2016.

Bureau of Statistics, Multidimensional Child Poverty in Lesotho – Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis, Bureau of Statistics, Lesotho, 2020.

Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Lesotho, 2018, cited in Country Programme Evaluation Terms of Reference.

Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, *Annual Joint Review 2015–2016*, Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Lesotho.

Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, *Kingdom of Lesotho Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*, Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Lesotho, 2019.

Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, *Kingdom of Lesotho Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*, Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Lesotho, 2022.

Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, *Lesotho Food and Nutrition Strategy and Costed Action Plan 2019–2023*, prepared by the Food and Nutrition Coordination Office, Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Maseru, Lesotho, March 2019.

Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Speech by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister, the Honourable Samuel Tsokoane Matekane at his inauguration as the 10th Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, 28th October 2022, Maseru, <https://www.gov.ls/download/speech-by-the-right-honourable-the-prime-minister-hon-samuel-ntsokoane-matekane-at-his-inauguration-as-the-10th-prime-minister-of-the-kingdom-of-lesotho-held-at-setsoto-stadium-on-28th-october-2022/>

Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Sustainable Development Goals: Indicator Baseline Report, 2016.

Human Sciences Research Council, Situation Analysis of Services for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Lesotho, Lesotho, 2011

Kingdom of Lesotho, National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan 2018/19-2022/23, <http://nac.org.ls/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/National-HIV-Strategic-Plan-2018-2023-Aug-30.18.pdf>

Lesotho COVID-19 National Emergency Command Centre (NECC) Governance Structure, Government of Lesotho, www.gov.ls/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NECC-Revised-adopted-Structure-by-Sub-Committee.pdf

Lesotho Spectrum Modelling Estimates, 2020.

Minister of Finance Budget Speech to the Parliament of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the 2022/23 Fiscal Year, 2 March 2022, <https://www.gov.ls/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2022-2023-Budget-Speech-Wednesday-02-03-2022.pdf>.

Ministry of Development Planning, National Strategic Development Plan II 2018/19 to 2022/23, Lesotho, 2018.

Ministry of Education and Training, Education Statistical Bulletin, 2019

Ministry of Health, National AIDS Commission (NAC) & United Nations Children's Fund, Lesotho National Assessment: KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, PRACTICES, NORMS (KAPN) RESEARCH ON SRHR/HIV, Lesotho, 2019.

Ministry of Social Development and UNICEF, Strategy for Strengthening Integration and Harmonization of Social Safety Nets in Lesotho, 2020.

Ministry of Social Development, A report of a National Disability Situation Analysis, Lesotho, 2019.

Pace, N., Daidone, S., Bhalla, G. and Prifti, E, *Evaluation of Lesotho's Child Grants Programme (CGP) and Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and Access to Government Services (SPRINGS) project*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and United Nations Children's Fund, Rome, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4862en>.

United Nations Children's Fund Lesotho, Lesotho Situation Analysis 2015, UNICEF Lesotho, 2015.

United Nations Children's Fund Lesotho, *UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme Full Approved Report 2021*, UNICEF Lesotho, 2021.

United Nations Children's Fund, Humanitarian Action for Children 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/media/75036/file/2020-HAC-Lesotho.pdf>

United Nations Children's Fund, Lesotho Education Fact Sheets 2021.

United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018-2021, New York, 2017, <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/sites/unicef.org/rosa/files/2020-06/UNICEF%20Gender%20Action%20Plan%202018%20-%202021.pdf>

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The Least Developed Country Category: 2021 Country Snapshots*, UN/DESA, 2021, www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/Snapshots2021.pdf

United Nations Development Programme Lesotho Human Development Report Briefing Note 2020.

United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2021-22: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*, UNDP, New York, 2022, <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22>

United Nations Development Programme, Lesotho National Human Development Report, Lesotho, 2016.

United Nations Lesotho and World Bank Group, Assessment of the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on the Kingdom of Lesotho, UNDP, June 2020.

United Nations Lesotho, *2020 UN Country Annual Results Report*, UN Lesotho, March 2021.

United Nations Lesotho, United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Lesotho 2019-2023, UN Lesotho, 2018.

United Nations, Lesotho Common Country Analysis, Lesotho, 2020.

WHO COVID-19 database, <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/ls>, accessed 24 September 2022.

WHO/UNICEF estimates of immunization coverage, 2021 revision, <https://immunizationdata.who.int/pages/coverage/mcv.html?CODE=LSO&ANTIGEN=MCV1&YEAR=>>

World Bank, 'Lesotho: World Bank Approves a \$26.5 Million Loan to Strengthen the Livelihoods of the Most Vulnerable', World Bank, 24 June 2022, www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-

[release/2022/06/27/lesotho-world-bank-approves-a-26-5-million-loan-to-strengthen-the-livelihoods-of-the-most-vulnerable](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/27/lesotho-world-bank-approves-a-26-5-million-loan-to-strengthen-the-livelihoods-of-the-most-vulnerable)], accessed 20 September 2022.

World Bank, 'The World Bank in Lesotho', World Bank, 2022
www.worldbank.org/en/country/lesotho/overview#1

World Bank, *Lesotho Social Protection Program and Systems Review*, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2021, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/996831624982907050/pdf/Lesotho-Social-Protection-Programs-and-Systems-Review.pdf>.

ANNEX D: PERSONS CONSULTED

Government of Lesotho

Ministry of Development Planning

Malefu Khanyapa, Monitoring & Evaluation Director (Female)

Malineo Sebohil, Chief Economic Planner (Female)

Ministry of Education and Training

Mme Thuto, Chief Education Officer (Primary) (Female)

Mabakubung Seutloali, Chief Education Officer (Secondary) (Male)

Maleshoane Rapholo, Chief Statistician (Female)

Lineo Mokitimi, Director Planning (Female)

Mamonyane Mangope, Economic Planner (Female)

Ministry of Finance

Maleshoane Lekomola-Danziger, Budget Director (Female)

Ministry of Health

Dr. Makhoase Ranyali, Head of Family Health Services (Female)

Ministry of Home Affairs

Napo Khuele, National Director: Identity and Civil Registration (Male)

Ministry of Justice and Law

Moliehi Mokotedi, Director Probation (Male)

Ministry of Social Development

Tsepang Mankhatho Linko, Director: Planning (Female)

Khabane Mofoka, Manager: Social Assistance (Female)

Setlaba Phalatsi, NISSA Manager (Male)

Itumeleng Mosala, Chief Economic Planner (Male)

Mookho Motheo, Director: Children's Services (Female)

UNICEF Lesotho

Deepak Bhaskaran, Representative, (debrief on field mission) (Male)

Kimanzi Muthengi, Deputy Representative (Male)

Umasree Polepeddi, Chief, Basic Education and Adolescent Development Section (Female)

Renato Pinto, Chief, Child Survival and Development Section (Male)

Marisa Foraci, Chief, Social Policy (Female)

Bernard Keraita, WASH Specialist (Male)
Lat Lerotholi, Early Childhood Development Specialist (Female)
Motseoa Tshabalala, Adolescent Development Specialist (Male)
Rantsala Sanaha, Child Protection Specialist (Male)
Mpiti Molapo, Programme Assistant (Female)
Thato Mokhehle, Immunization Specialist (Male)
Steve Macheso, Immunization Specialist (Male)
Thabiso Lekhotsa, Health Officer (Male)
Malume Mohale, C4D Specialist (Female)
Makatleho Rantso, Operations Manager (Female)
Mookho Thaane, Social Protection Specialist (Female)
Relebohile Bohloko, WASH Officer (Female)
Celine Sieu, Research and Evaluation Specialist (Female)
Anurita Bains, Former Representative (consultation in inception phase and brief interview) (Female)

Other United Nations entities in Lesotho

Nessie Golakai, UNDP Deputy Representative (Female)
Marc Derveeuw, UNFPA Representative (Male)
Aurore Rusiga, WFP Representative (Female)
Napou Ntlou, Head of Programmes, WFP (Male)
Richard Banda and Team, Representative, WHO (Male)
Vimbai Mukota, Team Lead, Resident Coordinator's Office (Female)

Civil society organizations

HELP Lesotho

Mamoletsane Khati, Director (Female)
Maidza Tawenderwa, M&E Consultant (Female)
Thabang Maphothoane, M&E Officer (Female)
Makhauta Shasha, Senior Program Officer – Adolescent Girls (Female)
Thato Lets'ela, Senior Program officer – Youth Leadership (Male)
Malebohang Posholi, Finance and Administration Manager (Female)

Lesotho National Federation of Organisations for the Disabled

Nkhasi Sefuthi, Director (Male)

Lesotho Red Cross Society

Sechaba Mokhameleli, Programme Director (Male)
Maine Makula, Disaster Management Officer (Male)

Lesotho SchoolNet Camara

Makhetha Makhetha, Country Director (Male)

Mpho Sephekola, ICT Officer (Male)

Development partners

Mario Varrenti, Head of Cooperation, European Union Delegation in Lesotho (Male)

ANNEX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

A. Generic protocol for government officials

Introduction

- Opening remarks: Consent for interview, anonymity assurance
- Introduction – name and current position
- What role do you play/have played in the UNICEF programme?

Relevance questions

1. How well is UNICEF's support aligned to Lesotho's national development priorities?
2. How adaptive is UNICEF to changes in the country's context? (For example, the COVID-19 pandemic, drought, other emergencies)
3. What value does UNICEF add that is distinctive from other UN agencies and other development partners?
4. UNICEF's work takes the form of policy advice, systems strengthening and intensification of service delivery. Is UNICEF's mix of these approaches appropriate for Lesotho's context? Is UNICEF focused on its comparative strengths?

Coherence questions

5. To what extent does UNICEF support or complement the Government's strategies/interventions on gender equality and equity?
6. How well has UNICEF collaborated with other UN agencies and other development partners in the COVID-19 response and recovery? Give an example.

Effectiveness questions

7. For the specific project/programme the Ministry has been involved in:
 - What results has the project/programme achieved to date?
 - What factors facilitated the achievement of the results?
 - How has COVID-19 impacted on the programme?
8. To what extent do UNICEF's interventions prioritize social and behaviour change? How effective is UNICEF in its communication and advocacy for social and behavioural change? Provide example(s) where you have seen successful social and behaviour change.
9. Comment on the quality of the partnership between the Ministry and UNICEF.
10. Share example(s) of how the project/programme contributed towards gender equality and equity.

Efficiency questions

11. Comment on the efficiency of UNICEF procedures relevant to your programme/Ministry. Are there more cost-effective alternatives to the way in which UNICEF supports the Ministry?

Sustainability questions

12. Give an example(s) of UNICEF-supported interventions that the Ministry has scaled up or intends scaling up.
13. Please share an example of policies/legislation or systems that the Ministry has implemented following support and/or advocacy by UNICEF.
14. What factors if any present a challenge to sustainability of results? What can be done to enhance sustainability?

Looking ahead

15. What opportunities does COVID-19 present that can help to accelerate the achievement of national development priorities and the SDGs?

16. What lessons learned from the design and implementation of the Country Programme need to be infused in the next Country Programme and/or in the UNSDCF?
17. Any remarks or matters not covered by the questions.

B. Generic protocol for UNICEF Lesotho Country Office

Introduction

- Opening remarks: Consent for interview, anonymity assurance
- Introduction – name and current position
- What role do you play in the UNICEF programme?

Relevance questions

1. How well is UNICEF's support aligned to Lesotho's national development priorities?
2. How adaptive is UNICEF to changes in the country's context? (For example, the COVID-19 pandemic, drought, other emergencies)
3. What value does UNICEF add that is distinctive from other UN agencies and other development partners?
4. UNICEF's work takes the form of policy advice, systems strengthening and intensification of service delivery. Is UNICEF's mix of these approaches appropriate for Lesotho's context? Is UNICEF focused on its comparative strengths?

Coherence questions

5. To what extent does UNICEF support or complement the Government's strategies/interventions on gender equality and equity?
6. How well has UNICEF collaborated with other UN agencies and other development partners in the COVID-19 response and recovery? Give an example.

Effectiveness questions

7. For the specific project/programme you/your unit was involved in:
 - What results has the project/programme achieved to date?
 - What factors facilitated the achievement of the results?
 - How has COVID-19 impacted on the programme?
8. To what extent do UNICEF's interventions prioritize social and behaviour change? How effective is UNICEF in its communication and advocacy for social and behavioural change? Provide example(s) where you have seen successful social and behaviour change.
9. Comment on the quality of the partnership between UNICEF and the following:
 - Government/Ministry
 - Other UN agencies
 - Other development partners (donors)
 - Civil society organizations
 - Private sector
 - Other
10. Share example(s) of how the project/programme contributed towards gender equality and equity.

Efficiency questions

11. How has COVID-19 impacted on the mobilization and allocation of resources? From which projects/programmes were resources redirected? What was the impact on those from which resources were redirected?
12. How efficiently has UNICEF Lesotho allocated financial and staff resources to the different programme components/activities?
13. How well do units within UNICEF collaborate to achieve programmatic coherence? Provide example(s) of programmatic coherence.
14. Are the Country Office structure and management arrangements fit for 'purpose'? What should be changed or improved?

Sustainability questions

15. Give an example(s) of UNICEF-supported interventions that the Ministry has scaled up or intends scaling up?
16. Please share an example(s) of policies/legislation, systems or approaches that partners in government and civil society have implemented following support and/or advocacy by UNICEF.
17. What factors if any present a challenge to sustainability of results? What can be done to enhance sustainability?

Looking ahead

18. What opportunities does COVID-19 present that can help to accelerate the achievement of national development priorities and the SDGs?
19. What lessons learned from the design and implementation of the Country Programme need to be infused in the next Country Programme and/or in the UNSDCF?
20. Any remarks or matters not covered by the questions.

C. Generic interview protocol for civil society/NGOs

Introduction

- Opening remarks: Consent for interview, anonymity assurance
- Introduction – name and current position
- What role does your organization play in the UNICEF programme?

Relevance questions

1. How well is UNICEF's support aligned to Lesotho's national development priorities?
2. How adaptive is UNICEF to changes in the country's context? (For example, the COVID-19 pandemic, drought, other emergencies)
3. What value does UNICEF add that is distinctive from other UN agencies and other development partners?
4. UNICEF's work takes the form of policy advice, systems strengthening and intensification of service delivery. Is UNICEF's mix of these approaches appropriate for Lesotho's context? Is UNICEF focused on its comparative strengths?

Coherence questions

5. To what extent does UNICEF support or complement the Government's strategies/interventions on gender equality and equity?
6. How well has UNICEF collaborated with other UN agencies and other development partners in the COVID-19 response and recovery? Give an example.

Effectiveness questions

7. For the specific project/programme your organization has been involved in:
 - What results has the project/programme achieved to date?
 - What factors facilitated the achievement of the results?
 - How has COVID-19 impacted on the programme?
8. To what extent do UNICEF's interventions prioritize social and behaviour change? How effective is UNICEF in its communication and advocacy for social and behavioural change? Provide example(s) where you have seen successful social and behaviour change.
9. Comment on the quality of the partnership between UNICEF and civil society in Lesotho.

Efficiency questions

10. Comment on the efficiency of UNICEF's procedures for engaging civil society organizations in project implementation.

Sustainability questions

11. What actions is your organization taking to ensure that results from UNICEF-supported interventions are sustainable?
12. What factors if any present a challenge to sustainability of results? What can be done to enhance sustainability?

Looking ahead

13. What opportunities does COVID-19 present that can help to accelerate the achievement of national development priorities and the SDGs?
14. What lessons learned from the design and implementation of the Country Programme need to be infused in the next Country Programme and/or in the UNSDCF?
15. Any remarks or matters not covered by the questions.

D. Interview protocol for United Nations agencies in Lesotho

Introduction

- Opening remarks: Consent for interview, anonymity assurance
- Introduction – name and current position

Relevance questions

1. How well is UNICEF's support aligned to Lesotho's national development priorities?
2. How adaptive is UNICEF to changes in the country's context? (For example, the COVID-19 pandemic, drought, other emergencies)
3. What value does UNICEF add that is distinctive from other UN agencies and other development partners?
4. UNICEF's work takes the form of policy advice, systems strengthening and intensification of service delivery. Is UNICEF's mix of these approaches appropriate for Lesotho's context? Is UNICEF focused on its comparative strengths?

Coherence questions

5. To what extent does UNICEF support or complement the Government's strategies/interventions on gender equality and equity?
6. How well has UNICEF collaborated with other UN agencies and other development partners in the COVID-19 response and recovery? Give an example.

Effectiveness

7. What are UNICEF's notable contributions to UNDAF results since 2019?
8. Give example(s) of 'delivering together' with UNICEF that were successful/effective. What facilitated the 'delivering together'? (or what hindered 'delivering together'?)

Efficiency

9. To what extent does UNICEF harmonize its programme/project planning and implementation with other UN agencies, where required?

Sustainability

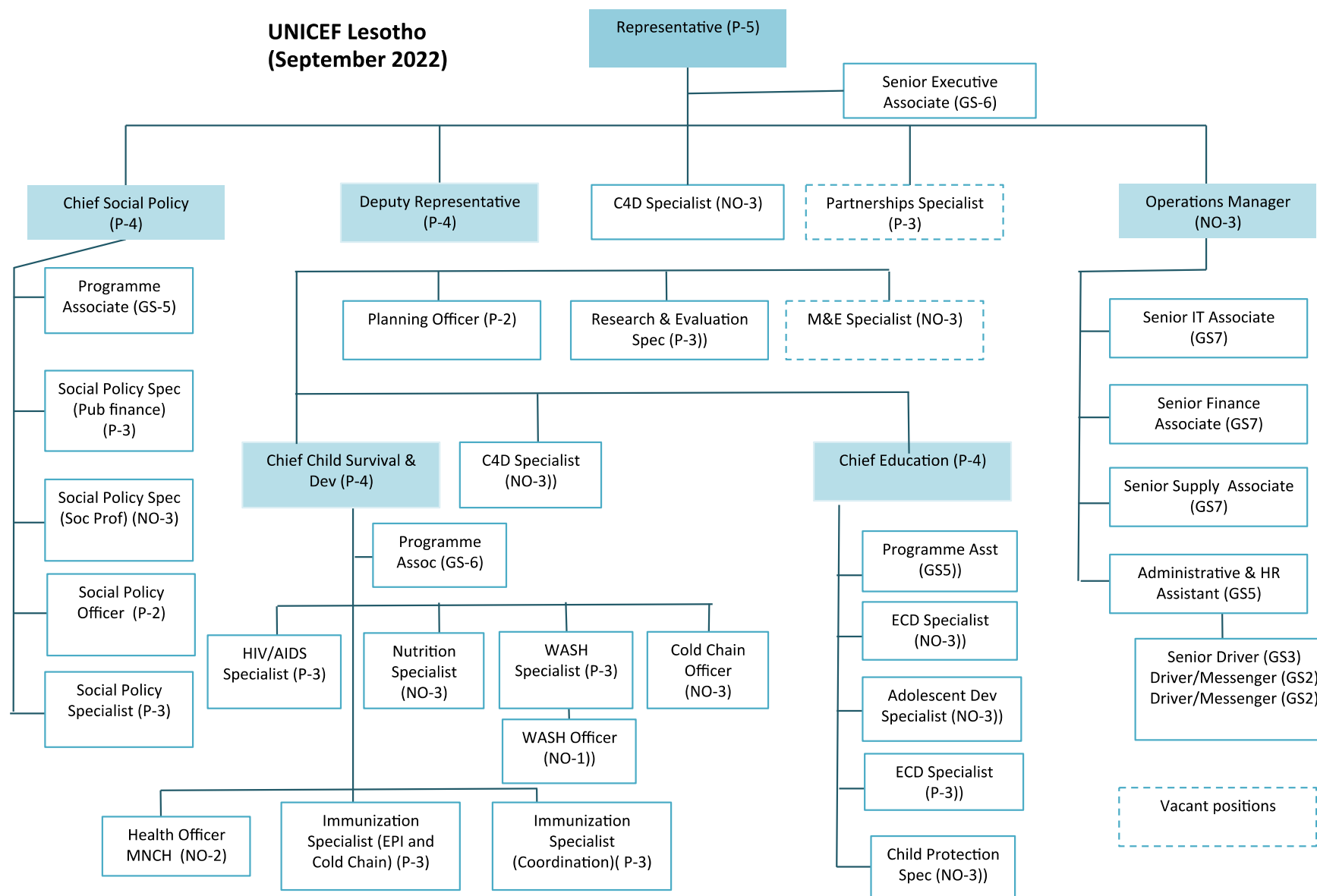
10. Comment on the sustainability of results of UNICEF's Country Programme.
11. What factors if any present a challenge to sustainability of results? What can be done to enhance sustainability?

Looking ahead

12. What opportunities does COVID-19 present that can help to accelerate the achievement of national development priorities and the SDGs?
13. What lessons learned from the design and implementation of the Country Programme need to be infused in the next Country Programme and/or in the UNSDCF?
14. Any remarks or matters not covered by the questions.

ANNEX F: COUNTRY OFFICE ORGANIZATION CHART

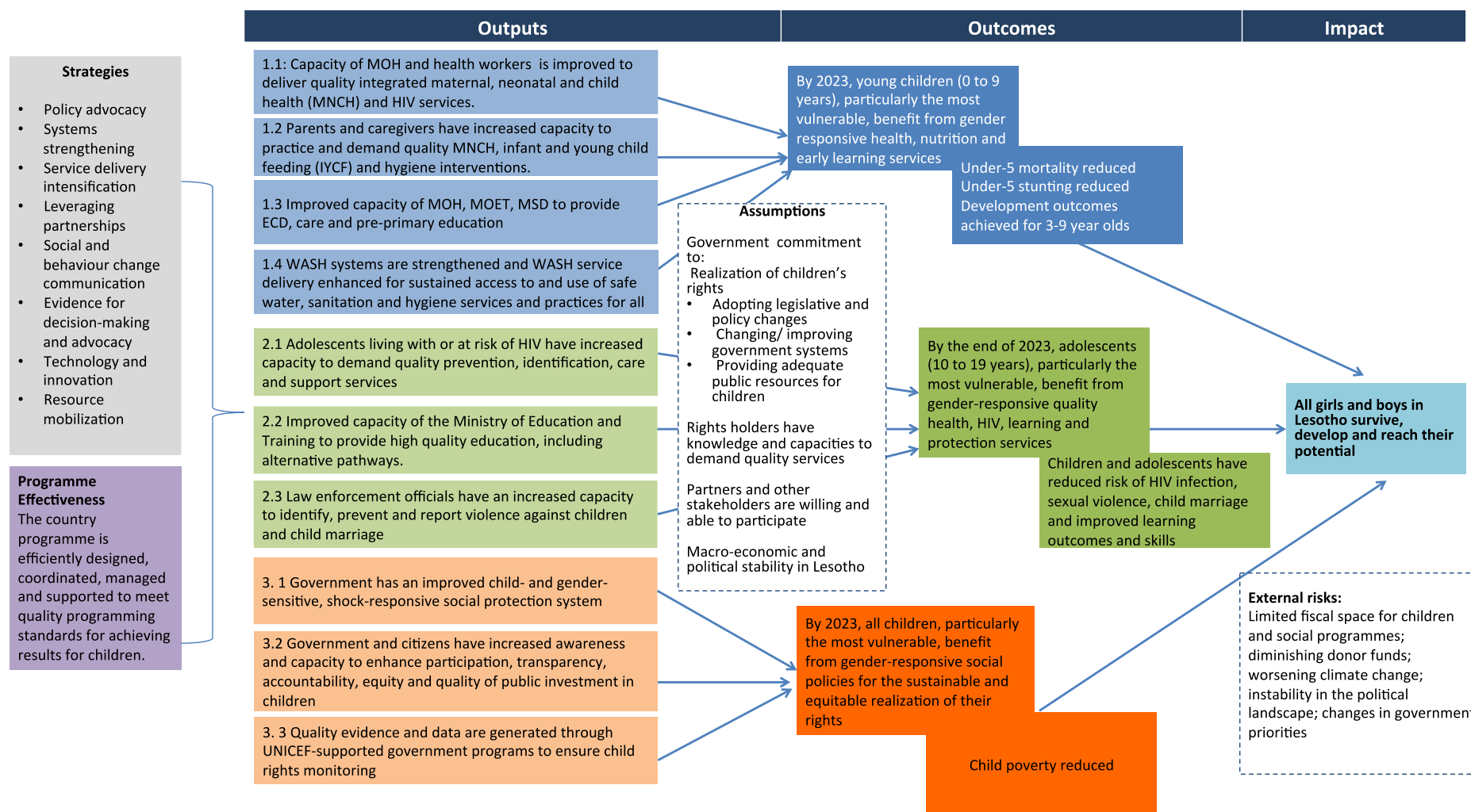
**UNICEF Lesotho
(September 2022)**

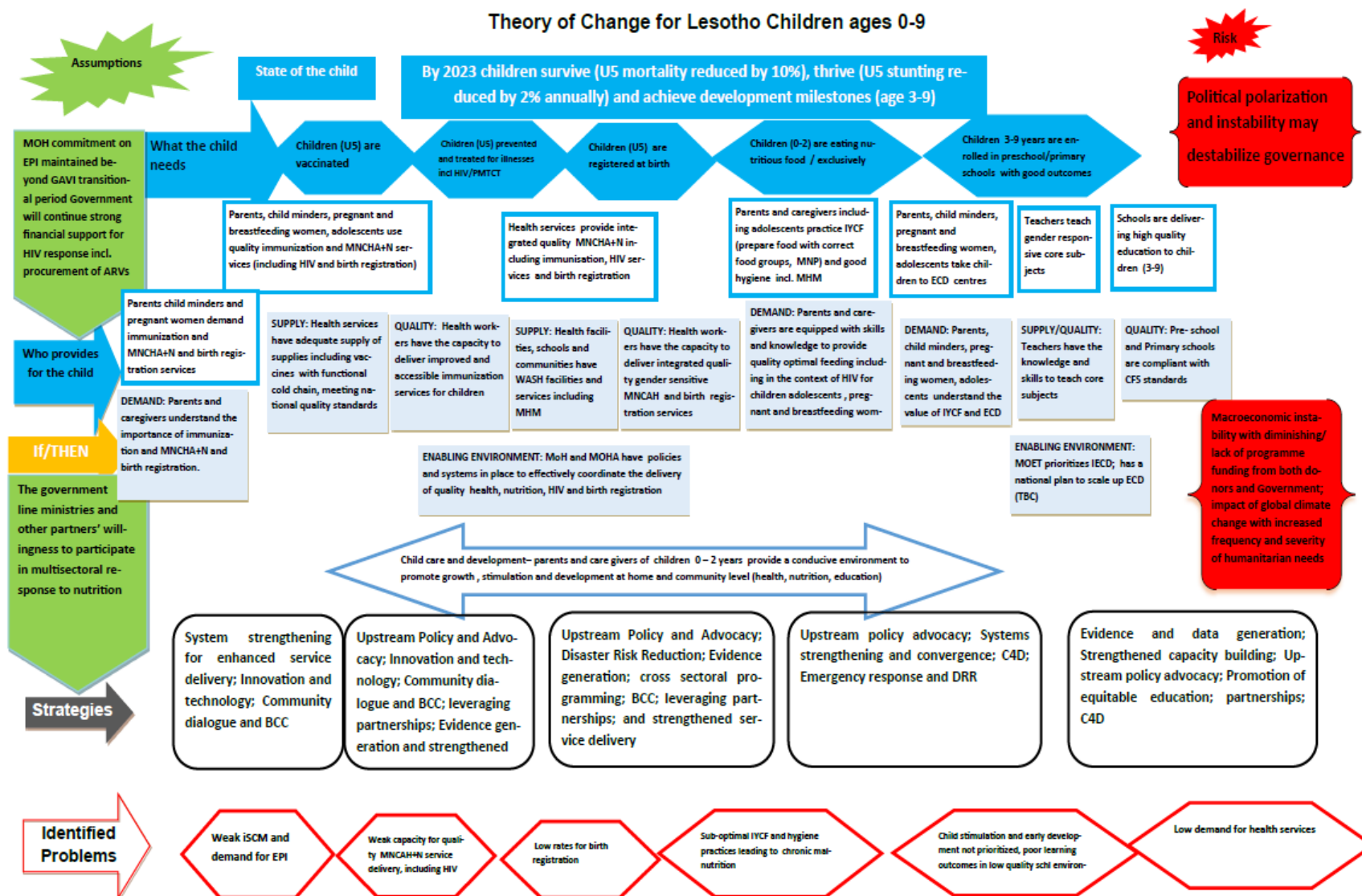


ANNEX G: THEORIES OF CHANGE

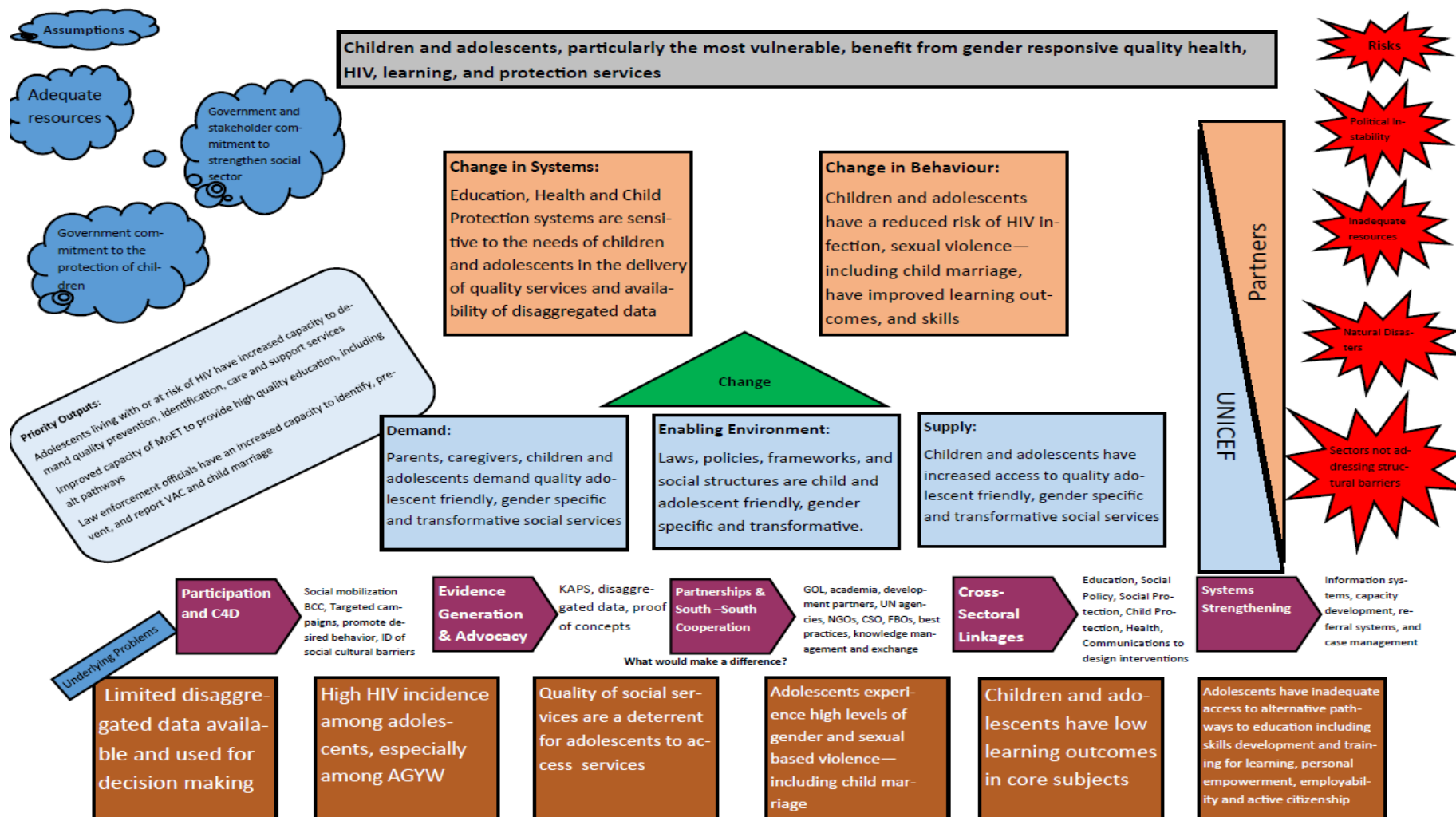
1. Theory of change UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme 2019-2023
2. Theory of change: Component 1 – First Decade
3. Theory of change: Component 2 – Second Decade
4. Theory of change: Component 3 – Reducing child poverty, enhancing equity and social protection

UNICEF Lesotho Country Programme 2019-2023

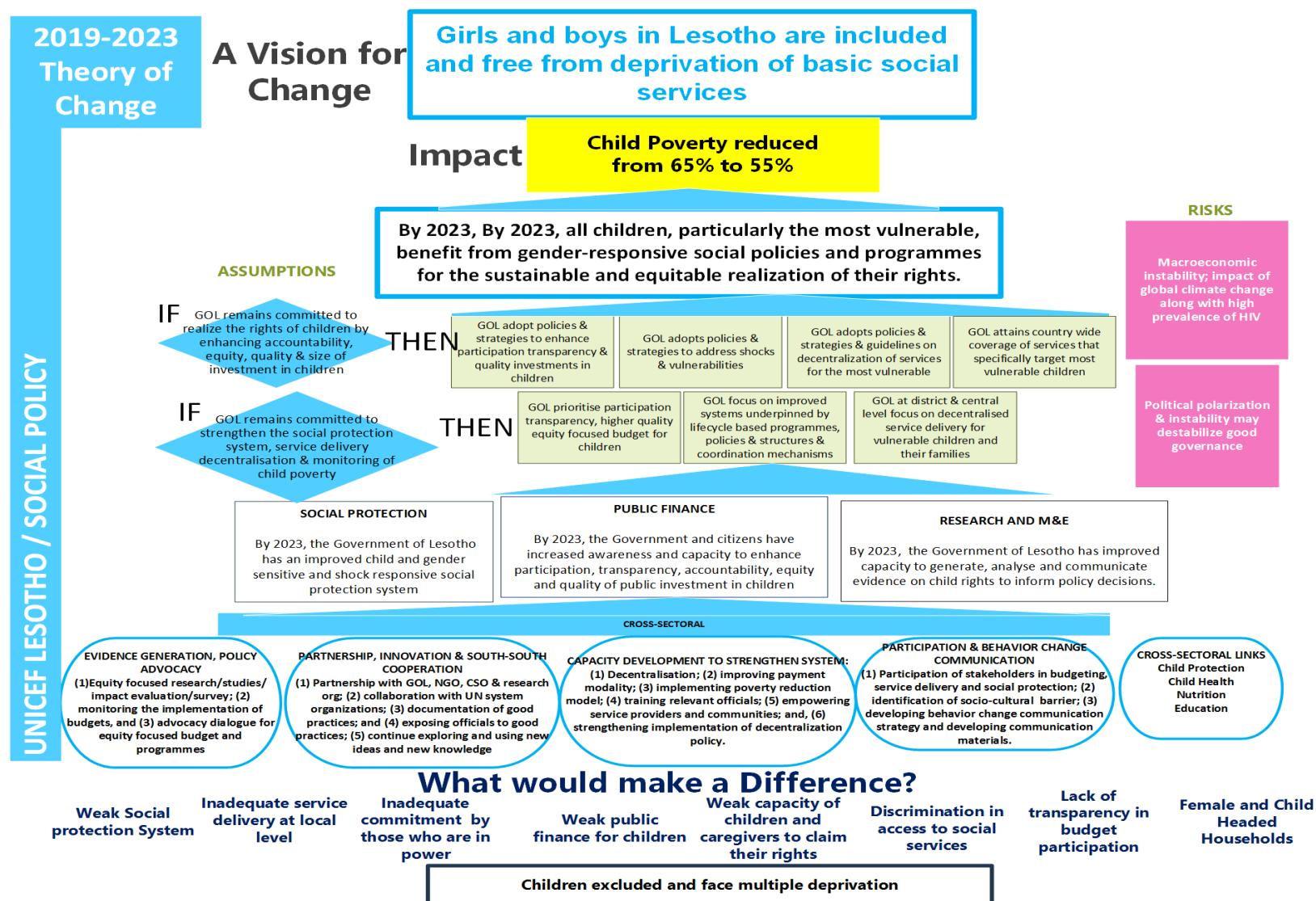




Theory of change: Component 2 - Second decade



Theory of change: Component 3: Reducing poverty, enhancing equity and social protection



For further information, please contact:
UNICEF Lesotho Country Office
2nd Floor United Nations House
13 United Nations Road, Maseru
Phone +266-22 31 58 01
Fax: +266-22 31 02 48
<https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/lesotho.html>