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EVALUATION REPORT

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Evaluation of UNICEF's Education Programme in India (2018-2022)

Name of the Evaluation Project:	Evaluation of UNICEF's Education Programme in India (2018-2022)
Timeframe of the evaluation	2018-2021
Duration of the Evaluation Assignment	December 2021- December 2022
Location of the evaluated object	National Scope with a focus on the following Indian States – Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka
Names and/or organization(s) of the evaluator(s)	Athena Infonomics
Name of organization commissioning the evaluation	UNICEF India

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Acknowledgement

This report provides an independent, evidence-based evaluation of the UNICEF India's Education Programme (2018-2022). The evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF India Country Office (ICO). The evaluation relied on consultations and inputs from a wide range of stakeholders, including government and implementing partners at the national, state and district level.

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List of Acronyms

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AIR	American Institute of Research
ALMP	Alternate Learning and Mentorship Programme
ARS	Adolescent Responsive Schooling
BCP	Bhartiya Chah Parishad
BEDMC	Block Education Data Management Centres
BEPC	Bihar Education Project Council
BEST	Bihar Easy School Tracking
BRC	Block Resource Coordinator
C4D	Communication for Development
CA	Contribution Analysis
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDPO	Child Development Project Officer
CEQUE	Centre for Equity and Quality in Universal Education
COM-B	Capacity, Opportunity, Motivation – Behavioural Change
COVID-19	Coronavirus
CRC	Cluster Resource Coordinator
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DIET	District Institute of Education and Training
DIKSHA	Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing
DoSE	Department of Secondary Education
DoSW	Department of Social Welfare
DPO	District Programme Officer
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
DSWO	District Social Welfare Office
DWCD	Department of Women and Child Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECM	Enterprise Content Management
EdTech	Education Technology
EMIS	Educational Management Information System
EMT	Evaluation Management team
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FLN	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
GEROS	Global Evaluation Report Oversight System
GoUP	Government of Uttar Pradesh
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICO	India Country Office
IRB	Institutional Review Board
ITAD UK	International Trade and Development United Kingdom
IVRS	Interactive Voice Response System
KII	Key Informant Interview

KPALP	Kendra Pramukh Academic Leadership Programme
LBL	Level-Based Learning
MGML	Multi Grade Multi Learning
MoE	Ministry of Education
MSCERT	Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training
MTSR	Mid Term Strategic Reflection
NAS	National Assessment Survey
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research Training
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NEP	National Education Policy
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NHM	National Health Mission
NIMHANS	National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OERS	Open Education Resources
PCA	Programme Cooperation Agreement
PGI	Performance Grading Index
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution
PSCE	Panchayat Standing Committee on Education
PSN	Programme Strategy Note
PVTG	Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups
RAM	Results Assessment Module
RCP	Responsive Caregiving Package
RMSA	Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
RTE	Right to Education
S4D	Sports for Development
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCERT	State Council for Educational Research Training
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHARDA	School Har Din Aaye
SHG	Self Help Group
SIEMAT	State Institute of Educational Management and Training
SIRD	State Institute of Rural Development
SMC	School Management Committee
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SRG	State Resource Group
SRLM	State Rural Livelihood Mission
ST	Scheduled Tribe
STP	Special Training Programme
TELOS	Targeted Enhancement of Learning Outcomes through Supportive Supervision
TLM	Teaching Learning Material
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
UDISE+	Unified District Information System for Education
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USP	Unique Selling Proposition
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Health
WCD	Women and Child Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an evaluation report of the UNICEF Education Programme (2018-2022). The evaluation was conducted between December 2021- December 2022.

Background

The Education Programme Strategy [1] for the UNICEF Country Programme 2018-2022 focuses on three major priority areas: a) out-of-school children; b) quality learning and teaching; and c) early childhood education, under the larger outcome of ensuring that 'Girls and boys, particularly the most disadvantaged, participate in quality early childhood and elementary education with learning outcomes at grade-appropriate levels, by 2022'. The outcome was reached through five output result areas, and an additional output was added (Output 506 on COVID-response) after the Mid-Term Strategic Reflection in 2022[2], to capture responses to and adaptations in programming during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF's educational programming, interventions and implementation modalities , is based on its classification of states into three typologies: High Burden, Tribal States and Transition states. More context and background to the evaluation and the Education Programme is provided in Sections 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3.

Purpose of the Evaluation and its Audience

The overarching purpose of the evaluation was to generate learnings on implementation modalities – what worked and how; as well as what gaps emerged, if any – in the interventions rolled out since 2018 under the UNICEF Education Programme in India. The evaluation findings and recommendations will feed into UNICEF India's upcoming Country Programme (beginning in 2023 and decision-making on education policies and processes at national and sub-national levels). The overall goal and objectives of the evaluation is presented in Section 1.4 and the intended audience is presented in Section 1.7.

The scope of the evaluation encompassed the Education Programme from 2018-2021 and covered all the six output areas. The geographic scope of the evaluation was national but also with an in-depth focus on a sample of seven states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Odisha, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu) among three state typologies for the purpose of primary data collection. The primary intended audience for the results from this study is UNICEF staff, government and other stakeholders who will be involved in the next UNICEF Education Programme. The scope of the evaluation is elucidated in Section 1.5.

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation is theory-based and utilised evaluation methods of Contribution Analysis and Process Tracing, especially Bayesian Updating. Evaluation evidence was assessed using the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability. Questions related to equity, gender equality and human rights considerations, especially those pertaining to marginalised and vulnerable populations, were integrated into all of the evaluation criteria. The criteria and corresponding questions are presented in Section 1.6.

The evaluation study utilised mixed-method research, including extensive analysis of the documents, Results Assessment Module (RAM) reports, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with the UNICEF and stakeholders at the national, state and district levels. Contribution Analysis with elements of Process Tracing, in particular, Bayesian Confidence Updating was employed to test the effectiveness of the Theory of Change (ToC). Contribution Analysis provided the overarching framework to arrive at credible causal claims about the UNICEF Education Programme's contribution to output result areas, considering other factors that may have influenced the achievement of these result areas. The evaluation team, in consultation with UNICEF, developed six contribution claims around the six output areas, and constructed output-specific ToC using the COM-B (Capacity, Opportunity, Motivation- Behavioural Change) approach.

UNICEF's contribution to change was assessed by mapping evidence of change against the behaviour changes, links and assumptions (causal pathways) in the ToC.

The evaluation team used a combination of process tracing and Bayesian Updating to investigate two specific causal claims on how UNICEF's Education Programme influenced the strengthening of special training programmes and increased programming and activities around responsive parenting. The Bayesian Analysis helped to measure confidence in UNICEF's contribution claims, and to update the evaluation team's confidence in them according to the relevance of emerging evidence through document review and KIIs. This involved establishing prior and posterior probabilities and estimating the probative value of the evidence. The methodology is further set out in Section 2.2.

Evaluation Findings

The main findings are described for each evaluation criterion and structured around the key evaluation questions that guided the evaluation.

- **Relevance:** The UNICEF Education Programme was well aligned with the national and state priorities as outlined in various policy documents and with the UNICEF strategic goals and SDGs. The Programme responded appropriately to the changes in the context, especially because UNICEF realigned its programming substantively and in a timely manner to deal with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews with UNICEF staff and document review show that the state typology-based programming approach is relevant to the contextual barriers in the three state typologies. Different activities were accorded different priorities in the three state typologies, although certain challenges affected the effectiveness of the typology-based approach - such as the absence of typology-based ToC and monitoring plans, limited opportunities to facilitate cross-learning within the typology states, and lack of a nuanced understanding of the approach at the state level. Detailed findings corresponding to each evaluation question under Relevance can be found in Section 3.2.

- **Effectiveness:** RAM analysis shows that UNICEF was mostly 'on track' to achieve its intended targets, with the exception of targets under Output 502 (ECE) due to pandemic-related challenges. However, this analysis does not take into consideration the indicators which were deactivated or revised as a result of the pandemic. The evaluation found evidence to confirm UNICEF's contribution to most key change activities across the six output areas. Evidence on certain activities, such as the establishment of model anganwadi or ECE centres under Output 502 (ECE), implementation of DRR activities under Output 501 (Policy and planning for equitable quality education), capacity building of supportive supervision groups under Output 504 (Quality education and learning) and capacity building of community groups under Output 505 (Demand for quality education), were mixed and varied depending on the state. While the causal mechanism to establish increased programming around responsive parenting and strengthen the delivery of special training programmes was weak, the evaluation found proof to ascertain UNICEF's direct technical and financial support in leading to these changes. Internal and external stakeholders noted accelerating factors such as strong state leadership and hindering factors such as frequent change in government staff, changing government priorities and funding constraints. The stakeholders also noted unintended positive outcomes such as increased institutional appreciation for evidence-based planning, increased parental involvement and teacher-led innovations in programming and some unintended negative outcomes such as high degree of reliance on UNICFE's continued financial and technical support. Findings from the evaluation on questions corresponding to this criterion can be found in Section 3.3 and Section 4.

- **Efficiency:** Most activities were reported to be completed within the stipulated timeframe with minor delays noted due to bureaucratic processes for facilitation and approvals, ad-hoc requests from the government, long internal processes at UNICEF and pandemic-related challenges. The current financial

template did not allow for analysing overspent funds, but all allocated funds were utilised. However, internal and external stakeholders reported insufficient funds to meet the expected goals and targets. External stakeholders also reported that the proportion of staff in state offices is incommensurate with the quantum of work, and while reporting positive feedback on working relationships, highlighted a few technical areas for improvement, such as monitoring and evaluation, digital education and public financing and planning. Detailed findings corresponding to each evaluation question under Efficiency can be found in Section 3.4.

- **Coherence:** The evaluation noted close convergence with the work of government stakeholders and other implementing partners. A need for a degree of separation of its work from that of government partners and broadening of engagements with non-traditional and emerging actors in the education sectors was noted by external stakeholders. While government partners provided overwhelmingly positive feedback on UNICEF's modalities of engagement, implementing partners raised a few concerns related to the duration of partnership engagements, coordination and communication and reporting mechanisms. UNICEF's strong relationship with the government, its ability to provide technical expertise and act as a knowledge partner and its convening power as a UN agency were some of the strongest comparative advantages highlighted by interviewees. However, internal convergence between different sectors within UNICEF, with other UN agencies and with other major UN initiatives was found to be weak and primarily forged through individual capacity and leadership rather than through systematic modes of collaboration. Findings from the evaluation on questions corresponding to this criterion can be found in Section 3.5.

- **Sustainability:** Several examples of the integration of UNICEF interventions within government programmes or scale-up of initiatives using government resources and capacity emerged. The focus on institutional strengthening and involvement of government staff, including teachers and ECE workers and use of community volunteers contributed towards enhanced sustainability of the initiatives. The primary challenges related to sustainability include the capacity (technical and financial) of the government institutions as well as evolving priorities and personnel turnover in both UNICEF and the state leadership. While external stakeholders highlighted UNICEF's role as a knowledge partner, it was noted that UNICEF could take a more proactive role in driving research and learning agenda in the education sector by creating an enabling environment for collective learning with all development partners and a need to strengthen monitoring. Detailed findings corresponding to each evaluation question under Sustainability can be found in Section 3.6.

Conclusion, Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- The evaluation identified several best practices or innovations within the Education Programme's interventions, such as technology-enabled solutions to increase coverage and monitoring of programmes, integration of DRR in education, improving equity and access through mother tongue-based multi-lingual education, integration of mental health and life skills within secondary education curriculum, leveraging community volunteers to strengthen the capacity of and sustainability of interventions, the inclusion of active supervision and mentorship to strengthen teacher capacity programmes and programmatic interventions to address learning loss.
- The evaluation team has distilled several lessons from the evaluation that could strengthen the Education Programme and improve its effectiveness and efficiency of the Education Programme such as strengthening the annual plan review process, improving the multi-sectoral programming approach and convergence, and strengthening linkages between demonstrations and evidence generation around innovations with policy advocacy. The evaluation also noted the flexibility of the UNICEF's programming approach, emphasis on evidence generation and knowledge management and partnership with technical agencies improve the effectiveness and relevance of the Programme.

- The future ToC for the Education Programme should consider the following:
    - Consider capacity building and technical support as a vehicle for institutional and system strengthening.
    - Explore the role of technical support in promoting policy advocacy.
    - Identify clear outputs and outcomes in relation to partnerships within the ToC.
    - Include leveraging public and other external resources as an output within the ToC.
    - Consider UNICEF's advocacy work, as well as its outputs, such as its participation in numerous committees that provide inputs into policy and operationalise the policy within the ToC.
    - Explicitly link UNICEF's knowledge management function to sector-wide research and learning agenda.

A detailed description of the conclusions is presented in Section 5 and best practices and lessons learned is presented in Section 6 of the report.

Recommendations

Recommendations	Priority	Timeframe	Responsible Agency
1. UNICEF to prioritise key areas of programmatic focus in its different geographic locations based on local needs and its comparative advantage (potential focus areas being: inclusive education, multi-lingual mother tongue-based education, digital education, adolescent education, life skills, school-to-work transition, and school safety').	High	Short	UNICEF ICO, UNICEF Field Offices
2. Strengthen convergence within UNICEF across all programmes and sectors through developing more coherent and holistic planning to guide collective results across sectors and geographic locations	High	Medium	UNICEF ICO, UNICEF Field Offices, C4D Team, DRR Team, WASH Team, Health Team, Nutrition, Social Policy, Social Protection
3. Develop a systematic approach to research and evidence generation by adopting a continuous quality improvement approach to monitoring and evaluation, deploying technology-based low-cost monitoring solutions, conducting a study on research and evaluation utilisation and evidence synthesis and strengthening knowledge management	High	Medium	UNICEF Education Programme at ICO, Evidence Unit
4. Define a clearer partnership strategy for the Education Programme, which includes new partnerships and is built collaboratively through consultations with the key external stakeholders of UNICEF to enhance the relevance of the strategy. Partnership engagement can be strengthened by streamlining the internal processes for partnerships and organising regular partner conference	High	Medium	UNICEF ICO, UNICEF Field Offices
5. Review and revisit the state typology-based approach and strengthen typology-based monitoring and reporting, develop typology-specific ToC	High	Short	UNICEF ICO, UNICEF Field Offices
6. Sharpen the focus on equity analysis and gender transformation across all programming, by ensuring relevant indicators are addressed across all data gathering exercises, programmatic approaches, and all reporting on results'	High	Medium	UNICEF ICO, Gender Specialist, Evidence Team

7. UNICEF to take a more systematic approach to education in emergency across its education programme within its broader country strategy for emergency response, including identifying and addressing internal capacity gaps and areas of need and comparative advantage at the sub-national level'	Medium	Medium	UNICEF ICO, UNICEF Field Offices
8. Identify capacity needs and augment technical capacity through strategic partnerships and improved learning opportunities for the UNICEF staff	Medium	Medium	UNICEF ICO, UNICEF Field Offices, UNICEF Regional Office

A detailed description of the recommendations is provided in Section 7 of the report.

01: CONTEXT, EVALUATION OBJECT, PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND INTENDED USERS

1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of the UNICEF Education Programme 2018-2022. The evaluation was commissioned by the Country Office of UNICEF India and was carried out between December 2021- December 2022. It covers the entire UNICEF Education portfolio during the first four years (2018-2021) of the five-year Programme.

Section 1 of this report provides the context, an overview of UNICEF's Education Programme (2018-2022) and describes the scope and the objectives of this evaluation, the evaluation questions and the intended users of the evaluation. Section 2 explains the evaluation methodology, including the evaluation approach, data collection and sampling strategies, and limitations and challenges faced by the evaluation team. This section also highlights the ethical considerations and evaluation management process. The findings resulting from the evaluation are presented in Section 3, organised according to the evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and sustainability) and the evaluation questions. Section 4 presents robust evidence of UNICEF's contribution to the increased integration of responsive parenting in Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) plans and the delivery of special training programmes for out-of-school children in the selected study states. Based on the findings, conclusions are presented in Section 5, best practices and lessons learned in Section 6 and recommendations in Section 7.

1.2 Context

This section sets out the current context and shifts in the policy landscape and major programmes and initiatives directed by these policies with regard to the UNICEF Education Programme's three main priority areas; a) early childhood education; b) quality learning and teaching and c) out-of-school children. Each subsection covers the landmark changes leading up to the beginning of the current Country Programme cycle in 2018 and provides an overview of the policies that have emerged between 2018 and 2022. To throw light on the drastic changes in the operating environment as a result of COVID-19, a pre- and post-pandemic comparison of key statistics and unintended positive and negative changes are also presented within each subsection.

A. Early Childhood Education

Policies on support and resources for early childhood care and education in India can be traced back to the National Policy of Education of 1986. Since this landmark policy, several centrally sponsored schemes and further legislations have come into effect to strengthening ECCE delivery in the county. The most significant of such initiatives is the centrally sponsored and state-implemented Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) which provides non-formal, pre-school education to children up to six years of age, in addition to health and nutrition services. However, the efficacy of the ICDS scheme has been hampered by poor implementation stemming from poor resource allocation, poor governance, and programmatic deficiencies such as inadequate focus on education within service delivery [3]. To address some of the issues, ICDS was restructured with a renewed focus on early childhood education through the National ECCE Curriculum Framework in 2013. Further, global and national focus on ECE increased with the introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 and the inclusion of *"quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education"* under SDG 4.2. ECE activities are also integral to achieving at least seven SDGs.

 However, challenges remain with the quality of ECE activities and are reflected in the school readiness levels in India. The India Early Childhood Impact Study (IECEI) reported that almost 57% of children are not ready to learn even as they enter school in Class 1 [4]. Further, 42.7% of rural Indian children in Class 1 were unable to recognise the letters of the alphabet in their medium of instruction, and 35.7% were unable to recognise numbers from 1-9[5]. This is surprising given that the IECEI report found that more than 80% of children were

participating in some form of institutional learning by age 4 in the sample states of Rajasthan, Telangana, and Assam [4]. The statistics, in conjunction, imply that failures in school readiness are not due to issues related to access to ECE centres but due to issues around practice and quality of ECE.

The current cycle (2018-2022) of UNICEF's Education Programme has witnessed a further rise in the awareness and importance of ECE, and its inclusion within national education and child development policies. In 2019, two major centrally sponsored schemes to operationalise ECE (ICDS and the National Creche Scheme) along with four other programmes with components of ECCE were brought under a consolidated scheme known as the Umbrella ICDS. Further in 2019, the erstwhile scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education was subsumed under the new Samagra Shiksha programme. Samagra Shiksha was proposed to *"treat school education holistically without segmentation from pre-nursery to Class 12"* [6]and supports pre-primary education through co-location of anganwadi centres in primary schools wherever feasible, in convergence with the department of WCD, or through a pre-school section in primary schools. Correspondingly, INR 803 crore was allocated towards ECE in the 2019-20 Samagra Shiksha budget[3]. The rising importance of ECE and school readiness was also reflected in the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, which recommends the inclusion of children between the ages of three to six years within the school systems and promotes universalisation of pre-primary education by 2030[7].

However, efforts to implement guidelines and strategies were affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent challenges related to funding and the operating environment. For example, the total approved allocation for pre-school education under Samagra Shiksha dropped by approximately 60% to INR 319 crore in 2020-21. Further, anganwadi centres were closed due to lockdowns and restrictions on mobility and face-to-face interactions in the country from March 2020 and reopened at different times in different states in 2021. Despite the increased policy focus and prescriptions, pandemic-related challenges have resulted in the reduction of children enrolled in pre-primary education between 2018 and 2021. According to data from the most recent reports of UDISE+, this drop is estimated to be about 20.5% from 119.5 lakhs in 2018-19 to 94.95 lakhs in 2021-22[8]. However, home-based learning programmes initiated during COVID-19 have garnered interest and attention on responsive caregiving and parenting. Although programmes such as ICDS, the National Creche Scheme and POSHAN Abhiyaan have elements of parental engagement and involvement, a rapid assessment of learning situations during the pandemic found evidence of increased parental engagement during this period, as compared to pre-COVID engagement[9].

B. Quality Learning and Teaching

Emphasis on learning in India has largely focused on evaluation and examination reform, as evidenced by Section 10 of the National Policy on Education of 1986. This emphasis on examination was carried forward in the RTE Act of 2009 through which the federal government initiated a "No Detention Policy", as a method to encourage stress-free learning and instead directed the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) of students through the Right to Education Act. Through consistent monitoring of students' performance, the CCE was aimed to help teachers customise teaching practices and hence improve learning outcomes. However, the absence of explicit learning outcomes was heavily criticised and in 2017, the rules were amended to "*provide for the preparation of class-wise, subject-wise learning outcomes*"[10]. Evaluation of the CCE system in schools did not show concrete improvement in the learning outcomes of children in primary and upper primary schools[11] and the framework was scrapped by the federal government in 2018, with a provision for states to decide if they wanted to continue with the No Detention Policy.

The public discourse on the global and national decline in learning levels garnered strength in recent years, aided by reports published by the World Bank, ASER and policy drafts issued by the Ministry of Education in India. Globally, quality learning has also found renewed focus through its inclusion under SDG 4.1 – *"By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes"*[12]. The increased focus on the need to strengthen the end result

of the schooling process and to ensure learning is also reflected in NEP 2020. The national "learning crisis" was acknowledged in NEP 2020 which stated *"Various governmental, as well as non-governmental surveys, indicate that we are currently in a learning crisis: a large proportion of students currently in elementary school – estimated to be over 5 crore in number – have not attained foundational literacy and numeracy, i.e., the ability to read and comprehend basic text and the ability to carry out basic addition and subtraction with Indian numerals"*[7]. To tackle this crisis, the NEP 2020 promotes the universalisation of foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) by 2025 as its highest priority. To operationalise this priority, a national mission on FLN or the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN) Bharat was set up by the Ministry of Education. The NEP also includes teacher education reforms and assessment reforms to address the learning crisis, and several initiatives have been launched since 2020 in this regard. For example, the National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Achievement (NISHTHA), an integrated in-service teacher training programme, was launched by NCERT. Similarly, CBSE launched the Structured Assessment for Analysing Learning levels (SAFAL) framework in 2021 for competency-based assessment for grades 3, 5 and 8 focusing on testing for core concepts, application-based questions and higher-order thinking skills.

The need for a shift in the focus and initiatives aimed at improving learning levels is further underscored in the light of data from the pandemic years. A comparison of learning outcomes as reported in the National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2017 and 2021 show a decline in the absolute learning levels across all grades and subjects except in grade 10 language[13]. The average learning achievement reportedly dropped by four percentage points between the two rounds of surveys. An ASER study on the status of learning in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal during COVID-19 show similar results- the reading level of children in primary grades stayed steady or showed marginal improvements between 2014 and 2018 but dropped from 2018 to 2021[14]. Further, a 2021 study on the impact of Covid-19 on learning finds that across five states of India, 92% and 82% of children surveyed had lost at least one specific ability in language and arithmetic respectively[15]. That is, 92% of children could not satisfactorily finish at least one task in language tests (such as describing an experience orally, reading with comprehension, reading familiar words or writing about a picture), and 82% could not satisfactorily finish at least one task in arithmetic tests (such as identifying single and two-digit numbers; performing arithmetic operations; using basic arithmetic operations for solving problems; describing 2D/3D shapes; reading and drawing inferences from data). The digital divide witnessed during the promotion of remote learning initiatives during the pandemic has also exacerbated the demand for digital education. Correspondingly, the final approved draft of the NEP 2020 had an exclusive chapter on ensuring equitable access to and use of digital resources for education.

C. Out-of-School Children

The Millennium Development Goals of 2000 emphasised the universalisation of elementary education across the globe. Towards achievement of this goal and in the backdrop of poor rates of enrollment and high drop-out rates in the country, the Government of India launched the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in 2001 with a view to provide quality elementary education to children between the ages of six to fourteen years. The initiative also promoted the establishment of informal centres in areas not serviced by formal schools and adopted measures to ensure inclusion of marginalised children within the school system. The scheme was largely successful with attendance improving from 69% in 2000 to 80% in 2004-05 in rural areas, and from 83% to 88% in the same time period in urban areas. The RTE Act of 2009 further looked to increase enrolment rates in the country, through its mandate to provide "*free and compulsory education to every child in the six to fourteen age group*" [16]. The RTE Act also proved to be successful in reducing the number of out-of-school children in the country- the District Information System of Education (DISE) data shows that enrolment in upper primary classes increased by 19.4 % between 2009 and 2016[17]. Gender inequities in enrolment rates have also reduced over the years with the percentage of girls (15-16 years) not enrolled in schools dropping from 20% in 2008 to 13.5% in 2018[18]. However, statistics on out-of-school children remain a cause for concern for specific groups of students, including children with disabilities and those from minority groups.

The continued focus on bringing children into or back to schools is echoed through SDG 4.1 which aims to *"ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes"* by 2030. At the national level, NEP 2020 has renewed the importance on initiatives for out -of-school children with the aim to attain 100% Gross Enrolment Ration (GER) by 2030. Further, it aims to bring around two crore children back into schools through an open schooling system[19]. These initiatives come in the wake of increased proportion of out-of-school children as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to ASER 20220, the proportion of children in the age group of 6-14 years not currently enrolled in school decreased from 2.5% to 1.6% between 2018 and 2022[20] . The largest decrease in percentage of children (age 15-16) not enrolled in school from 13.1% in 2018 to 7.5% in 2022. [21].

1.3 Subject of the Evaluation – UNICEF's Education Programme (2018-2022)

The overarching goal of the Education Programme that began in 2018 was to ensure that 'Girls and boys, particularly the most disadvantaged, participate in quality early childhood and elementary education with learning outcomes at grade-appropriate levels, by 2022.' The Education Programme has three main priority areas: a) early childhood education (ECE); b) out-of-school children; and c) quality teaching and learning delivered through six output areas (refer figure 1). The output areas cover a range of activities, including strategies to build government capacity and to deliver quality education, improve governance, decision-making, programme design and implementation and increase engagement of all stakeholders to create more supportive learning environments. The Programme, with a total budget

Figure 1: Output Areas

OUTPUT 501	OUTPUT 502	OUTPUT 503	OUTPUT 504	OUTPUT 505	OUTPUT 506
National and state governments have increased capacity for coordination and evidence based policies, planning, implementation and monitoring for equitable, inclusive and risk informed quality education	National and state governments have increased capacity to ensure age and developmentally appropriate pre-primary education and school readiness	Government and partners have increased capacity to deliver equitable, flexible, inclusive quality elementary education for out of school children	Government and partners have enhanced capacity to deliver quality education for improved learning outcomes for children in elementary education	Government and partners have enhanced capacity to generate demand for quality education through advocacy, sustained behaviour change and social protection	Government and partners have increased capacity to provide continued access to education, especially for the most vulnerable population in the COVID context

allocation of USD 50.23 million, is executed in close collaboration with relevant government departments at the national, state and sub-state levels and implementing partners which include NGOs and CSOs (more details on the stakeholders involved in the Programme and budgetary allocation can be found under Coherence and Efficiency in Section 3.5 and 3.4 respectively). The Programme ToC is presented in Annexure 2.1 and a detailed description of the output areas is provided in Annexure 2.2.

For the period of the current Education Programme, a major shift in the overall education programming and implementation was brought about by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic from early 2020. During this period, UNICEF assisted the government in adjusting its Education Programme and there was a revision to the Strategy Note[1] and the introduction of Output 506 (COVID-response) to better align UNICEF activities with government priorities and adapt and respond to pandemic conditions. This included work on remote learning solutions, safe reopening of schools, increasing access to digital materials, tools and platforms, providing necessary psychosocial and emotional support to teachers and increased collaboration with various line departments to provide convergent services to children.

The 2018 Programme also had an increased focus on the inclusion and mainstreaming of children from the most marginalised communities, and improving the quality of learning through foundational learning, life skills education and addressing inherent systemic methods of teaching that impede learning.

Geographically, UNICEF India undertakes or supports activities in 17 states and union territories which are classified across three state typologies based on the "level of development and operating environment"[22]. Further, within each state, UNICEF has at least two demonstration districts.

- **High-burden states:** The high-burden states include Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and West Bengal. These states have the largest burden in terms of infant mortality rate, under-5 mortality rate, low school attendance and child marriage, among others.
- **States with large tribal populations:** These include Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Assam. The proportion of burden on key issues related to children are as high in these states as in high-burden states. However, these states face additional challenges due to civil strife.
- **Transition/ Learning Lab states:** These include Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana. These states are characterised by developed social systems, stronger governance and institutions and private sector presence.

1.4 Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the evaluation was to generate learnings on implementation modalities – what worked and how as well as what gaps emerged, if any – in the interventions rolled out under the UNICEF Education Programme in India between 2018-2021. This evaluation's strategic recommendations are intended to inform the upcoming Education Programme 2023–2027. In support of the evaluation purpose, the primary evaluation objectives were:

- To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and sustainability of the UNICEF interventions at the level of the districts, state, and the country
- To establish the degree of alignment between the needs and contexts ranging from the level of districts to states/state typologies and the nation
- To document good practices and lessons learnt, and
- To identify bottlenecks and challenges in UNICEF's approach

1.5 Evaluation Scope

Temporal Scope: The evaluation covers the period from 2018 to 2021.

Thematic Scope: The evaluation assessed the progress of the Education Programme as a whole and covered the six output areas.

Geographic Scope: The scope of the evaluation was national but with an in-depth focus on sample of seven states among three state typologies for the purpose of primary data collection (refer to figure 2). The seven

states were proposed in the Terms of Reference by UNICEF. For example, Uttar Pradesh is one of the larger programming states of UNICEF in terms of funding and implementation, whereas Bihar has a unique programming context amongst the high-burden states. Assam and Odisha bring the context and setting of civil strife states to the evaluation. Amongst the transition states, programming in Tamil Nadu is delivered from a social policy lens, focusing on secondary education. Programming in Maharashtra focuses on early childhood education and quality learning and teaching, as does programming in Karnataka.

Figure 2: List of States Sampled for the Study - Typology Wise

High Burden States
Uttar Pradesh, Bihar

Tribal States
Odisha, Assam

Transition/Learning Lab States
Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu
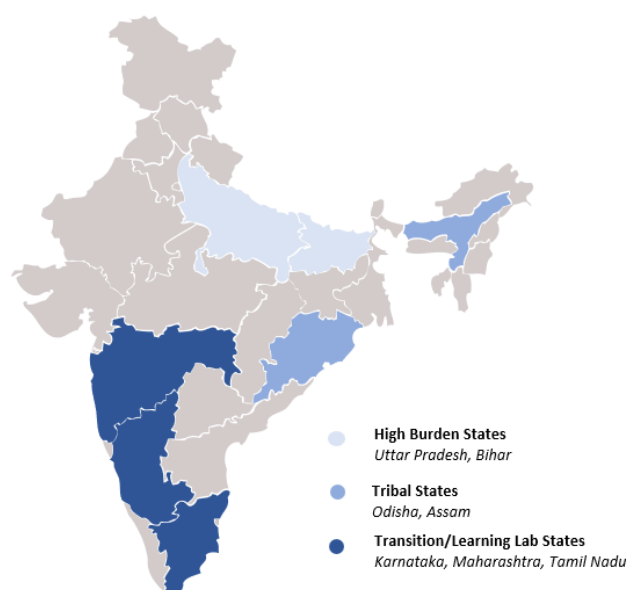
1.6 Evaluation Questions and Criteria

Evaluation Criteria: The ToR provided a clear mandate for this evaluation to be carried out using the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)[23], namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainably excluding impact. In addition, questions around gender and equity were included to comply with UNICEF policy in all evaluation criteria. To address equity, we explored the extent to which UNICEF's Programme addressed the needs of the various groups of marginalised children and girls. The criteria are elaborated below:

Table 1: Description of the Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Description
Relevance	The key areas explored under this criterion were the alignment of the Education Programme with the global priorities (UNICEF global strategic plan, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and core commitment to children), Country Programme, national and state priorities and the local contexts. We explored the relevance of the interventions, Programme design ToC, the extent to which issues of equity were addressed in the Programme design and responsiveness of the Programme to changing needs (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic).
Effectiveness	We explored questions about the intended results achievement, unintended outcomes, contributing/ hindering factors and lessons learned. We also sought to understand the effectiveness of the 'state typology design' in achieving the results.
Efficiency	We assessed if the UNICEF activities were delivered in a timely manner and if the resources (funds) were efficiently utilised to achieve the results.
Coherence	We explored the extent to which UNICEF was able to build synergies and coherence with the government and other development actors to deliver the educational priorities.
Sustainability	We explored the extent to which the interventions were sustainable and what measures were considered during the design and implementation to ensure sustainability. We also assessed the challenges to achieving sustainability.

Gender and Equity	We explored the extent to which UNICEF is mainstreaming gender in the Education Programme and using gender-disaggregated data and evidence to inform the design and implementation of the Programme.

Evaluation Questions: The ToR provided 39 evaluation questions which were reviewed, refined and finalised in consultation with the UNICEF team during the inception phase. The evaluation questions that guided this evaluation is provided in Figure 3 and a complete evaluation matrix with questions, sub-questions, relevant indicators, sources of information and analysis method is provided in Annexure 3.

Figure 3: Evaluation Questions

Relevance: To what extent are UNICEF's support activities relevant to addressing identified educational priorities?	
EQ 1	How aligned is UNICEF Education Programme with evolving global (UNICEF global strategic plan, SDGs and core commitments to children) and national priorities (Samagra Shiksha, NIPUN Bharat, NEP, RTE, etc)?
EQ 2	How relevant is the UNICEF Programme and its interventions to the specific context of state typologies and local contexts?
EQ 3	How relevant is UNICEF's Programme in addressing inherent equity gaps – taking into consideration the disparities regarding caste, residence, gender, religion, disability and wealth?
Effectiveness: To what extent have support activities contributed to achievement of targets for identified educational priorities?	
EQ 4	To what extent was UNICEF effective in achieving its planned outputs, both at national and at state levels, in the three priority areas of work?
EQ 5	How effective has UNICEF support been in addressing inherent equity gaps or taking into consideration the disparities regarding caste, residence, gender, religion and wealth?
Efficiency: To what extent are UNICEF's support activities timely and cost-effective in addressing identified educational priorities?	
EQ 6	To what extent were UNICEF activities delivered in a timely and organised manner?
EQ 7	To what extent did UNICEF deliver activities within the planned monetary resources allocated?
EQ 8	Were UNICEF's human resources well utilised to deliver activities and interventions?
Coherence: To what extent are support activities compatible with government policies and the work of other agencies working towards the identified educational priorities?	
EQ 9	(EXTERNAL COHERENCE) How does UNICEF's work fit with the work of external partners (global partners, regional partners, government and partner programmes/interventions)?
EQ 10	(INTERNAL COHERENCE) How does the UNICEF Education Programme align with/fit with other interventions being carried out by UNICEF?
Sustainability: To what extent are support activities undertaken by UNICEF likely to be continued by sub-national governments?	
EQ 11	To what extent have UNICEF support programmes been embedded in/integrated/costed into and/or helped scale-up government programmes?
EQ 12	What were the 'lessons learned' from the implementation of the Programme and have they been shared with the sector stakeholders (within UNICEF and with relevant government and development partners)?

1.6.1 Departure from the Terms of Reference

The ToR provided 39 evaluation questions nested under five criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability and an additional consideration around cross-cutting issues such as gender and equity. During the inception stage, the evaluation team highlighted the 'evaluability assumptions' by assessing the evaluation questions around two parameters: 'Whether the evaluation question is essential or desirable' and 'To what extent the evaluation question can be answered'. The assessment was based on the

evaluation team's analysis based on various criteria such as quality and quantity of the available data or reflects qualitative issues such as bias or lack of clarity regarding certain evaluation questions or to reduce redundancy in the questions (e.g., similar questions were combined or brought as sub-evaluation questions). As a result, several modifications were made to the original evaluation questions outlined in the ToR and Annexure 12 summarises the changes made to the evaluation questions.

On commencement of the data analysis and report writing phase of the evaluation, the following evaluation questions were combined for the purposes of avoiding duplication of findings and brevity of the overall reports. As this was finalised post the submission of the inception report, the evaluation matrix was not revised retrospectively to reflect this change.

- The evaluation sub-questions 1.1.2 (relevance) and evaluation sub-question 2.1.5 (effectiveness) were combined.
- The evaluation question 1.2 (relevance) and evaluation sub-question 2.1.2 (effectiveness) were combined.
- Evaluation question 1.3 (relevance) and 2.2 (effectiveness) were combined.

Another significant departure from the inception report was the inability to achieve the proposed sample for data collection. More details of this are presented in Section 2.7 in chapter 2.

Given the complexity and scale of the evaluation, the report exceeds the suggested length as per the Global Evaluation Report Oversight System (GEROS) format and as recommended in the ToR. Condensing the information in the report or executive summary may have led to the loss of pivotal findings and has been agreed on with the UNICEF ICO.

1.7 Intended Users

The intended audience for the results from this study is primarily UNICEF staff at India Country Office (ICO) and state level involved in the UNICEF Education Programme and the government partners at the national/ state level. The secondary audience comprises implementing partners at the national/state level, including Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)/ Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)/ academic institutions and the private sector. In addition, the evaluation will be of interest to other donors who collaborate with or invest in UNICEF Education Programme. The learnings from the study will eventually also be developed into a policy brief, guide areas of improvement, create successful models and develop strategies that can be rolled out widely in the next cycle.

02: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

2.1 Evaluation Implementation

The evaluation followed a sequential process comprising of three key phases – inception phase, data collection phase and analysis and reporting phase. Each phase included activities contributing directly and/or indirectly to evaluation deliverables, as seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Evaluation Implementation Plan

Phases	Activities	Deliverable	Activities towards achieving a Utilisation Focused Evaluation (UFE) approach
Inception Phase	• Initial desk review and consultations with the UNICEF ICO and state team to understand context and programme • Finalisation of the evaluation design, and refinement of the evaluation matrix in consultation with the UNICEF evaluation manager and programme team • Refinement of the ToC and identification of the contribution claims • Stakeholder mapping • Drafting of the research instrument	Inception Report	• A virtual meeting with UNICEF India to refine the ToC (Phase 1) • Consultative meetings with UNICEF India to refine the evaluation questions and matrix and identify the relevant indicators (Phase 1) • Consultative meetings with UNICEF India to present the claims for the Contribution Analysis (Phase 1) • Evaluation reference group meeting in order to discuss the evaluation objective and approach (Phase 1) • Consultative meetings with UNICEF India to finalise claims, hypothesis and evidence mapping for Contribution Tracing (Phase 2) • Presentation of the preliminary findings during the UNICEF network meeting (Phase 2) • Evaluation reference group meeting to present the draft evaluation report to validate findings and inform recommendations (Phase 3) • Recommendation workshop with select key stakeholders to solicit views on the suggested recommendations (Phase 3). Initial recommendations were revised based on inputs from the workshop to develop final recommendations.
Data collection phase	• IRB approval • Piloting of the research instrument • Finalisation of the claims for the contribution tracing • Training of the qualitative researcher • Conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussion	Field Completion Report	
Data Analysis, Validation and Report Writing	• Triangulation of data and contribution analysis contribution analysis using the Bayesian Confidence Updating method • Drafting of the evaluation report (s)	Presentation Final Evaluation Report	

2.2 Evaluation Methods

The technical approach for this evaluation was guided by OECD-DAC criteria[23], United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards[24], the Ethical Guidelines in Evaluation and the Code of Conduct for Evaluation[25] in the United Nations system. A theory-based evaluation method that combines Contribution Analysis and Process Tracing, especially Bayesian updating was employed to assess the effectiveness, clarity, relevance, and coherence of the ToC. The Contribution Analysis provided the overarching framework to arrive at credible causal claims about the UNICEF Education Programme's contribution to output areas, taking into consideration other factors that may have influenced such outputs. On the other hand, elements of Process Tracing guided the evaluation team's decisions about what kinds of evidence to look for, and what criteria to use to judge the strength of that evidence.

The primary evaluation methods were qualitative, including extensive analysis of the documents, analysis of the Results Assessment Module (RAM) reports[26], KIIs and FGDs with UNICEF and stakeholders at the national, state and district levels (refer to Section 2.3).

2.2.1 Reconstruction of Theory of Change

The Education Programme had a specific ToC (refer to Annexure 2.1) that traced the education sector challenges to potential areas of influence and improvement through UNICEF activities, thereby creating multiple levels of pathways from outputs to intermediate outcomes to overarching goals of the UNICEF Programme. As the first step for the evaluation, the team developed an evaluation ToC that laid out the channels for measurable change that will be assessed as part of this evaluation, while taking stock of the role of the intervention activities, assumptions (about reach and behaviour change) as well as external factors on the targeted education outcomes in the UNICEF Programme ToC (Refer to figure 5).

Figure 5: Evaluation ToC
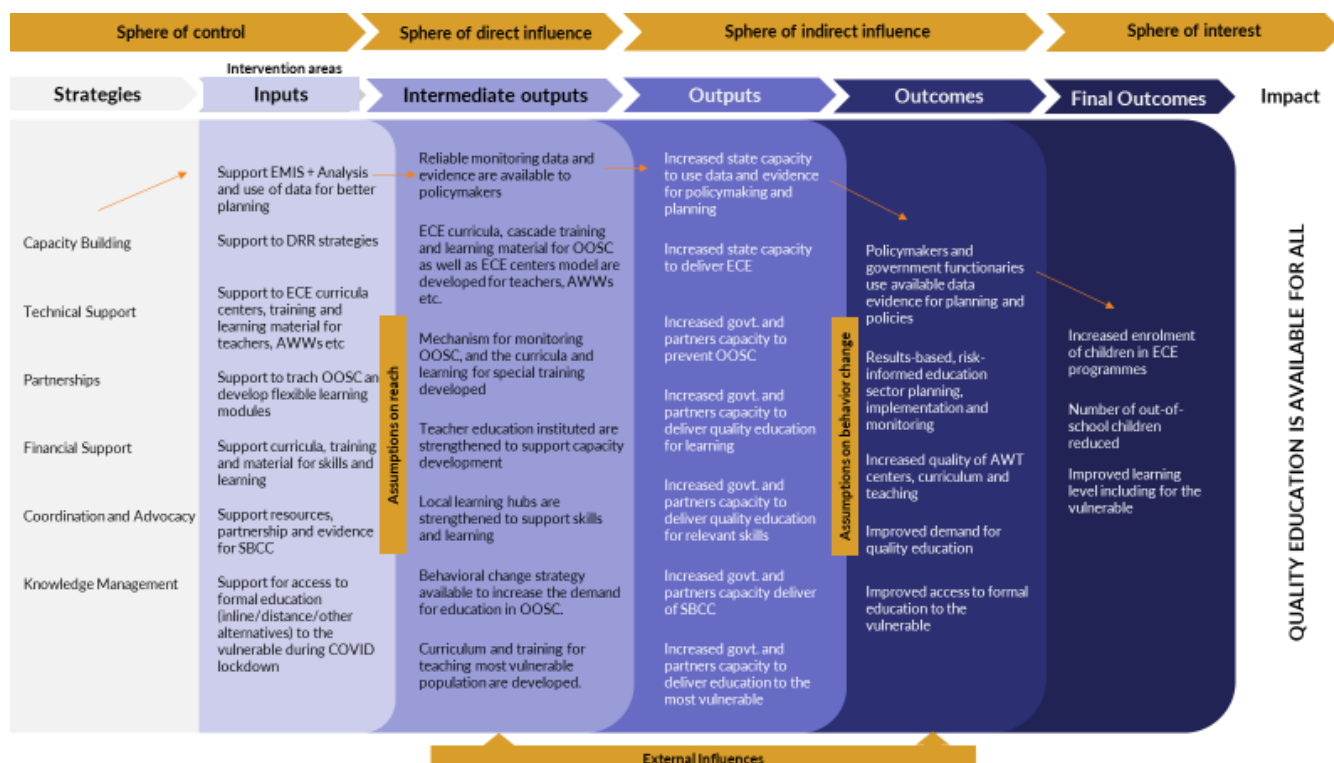
2.2.2 Contribution Analysis

Contribution Analysis was employed to assess UNICEF's contribution by mapping evidence of change against the behaviour changes, links, and assumptions (causal pathways) in the ToC. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the ToC for the UNICEF Programme is centered on six output areas; hence, the Contribution Analysis also focuses on the six output areas. Using the COM-B (Capacity, Opportunity, Motivation- Behavioural Change) approach (refer to Annexure 4.1), the evaluation team developed output-specific ToC (refer to annexure 4.2) and detailed contribution claims for each output.

The Contribution Analysis approach involves five steps (refer to figure 6), including developing a Logic Model or ToC for intervention and gathering evidence in order to explore the intervention's contribution to observed outcomes. By verifying the that the intervention is based on and taking into consideration other influencing factors, Contribution Analysis can provide evidence that the intervention did or did not make a difference. Contribution Analysis provides a helpful and intuitive framework, but not a prescribed set of methods and processes for assessing a ToC. The steps followed in the Contribution Analysis are expanded in Annexure 4. The contribution claims, reach, assumptions and behaviour changes underpinning the ToC of each output area are provided in Annexure 4.3

Figure 6: Steps involved in Contribution AnalysisToC

1. Develop a testable causal claim, including all the steps linking intervention with observed outcome
2. Design data collection and gather evidence
3. Develop contribution stories
4. Collect more evidence and revise the contribution story
5. Put the claim and findings up for challenge
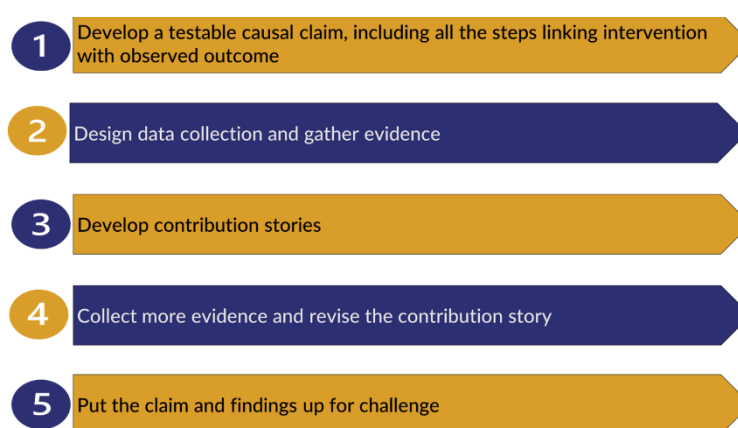
2.2.3 Contribution Tracing

Contribution Tracing is a rigorous quali-quantitative approach that combines Process Tracing and Contribution Analysis to test the validity of the claims through the process of Bayesian Confidence Updating. The Bayesian Confidence Updating helps to establish the strength of causal links by assigning probabilities to causal claims or hypotheses, and formally weighing evidence to update the researchers' confidence in these claims being true or false. Contribution Tracing requires the evaluators to develop a specific testable hypothesis, identify the relevant evidence, refine the hypotheses, code data against the evidence and apply and interpret the tests.

As Contribution Tracing is a time and resource-intensive exercise, it was proposed that this method be applied at a granular level, that is, for a single output or outcome using a case study approach with **'accountability lens'.** This approach was applied to an identified causal link in the ToC that is crucial where UNICEF particularly wants to understand and generate robust evidence of their contribution and learn about what works, for whom, in what contexts and why in order to inform future education programmes.

For Contribution Tracing, the evaluation team developed two claims exploring UNICEF's contribution towards two output areas.

- **CLAIM 1:** Increased awareness among ICDS officials as a result of UNICEF's technical support has led to increased programming around responsive parenting

Figure 7:Steps involved in Contribution Tracing

- **CLAIM 2:** UNICEF Education Programme's technical support to identify and map out-of-school children has led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes.
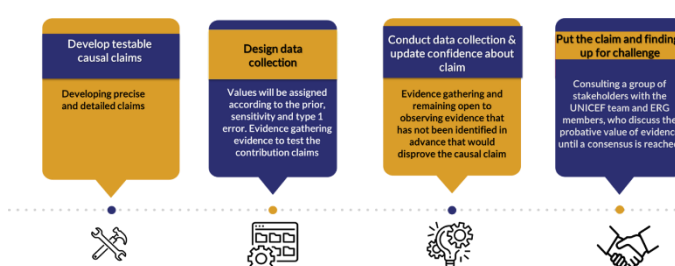
The steps followed in the Contribution Tracing are presented in figure 7 and expanded in Annexure 5. Findings of the Contribution Tracing exercise are presented in Section 4.

2.3 Data Collection Methods and Sampling Strategy

The study employs a mixed-method research design. These include document review, secondary analysis of the RAM reports, and qualitative primary data collection. The use of multiple methods enabled cross-referencing, validation and triangulation of information gathered from different sources.

2.3.1 Desk Review and Secondary Data Analysis

A large volume and a comprehensive number of documents were reviewed in this evaluation including the programme strategy note, Results Assessment Module (RAM) reports, budget reports, publications by UNICEF including evaluation and assessment reports, policy briefs and other research reports and external reports and data published by the government. A complete list of documents reviewed is available in the References section.

2.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews With Individuals, Groups and Focus Group Discussions

The key methods employed for the evaluation include KIIs and FGDs.

- **Key Informant Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders at the national, state and district levels. The list of the participants is available in Annexure 9.

- **Focus Group Discussion:** FGDs were organised at the district level with teachers, master trainers, School Management Committee (SMC) members and anganwadi workers.

The qualitative data collection was conducted over a period of five weeks from the beginning of October until the first week of November. To ensure that high quality data could be collected, and the instruments are relevant, a piloting of the data collection tool was conducted in September 2022.

2.2.2.1 Stakeholder Mapping and Sampling Strategy

Two groups of stakeholders were considered for this evaluation:

- **Internal stakeholders:** These were UNICEF staff at the national and state level who had been closely involved in conceptualising, implementing, and monitoring the Programme.
- **External stakeholders:** UNICEF had worked with a diverse set of stakeholders in the implementation of the Education Programme. The primary partner was the Government (at the national/ state/district level) and NGOs and CSOs, either leading or supporting activities at all levels. The secondary stakeholders for the evaluation study include the school management committee members, principals, teachers, and the early childhood development (ECD) workers or anganwadi workers and anganwadi helpers.

The full list of potential key informants was compiled during the stakeholder mapping process, forming the sampling frame for interviews. The evaluation team sampled approximately 195 stakeholders using a maximum variation purposive sampling approach for this study that allowed us to speak to a diverse range of institutions and organisations to construct a holistic understanding of the Programme's effectiveness and relevance. The stakeholder mapping exercise also provided us with information on the area and nature of engagement of the individuals with UNICEF; hence the evaluation team had also considered this as one of the criteria for the selection of respondents to ensure that the evaluation reflects the breadth of activities that UNICEF had implemented. We also considered the gender, institutional and hierarchical diversity of the stakeholders while sampling the respondents for data collection. The sampled list of respondents was finalised in consultations with the UNICEF team at the national and state level.

By the completion of the evaluation, a total number of 152 individuals were engaged as key informants. Distribution of the interviews across the various stakeholder types, states and gender is presented in the Annexure 7.1. In addition, a total of 154 teachers, master trainers, anganwadi workers and SMC members were engaged through FGDs. A total of 30 FGDs were conducted across six states, and the distribution of the FGD across states and the composition of the participants is presented in Annexure 7.2.

All consultations were conducted remotely via telephone or video conferencing platforms such as Zoom/ Microsoft Team or Google Meet based on the respondent's convenience.

2.2.2.2 Instrument

Discussion guides were developed for each stakeholder type at the national, state and district levels, which contained detailed questions around the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability. Additionally, questions were drafted specifically for the two claims that used the Contribution Tracing approach, administered to a sub-set of the sampled respondents purposively identified by UNICEF for testing the claims. The main areas of enquiry for the specific stakeholder cohort and the detailed questionnaire are provided in Annexure 10.

2.4 Data Analysis

All primary and secondary data were subjected to qualitative content analysis. The process for qualitative analysis involved transcribing the qualitative data, collected through interviews and FGDs, coding of all qualitative data followed by collating and summarising into categories and themes to answer the evaluation questions and sub-questions. An iterative process was followed for coding and categorisation to identify

emerging patterns. Finally, triangulation of qualitative interview data and other secondary information was conducted to synthesise the evaluation findings and draw conclusions.

The evaluation team used MAXQDA qualitative analysis software to help systematically extract qualitative data from the wealth of documentation produced by the UNICEF over the evaluation period and the interviews/ discussions conducted by the team.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The evaluation approach was guided by relevant UNICEF's Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis [27], UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards[24], UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation[28], and UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation[29]. The research design, data collection and informed consent document was reviewed and approved by Sigma Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Refer to Annexure 11). This ensured proper protocols were in place for informed consent, data protection and safeguards to protect the rights of participants, among other things. With respect to ethical approaches to managing evaluation participant data, the evaluation specifically ensured the following:

- **Confidentiality:** All participants were assured of the confidentiality of any information they share, and care was taken to protect the participants' anonymity through the use of anonymised interviewee codes for each respondent, ensuring that the recordings were uploaded onto the Cloud and not shared over email, and ensuring that only the evaluation and field team had access to the recordings and transcripts;
- **Preventing disclosure of identity:** Appropriate measures were put in place to prevent any individual data from being published or otherwise released in a form that would allow any subject's identity to be disclosed or inferred;
- **Informed consent:** We obtained oral-informed consent from all participants and ensured that participants have the contact details of the evaluation team to withdraw or change their consent at any time; and
- **Data security:** Raw data such as interview transcripts and recordings were stored in a password protected file system with limited access and be anonymised. Furthermore, the transcriptions and audio recordings were transferred to Athena's server through secure means using an encrypted shared drive. Only team members had access to the folders for the project's duration.

Furthermore, all the core evaluation team members have completed the UNICEF's Ethics in Evidence Generation. Furthermore, all the researchers involved in the data collection underwent training on ethics as part of the enumerator training.

2.6 Evaluation Management

Quality control was exercised throughout the evaluation process and the evaluation adhered to the quality of the evaluation process and deliverables as outlined in the UNICEF-Adapted United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards[28]. More specifically, the evaluation team used the following processes:

- **Application of Global Evaluation Report Oversight System (GEROS):** The evaluation conformed to the UNICEF global evaluation reports oversight system standards for evaluation.
- **Quality of data collection and data analysis:** The following activities were undertaken to ensure the quality of the data collection and data analysis:
  - The virtual interviews were recorded (with prior explicit consent). The transcripts were reviewed against the recordings for quality assurance. Random quality checks of the transcripts were conducted to review for completeness, language, and other criteria.
  - The core team members as well as members from the UNICEF Evidence Unit randomly spot-checked the researchers' interviews intermittently. The objective was to provide feedback to the researchers

on the interviews, identify additional probe areas and evaluate their performance or need for additional training.

- o Regular debriefing with the researchers were done during data collection.
- o The quality of data analysis was supported through triangulation of results from multiple data sources (that is document review, KIIs disaggregated by stakeholder type and FGD).

- **Meetings with the Evaluation Management Team (EMT) and Programme team in UNICEF:** Regular check-ins and meeting were held by the evaluation team with the EMT and Programme team in UNICEF India Country Office (ICO) on key points to confirm progress and document changes, decisions, and client feedback during the evaluation. The weekly meetings with the UNICEF Evaluation Manager and Country Office provided key points for reviews and escalations.

- **Peer – Review of all the deliverables:** Dr Sudhanshu Joshi and Ms Melanie Punton, who are part of our technical backstopping team, reviewed our analysis and our key deliverables as part of our quality control measures.

- **Editorial Quality Assurance:** Ms Aruna Balajee provided professional copy-editing support so that the final reports are engaging, well-formatted, and are compliant with UNICEF publication requirements.

2.7 Limitations of the Study

The key limitations and mitigation strategies used for this evaluation is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Limitation and Mitigation Measures

Limitations	Mitigation Measures
Methodological Limitations	
Subjectivity of qualitative data	For the interviews, a positive bias towards UNICEF due to social desirability was a possibility. However, triangulation of data sources and data methods helped mitigate the effect of these biases to the best extent possible. The study employed a mixed method research including primary data collection, and document review that allowed the evaluation team to triangulate stakeholders' opinions with secondary information, wherever available. Furthermore, interviews were conducted across different stakeholder cohorts (government, implementing partners and others) and levels (national, state and district) which further strengthened the research rigor. Additionally, interviews were also conducted with independent sector experts who were not involved in the UNICEF programming or implementation but had knowledge of the UNICEF work/ interventions.
Recall bias	The evaluation focused on a four-year period (2018-2021) which could have resulted in some information loss on UNICEF's interventions and nature of support. The evaluation team included appropriate probes in the instruments based on information from the document review and the stakeholder mapping exercise to aid respondents' recall of activities.
Remote interviews and consultations	All the interviews and discussions were conducted remotely which could have resulted in 'respondent fatigue' or missing of non-verbal cues by the interviewer. This was addressed through use of video conferencing facilities (wherever possible), interviewing to saturation and triangulating information from various sources. Additionally, interviews with UNICEF staff were conducted in multiple rounds given the length of the questionnaire and to avoid fatigue in responses.
Lack of transparency in assessing the strength of evidence that lead to contribution claims.	To overcome this methodological challenge, we proposed to use Contribution Tracing where the evaluators transparently assign probabilities to causal claims and weigh new evidence to update the evaluators' confidence in these claims. The original and updated probability values that is, the strength of evidence, were verified with a small set of key stakeholders. The evaluation team worked with UNICEF India to identify the key stakeholders and verify the contribution claims through a workshop.

Challenges in Data Collection	
Respondent selection bias	The evaluation team worked with UNICEF to generate a comprehensive list of stakeholders in each of the state. The evaluation team then sampled the respondents to ensure diversity in intervention/output areas and gender, to the best extent possible.
Timelines and compressed data collection phase	The time period for the data collection coincided with two key holidays in India – Dussehra and Diwali. Consequently, the evaluation team had limited timeframe to follow up with relevant stakeholders and some of the key stakeholders were unresponsive or could not be reached. This limitation was managed during the data collection phase by involving stakeholders from the secondary 'reserve' list or by working with the state teams for appropriate replacements.
Inability to achieve the proposed sample	Due to the compressed timelines and logistical challenges in scheduling interviews with the key stakeholders, all the planned interviews and discussions could not be achieved. In Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Assam, we achieved only 80%, 28% and 93%, respectively of the proposed sample. Regarding FGDs, we only achieved 65% of the proposed sample. The evaluation team, in consultations with the UNICEF ICO and field offices, developed a priority list and targeted those stakeholders during the last week of data collection. As the evaluation team was able to conduct interviews with a diverse group and triangulate information through document review, it was agreed that the current sample size was adequate to answer the evaluation questions.
Sampling difficulties	Although the evaluation team had developed a clear sampling strategy for the evaluation, it was not always possible to follow this plan to interview our selected respondents. For instances, the number of respondents nominated for the data collection at the national and state levels was lower than the sample size proposed by the evaluation team. The original sampling strategy included interviewing UNICEF's implementing partners at the district level. However, certain states, such as Assam engaged implementing partners only at the state-level and not at the district-level. In many instances, the information provided as part of the stakeholder mapping was either incorrect or outdated, and the stakeholder diversity, as originally envisioned, could not be achieved. The evaluation team was flexible and adaptive, implementing alternative strategies to ensure that the evaluation could be conducted properly. For instance, the evaluation team tried to increase the number of government respondents interviewed at the district level to get adequate sub-state representation and insights.
Gender balance in the FGDs	Our original approach was to purposively sample principals, teachers and SMC workers who are women or belong to specific marginalised communities, for the FGDs from the list of stakeholders provided by UNICEF. However, given UNICEFs limited role in directly engaging with the teachers, AWW, SMC members, master trainers etc., generating a comprehensive list was a challenge. Hence, a convenience sampling approach was used by the evaluation team, and we had to rely on UNICEF's government and implementing partners to facilitate and organise these FGDs.
Turnover	There were administrative and bureaucratic shuffles and reshuffles, where government officials were moved from one department to another. There were also changes within UNICEF, with staff being relocated or reassigned to another state or to the ICO. This risk was mitigated by including those external stakeholders who held previous positions or sampling those who had been in the position for extended periods. For UNICEF staff, small group discussions were conducted where the former staff was invited to the meeting to contribute towards the discussion.

03:EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 Overview

This chapter summarises key evaluation findings and the analysis of evaluation questions. The description has been structured around five evaluation criteria and 12 key evaluation questions. For each evaluation criteria, a detailed analysis is presented under the key evaluation questions. Where appropriate, the narrative has been merged due to overlap between questions. Additionally, the findings from the Contribution Analysis centred around the six output areas is presented under the OECD DAC criteria of effectiveness.

3.2 Relevance

This section is to assess the alignment of the Education Programme to the existing global, national and state priorities and policies of India in education and the extent to which the programming context addresses the unique context of the state typologies and local context. It also examines the relevance of the programming in addressing the needs of marginalised and vulnerable children.

EQ 1.1 How aligned is UNICEF's Education Programme with evolving global (UNICEF global strategic plan, SDGs, and core commitments to children) and national priorities (Samagra Shiksha, NIPUN Bharat, NEP 2020, RTE, etc)?

Evaluation Finding: The Education Programme is closely aligned with global priorities and national plans and policies. The evaluation noted UNICEF's contribution to shaping national policies such as the NEP 2020 and identified mechanisms through which it ensures relevance and appropriateness of work, including a process of co-creation with government stakeholders, situational analysis to informing programming areas and mid-term review. The Programme was able to respond appropriately to changes in the operating environment such as COVID-19 and introduction of NEP 2020 through rapid assessments and the MSTR. External stakeholders reported that UNICEF could have better leveraged its global experience on education in emergencies during the pandemic and highlighted a few areas where its role can be further strengthened such as adolescent and secondary education.

A.   Alignment with UNICEF's Strategic Plans and Global Priorities

The UNICEF Education Programme was aligned with the goals and targets of other relevant global initiatives. UNICEF India's Country Education Programme (2018-21) is relevant to the priorities in the strategic plan in terms of its core commitment to children, considering the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised, focusing on gender and equity, and responding to changing needs in education in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. An overview of how the change strategies relate to the activities and goals of the Education Programme in India is described in table 3.

Table 3: Alignment of Strategic Plan with UNICEF India Country Programme

Strategic Plan	UNICEF India Country Programme
Gender equality (overarching priority in the strategic plan, whilst more specifically gender-responsive programming is CHANGE STRATEGY 2)	Tackles gender issues across initiatives, highlighted in the Programme Strategy Note[1] – emphasising the need for gender-sensitive schools where there is access to sanitation for girls, use of gender disaggregated data for planning, the role of behaviour change communication to improve enrolment of girls, and advocating for gender inclusivity in education by addressing social and cultural barriers. Evaluation Question 1.3 below explains relevant initiatives in detail.
CHANGE STRATEGY 1: Programming at-scale results for children, which	UNICEF's Education Programme strategy includes various C4D initiatives around Out-of-School-Children and reducing dropouts in

includes promoting behaviour change among communities and disaster risk reduction to ensure children's safety.	tribal areas and other vulnerable groups, WASH programme, DRR and Child Protection for creating hygienic and safe learning environments. Examples include UNICEF's work during COVID-19 in promoting safe WASH habits and support in establishing school safety programmes. More details on such activities can be found under the findings elaborated under EQ 2.1 on Contribution Claim 1.
CHANGE STRATEGY 3: Winning the support of decision makers, using stronger advocacy, campaigns, increasing volunteer base, and creating platforms to support children.	Across states, government and technical partners have testified to UNICEF's relationship with the government and its advocacy to enhance work on education priorities in the Country Programme. UNICEF funded its on-ground technical partners who successfully built massive volunteer bases for educational activities. Examples in this regard are detailed under Section 6.2 on Best Practices on leveraging community support groups.
CHANGE STRATEGY 7 and 8: The role of technology for system-strengthening to foster innovation in programming for children; and using evaluations, data, and research to protect the most vulnerable groups of children.	UNICEF's development of the *School Har Din Aaye* (SHARDA) platform in Uttar Pradesh and the Bihar Easy School Tracking (BEST) app in Bihar are aligned with both change strategies. Technological solutions as further enablers for change are further detailed under Section 6.2 on Best Practices.

Additionally, the Education Country Programme is aligned with other priorities of UNICEF in education and with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some examples of the activities under the current Education Programme that contribute to the goals of other UNICEF initiatives are evidenced in table 4. The Programme contributes to global and national progress towards SDG 4 on 'inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all', with a more direct relationship with sub-targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.a, 4.c on achieving free primary and secondary education for all, ensuring boys and girls can access quality early childhood care and education (ECCE), enhancing equity and gender parity, focusing on foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN), prioritising children with disabilities and special needs, and improving the quality of teachers. Through its overall focus on girls, the Programme also aligns with the goals of SDG 5 on gender equality.

Table 4: Alignment of Education Programme with global UNICEF priorities

Activities under current Education Programme	Aligns with
Equity is a cross-cutting concern in the Country Programme across all 6 output areas.	UNICEF's Global Strategy on Education has an overall emphasis on integrating equity so "every" child learns – including mainstreaming minority communities, children affected by emergencies, investment in pre-primary education and transition to adulthood.
Output 504 (Quality education and learning) and Output 506 (COVID-response) strengthens use of digital learning platforms and tool to ensure inclusive quality education	Re-Imagine Education is UNICEF's global priority to leverage the potential of technology for digital learning by prioritising vulnerable children, and empowering decision-makers to use innovative methods.
Output 503 (Education for out-of-school girls and boys) focuses on working with governments to build systems for identifying, tracking**,** and monitoring out-of-school children	The Out-of-School Children Initiative, which is a partnership created in 2010 between UNICEF, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) which aims to empower governments to develop innovative ways to reduce the proportion of out-of-school children

Output 504 (Quality education and learning) strengthens the capacity of government officials and teachers to improve FLN outcomes	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Initiative is a partnership between UNICEF, JPAL, Pratham and Delivery Associates to scale-up evidence-based approaches for improving FLN.
Outputs, 504 and 505 (Demand for quality education) includes activities aimed at improving soft skills and emotional well-being of children	YuWaah Generation Unlimited initiative that is focused on empowering students with life skills to ensure age-appropriate development and smooth transition from schooling to workforce.
Output 504 includes the development and promotion of the Career Guidance Portal to empower adolescents to make informed career choices and adolescent responsive schools in select states.	The 'life course' approach advocated by UNICEF Adolescent Development and Participation to build 21st century skills which are foundational, transferable, digital, and job-specific – in-line with priorities in Reimagine Education

B. Alignment with National and State Policies and Priorities

National development priorities have considerably informed the Education Programme development for 2018-2022. The evaluation found that the Education Programme is aligned with national policies and programmes such as NEP, NIPUN Bharat (Mission on FLN) and the ECCE Policy. External stakeholders at the national and state levels attested to the relevance and alignment of UNICEF-supported activities with the key policy changes and initiatives. Table 5 maps the Programme's output areas with the aims of various national policies and provides confirmation of this alignment.

Table 5: Alignment of Output Areas with National Priorities

Output Areas	NEP 2020	NIPUN Bharat/ FLN Mission	ECCE Policy	School Safety guidelines	Samagra Shiksha	National Curriculum Framework	Right to Education
501 (Policy and planning for equitable quality education)	YES			YES	YES		YES
502 (ECE)	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES	
503 (Education for out-of-school girls and boys)	YES			YES	YES		YES
504 (Quality education and learning)	YES	YES			YES	YES	
505 (Demand for quality education)	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES	
506 (COVID-response)	YES						YES

The evaluation found that UNICEF ensures the relevance of activities it undertakes through a process of co-creation with relevant stakeholders while developing annual workplans. UNICEF's internal respondents confirmed that consultations were held with the relevant departments annually to reach mutual agreement of Programme activities for the upcoming years. Government partners at the national and state-level corroborated this claim and reported substantial efforts by the UNICEF ICO and state staff to understand government priorities and develop contextually appropriate programmes. In addition to consultations with stakeholders, UNICEF also established the relevance of its activities through situational analyses and secondary research. For example, a review of the country and state-specific strategy notes for education reveals that a detailed situational analysis was conducted prior to the start of the current Programme cycle, which helped to establish baseline and identify priority areas to shape the programming at the country level.

Furthermore, UNICEF's work has been integral to shaping relevant national/ state policies in education during the evaluation period. Select examples of key policies to which UNICEF has contributed are listed in below.

- **National Education Policy (NEP 2020)** – UNICEF played a leading role in advising the government on NEP 2020 strategies through participation in consultations and helped states in adapting to NEP 2020 priorities.
- **National Curriculum Framework** (NCF) and support to states – Consulted with government at national level to provide inputs on curriculum for NCF-FLN 2022. Prior to the NCF FLN 2022, through the Country Programme, UNICEF has also been assisting states in designing curriculum to align with national educational priorities. For instance, UNICEF supported Bihar government on integrating updated ECCE curriculum into the ICDS system.
- **NIPUN Bharat** – Provided inputs on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy at the national level, created forums in states convening NGOs/CSOs and assisted states in implementing FLN mission aligned with NEP 2020 priorities.
- **Child Safety Policy in Karnataka** – UNICEF developed the framework for Child Safety in Educational Institutions and conducted policy advocacy to include it in the State Education Rules
- **Bodo Land in Assam –** MoU between UNICEF and Bodo Land Territorial Council for developing special education policy for the area, due to its unique autonomous nature.
- **NEP 2020 and COVID-19 strategy in Tamil Nadu**: UNICEF participated in two government committees to advise the state on how to implement NEP 2020 in Tamil Nadu and identified priority areas and interventions for the COVID-19 education strategy.
- **Odisha ECCE Policy** – UNICEF is a member of the state committee on ECCE and has provided technical support to the government leading to redrafting of the ECCE policy. UNICEF has advocated for school entry age to be changed from 5 years to 6 years

While UNICEF's activities were noted to be relevant, several national-level external stakeholders expressed the need for UNICEF to rethink its long-term vision and planning. Respondents raised concerns related to UNICEF performing the role of a service provider, as opposed to being a forerunner in developing innovative solutions to educational challenges in the country. UNICEF's role and visibility in several policy and advocacy committees were reported to have diminished over the years leading to potential scope for the misalignment of activities and reduced organisational power in the future.

> *"I was dismayed to see that UNICEF did not participate in many of the Government meetings and workshops on resilience post pandemic. I was involved with the education departments and guiding them on ways to mitigate distress among young children in taking exams. I did not see UNICEF being part of these forums and discussions."*
>
> -KII Respondent

Implementing partners and independent experts also noted that UNICEF should work in niche areas, rather than working on areas that are either considered 'low-hanging fruits' or currently overrun by other development actors. The Education Programme Strategy Note echoes this call by partners, reporting the need for 'adopting greater focus and prioritisation in programming'.

C. Missing Areas of Interventions

While the overall feedback on the relevance of its activities was positive, **UNICEF's internal stakeholders noted specific instances of misalignment between its priorities and that of the government,** resulting in non-achievement of intended results and activities. For example, in Tamil Nadu the government focus was on strengthening primary education which meant continuous dialogue had to take place to improve the quality of secondary education. Further, **the lack of a culture of a transparency was reported to inhibit**

UNICEF's capability to undertake relevant plans and programmes. Internal stakeholders and implementing partners noted that state government are sometimes unwilling to accept the realities in the state evidenced through data, such as high proportions of out-of-school children or poor learning outcomes, resulting in lesser focus on such issues in annual workplans. Internal staff also expressed concerns around government willingness and capability to learn and synthesise lessons from existing programmes, which might add to relevance of activities prioritised in workplans.

"UNICEF has developed an app for out-of-school children and a career portal but there is no traction from the government. They are kind of lackadaisical. When it comes to these apps and technology, they are very cagey about data. They don't want to share data, so they keep asking for so many layers of security."

-   KII Respondent

Stakeholders also highlighted specific areas in which UNICEF should expand programming, such as vocational training and life skills. Government stakeholders who are in the process of adopting NEP 2020 felt that UNICEF could offer greater support on vocational training in secondary education for students of classes 9-11. Master trainers for life skills and state-level government stakeholders were of the opinion that emphasis on life skills would benefit classroom teaching by enhancing students' self-esteem and countering gender stereotypes. Additionally, some external stakeholders felt that the Programme could benefit from increased programming on menstrual hygiene awareness for adolescent girls.

D. Adapting the Education Programme to Evolving Priorities

External stakeholders at the national and state-levels acknowledged UNICEF support in adapting and responding to changes in the environment, such as the introduction of NEP 2020 and COVID-19 disruptions to schooling. UNICEF's COVID responses were informed by a range of rapid assessments and analyses such as how many students were receiving access to remote learning, which resources were most used and helpful, and what more teachers and parents were looking for with respect to remote learning thereby enhancing its relevance. UNICEF-supported activities as part of its response to the pandemic are further detailed in Section 3.3 under Contribution Claim 6 (EQ 2.1). Implementing partners attested to UNICEF support in adapting existing programmes for digital environments or devising strategies to address delays in timelines due to COVID-19. New areas of programming, such as emotional well-being and mental health initiatives were introduced after the Mid-Term Strategic Reflection (MTSR) as a result of the pandemic. The MTSR[2] also details how changes were made to programming due to the introduction of NEP. UNICEF adapted the programming to support multi-lingual mother tongue learning in tribal areas, to align with the NEP 2020. To adapt to the focus on pre-primary education in NEP 2020, UNICEF worked with different government ministries and departments to coordinate efforts on delivery of ECCE strategies, and to devise unified state strategies. To reflect the priority on digital learning in NEP 2020, UNICEF provided support for remote and digital learning to state governments through training on virtual classrooms for teachers during the pandemic, creation of digital resources and development of remote learner management systems. Further evidence of UNICEF-supported activities during the pandemic and its effectiveness can be found in Section 3.3.

Whilst many stakeholders expressed satisfaction with UNICEF's support during the COVID-19 crisis and their prompt involvement, some of the external stakeholders consulted during the evaluation suggested that UNICEF could have played a more meaningful role in school reopening because of their role as a global leader and their cross-country exposure to working in emergencies. They felt this comparative advantage of UNICEF in education in emergencies could have been leveraged more effectively.

EQ 1.2 How relevant is the UNICEF Programme and its interventions to the specific context of state typologies and local contexts?

For a more comprehensive response, the evaluation team have presented the response for EQ 1.2 as well as sub-evaluation questions on the effectiveness of differential targeting under 2.1.2 here.

> **Evaluation Finding:** Programming in different states was relevant to addressing the contextual needs of the states. Evaluation noted a clear focus on out-of-school children in high burden and tribal typologies of states and improved learning outcomes in transition states. However, the evaluation findings show that the typology approach is not effective due to challenges in implementation such as a reported lack of nuanced understanding among state offices on how to implement the approach. UNICEF staff at the state level could not comment on how the differential approaches have led to achievement of results since they did not have clarity on activities or implementation modalities in other states. Documentary analysis do not show differences in the mechanism through which activities were executed and rather noted similarities in the approach.

A. *Relevance of the Typology-Based Approach to Programming*

The evaluation found evidence of the relevance of differential targeting based on state typologies. UNICEF's programming approach based on the status of key indicators related to education and contextual barriers has led to different activities being accorded different priorities in the three state typologies, as described below.

High-burden states include those with poor learning and schooling levels, such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, from the states selected for the evaluation. Evidence from the RAM reports confirm that these states worked in all three priority areas (early childhood education; out-of-school children; and quality learning and teaching), as intended. In addition, there is an increased focus on reducing school dropouts and absenteeism and ensuring that children transition from the primary to secondary education level. Correspondingly, UNICEF assisted the state government in Bihar to develop targeted initiatives aimed at increasing enrollment among children of the Musahar community while Uttar Pradesh focused on integration and reduced dropouts among children with special needs in the state. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar also reported the development and establishment of digital monitoring systems to identify and track out-of-school children to ensure retention and transition of those at risk of dropping out. Additionally, internal stakeholders of UNICEF also highlighted a number of community-level interventions and more handholding or 'down-stream' work in these states, as envisioned.

Tribal states are defined by their ethnic and linguistic diversity and varying topography that affects the access to education. In Odisha, internal and external stakeholders reported specific interventions such as the *School Sanjog* programme to reach children from the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) and focus on other geographical locations occupied by vulnerable communities, within UNICEF programming. In Assam, UNICEF activities focused on children living in tea gardens and in other tribal-dominated areas such as Bodo and Pokhrajhal, Joharahat, Gulpara and Rawa. Additionally, external and internal stakeholders in Assam reported programming related to education in emergencies, given its high susceptibility to natural disasters. A significant initiative noticed in these states is the promotion of mother tongue-based learning and translation of resources used in ECE and quality learning interventions into non-dominant state languages.

Transition states selected for the evaluation such as Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu have relatively better schooling outcomes, with a lower proportion of out-of-school children. UNICEF engagements in these states were found to take on more of a policy and advocacy role and focused on 'upstream work' focusing on government systems. In Maharashtra, UNICEF supported the strengthening of educational institutions through the KPALP programme whereas in Karnataka, UNICEF's support to the *Nalli Kali* programme is primarily delivered through the state Samagra Shiksha mechanisms. Tamil Nadu, with its unique social protection approach to programming, focused on adolescent responsive schooling and provided technical assistance during the pandemic to ensure the social and emotional well-being of adolescents. Stakeholders highlighted lower levels of direct engagement at the district and community levels in these states.

B. Effectiveness of the Typology-Based Approach to Programming

The evaluation team could not distil the effectiveness of differential targeting since there was no common ToC or monitoring system to track overall progress. Internal stakeholders raised concerns on whether the approach was as 'differential' as envisaged and highlighted several overlapping areas of work between the three typologies. For instance, UNICEF worked with implementing partners in Maharashtra to establish the causes of high dropouts and improve learning outcomes among vulnerable and tribal groups in the state, similar to initiatives found in the high-burden typology of states.

 Based on secondary information available in RAM reports, **the evaluation team did not find substantial differences in the mechanisms through which different activities were implemented**, as was intended with the typology approach. For example, both Uttar Pradesh (high-burden state) and Maharashtra (transition state) reported programmes (*TELOS* and *KPALP* correspondingly) to enhance learning outcomes through institutional strengthening and capacity building. Similarly, Assam (tribal state) and Maharashtra (transition state) witnessed demonstration-based programmes (*Learning Enhancement Programme* and *Level-based Learning Programme*) to improve foundational skills. Further, in high-burden, tribal and transition states like Bihar, Assam and Tamil Nadu respectively, UNICEF provided technical support to the relevant government departments in developing disaggregated data profiles based on UDISE data for evidence-based planning. However, this could not be verified through interviews since UNICEF staff at the state level did not have much visibility on the execution or achievement of relevant areas in other states.

Additionally, internal stakeholders highlighted that while the approach was well-designed with a strong rationale, several challenges hampered its execution on-ground as intended. Most notably, UNICEF staff members at the state level reflected that the allocation of resources and prioritisation of work to be undertaken are influenced by its state typology. This restricts programming in certain areas, even when relevant. For example, transition states have geographical pockets with high concentration of out-of-school children but exclusion of Output 503 (Education for out-of-school girls and boys) from its prioritised area of work implies that these states cannot undertake interventions to address this issue. Additionally, internal stakeholders from transition states highlighted that the inability to take on field interventions due to resource constraints limit their ability to demonstrate innovative programmes and influence policy and planning. State-level internal stakeholders across the three typologies reported that UNICEF extended support to governments on ad hoc requests, which are sometimes outside the scope of work permitted by the state typology approach implying that on-ground implementation is not as rigid as planned. Respondents also reported that there were limited opportunities to exchange knowledge and resource or share best practices, either within or across state typologies. At the national level, UNICEF staff believed that the execution of the approach was hampered by the lack of nuanced understanding and appreciation of state typologies among state UNICEF offices and relevant external stakeholders such as government departments and implementing partners.

EQ 1.3 How relevant is UNICEF's Programme in addressing inherent equity gaps – taking into consideration the disparities regarding caste, residence, gender, religion, disability, and wealth?

To avoid duplication and overlap and for a more comprehensive response, the evaluators have merged the above question with the evaluation question 2.2.

Evaluation Finding: The Education Programme addressed relevant gender and equity concerns in different states, primarily through focusing interventions in areas with higher concentrations of marginalised and vulnerable communities. The evaluation noted that while the Programme was gender-sensitive, very few instances of gender-transformative programming to address structural barriers were found. In comparison, equity considerations were more carefully integrated into programming through activities such as translation of resources into non-dominant languages and flexible learning initiatives to reach out-

of-school children from marginalised and hard-to-reach areas, especially in the high burden and tribal typologies of states.

A. *Relevance of UNICEFs Programme in addressing equity and gender gaps*

Documentary review and external stakeholder interviews attest to the relevance of programmes and specific programme components in addressing gender and equity gaps in education. Integration of equity dimensions in the current Programme cycle is guided by the vision that 'Every Child Learns,' as set out in the Education Programme Strategy Note. In addition, the note refers specifically to improved UNICEF efforts to promote inclusive education by 'focussing particularly on children excluded based on gender, children with disabilities, the poorest, ethnic and linguistic minorities and children affected by emergencies.' Documents arising out of the Strategy Note, such as the Country Programme Action Plan and state-specific strategy notes for education also reflect this focus.

National and state-level external stakeholder interviews provide further confirmation of the relevance of UNICEF's activities in this regard. Respondents reported that UNICEF's focus districts for programming usually have a concentration of marginalised and vulnerable communities, and that the interventions are aligned with the needs of the community. For example, UNICEF works closely with the tea garden associations in Assam to deliver education services to children in difficult to access areas. Similarly, a large proportion of out-of-school children from the Muslim community in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have been integrated into flexible education through UNICEF- education in madrasas.

B. *Effectiveness of UNICEFs Programme in addressing equity and gender gaps*

While there was evidence of the relevance of activities aimed at promoting inclusive education, the evaluation found mixed evidence of the effectiveness of activities aimed at ensuring gender equity in education. Analysis of indicators from RAM indicate that activities with gender and equity components are well 'on-track' to be achieved within the Programme period (Refer Annexure 8.2 for the detailed RAM analysis). While these indicators were found across all output areas, most were concentrated within Output 503 (Education for out-of-school girls and boys) and Output 505 (Demand for quality education). Further, stakeholder interviews highlighted examples of UNICEF-supported activities to address gender barriers to education (such as early marriage) and empower girls, such as revitalisation of *Meena Manches* in Uttar Pradesh and development of *Kishori calendars* in Odisha. RAM data suggests that UNICEF provided technical assistance to state governments in the collection, analysis and use of gender-disaggregated data and differential planning based on the same. High-burden states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar reported focus on identification and mainstreaming of out-of-school girls, especially in areas with poor enrolment such as Devipatan in Uttar Pradesh. Implementing partners and community-level stakeholders interviewed in these states also provided testimonial evidence on the effectiveness of programmes on financial literacy for girls and SBCC strategies for improvement of attendance among girls.

However, while some interventions integrated gender transformative components, such as the clearly defined role of men in the *Vatsalya and Ghare Ghare Arunima Responsive Parenting Programme* in Odisha, most activities did not display systemic efforts to address structural barriers. For example, the RAM presents the number of participants trained as part of various capacity-building activities, disaggregated by gender. While this is gender sensitive, it is unclear whether UNICEF orchestrated clear plans and initiatives to ensure gender representation in trainings. A handful of external stakeholders reflected on the same and highlighted the need for a gender-transformative approach to education programming.

On the other hand, **the evaluation found instances of careful integration of equity considerations in programming,** including translation of resources into non-dominant languages, promotion of mother tongue-based learning, flexible learning programmes targeted at integration of out-of-school children from specific

communities and programming aimed at children with disabilities (in specific states). A few examples, collated from RAM reports and stakeholder interviews, is detailed in Table 6.

Table 6: Select Examples of Equity Considerations in Education Programme

Uttar Pradesh	• In Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF supported the development of the SAMARTH intervention for children with special needs, including establishment of a social model to screen children with disabilities in schools and development and distribution of accessible worksheets on language and mathematics. • UNICEF assisted the development of a framework on disability-inclusive education with a five-year roadmap to promote inclusive schools.
Bihar	• UNICEF supported targeted interventions, such as special training programmes, for the Musahar community in the state. Community volunteers were trained to monitor school attendance and ensure retention and transition among school-going children. • UNICEF provided technical assistance in revising the curriculum of madrasas in the state and developing new textbooks and workbooks in line with the revised curriculum. It also extended support to maulavis and madrasas during the pandemic to ensure continued learning through digital platforms.
Assam	• UNICEF supported Samagra Shiksha in differential planning, as a result of which the state plan for education reflected the needs of various social groups covering 13 minority-concentrated districts, two schedule tribe dominated districts, seven aspirational districts and 13 tea garden districts. • UNICEF supported a community radio programme to raise awareness on COVID-appropriate behaviour during the pandemic. The programme was translated into Shadari, the dialect used by tribal communities residing in tea gardens.
Odisha	• UNICEF, in collaboration with SCERT and District Institute of Education and Training (DIETs) in the state, supported the remedial learning programmes in tribal-dominated districts to ensure retention and transition of children. • Workbooks and activities developed under the *Ghare Ghare Arunima* responsive parenting programme was translated into multiple tribal language by the Academy of Tribal Languages and Culture with support from UNICEF.
Maharashtra	• UNICEF supported evidence generation to determine socio-economic causes of high dropout rates among children from tribal communities. The evidence generated was used to develop a SBCC strategy to address transition from elementary to secondary education. • UNICEF provided technical assistance in undertaking an equity-based review of state textbooks in Marathi, Math, English, Science, and Social Science from grades 1 to 10
Tamil Nadu	• UNICEF supported the development of contextual adolescent responsive school plans based on three typologies of geographies within the state- coastal, tribal, and hilly areas.

Despite the effectiveness of these specific programmes or components, equity considerations within general education programming at the national and state levels need to be further strengthened. Internal and external stakeholders across states highlighted the need for more programmes and initiatives focused on children with special needs, urban poor, and migrant children. State-specific gaps in targeting were also noted by respondents within and outside UNICEF: in Maharashtra, there was an expressed need to focus on tribal communities; whereas in Tamil Nadu, programming in schools with higher concentration of Scheduled Tribe population was highlighted as a gap.

3.3 Effectiveness

This section assesses the effectiveness of the Programme or the extent to which the Programme has achieved or is likely to achieve its intended results and evaluates the contribution of UNICEF. The description of the

results are organised according to the six output areas as described in the Programme ToC. UNICEF's contributions towards key outcomes were assessed through Contribution Analysis. Each of the output area was developed into a corresponding contribution claim. For each claim, the evaluation team developed a causal pathway (Annexure 4.2) which outlines how the intervention is thought to have contributed to a specific change. Key activities under each of the output areas were first identified based on financial expenditure and further validated and revised with the Education Programme team. Related changes in opportunities (such as trainings) resulting due to the activities, and the reach of these opportunities were then established. Finally, changes in behaviour resulting from improved opportunities and motivation were mapped.

The findings from the Contribution Analysis are structured along activities, reach and behavioural change related to each contribution claim. We have used the terms 'strong', 'mixed' or 'moderate' and 'weak' to signify the strength of evidence supporting the argument. A description of the qualifiers is provided below:

- **Strong:** Strong has been used throughout the report in instances where we have triangulated the information from various stakeholder cohorts across levels and from different states.
- **Moderate/ mixed:** These have been used in instances where the information has been triangulated from relatively fewer sources or have relevance in only one state typology.
- **Weak**: Weak to denote the strength of evidence has been used in instances where the information primarily relies on a single or limited source of evidence.

EQ 2.1 To what extent was UNICEF effective in achieving its planned outputs, both at national and at state levels, in the three priority areas of work?

Evaluation Finding: Analysis of indicators presented in the RAM show that UNICEF is 'on track' to achieve most of its intended targets and results under all output areas, with the exception of Output 502 (ECE). Achievement of results under this output areas was reported to be 'constrained' due to the pandemic. However, the analysis does not clearly present the effects of the pandemic on the progress of the Programme since it did not consider the indicators that were deactivated or discontinued due to COVID-19 or considers the revised targets, wherever applicable.

A. Achievement of Results

To answer this evaluation question, the evaluation team examined data from UNICEF's Results Assessment Module (RAM) to understand the progress of planned outputs against set targets. Extent of achievement of results were measured by analysing self-reported ratings provided against individual indicators. The description of ratings, as provided in the RAM[26], is provided below.

- On Track – The target is equal or more than the annual target.
- Constrained – Progress update is less than the annual target.
- No Progress- No data as the indicator did not have an annual target.
- Not reported – Non availability of data for reporting

In total, the evaluation team examined 21 indicators across the six output areas from 2018-2021, at both the national and state levels. **Evidence from the analysis indicates that UNICEF has largely been 'on track' to achieve its targets throughout the evaluation period with improvement over time as well.** However, some

Figure 8: Overall Performance of Indicators Across Output Areas

Source: RAM Data

indicators recorded no visible progress[1] between 2018-2020 but were reported in 2021. Overall, the reporting increased in 2021, from only 12 indicators of 21 (57%) being reported in the first three years to 19 of 21 indicators (90%) reported in 2021. Progress on achievement of results under each output area is detailed below.

Disaggregated analysis shows that the Programme is on track to meet its targets under output area 501 (Policy and planning for equitable quality education). Two out of three indicators were self-reported as 'constrained' in 2021, but a closer review indicates that they are close to their respective annual targets for that year. The Programme has also surpassed its targets for the indicator on number of states that reported having a differential education plan for equitable access and learning. Specifically, nearly all of the states selected for this evaluation were reported to be on 'on track' to achieve targets for all the three indicators. However, Karnataka reported 'constrained' achievement on having a differential education plan for equitable access and learning, whereas Uttar Pradesh indicated 'constrained' achievement on implementing a comprehensive school safety programme, which was reported to be delayed due to covid.

The achievement of the targets under output area 502 (ECE) was mixed, and there was no clear trend of improvement over the evaluation period. From the qualitative analysis of the progress update described in the RAM documents, COVID-19 constrained the progress on the indicators, evidenced by the partial non-reporting during 2020 and limited time to reinitiate activities in 2021. However, the Programme again surpassed the targets for two of its indicators: the percentage of frontline workers trained in counselling parents and the number of states that have developed mother tongue-based early childhood education packages. Similar to the national picture, all of the selected evaluation states reported 'constrained' achievement related to running of ECE centres and implementing quality ECE programmes.

The Programme reported being 'on track' to achieve targets for all the indicators under output area 503 (Education for out-of-school girls and boys). The indicators were consistently on track throughout the reporting period, and the number of out-of-school children accessing elementary education surpassed the targets, reaching nearly twice the estimated achievement up until 2021. There were also more states, than planned, responding to the strategies to improve access for disadvantaged children at scale and in a sustainable manner. Of the four sampled states where this output area was implemented, all but one reported that they were on track to meet the relevant targets. Odisha reported indicators with no progress or those that were constrained. Review of the qualitative comments around the indicator on out-of-school children indicate challenges around Covid-led school closures which affected the data collection.

The Programme reported being 'on track' for most of the indicators under output area 504 (Quality education and learning). Two indicators were reported as being 'constrained'. We also observed that the Programme exceeded its targets against indicators related to implementation and innovation. However, the Programme fell significantly short on the indicator related to the number of adolescent students receiving

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[1] 'No Progress' implies that there was no visible reporting or assigned annual targets for the given years, indicating that no action was taken. 'Not Reported' simply means that the data is missing.

life skills training – only 8% of the target was achieved. At the state level, a majority of the indicators have been reported to be 'on track', but there are a few that were 'constrained' as well. The main reasons cited across multiple indicators was COVID-19 and associated school closures.

The Programme was 'on track' to meet most of its targets under output area 505 (Demand for quality education). For two out of three indicators on the number of states reporting gender responsive strategies; and implementing social and behaviour change communication strategies supporting back to school and age-appropriate learning at home, the Programme has exceeded its targets.

Overall, the Programme was 'on track' to meet the targets under the output area 506 (COVID-response). However, as the output was introduced in 2020, there were data gaps which made it difficult to ascertain the progress of the indicators**.**

Annexure 8.1 presents output-wise indicator performance against the latest targets.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 on the Achievement of Results

In the RAM reports, the master list of indicators also included indicators which were tagged as 'Deactivated'. Based on consultations with the UNICEF staff and review of the updated national monitoring matrix (2021), the deactivated indicators were excluded from the analysis. The list of deactivated indicators is presented below. There were five indicators that were omitted from the analysis, given that they were not included in the final results matrix from UNICEF, just under 20% of the overall 26 indicators. These were from output areas 501 (Policy and planning for quality education- 2), 504 (Quality education and learning- 1) and 505 (Demand for quality education-2). The exact indicators are detailed below.

- **Output 501:** % of increase in government allocation (50,000 Cr) for elementary education (of total education budget.
- **Output 501:** Number of states that have a disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategy and implemented with robust monitoring mechanism within the Education Sector Plan.
- **Output 504**: Number of states that have effectively used learning assessment data for teacher professional development, curriculum reviews, pedagogical practices, and development of learning resource material.
- **Output 505:** Number of states with resourced gender specific strategies in education departments' plans to create demand for elementary education.
- **Output 505:** Number of states implementing evidence-based communication, community engagement and community mobilization through partnerships to promote and incentivize school participation, learning and retention, including social protection measures, cash transfers and scholarships/stipends.

Furthermore, the evaluation team noted that some of the indicators in each output area were slightly altered (in framing, measurement type, etc.) and presented as new indicators in 2021. However, in order to analyse the progress over time, these were grouped with their previous iterations.

In terms of analysing the achievement of results, the relevant targets were taken from the RAM reports and triangulated with the Monitoring Plan document, 2021. We observed that nearly all of the indicators had targets revised downwards for the years affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. While many remained 'on track' due to this revision, some were still unable to reach even those levels. There were also indicators that were not discontinued but did not report data in 2021. Consultations with Programme team indicated that the non-reporting of data was due to the impact of the pandemic. Hence, the evaluation team assessed the achievements based on the 2020 achievement levels and targets.

Qualitative analysis of the descriptions reporting progress and achievements provided in the RAM reports highlight that COVID-19 is cited as a reason for delay or change of direction in all of the output areas. This is largely on account of the closure of the platform of service delivery, namely, schools and anganwadi centres. For example, the implementation of the DRR strategy within the Education Sector Plan (one of

the deactivated indicators) was cited to be delayed because of the pandemic in Uttar Pradesh in 2021. However, we observed that UNICEF was able to modify the programme activities and shift to online mediums to continue delivery in some form and thereby achieve its targets. For example, under output area 504 (Quality education and learning), UNICEF effectively adjusted its technical support across states in completion of planned activities and in 'continuity of learning' , leading to implementation of remote learning programmes in seventeen states, reaching 57.5 million students (28.4 million girls). Across states, UNICEF trained teachers on digital platforms and tools and established a *Learning Management System* to support self-learning and blended training programmes reaching 125,000 users. Under Output 505 (Demand for quality education), school closures compelled use of traditional, online and mass media platforms for social and behaviour change and continued learning. UNICEF's advocacy made online learning programmes available on Direct-to-Home (DTH), national and state Doordarshan channels, cumulatively reaching 67 million people. Meena radio programme, on enhancing life skills, broadcast in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Jammu and Kashmir reached more than 30 million parents and children cumulatively.

B. Establishment of UNICEF's Contribution Across the Output Areas

Contribution Claim 1: How and to what extent has the UNICEF Education Programme contributed to increasing the capacity of the policymakers and functionaries in the national and state governments to use data and evidence for implementing and monitoring education policy and programming in the three typologies of states?

Summary of Contribution: The evaluation noted strong evidence of UNICEF's support towards strengthening of data systems and institutional capacity to use data in planning and programming. The trainings devised as part of these activities had a wide reach and provided relevant government officials with the opportunities to improve their knowledge and use of data. This has resulted in increased evidence-based planning. Evidence also suggests that UNICEF provided significant support towards operationalization of NEP and Samagra Shiksha guidelines. However, the evidence on planning and execution of DRR activities is mixed and varied depending on the state.

A. Activities

Document review and external stakeholder interviews present strong evidence of UNICEF's technical support under output 501 (Policy and planning for equitable quality education), at an aggregate level. Key activities under this output area include facilitation of evidence-based planning and programming, operationalization of NEP guidelines and recommendations, development and roll out of school safety programmes, establishment of DRR guidelines and implementation of National Assessment Survey (NAS) and post-NAS activities. However, the evaluation found varied degrees of evidence across the states to support these key change activities.

Evidence on UNICEF support for strengthening data systems, using data for planning and programming, and conducting various student assessments and NAS activities was strong at the national and sub-national levels. At the national level, UNICEF's support in bringing in the American Institute of Research (AIR) as a technical partner for NAS activities and providing technical and financial assistance towards post-NAS dissemination and planning was highlighted as a major contribution. At the state level, interviews with government stakeholders and RAM results capture UNICEF assistance in analysing UDISE+ data for capturing indicators pertaining to the Performance Grading Index (PGI), administered by the Ministry of Education. Some states also highlighted specific interventions under the realm of evidence-based planning. In Bihar, real-time monitoring of data from the BEST (Bihar Easy

"With UNICEF support, we developed Prashikshak portal at SCERT to ensure real-time data management which helped us to capture status of DIET like how many students are attending, what activities are going on etc. Now at SCERT level everybody can monitor what is happening in DIETs, what is the progress so far etc. Through this UNICEF supported Prashikshak portal education climate of the DIET has changed."

KII Respondent

School Tracking) mobile app has been decentralised to the block level by establishing Block Educational Data Management Centres (BEDMCs) with UNICEF support. In Maharashtra, UNICEF provided technical assistance for a rapid assessment survey to understand the reach and uptake of home learning packages. Guidelines for enumerators on how to reach teachers and parents and resources such as Excel Sheet and Google Form templates for data collection and data analysis were provided by UNICEF.

Evidence from external interviews support the claim that UNICEF aided in the operationalisation of Samagra Shiksha activities and NEP 2020 guidelines. In Bihar, UNICEF is involved in the annual planning exercise of Samagra Shiksha activities and in Odisha, UNICEF supported the implementation of NEP guidelines related to co-location of anganwadi centres within school premises. However, certain states such as Maharashtra also reported inability to support state government institutions with implementation of activities under Samagra Shiksha due to limited bandwidth and financial resources. In Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF provided technical support to Samagra Shiksha on evidence-based planning for different interventions under the flagship education programme of Government of Uttar Pradesh (GoUP) – *PRERNA*.

Mixed evidence exists on UNICEF support to implement and operationalise policies and programmes related to school safety. While states such as Bihar, Odisha and Assam witnessed UNICEF support in implementing school safety programmes, developing guidelines and handbooks on child-friendly spaces in emergencies and disaster preparedness in schools, transition states such as Maharashtra and Karnataka did not report much planned activities related to disaster risk reduction.

B. Reach and Reaction

Primary and secondary evidence, from external interviews and documents, show significant UNICEF support in expanding the reach of and reaction to key change activities, with mixed evidence on some activities in different states. The most significant among these claims was the support extended by UNICEF for strengthening data systems and executing student and learning assessment exercises. Some examples of instances where UNICEF supported capacity building for data collection, analysis and planning are provided in table 7.

Table 7: Reach of UNICEF Supported Training Under Output Area 501

- In Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF partnered with ACER (Australian Council for Educational Research) to provide a training-of-trainers (ToT) model of capacity building for state and district-level government officials on conducting learning assessments, analysis of data to create a feedback loop and taking timely remedial measures. In 2020, a group of 22 master trainers were trained who further oriented 43,003 teachers across the state.
- In Bihar, a total of 76 senior and state education functionaries were trained by UNICEF on undertaking gender and equity-based analysis of data from UDISE+ and BEST monitoring app portals.
- In 2018, UNICEF trained 150 state and district officials involved in the EMIS to conduct quality and accuracy checks on UDISE data and conducted disaggregated data analyses.
- At the national level, data from RAM indicates that over 3,000 education functionaries and teacher educators from different states have been trained on incorporating NAS findings in their annual planning.

Source: RAM Reports

Capacity building for disaster preparedness in schools was noted in select states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Assam. One hundred and seventy-six schools in the Devipatan division of Uttar Pradesh were developed as Model Risk Informed Schools, and 176 teachers and 2640 School Management Committee (SMC) members were oriented on training children to react to natural disasters. In Bihar, the Safe Saturday Programme on school safety was extended to 4000 madrasas in the state with the help of 76 master trainers.

C. Behaviour Change

The evaluation found evidence of behaviour change related to evidence-based planning among government officials, teacher educators and teachers as a result of UNICEF-supported change activities and initiatives to expand the reach of these activities. External respondents at national, state and district levels acknowledged how UNICEF advocacy and support for data system strengthening has led to increased institutional appreciation and use of data in planning and programming.

> *We have done a comparative analysis and shared it in the state level and district level so that they can understand where the gaps are, where children are lagging behind, what kind of strategies they need to use etc.*
>
> - KII respondent

External stakeholders who were interviewed reported an increase in their capacity to understand and analyse data and provided examples of evidence-based planning. A few examples, collated from interviews and RAM data, is highlighted in table 8 below. While the evaluation found confirmatory proof of evidence-based planning to deliver education services to marginalised groups, the evidence on data-based gendered planning is not as strong. In most cases, gender-disaggregated analyses of data were reported but the evaluation team did not find major programmes or policies that were implemented based on this data. Similarly, the evidence on improved inter-departmental collaboration, resulting due to the key change activities supported by UNICEF , is mixed. In states such as Odisha, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the evaluation noted collaboration with state disaster management departments (or equivalent) or with the DRR sections within UNICEF. However, no substantial evidence was observed with respect to other departments such as those concerning health and nutrition.

Table 8: Examples showing improved evidence-based planning

Uttar Pradesh	• UNICEF's technical assistance towards monthly monitoring and analysis of data on supportive supervision activities to improve learning (EEKSHA) has led to the planning of district-level interventions to improve the performance of poorly performing schools • UNICEF supported state and district-level data analysis on children with disabilities, leading to the development and execution of a targeted intervention called SAMARTH.
Bihar	• Data from UNICEF-supported real time monitoring app BEST was used to develop convergent programmes and deliver services in *Niti Aayog's* thirteen aspirational district. • Data from the BEST app, which indicated an acute dearth of secondary schools in the state, led to the establishment of 3885 schools.
Assam	• UNICEF-supported orientation on analysis and use of UDISE+ data led to the State Mission Office of Samagra Shiksha developing differential plans and focused interventions in 13 minority concentrated districts, two Scheduled Tribe (ST) dominated districts, seven aspirational districts and 13 major tea tribe dominated districts. • UNICEF's support to the SCERT in analysing the NAS 2017 data helped to identify training needs of teachers, which led to the development of a comprehensive teacher development plan and additional open education resources (OERs) by SCERT to support teachers to improve classroom transaction and pedagogical practices.
Odisha	• UNICEF partnered with AIR to develop a state framework for learning assessment, in collaboration with the assessment cell established at SCERT. Items for child-centred assessment in grade 3, 5 and 7 in mathematics and language was developed and were used by SCERT for the annual summative examination held in 2019-20.

Maharashtra	• UNICEF support, through AIR, led to the development of a state team for learning assessments. Based on learning assessment data, the Early Grades Learning Programme was further revamped in 2019.
Karnataka	• UNICEF supported the development of a micro survey to assess classroom processes, teacher quality and student participation. Data from the micro survey was used to develop district and block interventions.
Tamil Nadu	• UNICEF supported the development of a mobile app called ARS (Adolescent Responsive Schooling) App. Evidence and data collected from the app will be used for advocating a change in the state annual planning template, thus sharpening the adolescent and equity lens at scale in state planning process.

Source: RAM data and Consultations with Stakeholders

Contribution Claim 2: How and to what extent has the UNICEF Education Programme contributed to increasing the capacity of functionaries in the national and state governments to improve school readiness through appropriate pre-primary education?

Summary of Contribution: Evidence provides strong confirmatory proof of UNICEF's technical and financial assistance to states in strengthening their school readiness curriculum, development of resources aligned with the new NEP guidelines and curriculum, and capacity building for key actors to implement the same. External stakeholder interviews and documents confirmed the coverage of these training and capacity building activities and attested to increased delivery of ECE interventions. External respondents also attested to increased motivation and commitment from government officials on ECE-related activities, such as responsive parenting interventions, and increased levels of awareness to deliver ECE services among anganwadi workers and pre-school educators. More evidence on UNICEF's contribution towards responsive parenting interventions in Odisha, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh can be found in Section 4.2. However, the strength of evidence supporting the establishment of model ECE centres[2] as a key change activity was found to be mixed across states.

A. Activities

The evaluation found strong evidence of UNICEF's support towards activities under output area 502 (ECE). Key activities identified for this contribution claim include developing or strengthening school readiness curriculum, supporting state governments in establishing model ECE centres and providing training to anganwadi workers. While all states implemented various activities related to pre-primary education, the range and scale of these activities varied.

External stakeholder interviews and documentary evidence provide confirmation that UNICEF offered significant technical and financial assistance to states in improving school readiness through the review of ECE curriculum and the development of TLMs in line with the revised curriculum. UNICEF also supported the states in the formulation of guidelines and handbooks to aid pre-primary educators in using and understanding the curriculum and resources. At the national level, RAM data shows that UNICEF facilitated the formation of a joint committee to review the school-readiness curriculum for children between 5-6 years of age. At the state-level, government stakeholders acknowledged UNICEF support in devising state plans and manuals for operationalising ECE guidelines as set out in the NEP and NCF. Community-level respondents attested to receiving new or adapted TLMs such as activity books, workbooks and play materials in states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. States such as Odisha, Maharashtra, Assam and Uttar Pradesh also reported the translation of these materials into non-dominant state languages to ensure inclusive ECE services. A list of the major initiatives supported by UNICEF in this regard are provided in table 9.

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[2] In the Indian context, ECE centres refer to anganwadi centres.

Table 9: Major Initiatives Supported by UNICEF Under Output Area 502

Uttar Pradesh	• UNICEF provided technical support to review the ECE curriculum in the state and develop training manuals on operationalising the curriculum for district-level ICDS functionaries.
Bihar	• UNICEF provided technical assistance to the ICDS department to develop a five-year road map to operationalise ECE guidelines as set in the NCF. UNICEF supported the contextualisation of relevant TLMs to the state needs, and developed a calendar of activities to be used by anganwadi workers for home visits and demonstrations during the pandemic
Assam	• UNICEF provided technical support to develop a facilitators' guide for the rollout of a responsive parenting package called *Parvarish ke Champion*, including posters, videos and flipbooks. • UNICEF supported the DWCD in reviewing and revising the ECCE curriculum and associated TLM and supported capacity building of ICDS functionaries on the same. responsive parenting guidelines, facilitator manuals and the responsive parenting kit, consisting of *varnamala* (alphabet) charts, activity calendars, posters, and videos on responsive parenting.
Odisha	• UNICEF conceptualised a theme-based monthly calendar of activities based on the revised ECE curriculum called *Nua Arunima* and adapted the same for home-based learning environments, called *Ghare Ghare Arunima*[30]. • UNICEF also provided technical assistance to developing materials such as *Kuni* calendars for the *Vatsalya* programme–a responsive parenting intervention for children under the age of three years.
Maharashtra	• UNICEF, in collaboration with Vikramshila Education Resource Society, assisted the ICDS department in implementing the digital aspects of the Ankur responsive parenting programme during the pandemic. UNICEF provided technical and financial assistance towards developing and disseminating fortnightly calendars and training of anganwadi workers.
Karnataka	• UNICEF supported the DWCD and Department of School Education (DoSE) in developing and finalising the age-wise curriculum for children between 3-6-years.

Source: RAM data and Consultations with Stakeholders

Significant evidence also exists to support the claim that UNICEF supported the capacity development of ICDS functionaries at all levels, ranging from the development of an e-learning course on ECE-related themes at the national level to execution of blended-training programmes for anganwadi workers in collaboration with government and implementing partners. A list of major capacity building initiatives including their coverage is provided in table 11. Most capacity building activities were delivered in a cascade model and leveraged substantial support from state and district-level ICDS systems.

The evidence of UNICEF's support for establishing model centres of ECE and capacity development towards the same is mixed across states. While states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha reported establishment of these centres in their respective RAM reports, no activity was reported in the other states.

B. Reach and Reaction

Evidence from RAM reports and external stakeholder interviews show UNICEF support in expanding the coverage of training activities and distribution of relevant ECE materials. As with activities, the strength of evidence on the coverage of training to establish model centres is weak. A few examples of capacity building initiatives supported by UNICEF across states and their reach are illustrated in table 10.

Table 10:Reach of UNICEF Supported Training Under Output Area 502

- In Uttar Pradesh, a three-tier, seven-day blended capacity development programme was developed by UNICEF. The programme trained 676 master trainers, who in turn provided mentoring support and training to 3,520 block-level trainers and 94,4996 anganwadi workers.
- UNICEF Bihar supported the development of ECE-eILA, an online course for capacity building of ICDS functionaries. As many as 1,04,148 female anganwadi workers and 2650 lady supervisors were enrolled in the course in 2020. Three thousand two hundred fifty-seven middle level ICDS functionaries (CDPOs, DPOs and lady supervisors) were oriented to mentor and monitor anganwadi workers for home-based ECE interventions during the pandemic through UNICEF-supported virtual training.
- In Assam, UNICEF supported strengthening the systemic capacity of Anganwadi Workers Training Centres and mid-level training centres in providing induction training to anganwadi workers. Through this process, 79 CDPOs were trained on using the ECE quality monitoring tool to monitor the performance of anganwadi centres in 33 districts. During the pandemic, 5,815 anganwadi workers were also trained on responsive parenting interventions with UNICEF support.
- UNICEF Odisha supported the state government in the development of a e-learning course in Odia language on ECE and education, to reach around 75000 anganwadi workers and 1000 supervisors.

Source: RAM Reports

C. Behaviour Change

The evaluation found strong evidence of behaviour changes with respect to planning and delivery of ECE service at the state and sub-state levels as a result of UNICEF's technical and financial assistance, and the reach of these activities. State and district-level government stakeholders highlighted UNICEF's role in demonstrating ECE interventions through pilot projects, such as the *Ankur* programme in Maharashtra, and further advocacy and technical support to ensure ownership of these interventions by relevant state departments. Implementing partners testified to this increased ownership and reported the involvement of government functionaries at all levels. Anganwadi workers, supervisors, and other community-level ICDS workers reported an increase in their understanding of ECE aspects and ability to execute activity-based learning methods.

The strength of evidence on increased inter-departmental collaboration is also strong. Respondents from education departments noted working in close collaboration with other relevant departments such as the WCD and Department of Social Welfare (DSW). In Odisha, documentary evidence shows the WCD collaborated with the Department of Social Welfare to ensure responsive parenting materials reached anganwadi workers during the pandemic. RAM data reports that in Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF facilitated collaboration between DoSE and DWCD to develop a five-year road map on ECE activities while in Assam, UNICEF coordinated with the DSW and the state SCERT to increase the capacity of training centres involved in orienting anganwadi workers.

Contribution Claim 503: How and to what extent has the UNICEF Education Programme contributed to increasing the capacity of functionaries in the national and state governments to deliver flexible education services to reduce dropouts and the number of out-of-school children?

Summary of Contribution: The evaluation found strong evidence to support the claim that UNICEF assisted states in developing, flexible and alternate learning programmes for out-of-school children and improving the quality of these programmes in the high-burden and tribal typology of states. UNICEF's support towards solutions to identify and track children and innovative contextual programmes were specially acknowledged by external respondents. More evidence on UNICEF's contribution to identification of out-of-school children and programming is detailed in Section 4.2. UNICEF also assisted in training relevant government functionaries and community volunteers to execute these key change activities, which has improved knowledge and motivation to further support out-of-school children. The evidence on specific

activities such as special training programmes were strong in states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Assam.

A. Activities

Documentary evidence and external stakeholder interviews provide strong evidence of UNICEF-supported activities to identify and track out-of-school children, and interventions aimed at their mainstreaming in the high burden and tribal typology of states. UNICEF provided both technical and financial assistance to support technology-based solutions, such as the *BEST* app in Bihar and the *SHARDA* portal in Uttar Pradesh, to identify out-of-school children based on surveys. UNICEF collaborated with implementing partners at the state and sub-state levels to develop innovative flexible learning programmes such as *School-in-a-Van* and other mobile learning centres, which saw further uptake during the pandemic due to COVID-19 disruptions to schooling. In states where the population of out-of-school children is concentrated among specific communities such as among Muslims and tribal populations, UNICEF supported alternative learning programmes such as in madrasas and mobilised community volunteers to deliver these programmes in hard-to-reach areas. External stakeholders also reflected on UNICEF's support for revising the curriculum and quality of TLMs being used in alternate learning programmes such as in madrasas. A state-wise breakdown of UNICEF-supported interventions for out-of-school children or activities to improve capacity in delivering these interventions is listed in table 11.

Table 11: Major Initiatives Supported by UNICEF Under Output Area 503

Uttar Pradesh	• UNICEF supported the development of a comprehensive package of interventions called SHARDA for out-of-school children. UNICEF also provided technical assistance for activities under the programmes such as the development of a dashboard and monitoring app. • UNICEF, in partnership with ActionAid, trained master trainers and community volunteers to effectively implement the SHARDA interventions.
Odisha	• During the pandemic, UNICEF collaborated with the SC & ST Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare Department to develop the *Alternate Learning and Mentorship Programme (ALMP)* for children from tribal communities with low access to digital resources. UNICEF supported the formulation of learning materials and orientation of teachers on online and offline modes of teaching. • UNICEF, in partnership with 8 CSOs reached out-of-school children through mobile learning programmes such as *School Sanjog* in 2021.
Assam	• UNICEF supported a special package of *multi-grade, multi-level (MGML)* interventions to improve the quality of teaching and learning in special training programmes in the state. • In partnership with Pratham Education Foundation and Samagra Shiksha, UNICEF provided technical and financial assistance towards the capacity development of education volunteers in monitoring special training programmes in the state.
Bihar	• UNICEF supported the implementation of *S4D* programmes in schools across the state, as an innovative strategy to bring children back to school and to retain those at risk of dropping out. • UNICEF supported the revision of the curriculum in madrasas in the state, development of TLMs in line with the revised curriculum in Urdu and training of teachers to use these materials.

Source: RAM Reports

B. Reach and Reaction

The evaluation found strong evidence of the reach of some activities, such as special interventions and training on integration of out-of-school children, and technical assistance for special training programmes. For example, in Odisha, evidence from an internal stakeholder interview shows that more than 40,000

students from PVTGs were reached through the *School Sanjog* programme during the pandemic. Similarly, in Bihar, UNICEF reached 47,907 children through 332 mobile learning centres, implemented in collaboration with six CSO partners in the state in 2021. UNICEF Assam also collaborated with CSOs, tea garden associations and district administrative council to bring around 3,183 out-of-school children into mainstream education in 2019.

The reach of training activities to aid teachers, school management committees and relevant government officials in the identification and mainstreaming of out-of-school children was also found to be strong. In Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF assisted in orienting 75 district coordinators on revised strategies of integrating children from most deprived groups and 9000 master trainers on interventions under the *SHARDA* initiative in 2019. In Assam, it supported the Samagra Shiksha in developing a pool of 145 master trainers (as of 2019) on *S4D* programmes.

Out of the four high-burden and tribal typology states selected for this evaluation, three reported activities on special training programmes (STP) and related capacity building. Special training programmes are a unique form of government-led intervention where children identified as being out of school are offered bridge courses and remedial learning opportunities before integration into full-time, mainstream education. Special training programmes were especially strong in Bihar, where a cadre of community volunteers called *Shikha Sevaks* were trained to identify and monitor out-of-school children. The evaluation also found considerable documentary evidence of UNICEF's financial assistance towards establishment of non-residential special training programmes and capacity building for the same. Likewise, in Uttar Pradesh UNICEF's advocacy for special training programmes resulted in a 400% increase in the budget allocation for these programmes by the Samagra Shiksha in 2019-20. UNICEF also supported the training of 225 master trainers on STPs, who further trained around 1,33,555 teachers as of 2021.

C. Behaviour Change

The evaluation found evidence of behaviour change related to use of data for the formulation of targeted programmes for out-of-school children, and changes in the motivation of teachers and government officials to implement these programmes. External stakeholders at the national, state and district levels reported how information on out-of-school children collected through monitoring apps, household surveys or community volunteers provided a solid evidence base to develop interventions. For

> *They [UNICEF] worked with the Ministry for tracking the out-of-school children through mobile applications. With this application they also provide analysis, which helps us in designing our interventions.*
>
> *- KII respondent*

example, in Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF supported the data analysis of a 2018 household survey on out-of-school children. The identified bottlenecks and barriers to education were ultimately used to develop the *SHARDA* programme.

Community-level respondents such as master trainers and SMC members spoke to the effectiveness of the trainings received through UNICEF's implementing partners and reported an increase in the ability of teachers to understand the needs of children in special training programmes, devise appropriate teaching methods and deliver life skills education.

Evidence from documents and internal and external interviews also highlighted increased collaboration between schools and communities to identify, monitor and retain out-of-school children. Specifically in Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF's collaboration with ActionAid has resulted in a huge volunteer base who are involved in routine identification and monitoring of out-of-school children as well as linking them to other government schemes. During the pandemic, these volunteers acted as essential linkages for continuing home-based learning and the distribution of learning materials. Similarly, in Bihar, children in special training programmes are monitored by *Shiksha Sevaks*, who are community members trained through UNICEF's implementing partners such as Development Network.

Contribution Claim 4: How and to what extent has the UNICEF Education Programme contributed to increasing the capacity of functionaries in the national and state governments to deliver quality education and enhance skill development?

Summary of Contribution: The evaluation found strong evidence of UNICEF's technical assistance towards improving learning outcomes through activities such as the capacity building of supportive supervision groups, development of TLM, promotion of life skills education and learning interventions based on assessment data. Documentary review attests to the coverage of these activities across most states, while state and district-level interviews with external respondents provide testimonial evidence of the changes in motivation and behaviour of relevant stakeholders to deliver quality education. However, certain states such as Karnataka saw weak evidence of activities related to the strengthening of supportive supervision groups and life skills education.

A. Activities

Evidence from document review and external stakeholder interviews strongly supports the claim that UNICEF assisted states in demonstrating technical approaches for improving the quality of learning, including capacity building of teachers and supportive supervision groups on pedagogical practices and mentoring, use of learning assessment data to develop targeted interventions and establishment of interventions on life skills. While the evidence is strong at an aggregate level, the strength of evidence on some activities varied across the states.

Evidence on technical assistance to strengthen supportive supervision groups was strong across all the states. Supportive supervision groups consist of training institutes such as DIET and support institutes such as Block and Cluster resource centres with coordinators who mentor and provide academic support to teachers. Some states highlighted specific interventions for supportive supervision groups, such as the development of a real-time monitoring app, *EEKSHA*, for the observation of classroom practices in Uttar Pradesh. UNICEF also partnered with Ignus in Uttar Pradesh to pilot and scale up the '*Targeted Enhancement of Learning Outcomes through Supportive Supervision (TELOS)*' approach to improve the performance of cluster and block resource coordinators, thereby improving the learning outcomes of children. In Maharashtra, UNICEF partnered with Centre for Equity and Quality in Universal Education (CEQUE) to develop and implement a systematic programme called *Kendra Pramukh Academic Leadership Programme (KPALP)* to increase the capacity of *Kendra Pramukhs*, or Cluster Resource Coordinators. No major initiatives were reported for this activity in other states, such as Karnataka.

Data from RAM reports also provide examples of UNICEF assistance to relevant state government departments in developing TLM and interventions to improve pedagogical practices and learning outcomes. At the national level, UNICEF developed a learning management system called UNiLearn[31] with self-paced courses, webinars and virtual classrooms on various subjects. In Maharashtra, UNICEF partnered with QUEST Alliance to support a *Level-Based Learning (LBL) Programme* to improve foundational language skills for upper primary students and developed TLM for the same.

> "*Along with financial support, UNICEF's consultants from Vikramshila society, Learning and Language foundation and the Tata Institute of Social Science collaborated with state as part of academic support, particularly textbook and content development. The textbook developed was made as a bridging material, and tools to assess children were incorporated as a part of academic support. Teachers, educators were involved in the process. UNICEF played an essential role in developing the documents as well as supported in acquiring state and national resources.*"
>
> *-KII Respondent*

UNICEF Karnataka assisted the state Samagra Shiksha in the development of the English curriculum and aligned learning materials such as workbooks, for children in grades 1-3 studying in the *Nali Kali* multi-grade programme. In Assam, UNICEF in collaboration with Pratham Foundation, implemented a *Reading Enhancement Programme (Parhim Sikim)* to improve foundational skills in language and numeracy, especially in schools managed by tea garden associations.

State-level government and implementing partners also provided evidence of UNICEF assistance in implementing life skills programmes. At the national level, one of the key interventions was the development of the Career Guidance Portal, in association with Aasman Foundation and iDREAM Careers. Tamil Nadu has been the state champion in adopting life skills programming in education with its flagship '*Take it Eazy*' intervention. Developed based on UNICEF's global life skills education framework, the programme focused on improving adolescents' emotional wellbeing, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Technical assistance towards execution of learning assessment and advocacy for further uptake varied from state to state. While Uttar Pradesh and Bihar collaborated with ACER to develop state capacity on learning assessments, Odisha partnered with AIR to develop a state blueprint for child-centered assessment in grades 3, 5 and 7 in mathematics and languages. Maharashtra also collaborated with AIR to develop the capacity and knowledge of state resource persons on learning assessments.

B. Reach and Reaction

Documentary evidence shows that UNICEF supported capacity building of supportive supervision groups on learning outcomes and pedagogical practices, and academic mentorship. Respondents at the district and community levels spoke about the specific aspects of trainings received and attested to the effectiveness of these trainings. In most states, the trainings were delivered in a ToT model, where master trainers provide

> *Through UNICEF's support the entire cadre of people starting from the CRCC members to the volunteers who have been selected by Pratham, all have become part of the school system and therefore they could contribute greatly.*
>
> *- KII Respondent*

further orientation to cluster and block resource coordinators. Some examples of UNICEF-supported trainings and their coverage in various states is presented in the table below.

Table 12:Reach of UNICEF's Capacity Building Activities Under Output Area 504

- In Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF supported in constituting the state resource group with 223 members who were selected through a rigorous process. Similarly, 2,855 block resource coordinators were selected and trained to provide supportive supervision to teachers.
- In Assam, UNICEF assisted capacity building of 244 district resource group members and cluster coordinators who in turn trained and mentored around 2285 teachers in four districts.
- In Maharashtra, 209 state resource persons (master trainers) were oriented on learning outcomes, who further trained 2,456 *Kendra Pramukhs*. The KPs were able to mentor teachers in approximately 49,120 schools and influence the learning outcomes of 1.47 million students in the state.
- In Karnataka, UNICEF assisted the training of 30 state resource persons, 110 master resource persons and 2500 teachers in the English *Nalli Kali* level 2 curriculum.

Source: RAM Reports

The reach of other key activities under this contribution claim was also strong. States such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in collaboration with ACER provided training to master trainers on key aspects of learning assessments, such as item development and data analysis. In Assam, UNICEF's advocacy and capacity enhancement interventions led to the establishment and training of a pool of 50 technical experts, who provide guidance to the state on planning large-scale learning assessments.

C. Behaviour Change

The evaluation found substantial evidence of improved capabilities of supportive supervision groups to provide academic mentorship. District and community-level stakeholders further testified to increased teacher motivation and capacity to apply pedagogical practices and use TLM. A few testimonies from interviews with state and district-level government respondents are presented below as evidence.

> *The positive relationship between the Kendra Pramukh and teachers was noticed. UNICEF focused much on the pedagogy, creating a healthy classroom atmosphere, aligned teaching and learning, and maintaining*

a culture-based classroom that helped the teachers directly and more and more teachers came forward to empower and increase their students' skills. Teachers are now able to do assessments of the students, improve their teaching-learning practices, and could reach pedagogy to the students in the tough time.

- KII Respondent

The teachers have better capacity than earlier and can manage the classes in a more systematic and organised way. The leadership qualities of the cluster leaders have changed."

- KII Respondent

Respondents from teacher training institutes such as DIET and relevant state departments also provided evidence of increased development and quality of TLM in line with learning outcomes and other interventions to improve the quality of learning. Selected evidence from the documentary review in this regard is presented below.

"In no uncertain terms, the teachers express the significance of the Level-Based Learning (LBL) in improving the foundational skills in Marathi for upper primary students."

- Report of the LBL pilot in Palghar and Hingoli[32]

"There are also clear efforts to   strengthen geographical skills throughout the Geography books, through demonstration and   practice-based activities. The Science books also contain a variety of activities that encourage   observation-based learning and are written with the aim of generating curiosity and instilling a   spirit of enquiry among learners."

- Textbook Analysis Report[33]

External stakeholder interviews also attested to increased knowledge and use of learning assessment data in planning and delivering activities to improve learning outcomes, as shown below.

"As far as learning outcomes is concerned it has come out as a major focus point since the last 2-3 years. We have come out with the grade-wise competency mapping. UNICEF provides technical support on many of these areas."

- KII Respondent

"The teachers have enhanced their skills in data analysis, as they do better data analysis of the children than earlier."

- KII Respondent

In learning assessment, the learning outcome document that was supposed to be developed was to cover learning indicators and pedagogical process, that was meant to assess elementary level (class 1-8) education covering subjects like-Mathematics, Science, Language and Social Science. More specifically how to assess students in the classroom, how the process of pedagogy, and how it would take children towards learning outcomes. This process continued for nine months, the document was developed and implemented as well as used in the capacity building of teachers, it was also used in classroom interaction and made part of assessing the children and integrating them in the report card. The document proved fruitful."

- KII Respondent

The evidence on behaviour change related the increased capacity of block and cluster resource coordinators and use of learning assessment data is weaker in Karnataka. The evaluation also did not find significant proof of integration of life skills education in Maharashtra and Karnataka. However, this is primarily due to the lack of implementation of activities aimed at these changes rather than due to other internal or external hindering factors.

Contribution Claim 5: How and to what extent has the UNICEF Education Programme contributed to increasing the capacity of functionaries in the national and state governments to use social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) strategies to improve access to learning for the most vulnerable population?

Summary of Contribution: The evaluation found varying strength of evidence across states on activities related to the development, implementation and capacity building for SBCC activities. Initiatives to strengthen the capacities of SMC members were stronger in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam than in the transition states, which saw lesser activity due to resource constraints. Furthermore, the coverage of activities and the resultant change in opportunities, motivation and behavioural change is difficult to establish since SBCC strategies were reported to be a cross-cutting area integrated within programmes and interventions under other output areas, as opposed to a stand-alone output area with independent programming.

A. Activities

Documentary review and external stakeholder interviews provide proof of UNICEF's support for activities under output area 505 in specific states. Key activities identified under this output area include technical support for the development and implementation of SBCC strategies, capacity building of relevant government officials and community-based groups to implement these strategies and to enhance demand for quality education.

The evaluation found evidence of UNICEF's assistance towards building awareness of community groups such as school management committees (SMCs) and panchayat raj institutions (PRIs) on the importance of quality education. UNICEF also offered technical support for the promotion of inclusive education, including developing specific gender plans and training government officials on gender and equity issues. A list of major UNICEF-supported initiatives in this regard are highlighted in the table 13 below.

Table 13:Major Initiatives Supported by UNICEF Under Output Area 505

Uttar Pradesh	• UNICEF initiated *SMC Connect*, an IVRS-based system to disseminate information on educational provisions under the RTE for SMC members. • UNICEF assited the state government in designing and rolling out the '*Meena Campaign'* to revitalise *Meena Manches*, a platform for girls in schools to discuss gender and social issues. It also supported the capacity building of master trainers. • UNICEF supported the capacity building of state resource group members, district coordinators and academic resource persons to improve gender equity in schools.
Bihar	• UNICEF assisted in the training of nodal teachers in schools across the state on menstrual health and hygiene practices. • UNICEF supported the state government in revising the module for training of SMC members, and trained master trainers on the revised module. • UNICEF supported the development of a SBCC strategy to improve attendance in government schools. The strategy was approved, adopted and funded by the Bihar Education Project Council.
Assam	• UNICEF trained senior Samagra Shiksha officials on how to develop gender inclusive plans and account for equity consideration within monitoring & evaluation activities • UNICEF in collaboration with Tezpur University, demonstrated a life skills education through folk art model to tea garden communities in the state.
Odisha	• UNICEF provided technical support in state-level master trainers to further mentor SMC members in developing school development plans. • UNICEF partnered with the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) to capacitate Panchayat Standing Committee on Education (PSCE) members on issues of reduction of out-of- school children in Rayagada district.

Source: RAM Reports

All states reported implementation of advocacy and awareness campaigns on the safe reopening of schools and the promotion of safe hygiene practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF provided assistance in developing the *Tara Hai Tayyar* video series whereas in Bihar, it supported *the Safe Thursday* programme for promotion of covid-appropriate behaviour in school premises as well as in the community. In addition, some states carried out SBCC strategies specific to local contexts such as *Say yes to education, no to child marriage* in Uttar Pradesh and *Folklore for social change and adolescent empowerment* in Assam.

In general, the evaluation noted that SBCC activities were mostly built into interventions such as tracking and identification of out-of-school children or promotion of quality learning. As such, the full contribution of UNICEF's support toward these activities is difficult to establish. From the evidence available, SBCC strategies were noted to be weaker in the transition states. Respondents reported financial and personnel shortages as the primary reason for weak programming under this output area.

B. Reach and Reaction

The RAM documents the reach of UNICEF-supported activities, while internal and external stakeholder interviews provide testimonial evidence of the themes covered in the training, and its effectiveness. The documents also show evidence of UNICEF's advocacy to promote inclusive education. However, as mentioned above, **the exact coverage of the activities is difficult to confirm since gender and equity issues were included as part of training on activities covered under other output areas.** For example, the RAM data on output area 505 covers the capacity building of SMCs and other community volunteers to track and identify out-of-school children but this is also captured under activities reported in output area 503 (Education for out-of-school girls and boys). Similarly, the RAM provides information on the development and implementation of life skills education (covered under output area 504 on Quality education and learning), responsive parenting interventions (covered under output area 502 on ECE) and COVID-19-related awareness campaigns (covered under output area 506 on COVID-response).

C. Behavioural Change

Evidence from the district and community-level interviews show increased awareness among community members of the provisions for quality education and gender and equity barriers to achieving inclusive education for all. In addition, respondents reported increased awareness and confidence among girls and increased community involvement as a result of specific strategies. Two select testimonies attesting to these changes are provided below:

> *The work that has emerged out of the last 5 years is that SMCs are informed adequately and capacitated well about their roles, they can do a very good job in engaging with parents and ensuring their participation.*
>
> - KII respondent

> *The most important takeaway is confidence which is easily seen in these girls. Another is being vocal is something that we have seen. When I started this initiative, the girls used to be very shy. Even in the group they hardly even speak, so it was very difficult for us to work on the initials. Now we can see the confidence in them. I have been in the field for 20 days and I have seen that there are many things they have started. Sometimes we have also learned from what they have started. Being proactive on the ground, talking not only about these things but they become the voice for their own peers. Secondly, the involvement of the community. There are areas, where we know that even if we don't work, our people are there to connect with ensuring that securing is supporting us. The department was willing to do so because they have seen us working with them. We have seen that people have accepted and taking education seriously. There are women, there are mothers who say, "I couldn't do it but there are our girls who will do it now, will bring the opportunity".*
>
> - KII Respondent

Contribution Claim 6: How and to what extent has the UNICEF Education Programme contributed to increasing the capacity of functionaries in the national and state governments to provide continued access to education, especially for the most vulnerable, during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Summary of Contribution: Strong evidence exists to confirm UNICEF's assistance towards remote learning interventions, capacity building of teachers to use digital resources and deliver online and blended forms of learning, and development and operationalisation of guidelines for school reopening. Responsive parenting packages aimed at continuing ECE activities saw the most reach. As a result, several interventions to ensure continued learning were implemented by government functionaries. External respondents at the state and district level also reported increased capacities of teachers to use online platforms and tools to deliver lessons.

A. Activities

Documentary review and external stakeholder interviews provide strong evidence of UNICEF's technical and financial assistance to states during the pandemic for improving access to remote learning materials and programmes, development and operationalisation of SOPs for safe reopening of schools and conducting awareness campaigns to promote covid-appropriate behaviours. While support was observed in all the states, the intensity of activities varied depending on the state context.

Evidence of UNICEF-supported remote learning activities was found in all the states. Efforts to ensure access to remote learning resources mostly concentrated on supporting government functionaries in the development of digital textbooks and workbooks and the distribution of these materials through WhatsApp and other state-specific e-portals. In Bihar, UNICEF supported the content development of lessons to be held via the *Unnayan Bihar- Mera Mobile, Mera Vidyalaya* programme. Bihar,

> *"UNICEF supported Samagra Shiksha in developing this academic package, printing it and then supplying to the students in the field. It is a home learning material and through CRCC this package was reached out to the children."*
>
> - KII Respondent

Uttar Pradesh and Odisha also reported integration of learning materials developed on Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing DIKSHA[34] led by NCERT. To ensure continuity of learning, lessons were disseminated through mass media such as radio and TV, and with social media platforms such as YouTube. UNICEF assisted the launch of an exclusive TV channel *Gyan Brikshya* in Assam to stream lessons, while in Karnataka, it supported the state's YouTube channel *Makkala Vaani* for continued learning. In Bihar, lessons for specific classes were broadcast on Doordarshan and later uploaded to the YouTube channel of the Bihar Education Project Council. In hard-to-access areas, textbooks, workbooks and information on digital resources were distributed and promoted through frontline workers such as ASHA and anganwadi workers, collaborating with the respective government departments, and mobilising community volunteers. For example, UNICEF facilitated a partnership between the department of education and the departments associated with the State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM) and National Health Mission (NHM) to promote the e-Pathshala programme. SRLM circulated the e-pathshala content and oriented frontline workers through the NHM to disseminate the information during home visits.

In addition to these digital or remote learning resources, UNICEF also assisted states in the formulation and implementation of blended learning programmes, such as mobile learning centres. Mobile learning centres such as *School-in-a-Van*, and *School-in-a-Bus* were devised to reach children residing in difficult geographic terrain such as tea gardens or communities with low digital accessibility and connectivity. In Bihar, UNICEF in collaboration with implementing partners, reached out to the vulnerable Musahar community with vans and buses customised with books and audio and video content for children. In Odisha, UNICEF worked with the state SC & ST department and CSOs to conceptualise and implement the *School Sanjog* (School-in-a-Van and School-in-a-Bike) programme for children from ten particularly vulnerable tribal groups. In Odisha, UNICEF collaborated with SCERT and the Department of Education to implement a blended learning programme

(*Alternative Internship Programme),* where pre-service student teachers offered classes to children in hard-to-access areas.

More generally, UNICEF also provided technical and financial assistance for specific interventions to reduce learning loss as a result of disruptions to schooling. In Assam, UNICEF provided technical assistance in developing a reading programme, *Shukroboriyaa Kaahini*, for children in grades 1-8. UNICEF Maharashtra collaborated with the government and Pratham Books to implement the *Goshticha Shaniwar* reading programme for students in grades 1-8. The e-books were curated and shared via WhatsApp through a multi-tiered dissemination channel to ensure maximum reach. A similar campaign was undertaken by UNICEF Bihar in association with Pratham Books, where stories in local languages were selected and shared with parents and children in the *Missed Call Do, Kahani Suno* initiative. UNICEF Tamil Nadu collaborated with the NalandaWay Foundation to undertake a special programme called *Take it Eazy* to help adolescents improve their emotional well-being during the pandemic.

Evidence also exists on the development or adaptation of home-based ECE interventions in specific states. In Odisha, the *Nua Arunima* package of interventions was adapted for home-based learning and promoted as the *Ghare Arunima* programme. Additionally, a new calendar of activities for children below the age of three years, called *Kuni Calendar*, was developed and promoted among parents. In Maharashtra, the pilot *Ankur Responsive Caregiving Programme* was scaled up and implemented digitally across the state . In Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF assisted in the development of a 12-week responsive parenting package with instructional clips of activities and audio files of rhymes and stories developed in Hindi and Awadhi.

The RAM reports(26) show that in specific states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, UNICEF supported state governments in the safe reopening of schools by developing detailed guidelines. In Assam, UNICEF assisted in conducting a rapid assessment of WASH services in schools and assisted the state Samagra Shiksha in installing hand washing stations in selected tea garden schools. In Maharashtra, UNICEF Education and WASH sections implemented a *Back-to-School Project* to demonstrate differential models of preparation for safe school reopening.

B. Reach and Reaction

The evaluation found confirmatory proof of UNICEF's assistance in training government officials at different levels to deliver remote learning activities and ensure the safe reopening of schools. While the reach of these activities was significant in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Odisha, the level of coverage was much lower in the transition states.

Documentary evidence shows that UNICEF mostly supported the capacity building of district and community-level stakeholders through virtual platforms during the pandemic. Implementing partners involved in the execution of pre-existing programmes attested to UNICEF's support in adapting training materials and delivery of training through other platforms. Respondents from focus group discussions highlighted new topics introduced during the training to ensure teachers, students and parents had the right information and access to resources for continued learning. The table 14 below highlights the coverage of UNICEF-supported capacity building activities in various states.

Table 14: Reach of UNICEF Supported Training Under Output Area 506

- UNICEF supported the training of 4,978 anganwadi workers and supervisors on the responsive parenting package in Uttar Pradesh. The trained ICDS functionaries were able to cover around 51,545 children between 3-6 years to ensure school readiness.
- In Assam, UNICEF collaborated with the Department of Social Welfare to train 2010 supervisors and 30,000 anganwadi workers on responsive parenting for young children. UNICEF also worked with the state Samagra Shiksha. UNICEF, in collaboration with Samagra Shiksha, capacitated 1178 education volunteers to improve remote teaching learning practices for children enrolled in special training programmes.

- In Bihar, UNICEF supported the training of 257 middle-level ICDS functionaries and 2767 lady supervisors in mentoring anganwadi workers to deliver home-based ECE activities.
- UNICEF Maharashtra provided technical assistance in conducting 5 webinars on the Learn from Home Package developed by MSCERT, through which 3600 education officials were trained on ensuring continued learning.

C. Behaviour Change

Testimonies from external stakeholder interviews below show that relevant government functionaries were actively involved in the development and implementation of remote learning interventions and had the necessary knowledge to operationalise guidelines for the safe reopening of schools.

During pandemic, schools were closed, but online classes were conducted with support from Bihar Education Project Council (BEPC) and SCERT, for which teachers were trained on content delivery of the textbook over online means. The work was mostly done by BEPC, but the resources were provided by SCERT. UNICEF helped in providing facilities from ICT and their experts. Apart from this, e-material was developed for class 1-8 students. That material was shown in "Mera Doordarshan, Mera Shiksha Ke Adhar" programme. The support was provided by UNICEF, and it helped in bridging gap for children who were not able to access education.

- KII Respondent

RMSCERT in partnership with UNICEF has formed a resource group that is working on a checklist that will guide school functionaries   in developing a feasible plan for opening schools safely (when state allows for the same).

- Digital Education Report [17]

District-level respondents involved in the orientation of teachers also reported improved capacities to use remote learning resources and deliver classes through virtual or blended modes. A few pieces of evidence from interviews are presented below to validate this behaviour change.

The positive change is also seen in the capacity of the teachers. Through UNICEF's projects, the teachers first got to know about the home learning packages during the pandemic, because nobody knew what to do during the pandemic when everything was closed. Everybody doesn't have the same resources. The children mostly didn't have a smartphone in their house. Parents could mostly afford Rs. 1000-2000 phones. So, at that time with the support of UNICEF, the digital material reached the children.

- KII Respondent

For the first time in madrasas, there was implementation of technology. All madrasas have collaborated with us under this initiative. Maulavis have used digital learning for the first time, only through the intervention of UNICEF. It is a significant achievement for us.

- KII Respondent

Within UNICEF, increased inter-departmental collaboration was observed to provide convergent services to children. The Education Programme coordinated with the WASH, Child Protection and C4D programme to run awareness and advocacy campaigns, promote safe hygiene practices and safe reopening of schools.

C. Accelerating and Hindering Factors

The evaluation found several internal and external accelerators and hindering factors affecting UNICEF's achievement of results in the study states. Internal factors contributing to achievement of results are similar to responses elicited for UNICEF's comparative advantages and are presented in Section 3.5. Internal and external hindering factors are explained in detail as relevant throughout the report but is summarised below.

Hindering Factors

External stakeholder interviews highlighted challenges affecting programming, including issues related to staffing, funding, internal processes and short-term vision. These internal barriers are elucidated below.

- **Inadequate staff within UNICEF and staffing-related** delays were reported to affect the Programme implementation in some instances. Challenges related to internal staffing and capacity are further detailed in Section 3.4 under EQ 3.3.
- **Long-drawn internal processes within UNICEF** reportedly affected the timeliness and responsiveness of UNICEF activities. These factors and supporting examples are elucidated in Section 3.4 under EQ 3.1.
- Internal stakeholders reported that **funding constraints** hindered the implementation of activities as planned. Financial constraints and related changes in programming can be found in Section 3.4 under EQ 3.2.
- External stakeholders also highlighted that current programming is constrained by **the lack of a long-term vision**. This is further explained in Section 3.2 under EQ 1.1.

In addition to internal barriers, stakeholder interviews also highlighted several factors affecting the external enabling environment.

- **Operational and systemic challenges while working with the government** hindered the timely achievement of results. These deviations from the workplans are explained in Section 3.4 under EQ 3.1
- **Oft-changing state leadership**, along with differing programming interests and preferences of incumbent duty bearers had negative consequences on UNICEF's ability to achieve intended results. This challenge is further detailed in Section 3.4 under EQ 3.1
- Internal stakeholders and implementing partners noted that **lack of transparency within government systems** affected UNICEF's ability to undetake relevant activities. EQ 1.1 under Section 3.2 provides further details and supporting examples for this barrier.
- The **low levels of digital penetratio**n in specific states hampered the reach and effectiveness of digital interventions to ensure continued learning during the pandemic. This is explained under EQ 3.1 under Section 3.4.

Accelerating Factors

Respondents provided similar responses when asked about organisational or internal factors that accelerated programming and UNICEF's comparative advantages. These responses are synthesised in Section 3.5. In a few instances, internal stakeholders reported that **strong state leadership** and **close inter-departmental coordination** aided in the achievement of results within stipulated timelines. These factors are set out in detail in Section 3.4 under EQ 3.1.

D. Unintended or Unanticipated Outcomes

The evaluation found evidence of negative and positive unintended outcomes; however, most of these unanticipated outcomes have directly or indirectly arisen as a result of the pandemic.

Positive outcomes such as improved data quality and institutional appreciation for evidence-based planning, increased parental involvement in education, enhanced focus on emotional well-being and mental health issues, teacher-led innovations and increased focus on bridging the digital divide were observed in the evaluation. National level implementing partners and government functionaries reported shifts in the attitude of relevant government departments and organisations to strengthen data systems and enhance capacity of officials on learning and competency-based assessments. The pandemic and resultant home-based learning interventions (such as those on responsive parenting) has seen increased awareness and involvement of parents in their children's education, from early childhood to secondary levels and increased demand generation for quality interventions. Similarly, the pandemic witnessed great efforts by teachers to ensure continued learning in the form of innovative initiatives such as *School at your Doorstep* or '*Shala Tumcha Daari*' and interventions to provide psychosocial support to parents, teachers and students,

such as the *Take it Eazy* programme in Tamil Nadu. External stakeholders at the national level noted that the difficulties in reaching marginalised and vulnerable communities through remote learning interventions during the pandemic has highlighted the digital divide as a focus area for governments and other actors.

The evaluation found evidence of unintended negative outcomes, including overreliance on UNICEF for financial and technical assistance and widening of gender and social equity gaps. The most common negative externality reported was the overreliance on UNICEF's technical and financial assistance. This dependency threatened ultimate sustainability and government ownership of demonstrated interventions and is more fully explored under Section 3.6 on Challenges to Sustainability. While no other negative outcomes were reported as a result of UNICEF supported initiatives were reported, respondents noted changes in the operating environment as a result of COVID-19. The pandemic has resulted in further learning loss, potentially unravelling efforts made thus far to improve learning outcomes. It also resulted in re-establishing challenges to inclusive education. Children from marginalised and vulnerable communities have been disproportionately affected by the general and education-specific challenges caused by the pandemic and will result in further disparities in access to quality education.

EQ 2.2 How effective has UNICEF support been in addressing inherent equity gaps or taking into consideration the disparities regarding caste, residence, gender, religion, and wealth?

The response to this evaluation question is presented under the EQ. 1.3 (Relevance) for a more comprehensive overview of the UNICEF's Programmes relevance and effectiveness in addressing gender and equity gaps.

3.4 Efficiency

The Efficiency section of the TOR assesses the Programme's timely and cost-efficient implementation across the following dimensions a) timeliness of implementation; b) sufficiency of financial resources; and c) sufficiency of human resources.

EQ 3.1 To what extent were UNICEF activities delivered in a timely and organised manner?

Evaluation Finding: Programme activities were mostly completed within the stipulated timeframe with some delays noted due to dependence on the government for facilitation, bureaucratic processes for approvals, ad-hoc requests from the government, procedural delays within UNICEF and on account of pandemic restrictions.

According to data provided in RAM reports, UNICEF is well-positioned to achieve its targets, including the gender and equity-related targets. Evidence from interviews on achievement of independent planned activities and results corroborate our findings from the RAM analysis. Further information on achievement of results is presented in Section 3.3, under Effectiveness.

Internal and external stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation largely reported that planned activities were completed within the stipulated timeframe, with only minor delays or deviations from the workplan being highlighted. Both cohorts of **stakeholders also testified that these delays occurred as a result of the bureaucratic nature of structures and systems within government institutions, and due to the time taken to negotiate and integrate requests and feedback that were often beyond the scope of expected delivery**. Consequently, these delays affected the timelines of the implementation – for example, activities like capacity building trainings and workshops requiring government

"The timing of appointment with government people, delays in launching the application, delays in presentation of the application based on the appointments available, feedback from the government out of the scope of the phase that is being implemented and then trying to accommodate their feedback and inputs as far as possible. Stretching the scope and timeline comes with any project that we are doing with programme. It has nothing to do with UNICEF/ It has chosen a strategy to work with the government these challenges will always be there".

KII respondent

coordination and support were delayed due to delays in receiving inputs such as dates, schedules and list of participants. It also affected the quality or closure of deliverables – in instances where key deliverables included policy advocacy or meetings with relevant government stakeholders for obtaining feedback, project closure and achievement of intended results were delayed due to the inability to secure meetings promptly. National and state-level UNICEF staff highlighted that supporting government departments on ad hoc requests further diluted the available resources and caused deviations from the annual workplan. At the same time, respondents acknowledged that refusal to support the government on such requests could weaken UNICEF's positioning in the state and affect its ability to push and advocate for larger, strategically important policies and programmes.

Additionally, **UNICEF staff and implementing partners highlighted that change in government leadership affected the timely completion of planned activities**. Frequent turnover implied that UNICEF staff had to spend time establishing working relationships and explaining project operations and goals to the new duty bearers resulting in deviations from the workplan. UNICEF staff and implementing partners also reported that government priorities changed depending on the state leadership and such changes in between programming cycles either lead to activities being dropped or being achieved at a lower scale than intended. The lack or withdrawal of government ownership and buy-in also resulted in interventions being discontinued. Implementing partners and UNICEF staff testified that certain programmes – such as *S4D* are successful in states such as Bihar and Assam due to political support from the state government. However, similar programming was not successful in Maharashtra due to de-prioritisation by the state government which led to *S4D* initiatives being discontinued for Maharashtra. In Karnataka, the government was not keen on uptake of Output 501 (Policy and Planning for Equitable Quality Education) despite training programmes on use of data and evidence being arranged by UNICEF, resulting in low enrolment rates for training of government officers.

A few external and internal respondents noted that UNICEF's internal processes and associated challenges delayed timelines and affected its responsiveness. For example, the mismatch between UNICEF's internal programming cycle and reporting period (Jan – Dec) in contrast to the Government of India's year of work (Apr – Mar) was

"One of the aspects for UNICEF to look into is to make the operational process more convenient. UNICEF need to go through a lot of deliberation before giving any commitment to Government, while it is easy for some other partners/NGO."

- KII respondent

considered a hindrance by internal stakeholders. Further, UNICEF staff responded that internal processes, while ensuring necessary checks and balances, affects its ability to commit resources or finances to the government without due approval in comparison to other organisations. Implementing partners raised similar concerns, especially with respect to funding for unexpected or ad hoc activities requested by the government. Internal and external financial reporting mechanisms were also noted to be cumbersome and difficult to understand and execute. Implementing partners also highlighted that an adequate amount of

time for internal review by UNICEF is not accounted for in workplans, which negatively impacts the project deliverables. Other concerns, such as the duration of partnership cycles affecting the sustainability of results, are covered in Section 3.6.

External factors such as the pandemic, seasonal climatic occurrences and local geography were reported to have caused significant delays in programming. The majority of external respondents interviewed highlighted COVID-19 and related restrictions as an inhibitor to meeting project deadlines. The lockdowns halted planned activities across many projects involving face-to-face interactions or engagements with the field. In certain instances, the

> *"The app developed by UNICEF Supportive Supervision was not that effective as we were not going to centres; they were shut down because of COVID. Next year, when we go for supportive supervision, we will properly utilise the app."*
>
> *– KII Respondent*

respondents noted pivoting to digital or using IVR technologies to deliver the planned activities, but the activities were dropped in other instances. However, the reach and effectiveness of digital interventions was also hampered by the low levels of digital penetration in specific states, especially at the grassroots level. While digital communication came into the forefront after COVID, it has been difficult for parents to access these services due to a lack of familiarity, making it challenging to reach the community. This mode was also less preferable to girls, younger students, rural students and government school students[35].

Recurring, yet unpredictable climatic events like floods also impacted the efficient service delivery and fiscal planning. Another potential challenge highlighted by the external stakeholder was related to geography and terrain. For example, delays in accessing certain districts or establishing relationships with the community compounded by infrastructure issues and language barriers also affected the project timelines.

External stakeholders acknowledged UNICEF's role in mitigating some of the delays through its strong understanding of government mechanisms. Respondents highlighted UNICEF support in the facilitation of capacity-building activities (such as sending out letters to government departments, and coordination with government departments for dates of training) as well as UNICEF's ability to effectively navigate through the layers of bureaucracy.

While changing state leadership and priorities was highlighted as a barrier, certain internal respondents noted that **strong state leadership helped in the timely execution of activities**. A strong, committed leadership and support of relevant government stakeholders reduced administrative barriers and proved to be an effective mechanism to troubleshoot challenges related to duplication of efforts by different actors. An internal stakeholder reported that in Bihar, the relevant state leadership set up regular meetings among partners and NGOs as well as between internal stakeholders like the SCERT and Samagra Shiksha to address communication and coordination challenges.

Strong working relationships between government departments was reported to be another factor contributing to achievement of activities within stipulated timelines. At the national level, the Ministry of Education supported UNICEF on its WASH in schools programming, and for operationalisation of the *Swachh Vidyalaya* guidelines. At the state level, stakeholders in Odisha reported close coordination with the WCD to conceptualise and execute responsive parenting interventions. In Assam, collaboration with the State Disaster Management Authority led to development of school safety guidelines and programmes.

EQ 3.2 To what extent did UNICEF deliver activities within the planned monetary resources allocated.

Evaluation Finding: UNICEF's current templates for capturing financial information does not allow for identifying overspending since it does not separately capture extra sanctions of funds. However, analysis of financial data shows that the budget allocated was utilised in full. External and internal stakeholders reported inadequate funds to carry out planned programmes and the evaluation noted instances where

activities were discontinued due to funding constraints. External stakeholders reported cumbersome mechanisms for financial reporting while internal stakeholders reported that misalignment between UNICEF's financial cycle and that of the government's often lead to lack of visibility in funding.

The evaluation team explored this question by analysing financial data[36] shared by UNICEF, in terms of the actual use of funds across output areas, states and sub-interventions during the evaluation period. While this approach captured underutilization, UNICEF's current templates for capturing budget-related information did not allow for an analysis of over-spending, as it did not separately capture extra sanctions or funds released.

A. Fund Allocation and Utilisation

The total budget allocation for the Programme was around USD 50.23 million. The data available for the Programme years show that expected utilisation of funds increased for all output areas (barring 501 on Policy and planning for equitable quality education) between 2018 and 2019, and was followed by a significant drop in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Output area 504 (Quality education and learning) has seen the most investment so far in

Figure 9: Budget Expected Utilisation Trends
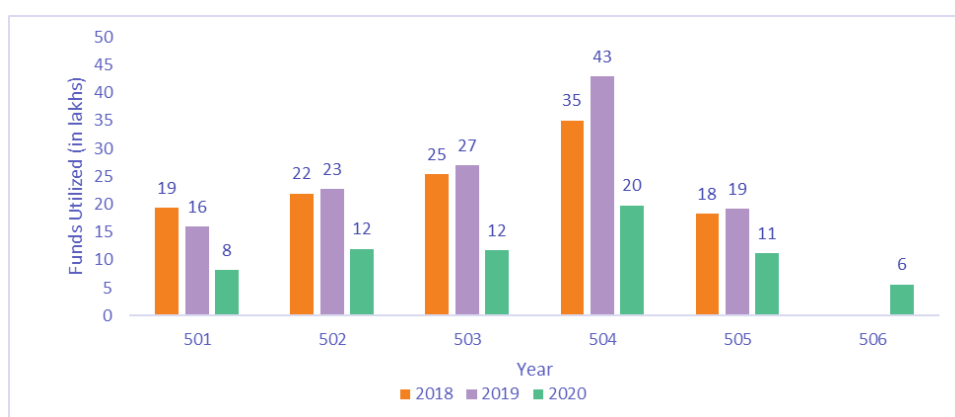
Source: Financial data provided by UNICEF ICO

terms of gross funds spent by a large margin (34% of the overall share), with output area 503 (Education for out-of-school girls and boys) being the next closest with 22% of the actual spend. Output area 502 (ECE) had the third highest share of the expenditure (17%), with output area 501 and 505 (Demand for quality education) having about equal shares (13% each). Given the more recent addition of output area 506 (COVID-response) in 2020, the funds invested were fractional compared to the other scheme areas (2% of the overall amount).

In four of the seven states, output area 504 (Quality education and learning) witnessed the largest share of funds utilised, given its higher overall expenditure as mentioned above. This level was the highest in Tamil Nadu, at 61%, followed by Maharashtra at 52%, Assam at 46% and Odisha at 39%. The states that did not follow this trend were Bihar, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh, where

Figure 10: Actual and Expected Utilisation by State

Source: Financial data provided by UNICEF ICO

maximum utilisation was under output area 503 (36% share), output area 501 (44% share) and output area 503 (45% share), respectively. Output area 504 still witnessed the second highest utilisation.

In addition to the output areas, we also looked at the utilisation across the board by broader activities, as well as the split under each of the output areas. The three top generic Intervention codes (GIC) in terms of funds to be utilised were 'Institutional Strengthening of National Systems', 'Service Delivery' and 'Fostering Innovation and use

Figure 11: Fund Distribution Across Generic Intervention Codes
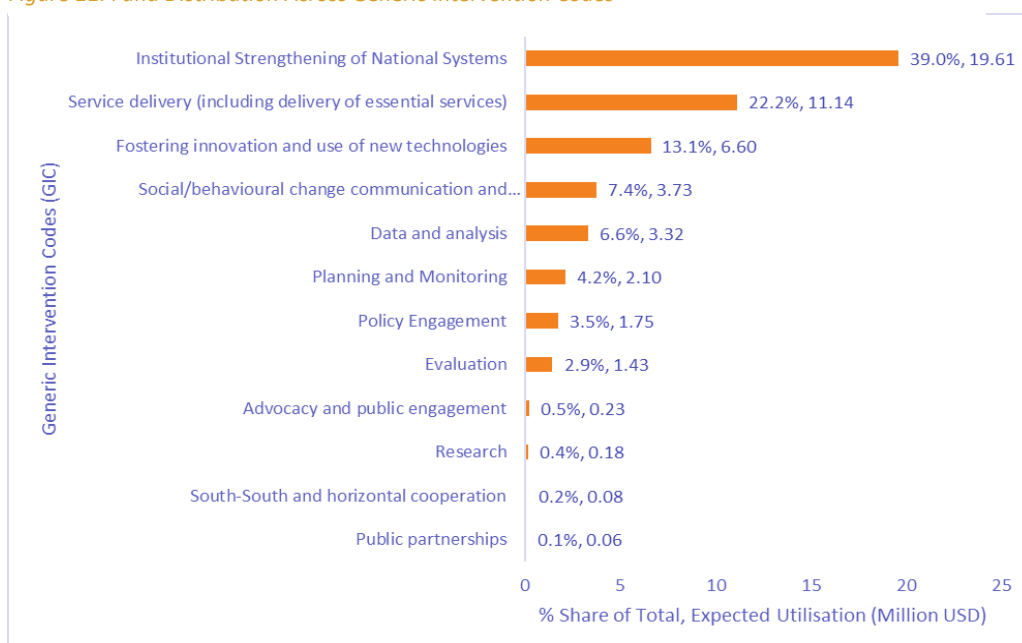
Source: Financial data provided by UNICEF ICO

of new Technologies', covering about three-fourths of the available corpus to be spent. Institutional strengthening alone covered 39% of the total funds set aside. Other relevant areas were social or behavioural change communication and community engagement (7.4%) and data and analysis (6.6%). **In contrast, there was relatively little spent on any kind of monitoring and evaluation or evidence generation.** The intervention areas 'Planning and Monitoring' and 'Evaluation' together only cover 7.1% of the overall spend, while 'Policy Engagement, Public Engagement and Research' together only covered 4.4%.

In terms of the sampled states, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had a significantly higher share of the funds to be utilised at 31% and 27%, respectively. For Odisha, Maharashtra and Assam, the funds stood at comparable shares of 14%, 13% and 9% respectively. Tamil Nadu and Karnataka had much lower shares at 4% and 3%, respectively.

While we couldn't assess further allocation, UNICEF has been effective in utilising resources according to the budgetary plans, despite the impediments faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. All of the funds earmarked for the project components over the timeline were utilised year on year with some variance observed across output area and states. Overall, the utilisation of funds stood at 88%. At output level, areas 502

Figure 12: Actual and Expected Utilisation by Output Area
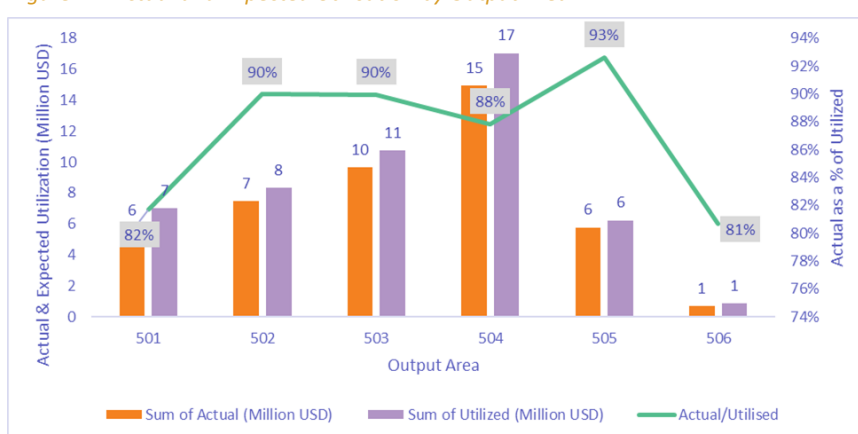
Source: Financial data provided by UNICEF ICO

(ECE) to 505 (Demand for quality education) were all around the 90% mark, with very little time left for the completion of the funding period, while output areas 501 (Policy and planning for equitable quality

education) and 506 (COVID-response) were lower at around 80%. In terms of utilisation levels, Karnataka is the only state at 100%, with the four other states above 90%. Assam and Tamil Nadu were the only states below 90% but were only 1 and 2% short respectively.

C. Fund Allocation for Gender and Equity Related Activities

The budget data was also analysed to get a sense of the utilisation of financial resources against gender and equity related interventions. Specific Intervention Codes (SICs)[3] in the budget data were analysed to understand overall and scheme-wise expenditure for equity and gender. **Out of a total of 38 SICs, we have mapped 10 (26%) that were dedicated to gender (4) and equity (6). Of the total, this expenditure was about 32% of which the lion's share was allocated under equity (29%).** Ninety-four per cent of the expenditure on equity was towards technical assistance – equitable access to quality education (13%). Education analyses including the Out-of-School-Children Initiative, Education Sector Analyses, (8%) and System Strengthening – inclusive education for vulnerable children poorest quintile, ethnic/linguistic minorities, migrant children, and non-citizens/ undocumented children (6%). The remaining 2% under equity was covered under System Strengthening – risk informed programming, including climate, resilience, disaster, conflict, and emergency preparedness (1%), Education humanitarian cluster/humanitarian sector coordination (0.6%) and System Strengthening – mother tongue / multilingual education (0.3%).

Table 15:Actual and Utilisation for Gender and Equity Related Activities

SIC Area	Sum of Utilised (in lakhs)	% Share of utilised	Actual/ Utilised %
Equity			
Technical assistance – Equitable access to quality education	65.55	13.05%	85%
Education analyses including the Out-of-School-Children Initiative, Education Sector Analyses,	40.51	8.07%	94%
System Strengthening – inclusive education for other vulnerable children poorest quintile, ethnic/linguistic minorities, migrant children, non-citizens/ undocumented children	29.32	5.84%	84%
System Strengthening – risk informed programming, including climate, resilience, disaster, conflict, and emergency preparedness	5.27	1.05%	94%
Education humanitarian cluster/humanitarian sector coordination	2.97	0.59%	100%
System strengthening – mother tongue / multilingual education	1.33	0.27%	99%
Gender			
System Strengthening – gender-responsive access (excluding SRGBV)	5.60	1.12%	98%
School Related Gender-based Violence (SRGBV)	5.54	1.10%	82%
System Strengthening – gender-responsive teaching and learning (excluding SRGBV)	3.39	0.67%	100%
United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) Secretariat	0.44	0.09%	100%

Source: Financial Data provided by UNICEF ICO

Funds allocated under gender were only 3% of the overall allocation across all output areas. Of these, gender-responsive access (1.1%) and gender-responsive teaching and learning (0.7%) under System Strengthening as well as work related to School Related Gender-based Violence (SRGBV) (1.1%) were the main areas of expenditure.

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[3] These are more granular and detailed as compared to the Generic Intervention Codes (GICs) mentioned above.

By output areas 501 (Policy and planning for equitable quality education), 503 (Education for out-of-school girls and boys) and 506 (COVID-response) have a sizeable share of equity-related allocation (41%, 86% and 95%, respectively). In all three areas, the SIC with the highest allocation was related to equity, with all of the top three under output area 503 and the top two under output area 506 connected with equity. Gender-related expenditure was the maximum under output area 505 (Demand for quality education), at 20% of the overall allocation.

UNICEF was also efficient in utilising the funds allocated towards gender and equity-related activities. In terms of utilisation for equity-related activities, the funds utilised under four of the six areas were above 94%, of which only one was from the top three SICs in terms of percentage share ('Education analyses'). Technical Assistance – equitable access to education and System Strengthening – inclusive education for vulnerable groups had relatively lower utilisation levels of 85% and 84%, respectively. In terms of utilisation, all funds utilised under SRGBV were relatively lower (82%), while for the remaining three areas they were close to or equal to full utilisation.

D. Funding Related Challenges

While the budget analysis showed that UNICEF funds were effectively utilised, **the internal stakeholders of UNICEF were of the perspective that the Education Programme budget was inadequate to fully meet the UNICEF stated goals and plans.** In particular, the lack of clarity of the level and timing of funds affected programme's scale, quality and timeliness. UNICEF staff at the state and national levels reported that funds committed at the beginning of the year were unavailable due to various reasons, resulting in planned activities being dropped or delayed. Evidence from the RAM reports and interviews with implementing partner interviews corroborate this challenge – the second phase of the *Level-Based Learning Programme* in Maharashtra was discontinued due to financial constraints. Additionally, states reported that they received an influx of unanticipated funds (to be spent by the end of each year) during the pandemic resulting in more unplanned activities being taken up. Even during normal programme cycles, the misalignment between UNICEF's internal cycles (Jan- Dec) and government cycles (Apr- Mar) lead to activities being concentrated during the latter half of the year. UNICEF staff also noted that the overall funds available for the Education Programme in the country are not comparable to the budget available in other countries, or even comparable with the budgets available for the Health and WASH programmes in the country. The increase in the number of actors in the education sector in India and their capability to provide funding for government activities compounded by UNICEF's overall financial constraints necessitates further exploration of partnerships which can prove to be mutually beneficial. In some instances, **the projects were implemented in a phased manner** with specific milestones for each phase to address financial constraints. However, this had a negative impact when it came to technology development as it affected the effectiveness and overall efficiency of the solutions.

Nearly all of the implementing partners stated that the process of transferring the funds was smooth and problem free, with the exception of Karnataka. Multiple respondents in Karnataka cited a one-month delay at the start of the year when submitting the budget at the beginning of the Country Programme cycle, due to pending approvals and delayed processing. An implementing partner cited that certain duty bearers within relevant government departments step in during such period and offer to work with partners on a reimbursement mode, but this was noted to be highly dependent on personal working relationships. In other instances where UNICEF funding was delayed and governments could not provide financial assistance, the work was reported to be halted.

The qualitative analysis also brought to light procedural hurdles that led to issues with funding access for external stakeholders. Multiple respondents from the government and partner organisations highlighted that the protocols to be followed for annual budget approvals were inhibiting, with releases tied to milestone and little flexibility for reassignment of funds under sub-categories when the need would arise during the year. Long funding gaps were subsequently responsible for a break in the continuity of project

implementation. Rigorous documentation requirements and a lack of flexibility posed challenges for stakeholders being able to access funding from UNICEF. In Assam, UNICEF organised a training programme for the financial staff of an implementing partner to circumvent this challenge.

Interviews with internal stakeholders identified several ways through which UNICEF and partners consistently used resources and inputs to enhance the efficiency of financial resources within education programming. Examples of some of the strategies and approaches highlighted by respondents are detailed below.

a) **Leveraging government funds (Samagra Shiksha):** The Programme most often was observed to draw on the available resources and budget from the government programmes such as Samagra Shiksha. In Odisha, a stakeholder outlined how they aided the WCD in mediating with Samagra Shiksha to secure funds for the co-location of anganwadi centres.

b) **Other donor fundings:** UNICEF's technical contribution to the planning for the World Bank STARS proposal with the government enabled leveraging of over USD 1.2 million for programming in strengthening ECE services in anganwadi centres for 2021-22. In Maharashtra, funding from the STARS programme was used to provide book packs along with activity books to engage children.

EQ 3.3 Were UNICEF's human resources well utilised to deliver activities and interventions?

Evaluation Finding: UNICEF staff offices were reported to be understaffed to undertake the current quantum of work. External stakeholders provided positive feedback on their working relationship with UNICEF staff but highlighted a few areas where technical capacity could be improved such as monitoring and evaluation and emerging areas such as digital education.

The evaluation found mixed evidence of UNICEF's efficient utilisation of human resources. UNICEF staff reported that there was sufficient allocation of human resources at the national and state level to meet the programming requirements. In many states, the existing UNICEF personnel were also supported by consultants who brought specific technical expertise to support the Programme delivery. **The strategy of leveraging the technical capacities of other sections within UNICEF ICO and state offices (especially WASH, DRR and C4D sections) for convergent programming, has further enhanced the efficient utilisation of the UNICEF's human resources**. UNICEF staff highlighted specific instances of such convergence, such as intersectoral collaboration to develop joint assessment plans to address natural disasters or other conflicts.

However, external stakeholders reported that UNICEF staff offices were understaffed in relation to the scale and complexity of the programmes they are required to handle. External respondents across states expressed the need for more responsiveness technical support, which is currently difficult given the bandwidth of limited staff. Implementing partners reported observing UNICEF staff working long hours and being overburdened with work, while appreciating their availability and accessibility. Information from the Education Strategic Plan[37] substantiates this claim despite having the largest global education presence of any international agency, the proportion of education-specific staff within UNICEF has decreased over the last 10 years (down to 16% in 2016 from 20% in 2006) and is also low compared with peer organisations (education staff is 32% at World Bank). . In a few instances, implementing partners reported issues relating to frequent change of staff and delays in filling vacant positions. These changes resulted in a reported lack of clarity, changing expectations around the results of the programming and deprioritisation of planned activities based on personal interests, affecting its on-ground continuity and implementation.

External stakeholders largely provided positive feedback on their working relationship with UNICEF. Implementing partners reported that UNICEF staff and consultants are supportive and cordial, going out of their way to help with any pressing challenges. Staff were also reported to be passionate and driven and provided testimonial evidence of how this has further motivated participants and beneficiaries involved in trainings and programmes. External respondents at all levels acknowledged the domain knowledge and skillset

"The two state advisors assigned by UNICEF are seated in our office and cooperate us all the time. They help us with remedial course developments, module development and also offer insights from various research topics and conduct different studies. They are dedicated to our vision and assist us whenever we require it. I am really very satisfied with the efforts of UNICEF."

–KII Respondent

of UNICEF staff and highlighted their technical understanding of relevant thematic areas of programming, especially pedagogical practices. Further, stakeholders attested to UNICEF's understanding of government systems and mechanisms, and experience working with various government departments.

However, certain external stakeholders identified challenges related to internal staffing within UNICEF, including technical skillsets. Respondents expressed the need for improved capacity of state-level staff in specific areas such as monitoring and evaluation, curriculum development, capacity building, financial planning and budgeting, and emerging areas such as digital education. In addition, **changing leadership with changing perspectives within UNICEF were reported to cause delays due to the need for constant recalibration and was noted to be a hindrance to long term implementation success.** For example, the *Bal Shiksha* project in Maharashtra was reported to be negative affected as a result of frequent change in technical staff. Additionally, UNICEF staff also raised concerns regarding the efficient utilisation of personnel, particularly UNICEF-supported consultants at the state level. The consultants are usually engaged for a period of one year and renewal of contracts were reported to be an inefficient process.

3.5 Coherence

The coherence section of evaluation assesses UNICEF's partnerships with external stakeholders in the education, and convergence and internal coherence within UNICEF with other programme area. It also evaluates the UNICEF's positioning and comparative advantages in education programming.

EQ 4.1 How does UNICEF's work fit with the work of external partners (global partners, regional partners, government, partner programmes/interventions)?

Evaluation Finding: The Education Programme works closely in convergence with external stakeholders including relevant government departments at state level and implementing partners. Interviews and documentary evidence confirmed the length and bread of UNICEF's engagements. However, independent experts highlighted the need for some degree of separation of work to ensure UNICEF's status as an independent organisation and diversity in partnerships, especially in engaging with non-traditional implementing partners.

A. Partnerships with External Stakeholders

Across all the states and at the national level, UNICEF engaged closely with the relevant ministries/ department. Alignment with the legislative and policy framework in India and the corresponding work of government actors are explicitly noted as the guiding force behind UNICEF's Education Programme in its Educational Programme Strategy Note[1], the Country

"UNICEF's goal and strategy is very much aligned with the state strategies, Government (of) India's education and protection policies."

KII Respondent

Programme Action Plan 2018-2022[22], the Country Programme Document [18] and the Education Programme

Strategy Notes of states such as Maharashtra and Bihar. Further documentary evidence showing the alignment of UNICEF priorities with that of the national and state governments is provided in Section 3.2.

At the national level, the closest degree of engagement was noted with the Ministry of Education, NCERT and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (ICDS programme). At the state level, UNICEF extends technical support to the Department of Education, Samaghra Shiksha, SCERT, and WCD, according to the state contexts. In states at particular risk of natural disasters or

> *"UNICEF has a partnership at both the central and the state levels. In many states, UNICEF has a long relationship built over the years which creates a lot of support".*
>
> *-   KII Respondent*

with a larger population of vulnerable communities, UNICEF specifically engaged with the concerned departments such as the State Disaster Management Authority in Assam, the Department of ST/ SC/ Minority Welfare in Odisha and the Bihar State Madrasa Education Board. In Assam, UNICEF also engaged with District Child Welfare Committees and tea garden associations to mainstream out-of-school children and roll out ECE programmes. The state also witnessed a unique sub-state partnership with UNICEF partnering with the Bodo Land Territorial Council. Evidence from interviews highlight UNICEF's ability to develop and maintain working relationships with government partners across national, state and district levels. Some of the major government departments that UNICEF works with in different states is showcased in Table 17.

External stakeholders at the national level and independent experts testified to UNICEF's close engagement with government partners in operationalising government policies on education, describing UNICEF as '*the natural partner for the Ministry and the Department of School Education'* and stating that *'UNICEF largely works with the government. If we see the national policy, UNICEF has helped in every stage of developing the curriculum in consultancy with women and child development.'* External respondents at the state-level testified to the same, reporting that various state policy guidelines are *'mainly steered by UNICEF'* and that '*UNICEF's role is to strengthen all such policy frameworks in the actual implementation'*. Evidence of this role can also be observed through its presence on various state-level committees such as the School Safety Advisory Committee and Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Committee in Assam, Steering Committee on Pre-School Education in Uttar Pradesh and COVID-related expert committee in Tamil Nadu.

However, a need for a certain degree of separation between the work UNICEF undertakes and that of the government, to maintain its identity and presence as an independent organisation capable of criticising government policies, if necessary, was raised by a few external respondents. UNICEF staff also highlighted that close alignment with government activities and resultant support for ad-hoc requests sometimes led to dilution of allocated resources, affecting planned programming in other areas. Lack of awareness among government partners of UNICEF's overall areas of work and country plan was reported to the primary cause for this deviation. Certain modalities of operation, such as immersion of UNICEF-supported consultants or personnel within government departments, were noted to be detrimental to maintaining an independent identity. On the other hand, this approach was reported to be beneficial in gaining government departments' support and confidence, improving UNICEF's visibility in the state and its convening power or for facilitating meetings. Further, some government stakeholders felt that UNICEF could increase the quantum of technical resource persons extended to them, displaying a high degree of reliance on UNICEF for long-term technical support and affecting government take-up and sustainability of programmes. While these stakeholders felt that they would be able to continue and recreate the interventions conducted by UNICEF, they reported that their pace and scale would be comparatively slower without UNICEF's continued support. Government stakeholders also noted the need to introduce mid-term review of the workplan formulated at the beginning of the year and undertake corrective actions, if required.

Evidence from external interviews and document review speak to UNICEF's strong financial and technical partnerships with national and state-specific NGOs and CSOs, with scope for engaging more non-traditional

partners. The evaluation found that UNICEF consistently engaged with traditional organisations who have worked in the education sector, and with UNICEF or other UN organisations, for a long period of time. At the national level, implementing partners contribute towards the design and implementation of large initiatives across multiple states and towards advocacy. For example, the Language and Learning Foundation supported four states in improving learning outcomes through child-centered pedagogy, whereas the American Institute for Research was contracted as a technical partner to provide support to the NCERT in analysing NAS data and conducting other related activities such as development of assessment frameworks. At the state and district levels, non-government stakeholders supported or implemented both pilot/demonstration projects or larger initiatives and programmes. In Odisha, UNICEF partnered with National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) to develop and pilot adolescent wellness workbooks in two districts whereas in Maharashtra, a reading campaign was piloted (and later upscaled) in collaboration with Pratham Books' StoryWeaver. In Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, UNICEF supported the ICDS department in strengthening pre-primary education through its partnership with Vikramshila Education Resource Society. Several multi-state engagements with technical partners were also noted, mostly with larger organisations such as Pratham, the NalandaWay Foundation and the Language and Learning Foundations or specialised organisations such as Vikramshila.

The table 16 presents examples of partnerships and engagements by UNICEF in the evaluation states. The table includes institutional contracts with organisations such as AIR and ACER as well as PCA agreements with NGOs and CSOs.

Table 16: Examples of Partnerships and Engagements by UNICEF

States	Government Partners	NGO/ CSO Partners	Academic Partners
Tamil Nadu	School Education Department State Planning Commission	NalandaWay Foundation READ Thozhamai Centre for Budget & Policy studies	
Karnataka	State Samaghra Shiksha Abhiyan	Sikshana Foundation	
Maharashtra	Maharashtra SCERT Women and Child Development Department (ICDS)	Vikramshila Centre for Equity and Quality in Universal Education (CEQUE) Pratham Books' StoryWeaver Centre for Learning Resources	Ambedkar University (Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development)
Bihar	Bihar Education Project Council Bihar SCERT Bihar State Madrasa Education Board	Language and Learning Foundation Save the Children Pratham	

		Development Network Mashal Nari Gunjan	
Uttar Pradesh	State Samaghra Shiksha Abhiyan Uttar Pradesh SCERT Women and Child Development Department (ICDS)	Vikramshila Samarthyam ActionAid NalandaWay Foundation Yeh Ek Soch Vigyan Ashram	
Odisha	Directorate of Higher Education ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare Department State SCERT Women and Child Development Department Odisha School Education Programme Authority	Samarthyam Nirantar Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti Pratham	
Assam	State Samaghra Shiksha Abhiyan State SCERT Assam Disaster Management Authority Tea garden associations such as Bhartiya Chah Parishad (BCP)	Pratham Foundation ANWESHA	
National	Ministry of Education NCERT Ministry of Minority Affairs NIMHANS	Aasman Foundation Room to Read Pratham Education Foundation American Institute of Research Australian Council for Educational Research Language and Learning Foundation Centre for Budget and Policy Studies Education Equality Foundation of India Tata Institute of Social Sciences	

The implementing partners interviewed at the national and state levels provided positive feedback on their overall engagement and coordination with UNICEF. In particular, they noted that UNICEF treated them as equal partners, and the mutuality of the partnerships was underscored through the collaborative process in which workplans and activities were developed. UNICEF staff liaising with these organisations were reported to be approachable and open, welcoming of feedback and available to discuss issues and challenges through the course of implementation of the activities. Implementing partners interviewed highlighted that reporting processes required of UNICEF partners had, in turn, strengthened their internal capacity and administrative processes, now enabling them to apply for grants or work with other international NGOs independently.

> *"Our partnership with UNICEF helped us as an organization, because, UNICEF expects certain financial, compliance, needs to be for an organization to even to partner with UNICEF. UNICEF was very proactive to help us in developing that capacity, whether it is UNICEF finance, programming side, reporting geo-financing processes, or how it all needs to be done."*
>
> *-KII Respondent*

Despite the overwhelming positive feedback in favour of UNICEF's partnership modalities, a few external respondents raised challenges with respect to coordination and communication. In one instance, an implementing partner relayed that the project delivery was affected by the lack of a clear sense of direction and clarity from UNICEF and was further compounded by a change in UNICEF personnel managing the project. An independent expert echoed this concern, stating that "*Within UNICEF are these personal preferences. Somewhere someone thinks I want a coaching programme for CRC, BRC etc., which are sometimes preferences*". Smaller state and district-level organisations reported that the one-year duration of the Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCA) hampered their ability to plan, staff and sustain activities at the field level. Further, delays in awarding successive contracts posed challenges for smaller organisations to continue their work and keep their field staff on payrolls. Some implementing partners expressed the need to simplify UNICEF's financial reporting processes but also reported that they received adequate training and support to do so during the partnership. The evaluation team obtained mixed responses on partners' perceptions of UNICEF's degree of engagement. While some organisations appreciated that UNICEF was involved in the planning but trusted them with the implementation of activities, some partners were of the view that UNICEF could have been more proactive in its involvement in field-level activities. Implementing partners in a few states highlighted that UNICEF works in a siloed approach and do not provide visibility on the work undertaken by its other partners, hindering their ability to leverage on existing work or learn from experiences of other organisations. UNICEF staff reported that multi-state and multi-sectoral PCAs with specialised technical agencies sometimes resulted in cross-utilitisation and dilution of funds, resulting in non-achievement of planned activities.

Despite the range of partnerships developed by UNICEF at the national and state levels, some respondents felt there was scope for UNICEF to broaden its engagements. Evidence from internal interviews and document review show only moderate engagement with academic partners, other development partners and specialised technical agencies. Independent experts and government stakeholders believed UNICEF's current collaboration with the private sector was nascent and could be more structured and systematic, and highlighted the need for a comprehensive strategy for private sector engagement. External factors, such as challenges in equipping academic institutions to work in project cycles or concerns around sharing credit in competitive spaces were reported to be current obstacles in broadening partnerships. In Assam, internal stakeholders highlighted difficulties in finding mature partners with the right set of technical skillsets and contextual understanding of conflict-afflicted areas.

The evaluation did not have enough opportunity to interact with other donors working in education sector to understand alignment and complementarities of working with UNICEF. However, external stakeholders highlighted the role of UNICEF as a coordinating or convening organisation.

B. Comparative Advantages of UNICEF

Throughout the interviews, respondents highlighted several organisational advantages of UNICEF in comparison with other actors in the education sector. These comparative advantages are described below:

- **Majority of the respondents reported UNICEF's strong working relationship with national and state-level governments to be its biggest advantage.** UNICEF's effective strategic positioning is evident through its status as the partner of choice of the government in supporting reforms in education, as described in the section above on its alignment with the work of government partners. Documents such as the Education Programme Strategy Note also acknowledge this unique positioning as one of UNICEF's comparative advantages. Qualitative evidence confirms that UNICEF has adequately leveraged this relationship to demonstrate, deliver and scale up interventions in collaboration with implementing partners. External respondents also noted that several UNICEF-supported consultants have previously worked in the relevant government departments and bring a sound understanding of government mechanisms and processes, enabling them to plan and deliver activities efficiently and resulting in increased sustainability of interventions.

- **Multiple stakeholders recognised UNICEF's ability to provide technical expertise, either through its own highly qualified staff or its access to a network of national and international consultants.** Government stakeholders interviewed consistently acknowledged and appreciated UNICEF's work and reported confidence in relying on the organisation for technical advice and support. UNICEF internal documents such as the national and state-level Education Programme Strategy Notes and UNICEF staff at the national level also recognised its ability to provide and draw upon technical expertise from across the globe. Implementing partners referenced UNICEF as a key 'knowledge partner' bringing global standards and conceptual frameworks into local contexts and applications, especially in the areas of ECE and FLN. However, a few external respondents also believed that UNICEF has not adequately leveraged its capacities to act as a knowledge partner and expressed the need for more research and knowledge management to build advocacy on key challenges and flagship interventions.

- **UNICEF's intersectoral presence and engagement was noted by internal stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of activities it delivers.** The Education Programme Strategy Note describes using school as 'an integrated service platform' to deliver interventions for children. The same strategy to implement activities was highlighted in documentary and qualitative evidence at the state levels.

  "Obvious advantage is they hold multi-sectoral expertise-WASH, child protection. So a range of perspectives are brought in to support education and whole infrastructure, delivery and transaction of education set-up. Right from social protection, child protection, education, and nutrition, these are one big advantage in terms of broad spectrum of knowledge holders for UNICEF."

  -KII respondent

- **UNICEF's core commitment to children in its programmes and activities was acknowledged to be one of its USP.** The Education Programme Strategy Note identifies UNICEF's 'mandate and normative function centered on children's rights' as one of its comparative advantages. UNICEF's ability to translate this narrative into practice is evidenced through testimonies from external stakeholder interviews, with one respondent describing UNICEF to have *'developed a culture of child rights'.*

- **External and internal stakeholders at various levels recognised UNICEF's convening power, acquired through its credibility and visibility as an UN agency, as one of its most unique advantages.** At the national level, UNICEF leveraged this convening power to share lessons and experiences on FLN whereas in states like Uttar Pradesh, it established the ECCE and FLN consortium. Stakeholders also acknowledged UNICEF's role in organising high-level consultations and collaborations on out-of-school children. The

national Educational Programme Strategy Note and its counterpart in states like Maharashtra and Assam reference utilising this convening power to advocate for increased collaboration between various government departments and with the private sector.

- **UNICEF's presence and relationships with government systems at all levels, and across years, has aided its delivery of activities.** Evidence from external and internal stakeholder interviews demonstrate that UNICEF's presence from the district to the state and national level has enabled it to act as a necessary liaison and create a closed loop through which feedback and information can be transmitted. Further, UNICEF's presence through the years has created a rich institutional knowledge and legacy of state contexts and mechanisms, adding to their acceptance and visibility in the states.

- **UNICEF's support on unique areas of work is recognised by its stakeholders.** External respondents noted that UNICEF engages in areas that are typically underfunded or under prioritised by other development actors and government stakeholders. Some examples of areas of work that were appreciated by interviewees include capacity building and institutional strengthening and contextual interventions such as development of madrasas in Bihar.

EQ 4.2 How does the UNICEF Education Programme align with/fit with other interventions being carried out by UNICEF?

Evaluation Finding: Internal convergence was reported to be weak and led by individual leadership rather than systematic processes within the organisation. The extent of collaboration was closer with departments such as Child Protection and WASH but weaker with other sectors such as Health and Nutrition.

Analysis of documents indicate programmatic examples of inter-sectoral engagements which are provided in table 17.

Table 17:Examples of Cross-Sectoral Work in the Education Programmes

- Strengthen the monitoring and validation system of *Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar* in collaboration with the WASH department for the Ministry of Education
- Training provided to the State Institute of Rural Development in Odisha in collaboration with the child protection and health and nutrition sectors for developing child-friendly schools
- Back-to-School campaigns anchored by C4D and education departments in various states such as Odisha and Bihar
- Development of teacher's manual on school safety and security in collaboration with child protection and DRR sectors in Uttar Pradesh
- Life skill development programme for in- and out-of-school children in convergence with child protection and C4D sectors in Assam
- SBCC material on enrolment, retention and learning developed in convergence with C4D department.
- Development of SOPs for school reopening in coordination with WASH and C4D departments in Odisha

UNICEF's intersectoral programming approach and integrated delivery of services is emphasised in its Programme Strategy Note [1], Country Programme Action Plan[22] and state-specific strategy notes. UNICEF staff also highlighted benefits to intersectoral programming, such as the ability to cross-utilise funds or deliver convergent programming with limited personnel, resulting in efficient use of resources.

However, **the evaluation team observed mixed evidence on the degree of UNICEF's internal coherence**. While some staff reported efforts to deliver convergent services and activities, others noted that these efforts were not formal or systematic and varied depending on individual capacity and leadership. UNICEF staff reported that there was a lack of synergy between different sectors and attributed this to the lack of a formal system to monitor, measure and share credit for collaborative interventions and achievements. For example, a respondent noted that convergent activities find a place in the results matrix of the sector they are collaborating with but might not have a corresponding indicator in the results matrix of the education sector.

The extent of collaboration also varied from state to state and between sectors. For example, Uttar Pradesh noted close coordination with the health sector to deliver interventions aimed at children with special needs while Maharashtra highlighted the need to strengthen engagements with the C4D sector. Overall, strong alignment was seen with the sectors of WASH and child protection (necessitated in part by COVID-19 conditions) in comparison to the other sectors.

The evaluation also found mixed evidence on the coherence between different UNICEF programmes. While documentary evidence mentions that the education sector would work in close collaboration with other UNICEF initiatives such as the multistakeholder 'Generation Unlimited' programme, and with other UN agencies, the evaluation did not find substantial evidence of such engagements from qualitative interviews.

3.6 Sustainability

This section explores the extent to which the Programme interventions can be scaled up, and the extent to which sustainability is ensured. It also examines mechanisms of evidence generation and dissemination as part of advocacy activities aimed at sustainability.

EQ 5.1 To what extent have UNICEF support programmes been embedded in/integrated/costed into and or helped scale up government programmes?

> **Evaluation Finding:** The evaluation found mixed evidence on sustainability of UNICEFF programmes. While several initiatives were reported to be integrated within government plans or schemes, this was highly dependent on the level of government buy-in. The focus on institutional strengthening and involvement of government staff, including teachers and ECE workers and use of community volunteers contributed towards enhanced sustainability of the initiatives. The primary challenges related to sustainability include capacity (technical and financial) of the government institutions as well as evolving priorities and personnel turnover in both UNICEF and the state leadership.

There is mixed evidence from qualitative interviews on the sustainability of UNICEF's interventions. Initiatives with strong government buy-in were reported to have a higher probability of being continued, albeit at a slower pace and smaller scale. Document review and qualitative interviews provide evidence of initiatives piloted by UNICEF across different states, which have ultimately been adopted or integrated into other plans and programmes by the government. Select examples of such initiatives have been detailed in table 18.

Table 18: Select Examples of UNICEF's Initiatives That Were Scaled Up

Maharashtra	• The *Level-Based Learning Programme*, an intervention to improve foundation skillsets for students was piloted in two districts covering 60 schools and 1400 students. The intervention was later scaled by the government to cover 38,000 students across 2700 schools.
Assam	• UNICEF provided technical support to the Department of Elementary Education and Samagra Shiksha to mainstream out-of-school children by strengthening partnerships

		between district administration, CSOs and tea garden administration. The partnership helped in mainstreaming 3,183 out-of-school children in focus and tea garden districts of Sonitpur, Goalpara, Dhubri and Tinsukia
Uttar Pradesh	•	The UNICEF-supported *Learning Enhancement Programme* assisted academic supervisors in providing quality mentorship and improved teaching learning practices to enhance learning gains. The programme was initially piloted in five districts and later upscaled to 75 districts by state government
Tamil Nadu	•	UNICEF supported SCERT in the development of life skills and books to be used by adolescents as part of the curriculum piloted for educationally backward blocks. The onus of printing, digitisation and distribution of these textbook were later taken up by SCERT along with teacher training on utilisation of these textbook in classroom teaching
	•	The *Take it Eazy* flagship programme on life skills upscaled to other states by UNICEF
Odisha	•	Based on learnings from the UNICEF-supported intervention *Ghare Ghare Arunima,* the state government is funding similar activity-based books and developing various learning resources. Further, the state has also allocated funding for translation of responsive parenting calendars to tribal languages in the next five years

A. Factors contributing to increased sustainability

Closer examination by the evaluation team identified three mechanisms through which UNICEF has ensured continuity of activities- emphasis on institutional capacity building, leveraging public capacity and resources, and enhancing community involvement. These mechanisms are explained in detail below.

Documentary review and testimony from qualitative interviews show that UNICEF-assisted programmes with a 'minimal hinderance' approach were more likely to be upscaled. Internal and external respondents highlighted that building the capacity of ingrained institutions to deliver programmes ensure a certain degree of continuity of activities. UNICEF has successfully adopted the approach of leveraging and strengthening institutional capacity in multiple states. For example, the *Learning Enhancement Programme* in Uttar Pradesh was upscaled by training State Resource Groups (SRGs) on learning outcomes, pedagogy, performance monitoring and data-based decision making. SRGs further acted as master trainers and oriented block resource coordinators on the same. In Assam, UNICEF enhanced the reach of its activities to identify and track out-of-school children by strengthening the capacity of the district administration and SMCs on the same. In Maharashtra, UNICEF assisted in strengthening the capacity of DIETs to provide training and mentorship to cluster resource coordinators (CRCs) as part of the *KPALP* programme. The DIET trained six state resource persons which will scale the training to CRCs across 5064 clusters in the state and build their capacity through workshops.

UNICEF assured sustainability of interventions by involving government partners in the design and implementation of interventions, to ensure government buy-in and interest. Stakeholders reported that this strategy enabled government stakeholders to understand the programme and scale them up with changes to suit government mechanisms and structures, if necessary. For example, in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, teachers were involved in the curriculum and textbook development which made it easier for them to absorb the changes that were led by UNICEF and apply them in teaching.

UNICEF's strategy of scaling up interventions by leveraging existing public funds for education removed the dependency on external financing and ensured sustainability. Internal stakeholders reported that UNICEF works with state governments to identify funds from existing budgets for education-related departments and schemes to integrate successful pilot interventions into existing government programmes. In Assam, UNICEF ensured continuity of activities aimed at mainstreaming out-of-school children by leveraging funds from the Samagra Shiksha. In Tamil Nadu, the printing, dissemination, training, and digitalisation of life skills workbooks was continued and upscaled through the SCERT's budget. UNICEF has also leveraged public financing for different activities in specific states and conducted evidence generation activities to understand the amount of public funds available for education. For example, UNICEF assisted in the development of costed plans for education strategy in specific states through public financing in Odisha. In Tamil Nadu, it facilitated a Public Expenditure Review and disseminated findings from the same to build advocacy for greater education expenditure in the state.

Another mechanism through which UNICEF ensured sustainability was to generate community demand for quality interventions and initiatives. UNICEF engaged in SBCC activities to enhance awareness regarding schooling and learning outcomes and improve the ability of community groups to demand quality education, thereby ensuring continued pressure on the government to deliver the same. District and community-level stakeholders testified to increased awareness and vocalisation of demands as a result of these activities.

> *"Secondly, the involvement of the community. There are areas, where we know that even if we don't work, our people are there to connect with ensuring that securing is supporting us. The department was willing to do so because they have seen us working with them. We have seen that people have accepted and taking education seriously. there are women, there are mothers who say "I couldn't do it but there are our girls who will do it now, will bring the opportunity".*
>
> *-KII Respondent*

Stakeholders also reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the unanticipated scale up of certain interventions. For example, the closure of anganwadi centres led to enhanced focus on the development and dissemination of responsive parenting kits and online tools to ensure home-based learning. Large scale trainings were conducted to ensure that anganwadi workers were equipped to help parents use these kits. In terms of teacher training, the transition to digital platforms ensured that a greater number of teachers could be trained without geographical limitations – a relatively slower process in offline training. Additionally, the role of WhatsApp, email and other e-platforms ensured cross-sharing of resource materials and continued access to the training material.

B. Factors Affecting Sustainability

The evaluation team found several internal and external factors affecting the sustainability of the interventions, including an overall dependency on UNICEF's technical and financial assistance. While many of the external respondents had a positive disposition to the continuation of activities or interventions piloted by UNICEF, they highlighted that the complete withdrawal of UNICEF's technical support could have a detrimental impact on the scale, pace and quality of the interventions. Some challenges to sustainability, as identified from qualitative interviews with internal and external stakeholders, are summarised below and explained in relevant sections cross-referenced here.

- Frequent **changes in state leadership and differing interests** and priorities of incumbent duty bearers were reported to be difficult to achieve government buy-in, thus affecting continuation of activities and programmes. This challenge is further explained in Section 3.4 under EQ 3.1.
- Implementing partners reported that the **one-year duration of PCAs** and resultant lack of long-term visibility affects sustainability of programmes. EQ 4.1 under Section 3.5 provides more details regarding this challenge.
- Government stakeholders reported that while they would be able to continue UNICEF-supported interventions, the **scale and quality of the programmes would be adversely affected** without UNICEF's technical support. This is also explained under EQ 4.1 under Section 3.5.

- Continued **creation and dissemination of research** to ensure government ownership of programmes was highlighted to be important to ensure sustainability. UNICEF's role in presenting evidence and lessons for advocacy is set out in detail under EQ 5.2 later in this section.
- **Lack of basic services and inadequate infrastructure** in classrooms and AWCs were reported by UNICEF staff and community-level stakeholders to hamper sustainability. District and community-level respondents explained that anganwadi workers deal with the lack of basic services and infrastructure in AWCs. Their concerns therefore become more immediate, such as the lack of boundary walls and teaching equipment in schools and cannot always prioritise the learnings from trainings in the face of these concerns. During FGDs, teachers across states mentioned that they require follow-up refresher trainings to apply the principles taught to them during workshops and was noted by government stakeholders as well.

EQ 5.2 What were the 'lessons learned' from the implementation of the Programme and have they been shared with the sector stakeholders (within UNICEF and with relevant government and development partners)?

Evaluation Finding: The evaluation found instances of evidence generation through initiation and facilitation of research and strengthening of data systems to improve data for evidence generation. Stakeholders highlighted UNICEF's role as a leading knowledge partner but reported the need for a more proactive approach to evidence generation and dissemination for advocacy on key issues. While internal monitoring system and learning systems were noted, UNICEF staff reported that these systems in their current form do not allow for synthesis of lessons or much cross-learning between states.

The evaluation identified a number of mechanisms through which UNICEF monitored, documented and disseminated evidence generated from its activities. National and state-level external stakeholders reported that UNICEF played a significant role in strengthening data systems to effectively monitor indicators related to schooling and learning outcomes. These respondents also testified to UNICEF's assistance in dissemination of NAS data and findings among relevant stakeholders and the formulation of evidence-based differential plans. More information of UNICEF's contribution to strengthening monitoring and data systems can be found in Section 3.3 under EQ 2.1. State-level external stakeholders also highlighted UNICEF-supported digital initiatives to improve monitoring. In Uttar Pradesh, the *SHARDA* portal developed with technical assistance from UNICEF, tracks out-of-school children through enrolment rates and monitors their mainstreaming into schools. Similarly in Bihar, UNICEF supported the establishment and maintenance of the *BEST* app to monitor real-time data on attendance rates, inspections of schools, and indicators such as learning assessments, school cleanliness and number of available toilets for boys and girls. In Odisha, the *Prashikshak* portal was developed by UNICEF to support the SCERT in monitoring progress and managing real-time data on indicators related to DIET, such as attendance rates and nature of activities.

The evaluation noted the presence of internal monitoring and learning mechanisms that allow for cross-learning among the states. For instance, UNICEF's RAM is an internal tool[26] to monitor state-wise progress of the Education Programme. Consultations with the UNICEF internal stakeholders reveal that RAM reporting is critical for monitoring, as it helps them assess progress against the targets and allows them to reflect on the factors accelerating or hindering their progress. The *Enterprise Content Management (ECM)* system and the network meetings are other avenues that allow for sharing of lessons and best practices.

In addition to establishing institutional mechanisms for better monitoring, external and internal stakeholder interviews and RAM reports provide evidence of specific research-based evidence generation activities to inform programming. Implementing partners reported that they rely on UNICEF for continued creation and dissemination of research for policy advocacy with government partners, as they do not work

on the same scale as UNICEF and therefore do not have access to the technical resources to conduct analyses and research. The respondents also noted that government stakeholders do not immediately observe the changes of UNICEF's initiatives, thereby relying on UNICEF to present them with research and advocacy to explain the benefits of their programming. Respondents felt that in the absence of continuous research by UNICEF, government interest might reduce with time. A few select examples of evidence-generation activities supported by UNICEF is provided in the table 19.

Table 19: Select Examples of Evidence-Generation Activities Supported by UNICEF

- In Karnataka, UNICEF provided technical assistance towards the administration of micro surveys on quality indicators related to classroom processes, teacher quality and student participation. The findings from the survey were used to prepare plans and monitor primary education quality through the data obtained.
- UNICEF facilitated a e-consortium for government school to share information on conducting activities during the pandemic in the form of a webinar series. Findings, recommendations, and best practices shared by the consortium were submitted to the government and widely disseminated across the state to plan for Audience Response Systems.
- In Maharashtra, UNICEF supported a capacity gap analysis of 2100 ICDS supervisors to understand effectiveness of communication strategies related to programme activities during COVID-19. Findings from the analysis were used to inform the strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, UNICEF leveraged findings from a rapid assessment with caregivers to their use of activities disseminated. Analysis from both surveys was used to increase access to resources through digital platforms (such as TV, IVRS, radio).
- UNICEF commissioned rapid assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic to understand gaps in the reach and distribution of home-based learning kits and developed targeted approaches to address the same. During this period, it also commissioned and supported school reopening surveys based on state-wise strategies for safe reopening of schools

Source: RAM Reports

Additionally, UNICEF also engaged in dissemination of evidence generated as part of its programmes through development of policy briefs, which were further used for generating awareness and advocacy. For instance, in Assam, UNICEF developed policy briefs on quality ECE in the state. Regional analysis on areas such as Bodo land and tea garden districts capture differences within the state and help the state in planning interventions and integrating equity into the programming process. In Odisha, UNICEF created a costed plan in partnership with Pratham on second chance learning opportunities for marginalised children in the 15-19 age group, with specific focus on girls. The findings of the costed plan were then converted to policy briefs to conduct advocacy with the state government for the intervention.

While external stakeholders recognised the UNICEF's role as a knowledge partner, a more systematic approach to evidence generation, utilisation and dissemination was highlighted during discussions. The unique position of UNICEF and its associations with technical institutes, research organisations and academic institutions has made them key partner for data and evidence generation. However, there emerged a need for UNICEF to convene efforts to build a more enabling environment for collective learning with all development partners in the education sector, including government, donors and CSOs. Furthermore, while we have qualitative evidence through consultations on research utilisation, there is no articulated strategy in the Education Programme for using evidence generated through research and evaluation for wider policy-level changes and commitments.

The evaluation team also noted certain drawbacks with the internal mechanisms for learning and sharing of best practice. The RAM template in its current format does not allow for the Programme team to report on unique innovations in state programming. Internal stakeholders also reported that although the monitoring structure is well-established and followed, efforts to synthesise lessons from the RAM should be improved. Further, UNICEF staff and consultants expressed the need for better structuring of network

meetings to allow for more opportunity to present best practices and deliberate on learnings or process changes that could help improve planning around sustainability, policy advocacy, convergence and engagements/ partnerships with the government and other stakeholders.

04. UNICEF's CONTRIBUTION TO RESPONSIVE PARENTING AND STRENGTHENED DELIVERY OF SPECIAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

4.1 Overview

The findings from the contribution tracing are relevant for Evaluation Question 2.1 and specifically for the sub-evaluation question EQ 2.1.4 -*To what extent has UNICEF support contributed to the broader national and state-level priorities?* However, given the unique nature of the methodology and the case study approach taken by the evaluation team, the findings from the Contribution Tracing are presented in a separate chapter in the report.

This section presents the findings from the Contribution Tracing to two high-level questions posed by UNICEF ICO, examining outputs related to two key components of the Education Programme.

- **Contribution Claim 1 (Responsive Parenting):** Increased awareness among ICDS officials as a result of UNICEF's technical support has led to increased programming around responsive parenting
- **Contribution Claim 2 (Out-of-School Children):** UNICEF Education Programme's technical support to identify and map out-of-school children has led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes.

The claim on responsive parenting was tested in three states – Maharashtra, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh while the claim on out-of-school children was tested in two states – Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. For each claim, the evaluation team developed a series of 'hypothesised causal chain,' using 'process tracing' and competing hypotheses or rival claims to be tested. The evaluation team then specified the evidence we would expect or like to see for each component of the causal chain if the 'hypothesis' was true. The data collection by the evaluation team then focused on collating evidence. As described in Section 2 and Annexure 5, the analysis focused on assessing each piece of evidence for both the level of confidence that this evidence exists when the claim is true (sensitivity) as well as the level of confidence that this evidence might exist even if the claim is false (type I Error). More information on Sensitivity and Type 1 error values and the parameters for assigning values are presented in Annexure 6. The values were then plugged into the Bayesian formula to measure confidence in the contribution claims and to update the measures of confidence based on emerging knowledge. Table 20 provides the qualitative rubric that was applied to interpret the quantitative scores of the level of confidence.

Table 20: Qualitative Description of the Level of Confidence

Practically certain that () is true	0.99+
Reasonably certain that () is true	0.95 – 0.99
Highly confident that () is true	0.85 – 0.95
Cautiously confident that () is true	0.70 – 0.85
More confident than not confident that () is true	0.50 – 0.70
Neither confident nor not confident that () is true (or false) – no idea	0.5
More confident than not confident that () is false	0.30 – 0.50
Cautiously confident that () is false	0.15 – 0.30
Highly confident that () is false	0.05 – 0.15
Reasonably certain that () is false	0.01 – 0.05
Practically certain that () is false	Less than 0.01

The findings from Contribution Tracing analysis are structured along the various components of the hypothesis and the alternate hypothesis before presenting the evaluation team's assessment of the overall confidence in the claim and causal mechanism as a whole.

4.2 Increased awareness among ICDS officials as a result of UNICEF's technical support has led to increased programming around responsive parenting

Summary of the Contribution: The evaluation found low confidence in the causal claim that UNICEF's technical support has led to increased awareness of responsive parenting among ICDS officials, resulting in increased programming around this area. The low confidence is due to the lack of evidence on UNICEF's advocacy with government functionaries and points to the need for more documentation of such activities. However, we are 'practically certain' that UNICEF's direct technical and financial support has led to increased programming around responsive parenting, which was explored as an alternate hypothesis to the causal link.

The first contribution claim on responsive parenting was broken down into three components or hypotheses:

- H1: UNICEF delivered technical support to the ICDS officials at all levels on parental engagement and responsive parenting
- H2: There is increased awareness about parental engagement and responsive parenting among ICDS officials at all levels due to UNICEF technical support
- H3: Increased awareness among ICDS officials, at the state level has led to increased programming around responsive parenting

For this claim, two alternate hypothesis or explanation was explored in all three states:

- AH1: The pandemic and extended closures of schools and anganwadi centres (ECE centres) necessitated the funding and implementation of parenting programmes focused on engaging parents to support education and learning environments
- AH2: Direct technical and financial support provided by UNICEF has led to increased programming or activities around responsive parenting within the ICDS department

4.2.1 Findings on the hypotheses

Table 21 illustrates the different components of the claim and the assessment of the posterior confidence.

Table 21: Posterior Confidence of the Hypotheses of Claim 1 on Responsive Parenting

Hypothesis	Maharashtra	Odisha	Uttar Pradesh
H1: UNICEF delivered technical support to the ICDS officials at all levels on parental engagement and responsive parenting	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
H2:There is increased awareness about parental engagement and responsive parenting among ICDS officials at all levels due to UNICEF technical and advocacy support	0.9233	0.9797	0.9891
H3: Increased awareness among ICDS officials, at the state level has led to increased programming around responsive parenting	0.1500	0.1500	0.1500

We have summarised the evidence and findings around the different components of the claims.

Hypothesis 1: UNICEF delivered technical support to the ICDS officials at all levels on parental engagement and responsive parenting.

The posterior confidence in this component of the claim is 1.00 (Practically Certain) – this implies that based on the evidence observed, we are 'practically certain' that UNICEF extended technical support to the ICDS officials at all levels on parental engagement and responsive parenting.

There is strong evidence that **UNICEF extended technical support on parental engagement and responsive parenting** in terms of capacity building of anganwadi workers, CDPOs, state-level master trainers, supervisors and caregivers (Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Odisha), contributed towards the development of training manuals and handbooks (in Maharashtra), extended technical assistance to develop a tool to monitor the quality implementation and reach and efficacy of Responsive Caregiving Programme (in Maharashtra) and developed content and resource materials to implement responsive parenting activities such as activity calendars (in Odisha).

The documentary evidence ranged from letters and written messages from the relevant department of ICDS to government orders, handbooks, toolkits, materials and presentations prepared by the implementing partners or directly by UNICEF. The type and nature of evidence varied based on the programming context in each state. For example, in Maharashtra, we collected documentary evidence from UNICEF as well as the implementing partner, while in Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, we relied more on government documents, such as letters. A detailed description of documents and evidence of the nature of technical support is outlined in the table 22.

Table 22: Evidence of capacity building on parental engagement and responsive parenting

Uttar Pradesh	• Letters received from the Department of Integrated Child Development Services provide evidence regarding the training and capacity-building programmes conducted with support from UNICEF for anganwadi workers and TSG members
Odisha	• The ECD case study document by the ICDS department outlines the technical support provided by UNICEF towards the design of responsive parenting-related activities • Materials on activities for parental engagement in children's education (such as *Kuni* calendar) include UNICE''s logo as an acknowledgement of UNICEF's support • Letter of the partnership between the government institute and UNICEF describing the adaptation of responsive parenting activities in 17 non-dominant mother tongue-based languages
Maharashtra	• The PCA, with the implementing partner, provide evidence of the activities supported by UNICEF to strengthen the capacity of ICDS for responsive parenting, including training and capacity-building activities, the development of resource materials and handbook for anganwadi workers. It also provides evidence of the support provided by UNICEF to develop a tool for monitoring the quality of the implementation of the responsive parenting programme • Presentation by the implementing partner providing an update on the activities implemented with support of UNICEF to build the capacity of anganwadi workers, CDPOs, supervisors and state-level master trainers. • The newsletter by the implementing partner provides evidence of the 'reach' of the support to strengthen the capacity of the anganwadi workers • Handbook on responsive care and parenting programme for anganwadi workers is evidence of technical support provided by UNICEF towards creating guidelines for programme implementation • Government Orders/ letters from the ICDS department at the state level inviting officials for training on responsive parenting

The interviews with the relevant external stakeholders in the states also validated and strengthened the evidence base of the technical support provided by UNICEF.

"I have also received 3-4 kinds of training on ECCE from UNICEF which placed a lot of importance on parenting and mother tongue based ECCE."

"The focus on parenting in training has increased recently."

"With the technical support received from UNICEF, we have developed a handbook for anganwadi workers."

"For responsive parenting, we made some posters, and designed a mascot called Tiki Mausi. This was a local animated female character who will reach out to the parents and build awareness among the parents that they have to teach their children. She would tell the parents about the importance of early childhood education. In all these practices, it was UNICEF who provided us input, prepared the material, and provided feedback."

Hypothesis 2: There is increased awareness about parental engagement and responsive parenting among ICDS officials at all levels due to UNICEF technical support.

The posterior confidence in this component of the claim ranged from 0.9233 in Maharashtra to 0.9891 in Uttar Pradesh. Based on the evidence received for Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, we are 'reasonably certain' that there has been increased awareness about parental engagement and responsive parenting among the ICDS officials due to UNICEF's technical support. In Maharashtra, the posterior value of 0.9233 implies that we are 'highly confident' that this component of the claim is true.

We were able to draw evidence on the 'increased awareness' primarily through interviews with the relevant government stakeholders at the state and district levels. The interviews at the state level sought to understand the stakeholders' perception of increased awareness among government officials at the state and district levels. In contrast, interviews at the district level reported self-awareness or improved awareness among the caregivers. In Maharashtra, confidence was marginally lower than in the other two states, as the evaluation team had limited opportunities to interact with officials at the district level.

"During the last 3 years, we have seen some changes. For example, we understood that the children are coming to Anganwadi centers only for 3-4 hours, but they are with their parents the rest of the time. So, if we are aware of how to do parenting, it will have a good impact on our child. The learning outcome and behaviour of the child have been changed due to this type of intervention."

- KII Respondent

Hypothesis 3: Increased awareness among ICDS officials, at the state level has led to increased programming around responsive parenting.

The posterior confidence in this component of the claim is 0.15 in all states. This implies that based on the available evidence, ***we are 'highly confident' that this hypothesis is false***. To find evidence for this component, the evaluation team posed questions to the key informants at the state level on changes that happened in the department or programming due to increased awareness on parental engagement and on responsive parenting. However, the respondents couldn't confirm this hypothesis. One key reason could be that much of the training or capacity-building work around responsive parenting or parental engagement was already linked to an activity or programme, supported by UNICEF. The absence of documentary evidence means that the evaluation team was not able to access sufficient data, and the limited timeframe of the project also meant that the evaluation team was unable to seek additional information from the key informants to establish the causal link of increased awareness leading to increased programming.

The absence of documentary evidence indicates the need for additional efforts for evidence generation and documentation. The evaluation team was not provided evidence of policy advocacy efforts conducted by UNICEF that could have translated into 'improved awareness' among the ICDS officials. Research on the outcome of advocacy efforts of UNICEF to inform policy or programme, feedback reports from the participants of the training, capacity gap assessments and better documentation of meeting minutes addressing advocacy efforts could have strengthened the evidence for this component.

4.2.1 Findings on the Alternate Hypothesis

The table 23 presents the assessment of posterior confidence for the alternate hypothesis that was explored for this claim.

Table 23: Posterior Confidence for the Alternate Hypotheses for Claim 1 on Responsive Parenting

Hypothesis	Maharashtra	Odisha	Uttar Pradesh
AH1: Pandemic and extended closures of schools and Anganwadi centres (ECE centres) necessitated the funding and implementation of parenting programmes focused on engaging parents to support education and learning environments.	0.9698	0.9995	1.0000
AH2: Direct technical and financial support provided by UNICEF has led to to increased programming or activities around responsive parenting within ICDS department.	0.9995	0.9995	0.9996

AH1: Pandemic and extended closures of schools and Anganwadi centres (ECE centres) necessitated the funding and implementation of parenting programmes focused on engaging parents to support education and learning environments.

The posterior confidence of the alternate claim ranged from 0.97 in Maharashtra to 1.00 in Uttar Pradesh. Based on the evidence observed, we are highly confident in Maharashtra, and 'practically certain' in Odisha and Uttar Pradesh that this alternate claim is true.

Document review and key informant interviews highlight the facilitating role that pandemic played in initiating activities or scaling up programmes around responsive parenting. For example, the *Ghare Ghare Arunima* calendar implemented by the Odisha government was meant to deliver home-based play-way, an interactive method of education during the

"During COVID period, we came up with Kuni Calendar and Ghare Ghare Arunima"

- KII Respondent

extended closure of anganwadi centre during the pandemic. In Maharashtra, responsive parenting programmes (such as the *Ankur* programme) was launched in 2018 and hence the focus on responsive parenting predates covid. However, with covid, there was a digital adaptation of the *Ankur* programme which helped with the programme's scale and state-wide implementation. During Covid, the videos on different aspects of child development were circulated to anganwadi workers, who then shared them with parents and caregivers via WhatsApp or during home visits. Prior to the closures of the anganwadi centres during the pandemic, these activities were demonstrated in bimonthly parent meetings at the pre-primary centres by the anganwadi workers to the parents.

However, evidence also indicates that UNICEF played a vital role in supporting these initiatives during the pandemic. For example, UNICEF extended financial support for the content development and digitisation of the content for the *Ankur* programme in Maharashtra. In addition, the technical support extended by UNICEF for the design of the *Ghare Ghare Arunima* calendar has been outlined under Hypothesis 1.

"Ghare Ghare Arunima was developed by UNICEF for 3-6 years of children during COVID period."

"During covid, the work done by UNICEF came in front of everyone. Though they are working in multiple fields but during covid we saw their effectiveness. Through the medium of Baal Pitara, calendar for parents, the responsive parenting work was done. They visited the area and were in contact with Anganwadi workers and us. So, they helped a lot during Corona"

AH2: Direct technical and financial support provided by UNICEF has led to increased programming or activities around responsive parenting within ICDS department.

The posterior confidence in this component of the claim ranged from 0.995 in Maharashtra to 0.9996 in Uttar Pradesh. Based on the evidence received, we are 'practically certain' that there has been increased programming or activities around responsive parenting in all three states due to UNICEF's direct technical assistance. There is strong evidence that UNICEF's direct technical and financial support has led to increased programming or activities around responsive parenting within the ICDS department as outlined below:

- In Uttar Pradesh, *'Dular programme'* on responsive caregiving and early learning programme for parents of children from birth to six years received support from UNICEF. This programme used an innovative Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) mechanism to reach out to parents. Another initiative on responsive parenting in Uttar Pradesh was called *'Khushi Ki Chaupal'*, a community-based meeting to discuss activities around early childhood education with the parents. UNICEF also supported this initiative and the development of '*Bal Pitara*' app that provided access to responsive parenting packages (32-week calendar)
- In Odisha, UNICEF supported the ICDS department to launch '*Vatsalya*' – a home-based, parent-led early stimulation programme. UNICEF also extended technical support for the *Ghare Ghare Arunima and Kunis*' calendar which provided a calendar-based list of activities for children in various age categories, to be implemented with support from parents and grandparents at home.
- In Maharashtra, UNICEF extended technical and financial support and worked with its implementing partner to support the design, implementation and monitoring of the *Ankur-* Responsive Caregiving Programme in 2018 The package includes activities from all the domains of development- physical development, sensory, cognitive and perceptual development, creativity, language, literacy, and communication, personal, social and emotional development to help establish a play-based learning routine for children at home.

For this component, we have considered two types of evidence: documentary evidence and key informant interviews. The description of the documentary evidence is provided in table 24.

Table 24: Evidence of Technical Support Extended by UNICEF for Programming Around Responsive Parenting

Uttar Pradesh	• Instructional letters from the ICDS department on *Bal Pitara, Dular* and *ECCE Chaupal* activities which refers to UNICEF's contribution • Government Orders to the ICDS officers at the district level outlining activities to be undertaken under the responsive parenting packages referencing UNICEF developed material or handbook
Odisha	• The talking points of the Principal Secretary provides an overview of all the responsive parenting interventions implemented by the states such as *Kuni* Calendar and men-streaming and acknowledge UNICEF as the technical partner in the programme • ICDS plan provides progress on the implementation of *Vatsalya* campaign, mother tongue-based responsive parenting, Happy parenting, posters, *Ghare Ghare Arunima* and *Kuni* Calendar, draft ECCE Policy • The ECD case study documented by the ICDS department describes the responsive parenting interventions (*Kuni* Calendar) and acknowledges UNICEF's role in supporting the intervention.

	• The letter from the Principal Secretary to the DSWOs informs the release of the *'Ghare Ghare Arunima'* calendar and provides evidence of implementation of responsive parenting-related activities in the state
Maharashtra	• The PCA between UNICEF and the implementing partner describes the partnership for piloting and scale up responsive parenting packages in Maharashtra and the financial support extended by UNICEF towards the programme
	• Handbook on responsive care and parenting programme for anganwadi workers provide evidence of UNICEF's partnerships with ICDS to implement the *Ankur* Responsive Caregiving Programme to help establish a play-based learning routine for children at home. It also describes the activities included under the responsive parenting package.
	• Presentation by the implementing partner on the responsive parenting programme – *Ankur* acknowledges UNICEF's financial contribution towards the programme implementation
	• The newsletter by the implementing partner provides evidence of the various activities conducted as part of responsive parenting and acknowledges UNICEF's role through co-branding and inclusion of UNICEF logo

The testimonies from the government stakeholders and implementing partners at the state level also provide evidence of increased activities or programming around responsive parenting on account of UNICEF's support.

> *"Universalising the responsive parental programme in a big way, not through only one medium but using different channels, like Dular or Khushi ki Chaupal. So, these things went well."*
>
> *"We got so many benefits from the Chaupal meeting. Parents of children aged between 3 to 6 years old attend the meeting. In meetings, we teach activities by the medium of story, and the parents repeat it with their children. The benefit of the Chaupal meeting is that the number of students has increased, and parents now know the importance of Anganwadi. UNICEF helped us in achieving this."*
>
> *"UNICEF ran a pilot, and based on this pilot, quite a number of activities were later designed and developed. UNICEF has given technical support and funding also. The design and implementation of the Aarambh and Ankur programs on responsive parenting, training and capacity building etc. was done by UNICEF. So, the foundation was laid by UNICEF and later implemented by the state.*
> *"Ghare Ghare Arunima has reached homes across the state thanks to the excellent partnership between UNICEF and the state government."*
>
> *"It was UNICEF that developed resources and materials like Kuni Calendars, Nua Arunima etc. We could not have strengthened ECCE in our state without the support of UNICEF."*

4.2.2 Assessment of the Overall Claim

To quantify confidence in the claim as a whole, we have to take the lowest confidence value for an individual component, which is Hypothesis 3. This is because, in Contribution Tracing, the overall claim as a whole is the logical intersection of all components and its overall strength is thus dependent on the weakest link. In summary, our confidence in the causal mechanism that increased awareness around responsive parenting due to UNICEF's technical support has led to increased programming and activities within the ICDS department is low.

While the causal link between increased awareness and increased programming is weak, there is strong evidence of UNICEF's direct financial and technical support to increasing responsive parenting interventions

– which was explored as an alternate hypothesis. The confidence score for this ranges between 0.995 (in Maharashtra and Odisha) and 0.996 in Uttar Pradesh. This implies that we are 'practically certain' in that this hypothesis is true. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that pandemic-led school closure has necessitated the funding and implementation of responsive parenting programmes to support education and learning environments, the role of UNICEF during this pandemic couldn't be ignored and was also well acknowledged during the discussions.

Hence, there is strong evidence to uphold the UNICEF's technical and financial support in increasing programming around responsive parenting. The absence of evidence provides directions towards the strengthening evidence base of UNICEF's interventions. Strengthening monitoring and feedback data from the training participants and implementing evaluation of the advocacy efforts would have increased the confidence in the causal mechanism.

4.3 UNICEF Education Programme's technical support to identify and map out-of-school children has led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes.

Summary of the Contribution: The confidence in the causal claim that UNICEF's support has led to increased identification and mapping of out-of-school children and in turn, resulted in strengthened delivery of special training programmes is low. As with the first claim, this is due to the absence of evidence linking increased mapping to strengthened delivery. However, evidence confirms that UNICEF's direct technical and financial support 'certainly' led to improved quality of special training programmes.

The main objective of the claim was to establish UNICEF's contribution towards strengthening of special training programmes and exploring if there are reasonable 'casual links' between the improved tracking and mapping of out-of-school children with the strengthened delivery of special training programmes. The contribution claim was broken down into the three main components or hypotheses.

- H1: UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Department of Education and NGOs to develop technology-based and other solutions for mapping, tracking and identification of out-of-school children
- H2: UNICEF-supported technology-based and other solutions have led to better tracking and identification of out-of-school children by the Department of Education and other relevant departments, such as the Directorate of Mass Education
- H3: Increased tracking and mapping of out-of-school children, as a result of UNICEF-supported technology-based and other solutions has led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes

For this claim, three alternate explanations were investigated.

- AH1: GOs/ CSOs/CBOs/ social activists independent of UNICEF, including their technical and advocacy efforts has to led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes for out-of-school children at the state and district level *(Tested in both Uttar Pradesh and Bihar)*
- AH2: Focus on identification and mainstreaming of out-of-school children as part of state plans for the elimination of child labour has led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes *(Tested only in Bihar)*
- AH3: The direct technical and financial support provided by UNICEF has led to the strengthened delivery of special training programmes *(Tested in both Uttar Pradesh and Bihar)*

In Bihar, the presence of the State Action Plan for Elimination of Child Labour was identified as a possible rival claim for improved out-of-school children programming and strengthened delivery of special training programmes through document review and consultations with the UNICEF ICO. Hence, this alternate hypothesis was explored in the state.

4.3.1 Findings on the hypotheses

Table 25 presents the assessment of the posterior confidence for the different components of the claim.

Table 25: Posterior Confidence of the Hypotheses of Claim 2 on Out-of-School Children

Hypothesis	Bihar	Uttar Pradesh
H1: UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Department of Education and NGOs to develop technology-based and other solutions for mapping, tracking and identification of out-of-school children	0.999	0.9990
H2: UNICEF-supported technology-based, and other solutions have led to better tracking and identification of out-of-school children by the Department of Education and other relevant departments, such as the Directorate of Mass Education	0.8500	0.9698
H3: Increased tracking and mapping of out-of-school children, as a result of UNICEF-supported technology-based and other solutions, has led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes	0.2436	0.0005

In the subsequent sections, we have presented the findings and evidence for the different components of the claims.

H1: UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Department of Education and NGOs to develop technology-based and other solutions for mapping, tracking and identification of out-of-school children.

The posterior confidence in this component of the claim is 0.999 in both Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Based on the evidence from documentary review and KIIs we are 'practically certain' that UNICEF extended technical and financial support to the Department of Education and NGOs to develop technology-based and other solutions for mapping, tracking and identification of out-of-school children.

In Bihar, UNICEF supported the development of the *BEST* app – a real-time monitoring of elementary schools, including a module on out-of-school children. Furthermore, UNICEF was closely involved with Bihar Education Project Council to provide technical support on data formats used by district officials to capture data on migration and out-of-school children and supported the data collection, analysis, and reporting. UNICEF also extended technical support on conducting validation checks and systems to improve the reliability and credibility of the data.

In Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF extended technical support to the Department of Basic Education to develop the *SHARDA* portal and app that helps identify out-of-school children, ensure their re-enrolment, assess their learning levels, and mainstream them through special education training and track their overall progress. Additionally, UNICEF has extended technical and financial support to conduct household surveys to identify out-of-school children in the state.

The documents collated by the evaluation team and the evidence presented in these documents are summarised in the table 26.

Table 26: Evidence of UNICEF's Support for Developing Technology and Other Solutions for Tracking Out-of-School Children

Bihar	- Minutes of meetings from the Department of Mass education referencing UNICEF support to develop mobile app for tracking dropouts and learning outcome - Guidelines issued by the Department of Mass Education referencing the use of BEST app and household surveys to track out-of-school children - Government Order issued by the Department of Mass Education to all the district programming officers providing guidance on the data template for mapping out-of-school children - Bihar Education Project Council Minutes of the meeting provide evidence of UNICEF's participation towards conducting sample surveys through mobile app, creating a database on out-of-school children as well as technical support provided by UNICEF towards data collection, analysis, and reporting. - Guidelines developed by UNICEF to conduct household surveys and describing the process for conducting validation checks on data - Documents received from UNICEF confirming the financial support extended to a technical agency to support the out-of-school-children data format and data validation - Government Order by the Bihar Education Project Council to the district officials on the use of the BEST app and the data templates to mapping the out-of-school children
Uttar Pradesh	- The State Plan 2020-21 by the Department of Basic Education which includes a chapter on out-of-school children acknowledges UNICEF's technical support towards the formulation of guidelines and developing software and portal for data entry and multi-level monitoring. - Instructional letter from the Department of Basic Education to the district officials on the SHARDA portal and app

Select testimonies from the key informant interviews evidencing UNICEF's support towards developing solutions – technology and traditional surveys for mapping, tracking and identifying out-of-school children are presented below.

> *"We have worked a lot on SHARDA app and developing a portal with the help of UNICEF."*
>
> *"We have UNICEF supported team who visits and investigates the children who are still not going to school. Through household surveys, these children are identified and registered."*
>
> *"Key contribution of UNICEF is the resource and technical support provided for conducting surveys and studies on the out-of-school children."*
>
> *"The UNICEF programme is important. At the time when the Government of India portal wasn't ready, we used to capture the data with paper and pencil. It was hectic and challenging to put the data on paper. To reduce such issues, the application was created by UNICEF. The application did work well on the ground."*

H2: UNICEF-supported technology-based and other solutions have led to better tracking and identification of out-of-school children by the Department of Education and other relevant departments such as Directorate of Mass Education.

The posterior confidence in this component of the claim is 0.85 in Bihar and 0.9698 in Uttar Pradesh. Based on the evidence received, we are 'highly confident' in Bihar and 'reasonably certain' in Uttar Pradesh.

To assess this component of the claim, the evaluation team, during the KIIs, sought to understand external stakeholders' perceptions concerning the benefits or utility of the systems and process for mapping out-of-school children supported by UNICEF. The evaluation team also examined the documents to find evidence of improved tracking and mapping of out-of-school children; however, the documentary evidence was limited to presenting quantitative data on out-of-school children, and a pre-post analysis was not possible. Furthermore, the situation of out-of-school children was complicated by Covid, and extended school closures, which could have resulted in higher data reporting. Hence, the evidence for assessment is drawn from the consultations.

Interviews with government stakeholders and implementing partners emphasised the advantage of the technology-based solutions developed with UNICEF support to improve the monitoring of the out-of-school children and their progress, as evidenced in the testimonies below.

"We have identified many children, enrolled them in the nearby schools, and try to reduce the gap in education through the special training programme. For this, a portal was also made, which was developed by the UNICEF."

"Today we have complete details of every single child. You can access the data anywhere. 95% of the teachers use the mobile app to feed the data daily. The government is now encouraging and promoting teachers who identify a greater number of out-of-school children. So, such environment building has been done to bring out-of-school children into the mainstream. Now we identify around 4-5 lakhs of the out-of-school children yearly."

"Due to the technological intervention, we can easily focus on the block, district, school-wise data. Earlier, when we asked for the data, we used to receive the data manually. Through the technology, we receive evidence-based genuine data that we upload in the portal that increased the figures of the data of the children."

H3: Increased tracking and mapping of out-of-school children, as a result of UNICEF-supported technology-based and other solutions, has led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes.

To assess this component of the claim, we relied on documents and KIIs. Documents provided evidence of the contribution of the UNICEF's direct technical support towards strengthening the special training programmes. During the KIIs, the evaluation team probed on the improved tracking and mapping of the out-of-school children and its significance for strengthening the special training programme. The evaluation team found some evidence from the interviews that the mapping and tracking process was an important aspect of strengthening the special training programme. Since the key informants were free to identify any factors that they thought were relevant to strengthening the special training programme, more evidence from the interviews pointed towards the importance of UNICEF's direct support.

More research on the effects and utilisation of the tracking and mapping system for out-of-school children and evaluation of the out-of-school children programme and initiatives could strengthen this component of the claim.

4.3.2 Findings on the alternate hypotheses

The table 27 presents the assessment of posterior confidence for the alternate hypothesis that was explored for this claim.

Table 27: Posterior Confidence for the Alternate Hypotheses for Claim 2 on Out-of-School Children

Alternate Hypotheses	Bihar	Uttar Pradesh
AH1: The activities of other NGOs/ CSOs/CBOs/ social activists, including their technical and advocacy efforts, have led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes for out-of-school children at the state and district level.	0.1598	0.0029
AH2. Focus on identification and mainstreaming of out-of-school children as part of state plans for the elimination of child labour has led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes	0.0001	NA
AH3:The direct technical and financial support provided by UNICEF has led to the strengthened delivery of the special training programmes	1.000	0.9996

The evaluation team explored three potential alternate hypotheses and found no evidence to support the first two hypotheses. The evidence for the first two alternate hypotheses was drawn from the interviews with the key stakeholders – the evaluation team, during the KIIs, probed for other factors that could have potentially contributed to the strengthened delivery of the special training programmes. Both documentary and KIIs were considered evidence for the third alternate hypothesis.

AH1: The activities of other NGOs/ CSOs/CBOs/ social activists, including their technical and advocacy efforts, have led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes for out-of-school children at the state and district level.

To draw evidence for the first alternate hypothesis, the evaluation team enquired about other organisations that the stakeholder knew about that worked on issues related to out-of-school children and special training programmes and the nature of support provided by these organisations. During the interviews, the respondents mentioned other organisations that were providing similar training or support to that of UNICEF, such as implementing special training programmes, supporting the capacity building of the community volunteer or operating mobile learning centres. However, the organisations referenced during the consultations were partners of UNICEF with whom they have financial partnerships. Hence, no information was found to substantiate this alternate hypothesis. Therefore, the probative value of 0.1598 in Bihar implies that we are 'cautiously certain', and 0.0029 in Uttar Pradesh means 'practically certain' that this alternate hypothesis is false.

AH2. Focus on identification and mainstreaming of out-of-school children as part of state plans for the elimination of child labour has led to strengthened delivery of special training programmes

The second alternate hypothesis sought to understand the significance of the State Action Plan for the elimination of child labour in strengthening the delivery of special training programmes through discussions with the stakeholders. The State Action Plan identified 'education' as key intervention strategy for reducing and eliminating child labour. However, consultations with external stakeholders highlight that the education department is responsible for providing access to education and remedial support on learning gaps to the identified child labour or out-of-school children. This is achieved through convergence and coordination between the labour and education departments. Hence, no information was found to substantiate this alternate hypothesis. Therefore, the probative value of 0.999 in Bihar means that we are 'practically certain' that this alternate hypothesis is not true.

AH3:The technical and financial support provided by UNICEF has led to the strengthened delivery of the special training programmes.

The third alternate hypothesis sought to understand and assess if the direct technical and financial support provided by UNICEF has led to the strengthened delivery of the special training programmes. The posterior confidence in this component of the claim is 1.000 in Bihar and 0.9996 in Uttar Pradesh. Based on the evidence received, we are 'practically certain' that the component of the claim is true. There is strong evidence that UNICEF extended technical and financial support to strengthen special training programmes.

In Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF provided support to conduct training of the master trainers, SMC members, district coordinators and teachers and develop learning and bridge course materials for the special training programmes.

In Bihar, UNICEF extended technical and financial support to implement innovative programmes such as the mobile library or *'school in the bus'* to create an enabling learning environment for out-of-school children, build the capacity of community volunteer (*Shiksha Sevak* or *Tola Sevaks*) on remedial support for out-of-school children, develop training modules and conduct training of master trainers through the state institutions, provide technical inputs to review and revise flexible learning guidelines and establish mobile learning centres for mainstreaming of out-of-school children in seven districts in partnership with implementing partners.

The documentary evidence to substantiate this alternate hypothesis and the description of the evidence in the documents is outlined in the table 28.

Table 28: Evidence of UNICEF's support to strengthening Special Training Programmes

Bihar	• Letter from UNICEF addressed to the Bihar Education Project Council outlining funding support to develop training modules and train master trainers • Letter from Bihar Education Project Council informing UNICEF of the capacity building programme for master trainer conducted and requesting for release of funds • Letter from the State Project Director, Bihar Education Project Council informing the district officials of the establishment of the mobile learning centres by UNICEF in partnership with the select NGOs • Minutes of the meeting from the Bihar Education Project Council referencing UNICEF support in the review and revision of the flexible learning modules, training module and guidelines and also referencing UNICEF staff as participants in the meeting • Letter(s) from Bihar Education Project Council informing the district officials of the training workshops for the *Tola/ Shiksha Sevaks* that will be conducted with support from UNICEF
Uttar Pradesh	• The State Plan 2020-21 outlines the training of master trainers on special training and nodal teachers with support from UNICEF • Guideline outlining the special training programme for out-of-school children

The evaluation team has triangulated the evidence from the document review through interviews with the key stakeholders. Select quotes from the interview provided below will strengthen the evidence of the support provided by UNICEF towards strengthening the special training programme.

"UNICEF has supported in conducting training programmes for the teachers and Tola Sevaks as well. In addition, they aided us by providing materials."

"With UNICEF, we had a campaign on out-of-school children, and the main medium for this campaign was our bus. So, in this bus we have a library with books in both Hindi and English language for the primary students. They can also read and spend some time playing on our bus. The children are welcome to participate in the sports. The bus is multipurpose like we make a shed with space with a favourable

atmosphere. Then after that, some children like to paint or draw; we also have materials like colours in the bus. We also have laptops on our bus."

"UNICEF came with 3 teams and within 13 days, they visited 75 districts and trained the 9000 nodal teachers on out-of-school children. The result was huge. So, it's not only the technical support but also reaching out to all the 75 districts, with teams, time, quality support and handholding at the block level."

4.3.3 Assessment of the Overall Claim

The overall confidence for the claim is determined by the lowest confidence value among the hypotheses, which is Hypothesis 3 in this case. In summary, we are 'cautiously confident' in Bihar and 'practically certain' that the causal link between improved tracking and mapping of out-of-school children and strengthened delivery of special training programmes is false. More documented evidence on the impact of the improved provision of detailed data and evidence on out-of-school children in the education system could strengthen the causal claim.

While the causal link between improved tracking and mapping of out-of-school children and strengthened delivery of special training programmes is weak, there is strong evidence of UNICEF's direct financial and technical support to strengthening special training programmes – which was explored as an alternate hypothesis. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, we are 'practically certain' that this is true.

The evaluation team found no evidence to validate the other two alternate hypotheses; hence, it has been ruled out.

05. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the overall conclusions based on summarised evidence and findings of the evaluation. These are presented in line with the evaluation objectives outlined in the ToR.

5.1 Achievement of UNICEF's Education Programme in the priority areas of Early Childhood Education, Out-of-School Children and Quality Teaching and Learning

The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and coherence of the UNICEF Education Programme in achieving the intended results and outcomes across the three priority areas. Overall, the Education Programme across the six output areas and the intervention strategies were relevant to the national priorities and UNICEF's priorities as outlined in the Country Programme documents and strategic plans. There is strong evidence that UNICEF's Education Programme has been effective in achieving key results across the three priority areas over the last four years.

- **Early Childhood Education:** Analysis of monitoring data shows that achievement of results under this area were mixed, and limited in some instances by the pandemic. The evaluation noted significant technical and financial assistance for programming around the promotion of school readiness in the high-burden and tribal typologies of states through interviews with external stakeholders and documentray evidence from RAM. The key activties under this area revolved around formulation of guidelines on operationalisation of ECE policies, revision of ECE curriculum, development of workbooks and other interactive resources in line with the revised curriculum and estbalishment of responsive parenting programmes for home-based learning, especially during the pandemic. These activities along with capacity building and advocacy to improve service delivery has resulted in greater ownership and increased involvement of ICDS functionaries in planning and programming related to ECE. However, the evaluation found that certain planned activities such as the establishment of model anganwadi centres were reported only in certain states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha.

- **Out-of-School Children**: Indicators related to programming for out-of-school children were reported to be on track during the evaluation period. UNICEF's key contribution under this area includes the establishment and strengthening of data systems and training of relevant government functionaries to track and identify out-of-school children, supporting alternative learning institutions such as madrasas and the promotion of flexible learning programmes such as mobile learning centres during the pandemic. In the high burden states, UNICEF's contribution towards special training programmes to mainstream out-of-school children was also noted by external stakeholders. These activities were reported to have improved the ability of government stakeholders to understand and analyse data and develop differential education plans to bring children back to schools.

- **Quality Teaching and Learning:** Most indicators relating to this pillar were reported to be 'on track' with a few indicators, such as that on life skills training, being constrained due to the pandemic and associated school closures. The evaluation noted UNICEF's contribution in supporting state governments to develop quality TLM in line with learning outcomes and demonstration of technical approaches to improve pedagogical practices. External stakeholders also acknowledged UNICEF's support towards other key activities under this pillar, including technical assistance towards analysis of NAS data and dissemination of its findings, training of government functionaries on learning assessments, strengthening the capacity of supportive supervision groups to provide academic mentorship to teachers and initiatives aimed at improving life skills including the development of the Career Guidance Portal. The evaluation also found several instances of programmes set up to improve learning outcomes such as the *Level-Based Learning Programme* in Maharashtra and the *Reading Enhancement Programme* in Assam. These activities have reportedly increased the capacity of DIETs and other institutions to train, supervise and support teachers and to develop targeted plans to improve learning outcomes based on assessment data.

The evaluation noted that the Education Programme was anchored in a mix of upstream and downstream strategies across the three pillars. For any downstream activities, we suggest that UNICEF consider pilot initiatives only in emerging areas of interest. For example, school security, planning for an emergency, and readiness for future pandemics. Any pilot or innovative programmes should be undertaken by UNICEF leveraging the resources (technical and financial resources) of the state governments, embed it within the state teacher support institution SCERTs and from there, the results and findings leading to programmatic actions through the agency of the SCERT down to the DIET and classrooms.

Consultations with internal and external stakeholders also highlighted the need to strengthen the link between the downstream and upstream activities and clearly chart out a clear plan for sustainability that clearly outline how learnings from these downstream activities can be scaled up effectively. The sustainability plan should include UNICEF's assessment of the sustainability of the initiatives across parameters such as key actors and partnerships, co-development of solutions, inclusion and user buy-in (community participation), capacity building, funding, strategy and planning and scalability and replicability. The sustainability plan should also clearly identify avenues for scalability, define the roles and responsibilities of the partners and the timeframe for assessment and scale-up. Given the challenges associated with frequent changes in the leadership and staff turnover in the Government, it is important for UNICEF to secure agreement and buy-in from the relevant government institutions at the start of the programme to replicate and/or scale-up its activities.

The evaluation noted that the external stakeholders, specifically government partners, valued UNICEF's technical support across the three pillars, specifically in the areas of systems/ institutional strengthening and strengthening evidence generation, learning and knowledge management. The implementing partners valued UNICEF's role in policy advocacy. This provides a direction for UNICEF's strategic positioning for the upcoming programme. UNICEF's role in the upcoming Country Programme can be centred around extending technical support for implementation, monitoring, evidence generation, and policy advocacy. Furthermore, the evaluation team also noted that UNICEF has contributed to a design of a range of policies and education programmes, including the National Education Policy and NIPUN Bharat on foundational literacy and numeracy and has successfully placed itself in key positions with the Government at all levels as a strategic partner to guide Government's planning in the education sector. **In the upcoming Country Programme, UNICEF's role must be to ensure the operationalisation and effective implementation of these programmes by supporting the Government in planning, resource mobilisation, and monitoring**.

UNICEF's role during the pandemic was also noted to be relevant, and the interventions across the three pillars were appropriate to respond to the needs of the Government to handle the crises. The evaluation team also noted that selected innovations were made, and many lessons and best practices, including technology innovations, new programmatic areas etc. were identified from UNICEF's response during the crisis which is discussed in Section 6 of this report. **Moving forward, UNICEF needs to strengthen its leadership and internal capacity to respond to emergencies,** and specific recommendations are provided in Section 7 of this report.

The evaluation also noted that the internal coherence is weak, and UNICEF has opportunities to accelerate its effectiveness by strengthening its multi-sectoral approach. UNICEF can create complementarities and synergies within its programme by developing guidance for programmatic convergence, which also outlines the plan for results monitoring. The evaluation also noted UNICEF had enabled inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration of the Government in a limited area, such as early childhood education. However, **UNICEF can potentially add significant value to the upcoming Country Programme by strengthening the Government's intersectoral approaches in the area of DRR, adolescent and skill education, life skills and education in emergencies.**

Partnership with Government at all levels and with implementing partners was a strength of this Education Programme. However, UNICEF needs to strengthen its engagement with other donor organisations,

academic institutions and newly emerging actors in the education sector and leverage its comparative advantage in the role of a convenor more effectively. **The expectation of the external stakeholders is that UNICEF should take a more proactive role in bringing together diverse actors to plan and implement coordinated and collective actions in education.**

UNICEF's human resources seem well allocated and efficiently utilised as the external stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the leadership and technical expertise of staff. In addition, staff of UNICEF was noted to bring a strong experience of working with the government, and an understanding of how the system works, in addition to strong technical and sectoral expertise. The evaluation team also noted that the leadership of UNICEF at the state and national had played an important role in driving partnerships with external stakeholders collaboratively and transparently. However, the responsiveness to the request and needs of the partners was limited due limited technical capacity available at field offices, and the need to build the capacity of the internal staff of UNICEF in emerging areas were highlighted by the external stakeholders.

The evaluation team has also identified a range of best practices across the three pillars and cross-cutting areas which is discussed in Section 6 of this report. However, **the UNICEF's process for monitoring, evaluation and learning requires strengthening, and certain amendments can be made to the reporting systems.** While the RAM reports allow largely for output-level reporting, and there are some provisions for the inclusion of qualitative information describing best practices, innovative programmes and progress updates, the template itself was noted by the internal stakeholders as being 'not user friendly'**. The reporting structure can be re-looked, and there can be flexibility for the inclusion of qualitative findings on enabling and limiting factors, sustainability plan, challenges to sustainability etc. that could guide advocacy efforts and replicability and scalability of the initiatives.** More specific recommendations to improve the UNICEF's capacity to learn and improve its programming is presented in Section 7 of the report.

5.2 Relevance of the State Typology-Based Approach

While the state typology-based programming approach was noted to be relevant to address the contextual barriers in the three state typologies, the implementation of the approach was severely constrained due to factors listed below:

- Absence of clarity among state Programme team on how the typology approach can guide programming.
- Learning and exchange of best practices within and across the typology were limited.
- Performing evidence-based advocacy and planning in the transition states were noted to be a challenge due to funding constraints and the inability of states to undertake demonstrations or pilots. The need for the transition states to undertake downstream activities in new and innovative programming areas was noted.

The absence of a typology-based ToC, results framework or monitoring data hindered the ability of the evaluation team to assess the effectiveness of the approach through secondary information. However, findings from primary data collection point towards the need to revisit the state typology-based programming approach for the upcoming Country Programme. Recommendation for improving this approach is presented in Section 7 of the report.

5.3 Performance of UNICEF's Education Programme in Integrating Gender and Equity Principles

Equity and gender have been articulated within the current Education Programme, and the evaluation noted efforts directed towards addressing the needs of marginalised communities, out-of-school children and gender-responsive education. These efforts were also confirmed and acknowledged by external stakeholders

. Equity dimensions were integrated into the Programme through a focus on integration of out-of-school children and initatives to promote quality learning for children from marginalised communities, such as development of multi-lingual TLM and revision of curriculum within madrasas. Integration of gender was seen in the Programme through activities such as campaigns to address gender barriers to education and specific activities focusing on out-of-school girl children, gendered review of text books etc.

However, the need for strong integration of gender and equity dimensions across all the elements of Education Programme was highlighted by internal and external stakeholders. UNICEF's strategies and operations need to be more explicit with regard to gender-transformative programming and inclusive and equitable quality education and learning. Specific recommendations to address gender and equity dimensions are provided in Section 7 of the report.

5.4 Inputs for the Theory of Change (ToC) to Inform the Development of UNICEF's Education Programme for the Next Country Programme 2023-27.

As presented in Annexure 2.1, the UNICEF Programme Theory of Change (ToC) maps the challenges facing the education goals of the states and potential areas of improvement through UNICEF-supported activities and strategies. UNICEF's strategies to achieve these goals include developing institutional capacity to scale up the delivery of quality education, leveraging decision-makers, communities, and other stakeholders to reduce the proportion of out-of-school children and increase engagement in early childhood education. The ToC elucidates the multiple change pathways originating from these strategies to the six output areas, the three intermediate outcomes, and the overarching goals of the UNICEF Programme.

Based on the Programme ToC, background documents and extensive consultations with the stakeholders, the evaluation team developed an evaluation ToC that laid out the channels for measurable change that could be assessed as part of this evaluation, while taking stock of the role of the intervention activities, assumptions (about reach and behaviour change) as well as external factors on the education outcomes. The evaluators also identified the enabling and disabling assumptions about the reach and behaviour of key stakeholders as well as the external factors. Lastly, there may be external factors completely outside of the spheres of direct and indirect influence of the Programme. These external influences could partly explain the reasons for the achievement of (barriers to) the educational sector goals in the areas, over and above the contributions of the UNICEF Programme. This revised ToC, including the assumptions, risks and potential external factors formed the foundation for developing detailed contribution claims for contribution analysis and contribution tracing hypotheses. Refer to Section 2.2.1 for the reconstructed ToC.

The following suggestions are made by the evaluation team for the revision of the ToC for the upcoming Education Programme:

- Consider capacity building as a vehicle for institutional and system strengthening that can capture an array of activities or support extended by UNICEF. The evaluation findings show that the current model of ToT-based capacity building has worked well at the individual level for master trainers, teachers, AWW and SMC workers as well as at the institutional level for DIET, CRC, BRC etc. Capacity building should also be viewed in combination with other key strategies such as technical support and partnerships, as these strategies reinforce one another. Together they have contributed to all six outputs.
- Consider how technical support can improve institutional strengthening and capacity building. This evaluation finds evidence that technical support—building technology-based solutions for improved tracking out-of-school children, developing guidelines and improving monitoring data quality helped achieve the intended results through strengthening the partners' institutional capacity.

- Future Programme ToC may also explore the role of technical support in promoting policy advocacy. This evaluation found evidence of technical support, especially for pilot interventions, producing useful evidence that fed into developing SOPs, guidelines, and upscaling interventions.

- In the current Programme, strong partnerships with various government departments, implementing partners (CSO/ CBOs), other UNICEF programmes such as C4D, WASH, DRR, health, etc., and onboarding strategic partners like AIR for technical support played a vital role in achieving results. However, the current Programme ToC does not include any outcome or output in relation to partnerships. We recommend UNICEF develop a partnership strategy at the ICO and the state level, and the future Programme ToC identifies clear outputs and outcomes in relation to partnerships.

- UNICEF's financial support to government and implementing partners have helped leverage public and external donor resources for certain activities. Future Programme ToC should include leveraging public and other external resources as an output. Developing strong partnerships also play a vital role in mobilising external finance, and hence the interrelationship between partnerships and financial support should be captured explicitly.

- UNICEF's role in coordination, advocacy and facilitating convergence among various stakeholders including the government is acknowledged by the key stakeholders. The future ToC should explicitly take into account UNICEF's advocacy work, as well as its outputs, such as its participation in numerous committees that provide inputs into policy and operationalise the policy.

- This evaluation found limited evidence on the utilisation of the research and evaluation to inform policy or programme planning and implementation. The current ToC does not acknowledge UNICEF's role as an agency driving research and learning agenda. The future Programme ToC should explicitly link UNICEF's knowledge management function to a sector-wide research and learning agenda.

06. BEST PRACTICES
AND LESSONS LEARNED

6.1 Overview

This chapter includes a discussion of the best practices and lessons learnt from the evaluation, followed by conclusion and recommendations extracted from the findings of the evaluations. We believe the learnings will have a wider impact on UNICEF and can be leveraged for programming in the education sector and in other sectoral works within ICO.

6.2 Best Practices

A. Technology solutions as enablers for increased coverage and improved monitoring of programmes: This Education Programme has witnessed an increased use of technology-enabled solutions (partly explained by COVID-19 disruptions to schooling) across various interventions, including e-training of the teachers, e-content and learning materials, mobile apps for improved tracking of out-of-school children and delivery of age-appropriate content through the use of audio-visual means. UNICEF has also successfully leveraged low-cost technology solutions such as radios and televisions to impart education during the pandemic or use interactive voice response (IVR) to engage parents in responsive parenting (in Odisha and Maharashtra). The *Diksha Portal* of the Ministry of Education, which was supported by UNICEF, had a positive impact on teachers' capacity and improved their access to digital content and curriculum. The career portal is another innovation that strengthens school-to-work transition by providing students, parents and teachers with information on career opportunities. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF has successfully leveraged mobile apps (for example *BEST* and *SHARDA* Portal, respectively) to better track and monitor out-of-school children.

UNICEF has also successfully leveraged technology solutions such as telemonitoring, WhatsApp and online surveys to facilitate better data collection and strengthen the real-time monitoring capabilities of UNICEF. For example, in Odisha, the telemonitoring method was deployed to track the utilisation and uptake of *Kuni Calendar* (ECE responsive parental interventions) and understand the opportunities and barriers to parental engagement in education.

The stakeholders consulted during the evaluation highlighted that the technology-led solutions have helped to improve the learning environment, and enhanced access to educational materials and resources. It has also resulted in larger outreach, coverage and scale-up of the Programme or interventions.

B. Strengthened institutional capacity to integrate DRR in education: There is a growing recognition of the impact of climate change on the education system, specifically on the children's access to learning facilities, physical health and well-being and their academic performance. In this Programme cycle, states like Odisha, Bihar and Assam invested a lot of efforts towards strengthening the school safety programme. For example, in Odisha, UNICEF supported the development of guidelines, standard operating procedures SOPs, training modules and a handbook on disaster preparedness for improved mitigation, preparedness, and preparing a disaster management plan for educational institutions. As a result, all schools in Odisha are required to develop a disaster preparedness plan based on the guidelines of the Odisha Education Department. There were also efforts towards integrating disaster management into the school curriculum. In Assam, UNICEF supported the State Disaster Management Authority in developing guidelines for ensuring child-friendly spaces in emergencies, in line with the National School Safety Policy guidelines.

C. Improved equity and access to education through mother-tongue based multi-lingual education: This Education Programme also witnessed a focus on multi-lingual education. Consultations with the external stakeholders during the evaluation noted that availability of instruction materials and delivery of instructions in non-dominant languages has helped in improving the engagement of children and learning environment. For example, in Odisha, early childhood education materials such as the ECE calendar activities etc. was developed in Oriya and in over 15 non-dominant tribal language. In Assam, UNICEF supported the SCERT and Samagra Shiksha in developing learning material in Bodo, Hindi and Bengali, in addition to Assamese. UNICEF

also supported language mapping efforts in Odisha that allowed the state to understand areas where children face a language disadvantage and define appropriate strategies for formally including non-dominant languages in teaching and learning. In addition, UNICEF supported the review and development of textbooks in tribal and regional languages for children and the capacity strengthening of teachers in select states.

D. Integrating mental health and life skills within secondary education curriculum: In states like Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, there was substantial focus on the emotional well-being of children, which was further catalysed due to COVID-19. Tamil Nadu has successfully integrated life skills within the school curriculum framework, ensuring the sustainability and ownership of the initiatives. In collaboration with an implementing partner NalandaWay Foundation, UNICEF Tamil Nadu developed well-being and life skills workbook for adolescents studying in standards 9-12, which was in line with UNICEF's Life Skills Framework and adhered to the TNSCERT guidelines. The development of the materials and resources used a participatory and collaborative approach involving teachers as resource persons. Furthermore, the *'Take it Eazy'* programme was launched with support from UNICEF in Tamil Nadu to address adolescents' emotional well-being and life skills through stories and art. The programme uses IVRS technology to deliver stories that equip students with coping strategies and handle stress(38). According to the findings of the evaluation, the programme had resulted in significant increase in the overall well-being of the children, specifically in emotion well-being, problem-solving ability, social relationship and decision-making ability.

E. Leveraging volunteers to enhance capacity and sustainability of the interventions: The current Education Programme has witnessed multiple initiatives that leverage volunteer support to improve the learning outcomes of children. These initiatives help address capacity gaps within the government systems (for example, staff vacancy among teachers) and have positive implications for the efficiency and sustainability of these initiatives. In Bihar, through the creation and capacity strengthening of *Shiksha* or *Tola Sevak*, a cadre of volunteer workers, UNICEF and relevant government departments have strengthened their efforts towards identifying, tracking and mainstreaming out-of-school children. This also has wider implications for the sustainability of programmes as it augments the government and UNICEF technical resources. In Odisha, the *Alternative Learning and Mentorship Programme* was launched during COVID(39) in collaboration with State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) to bridge digital and learning gaps in the state and reach the most marginalised children. The pre-service teachers studying for the diploma in elementary education (D.El.Ed) extended teaching-learning support to the children in their community, thereby ensuring continuity in education. These pre-service teachers mentored the students on curricular, co-curricular and socio-emotional aspects. These pre-service teachers also acquired skills in 'multi-grade, multi-level classroom management, use of the developed digitisation materials, exploring *Diksha* and *Madhu* app, school safety and child protection issues and hygiene behaviour' through the ALMP programme's training components.

F. Strengthening teacher capacity programmes through focus on active coaching and mentorships: UNICEF continued its investment in teachers' capacity by launching capacity-building programmes on pedagogical skills, classroom management, and practices. UNICEF Maharashtra supported the state SCERT to build a professional development programme for teachers and other stakeholders in the education ecosystem. However, following-up with the trainees to understand the challenges in applying the learning and tools were limited and most often there was no refresher programme. This could be mitigated to some extent by building active coaching and mentoring as part of the capacity building programme.

UNICEF Maharashtra launched the *Kendra Pramukh Academic Leadership Program* in collaboration with SCERT and with technical support from Centre for Equity and Quality in Universal Education (CEQUE). The *Kendra Pramukhs* are academic leaders in the government school system who extend teacher support in a cluster of 10-12 schools. The *Kendra Pramukhs* are trained in data analysis to understand problems of learning and practice, making focused classroom observations, giving effective feedback, and drawing data-based action plans. A unique element of the capacity-building programme is its emphasis on coaching and mentoring. The faculty or resource persons from DIET are trained as 'Master Facilitator' who in turn train the 'Coaches', who in turn coach the *Kendra Pramukhs*. The KPALP programmes also involved establishing

professional learning communities where the *Kendra Pramukhs* can discuss the evidence from the data and work collaboratively with their peer to develop action plans in the clusters. Interviews with KPALP resource persons highlight that teacher coaching positively impacted teaching practices and student learning.

G. Programmatic response to address learning losses due to COVID-19: The pandemic has resulted in significant learning losses, which require targeted interventions to prioritise foundational literacy and numeracy and strengthen the mechanism of instruction delivery by offering bridge courses and catch-up learning. The '*Kalika Chetarike*' is a comprehensive programme launched by the Government of Karnataka with technical support from UNICEF that aligns with the RAPID Learning Recovery Framework developed jointly by UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank. The programme focuses on adjusting the curriculum to focus on fundamentals. The programme has re-designed the existing curriculum to focus on learning recovery and will focus on achieving all the prescribed learning indicators, class-wise, over syllabus-level teaching. The teachers are also provided with a portfolio of Teaching–Learning-Materials (TLMs) that guide them on how to assess children to understand students' current learning levels, group them, use relevant TLMs(39), etc. The programmes also focus on building a cadre of master trainers who support the teachers in giving effective instructions. The programme also includes activities that address the emotional well-being of children, and teachers are equipped to plan and implement these activities.

6.3 Lessons Learned

Maintain an open dialogue and strengthen the annual plan review process throughout the programme cycle for effective engagement with government partners. Various levels of government are essential partners for UNICEF in creating an enabling environment that contributes to meeting the final goals of the Programme, including sustainability. In all the states, UNICEF has sought strong alignments with government institutions and has successfully leveraged public sector resources and capacities to enhance coverage and sustainability of the interventions. However, a strong alignment with the government has a downside. In many states, there has been a dilution of UNICEF focus, resulting in inefficient use of resources. UNICEF staff extended technical support to the government on activities that weren't part of the original work plans. Furthermore, gaps were noted in the evaluation on implementing and sustaining activities, as outlined in the state strategy notes. Interviews with UNICEF stakeholders highlight that government partners at the state level often don't have clarity regarding the overall Country Programme, which also contributes towards the misalignment. Interviews with the government partners brought out the need to strengthen the review of the status of the work plans. For more effective engagement with the state government, UNICEF could consider dissemination activities to appraise the state government of the Country Programme and co-creating state-level ToC in consultation with the focal ministry and quarterly and annual review of the progress on the workplan.

Strengthened convergence and inter-sectoral coordination could improve the efficiency of the programme. Realising the full rights of children requires coordinated efforts across various sectors- education, health, child protection, disaster risk management and communication. For example, in the out-of-school children programming, UNICEF has facilitated coordination in states like Bihar with Education Department and Labour Department. Internally, the UNICEF team coordinates with the child protection team for out-of-school children programming. Coherence with the WASH and DRR sectors (in select states) was also noted to be strong. The integrated approach has delivered some positive results in terms of improving the efficiency of the Programme. The involvement of other sectors has allowed the Education Programme to access additional human and financial resources.

The adaptable and flexible approach to programming adopted by the Education Programme has helped in the rapid response to covid as well enhancing the relevance of the Programme. UNICEF has adopted a flexible and decentralised approach to programming where the field officers are allowed to employ a variety of approaches according to the state context as long as it aligns with the larger Country Programme

objectives. This has enabled the state offices to prioritise certain output areas or interventions within output areas to better align with the state priorities. This flexibility also allowed the UNICEF state offices to better allocate the resources-both financial and technical resources. Furthermore, adaptive mechanisms like mid-term reviews have helped UNICEF revise the Programme strategies and ensure that the interventions are relevant to the state/ national priorities. The evaluation noted that this flexibility of the UNICEF programming approach had enabled them to respond to the covid crisis in a robust and timely manner.

Evidence generation and knowledge management are critical for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions. Throughout this Programme cycle, UNICEF has supported the national and state governments to strengthen and use data for improved planning. The role of UNICEF in strengthening the National Achievement Survey (NAS) through its technical partnership with the American Institute of Research (AIR) and the technical and funding support extended in the dissemination of the NAS findings was appreciated by the stakeholders. The evaluation also noted instances of UNICEF-led and supported research and evidence base to guide intervention designs. There is also a growing emphasis on monitoring and evaluation to inform the planning and implementation of interventions. For example, Odisha conducted a rapid assessment of the *Alternative Learning and Mentorship Programme* to assess student-level outcomes in terms of continued engagement with education, teacher-level outcomes in terms of clarity of programme objectives, motivation towards teaching and ascertain parents' and community's raised awareness towards education. The findings from the evaluation guided the future development of the Programme. The evaluation also noted instances where UNICEF has leveraged evidence-based advocacy to facilitate programming and policy changes.

District-level programming should support learning: The Education Programme was a mix of upstream and downstream activities. The upstream activities involved interventions such as technical support to the NCERT, SCERT, Samagra Shiksha; policy advocacy; strengthening the evidence-based planning; operationalisation of NEP; developing guidelines and standard operating procedures on school safety etc. These strategies can be categorised as advocacy, evidence-based or institutional strengthening and are focused at the state/ national level. UNICEF, especially in the high-burden and tribal states, have supported project implementation or innovative initiatives on a pilot basis at district levels. District-level interventions through partnerships with technical agencies or government institutions helped generate evidence on proof of concept. However, there should be a clear linkage with policy advocacy or large-scale evidence-based programming to facilitate the sustainability of the interventions. This will also require re-imagining UNICEF's strength to convene stakeholders and inform policy dialogue.

Partnerships with technical agencies provide UNICEF with access to technical resources and expand UNICEF's capacity to deliver initiatives. During this Country Programme, UNICEF-ICO and the field offices have effectively leveraged financial and non-financial partnerships with implementing partners and technical agencies. These partnerships have increased UNICEF's presence in the education sector and expanded UNICEF's technical and implementation capacity to engage with government and community stakeholders. The external stakeholders have appreciated UNICEF's approach to partnerships which was collaborative and participatory. UNICEF and its partners worked jointly from the concept phase to implementation and advocacy.

07.RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations were developed based on the assessments, analysis, key findings, and conclusions set out in this report and have been informed by stakeholders' suggestions received during the consultations and the evaluators' own experience. A total of thirteen recommendations were initially proposed by the evaluation team and revised through a series of consultations with the Evaluation Manager, UNICEF's Education Programme team and a recommendations' workshop. The recommendation workshop with stakeholders from the UNICEF ICO, Chief Field Officers, and the ERG members allowed for sense-checking of the recommendations and ensured their relevance and ownership. Annexure 13 includes the concept note outlining the recommendation workshop's objectives, agenda and participants.

Based on inputs received from the consultations and feedback from the recommendations' workshop, the initial recommendations were either deleted, modified or consolidated to arrive at a final list of eight recommendations. The evaluation team has focused on the recommendations that are of the greatest significance and utility for the UNICEF Education Programme. It includes a description of the responsible organisations, their priority (high or medium) and time horizon (short (< 9 months)/medium (9-24 months)). In the interests of maximising the utility of this section, low-priority and long-term recommendations were not made.

Recommendation 1: UNICEF to prioritise key areas of programmatic focus where UNICEF has a comparative advantage and based on local needs in the next Education Programme	**Responsible Organisation:** UNICEF ICO, UNICEF Field Offices
Priority: High	**Timeframe:** Short (within the design process of the next Education Programme)

As noted under EQ 1.1 and EQ 1.3 under relevance, UNICEF has carried out various activities and interventions across the three state typologies. Given the resource constraints and funding gap highlighted under EQ 3.1 (efficiency), UNICEF runs the risk of spreading itself too thin. **Therefore, we strongly recommend that UNICEF pursue its work in a limited number of programmatic areas.** The evaluation team has identified such thematic areas and mapped them to the larger technical areas of work based on our analysis of UNICEF's priorities in the current Education Programme and its comparative advantages. However, we **strongly recommend that UNICEF prioritise the programmatic areas at the national and state level based on a detailed education sectoral analysis** that covers all of the sectors in education: early childhood education, primary education and foundational learning, secondary and higher education, and technical and vocational education and training. **The sectoral analysis should also be equity and gender focused.**

The specific action points for UNICEF to consider for the upcoming Education Programme are outlined below:
- UNICEF's activities and priorities in the next Country Programme should focus on the following technical areas: Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building; Technical Support; Policy Advocacy; Research, Evidence generation and utilisation and knowledge management. However, the evaluation team acknowledges that there are inter-linkages between the technical areas of interventions, and this is discussed in the Conclusion section, when discussing the recommendations for the future ToC.
- We recommend that UNICEF **limit downstream activities or district-level interventions** in the next Country Programme to new or emerging areas of interest and closely link these to the upstream work. In this modality, we propose that UNICEF leverage government funds and CSR funds for any 'downstream' work and extend support to identify and manage partnership to implement such work.
- UNICEF can **extend technical support** to support the implementation of work in the following areas:
  - In inclusive education, UNICEF can extend technical support to the relevant state government to mainstream disability-inclusive education in all education plans. UNICEF can support the relevant departments by assessing the relevance and effectiveness of existing structures, tools, capacities, and action plans to support the implementation of disability-inclusive education

- o Extend technical support to the NCERT/SCERT to develop appropriate pedagogical practices for the use of mother tongue language in education.
- o Extend technical support to support education specialists and other ed-tech organisations in examining and integrating gender, equity, and inclusivity within digital solutions through the creation of toolkit with best practices
- o Extend technical support to relevant national and state ministry and departments to build capacities to lead and implement programmes on secondary education, adolescent education, life skills and school-to-work transition.
- o Extend technical support to the relevant state departments to conduct school safety assessments and implement school safety programmes.
- o Extend technical support to the relevant government departments to implement quality ECE programmes
- o Extend technical support to the states to operationalise National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and Foundational, Literacy and Numeracy Mission through the creation of guidelines, guidance documents and systems strengthening of the education department at all levels

- UNICEF could consider working on **institutional strengthening** in the following areas:
  - o Continue work on building the capacity of the relevant ministry and department in education for improved planning, monitoring, public financial management, policy implementation
  - o Strengthen institutional capacities of the SIEMAT/NCERT/SCERT/DIET to assess educator's competencies and implement teacher professional development modules
  - o Strengthen institutional capacities of NCERT/SCERT to improve the pedagogical practices of the pre-primary curriculum and develop a customised teacher education curriculum for the pre-primary teachers.

- UNICEF could consider working on **evidence and research generation and utilisation** in the following thematic areas:
  - o UNICEF should also work to strengthen the government EMIS to better capture disability-related data on access, participation, and learning, review the scope and quality of national and state data systems in relation to disability-inclusive education and support the development of disaggregated evidence basis for policy decisions
  - o UNICEF could support the relevant state governments to develop a detailed mapping of mother tongue languages
  - o Improve monitoring of the quality of remote learning and digital education initiatives

- UNICEF could extend **policy and advocacy support** in the areas of:
  - o Inform policy on equitable and equal access to digital learning (addressing the digital divide)
  - o Strong advocacy work around the integration of life skills and job-specific skills within the school curriculum
  - o The current Country Programme has seen innovative practices in out-of-school children's programming, including tracking and monitoring children and interventions to address learning gaps. Greater policy advocacy is required to scale up the data and evidence-generation initiatives at a national level and ensure that the government counterparts and other development partners use the data and evidence to develop new policies and interventions targeting out-of-school children.
  - o Enhanced policy advocacy to adopt operational guidelines on model ECE centres.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen convergence and multi-sectoral approach within UNICEF across all programmes	**Responsible Organisation:** UNICEF ICO, including the Education Team, C4D Team, DRR Team, WASH Team, Health Team, Nutrition, Social Policy, Social Protection

Priority: High	**Timeframe:** Medium

It was observed that the inter-sectoral convergence within UNICEF was mixed, and the convergence was driven through individual leadership rather than a coherent, systematic institutional mechanism and planning. The following action points are suggested to strengthen convergence within UNICEF

- Develop strategy, guidelines, or milestones to promote systematic integration between the sectors or to guide collective results across sectors. The convergence strategy should also identify prioritised areas of convergence with the Education Programme and assign responsibility (lead versus support)
- UNICEF can consider creating an apex-level committee at the national and state level, which includes senior members of the various UNICEF programmatic areas to monitor the convergence strategy

Recommendation 3: Develop a systematic approach to evidence generation, utilisation and dissemination	**Responsible Organisation:** UNICEF Education Programme at ICO, Evidence Unit**,** UNICEF field offices,
Priority: High	**Timeframe:** Medium

To support strategic decision-making within UNICEF, there is a need for a more systematic approach to research and evidence generation and utilisation. Furthermore, while UNICEF's role and comparative advantage as a knowledge partner were acknowledged by the stakeholders, there was a need to strengthen UNICEF's role in driving research and learning agenda in the education sector by creating an enabling environment for collective learning with all development partners.

The following action points are proposed to strengthen UNICEF's capacity to monitor and utilise research/ evidence for improved programming and strengthen the internal and external environment for evidence-based planning and cross-learning:

- Develop a national research agenda in education through systematic evidence reviews and adopting a consultative and consensus-building approach involving government, development actors in the education sector and experts to prioritise research gaps. The agenda will help increase the research's relevance and utility and better utilise limited resources for research and evaluation.

- Specific action points for improved monitoring include:
  - Adopting a continuous quality improvement approach to monitoring and evaluation. Rapid assessments or rapid cycle evaluations will enable UNICEF to assess, for example, the quality of training, the utilisation or application of the training in improving classroom practices and the utility of the parenting ECE materials, thereby allowing timely course correction and improvement to the interventions.
  - Deploying technology-based low-cost monitoring solutions, including telemonitoring, online surveys and such, to strengthen the monitoring of programmes

- Specific action points towards better utilisation of evidence/ research for programming include:
  - Conducting a study on research and evaluation utilisation to understand better how and when in the course of programming are evaluations used and the changes or decisions. This could also help drive evaluation and learning agenda within the Education Programme and provide guidance to ensure that quality, relevant evaluations are conducted every time.
  - Conducting evidence synthesis of evaluation findings across multiple evaluations in education to improve the accessibility of information for the education specialist.
  - Plan evidence generation exercises so that it can be linked with the UNICEF advocacy efforts

- To support external administrative data collection and strengthening external evidence base, we suggest that UNICEF

- o Support capacity building of state institutions like SCERTs to design evidence frameworks, conduct high-quality research and better utilise evidence outcomes for effectively planning
  - o Continue to extend technical support to build capacity of government stakeholders at sub-national levels to collect relevant and reliable data effectively and regularly and address data gaps.
  - o Strengthen the capacity of its CSO partners to develop their advocacy and evidence generation capacity and improve reporting that could be linked to UNICEF's 'upstream work'
- To strengthen knowledge management and dissemination, we suggest
  - o Collating and sharing research and data from UNICEF's successful initiatives
  - o Promote more opportunities for cross-learning across states so that successful initiatives in one state can be scaled up across other states.

Recommendation 4: Define a clear partnership strategy for the Education Programme, diversify partner base and implement process improvement activities to strengthen partnership engagement	Responsible Organisation: UNICEF ICO, UNICEF Field Offices
Priority: High	Timeframe: Medium

The evaluation team noted the need to diversify and strengthen strategic partnerships for the Education Programme. Partnership is defined by the evaluation team as all types of government and non-government partners (CSO, academic partners, private sector, other development partners) and all partnering modalities, both at the national level as well as at the sub-national level.

- Specific action points that UNICEF could consider are outlined below:
  - o Develop a detailed partnership strategy to define strategic partnerships of the ICO and, at the state level, to strengthen relations with different strategic partners. The strategy should also provide information on objectives, engagement modality, selection criteria, outcomes, and performance metrics around a partnership with different groups and tailor approaches for each. This should include groups such as private sector and academia, civil society, development partners and Government.
  - o The partnership strategy could be built collaboratively and in participatory including consultations with the state government, private sector, and other development partners, thereby enhancing the relevance of the strategy to the critical needs of the state education sector plans and priorities

- Specific action points that UNICEF can consider strengthening partner engagement are outlined below:
  - o Streamline and optimise the internal processes for partnerships and programme cooperation/ implementation agreements and consider multi-year multi-state engagements with the CSO to ensure enhanced coverage, greater sustainability, and efficiency of the interventions.
  - o Organise regular partners conferences to present UNICEF's key program and outcome areas with the other actors in the states actively looking for opportunities, including pledging conferences for addressing critical gaps in the state education sector plans from the perspective of identified areas for future support and allow for greater cross-learning among the implementing partners of UNICEF

Recommendation 5: Review and revisit the state typology-based approach and strengthen typology-based monitoring and reporting and develop typology-specific ToC	Responsible Organisation: UNICEF ICO, UNICEF Field Offices
Priority: High	Timeframe: Short

UNICEF's differential programme approach based on the state typology was largely relevant. However, the effectiveness of the state typology-based approach was limited due to several challenges highlighted under EQ 1.3 in relevance. ***It is recommended that the state-typology-based approach be revisited.*** Any differential programming approach should consider the following action points:

- The classification of the states could benefit from more disaggregated analysis of education and using more micro-level data in the Situation Analysis
- Strengthening typology-based monitoring and reporting,
- Develop typology-specific ToC to guide activities and results

Recommendation 6: Strengthen the integration of gender and equity principles and promote greater gender transformative programming and equity analysis	**Responsible Organisation:** UNICEF ICO, Gender Specialist, Evidence Team
Priority: High	**Timeframe:** Medium

Gender and equity were key components of the current Education Programme, which was achieved through the inclusion of gender, disability, marginalised communities and focus on disadvantaged areas. Below are a set of actions that could support more effective integration of some key aspects of equity, gender and inclusion in the upcoming Education Programme:

- Enhanced focus on marginalised children such as urban poor, transgender, and children with disability in the next Country Programme
- Increase the usage of equity focus and inclusion-related indicators on gender, disability, and disadvantaged communities in the situational analysis to understand critical gaps and develop context-specific strategies as part of the planning process
- Identify and implement gender-transformative activities for the engagement of men and boys within the Education Programme
- Better results mapping in the Education Programme to improve institutional accountability for gender and equity
- Increase its financial resources and allocation towards gender and equity-related activities
- Augment UNICEF staff capacity on gender and other equality and inclusion-related concepts and programming strategies

Recommendation 7: Adopt a systematic approach to education in an emergency within the larger India Country Office's strategy for Emergencies to enhance preparedness for future emergencies	**Responsible Organisation:** UNICEF ICO, UNICEF Field Offices
Priority: Medium	**Timeframe:** Medium

As noted under EQ 1.2 under relevance, UNICEF was able to realign its programme substantively to respond appropriately to the pandemic. However, external stakeholders of UNICEF expressed that UNICEF could have leveraged its comparative advantage on education in emergencies more effectively. Building upon the experience from the pandemic, UNICEF could consider more systematic planning for future crises (anticipated risks like flood, earthquake and conflicts etc.) in the upcoming education programmes.

- Specific actions on planning include:
  - Within the larger ICO's strategy for emergencies, quantify the risks that are likely to affect education.
  - Analyse the differences in risks and their impact on education at the sub-national level.
  - The state strategy note should also include conflict/ risk analysis and identify severe risks that could impact education services

- Specific actions on institutional strengthening and capacity building include:

- Build guidelines and SOPs for risk response in the education sector and improve UNICEF's readiness to respond to a crisis by developing minimum preparedness activities in education for different types of risks
- Focus on capacity building of UNICEF's education specialists in emergencies
- Extend technical support to the relevant state departments to develop risk-resilient education plans and ensure that plans and policies are in place to ensure continuation of education services

- Specific actions on the implementation include:
  - Enhanced convergence with the DRR team

Recommendation 8: Identify capacity needs and augment technical capacity through strategic partnerships and improved learning opportunities for the UNICEF staff	**Responsible Organisation:** UNICEF ICO, UNICEF Field Offices, UNICEF Regional Office
Priority: Medium	**Timeframe:** Medium

The technical expertise of UNICEF in various domains within education was noted as one of the comparative advantages. However, it is essential to continue strengthening the technical capacity to support the implementation and strategic positioning of UNICEF at the country and field office levels. Therefore, UNICEF needs to consider providing more learning and development opportunities for staff with transferable skills to diversify and develop their skills in critical areas and build strategic partnerships to bring new technical expertise to UNICEF. Some specific action points include:

- Conduct a capacity assessment of the ICO and field offices to identify needs and capacity gaps to meet the priorities of the next Education Programme.
- Determine how best UNICEF can build technical expertise – via internal resources or drawing support available in the market or through strategic partnerships with academic partners or access to specialised skills.
- Augment internal staff capacity through regular refresher training on emerging areas such as digital education, adolescent programming, inclusive education and monitoring and evaluation and soft skills like policy advocacy, and partnerships
- Explore Long-Term Agreements (LTA) for consultants and individual contractors to provide education technical support services

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