

Evaluation of the National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 and UNICEF's contribution to its design, implementation and monitoring

2022

EVALUATION REPORT

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Special thanks go to Sofiya Yuvshanova for lending her continued support to the evaluation throughout the process.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

CFS	child-friendly school
Covid-19	Coronavirus SARS CoV-2
CO	Country Office
CPD	Country Programme Document
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	civil society organization
ECD	early childhood development
ECDI	Early Childhood Development Index
FGD	focus group discussion
GANHRI	Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions
GoT	Government of Turkmenistan
HDI	Human Development Index
HR	human resources
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ILO	International Labour Organization
IR	inception report
ISLD	Institute of State, Law and Democracy
JP	Joint Programme
KII	key informant interview
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MFE	Ministry of Finance and Economy
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MLSPP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population
MHMI	Ministry of Health/ Ministry of Health and Medical Industry
MoI	Ministry of the Interior/ Ministry of Internal Affairs
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NAP	National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's Rights in Turkmenistan 2018–2022
NEET	not in employment, education or training
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
PP	purchasing power
PPP	purchasing power parity
SEND	special educational needs and/or disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	specific, measurable, achievable, results-focused and timely
SOP	standard operating procedure
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
U5MR	under-5 mortality rate
UNCRC	United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child



UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN-SWAP	United Nations System Wide Action Plan
WHO	World Health Organization



1. Executive summary

This is the final report of the Evaluation of the National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 (NAP) and UNICEF's contribution to its design, implementation and monitoring. The evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF Country Office (CO) Turkmenistan to Dessislava Ilieva, individual international consultant based in Bulgaria. The evaluation was undertaken between Jul - Dec 2021.

The objects of this evaluation are:

- **The National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 (NAP)**, with a Road Map for Its implementation and Indicator's Framework.
- **UNICEF's contribution** to the design, implementation and monitoring of the NAP
- **Impact of COVID-19** global pandemic on the implementation of NAP
- **Contribution of the NAP** to the implementation of SDGs.

The NAP is based on the principles and provisions of the Constitution of Turkmenistan, Law of Turkmenistan on 'State Guarantees of the Rights of the Child' and other international agreements in the interest of children, to which Turkmenistan is a party. The NAP was adopted in 2015 and has been instrumental in implementing the majority of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Plan identifies key areas of state social policy in the interests of children based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Government of Turkmenistan (GoT) is committed to advancing the 2030 Agenda, adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016 and has been working on integration of SDG targets and indicators into national programmes and plans of actions, including the NAP, as well as on design of an SDG monitoring system with technical assistance from the United Nations (UN).

The NAP is significant in terms of bringing together the effort of UNICEF, national partners, other UN agencies and public organisations in delivering towards children's rights. This is the first ever such a comprehensive and multi-lateral effort to ensure rights of the children of Turkmenistan and a comprehensive strategic document that is endorsed at the highest political level.

The main purpose of the evaluation is to:

- Generate substantive evidence-based knowledge by identifying good practices and lessons learned from the implementation of NAP.
- Give adjustment necessary for the planning and implementation of support under the current UNICEF CPD 2021-2025 and a basis for the development of the new NAP 2023-2028.
- Strengthening UNICEF contribution to the realization of child rights and protection of children's access to quality services.

The timing of the evaluation is critical as the new Country Programme of Cooperation with the UN and UNICEF was signed in 2020, current NAP will be completed in 2022 and the development of a new NAP 2023-2025 will be started this year. Thus, the evaluation will help to shape the programming and policymaking in child-rights, including main elements of cooperation with UNICEF.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation has both summative and formative dimensions and uses mixed-methods. The evaluation was guided by the participatory approach as it engaged all key stakeholders during all stages of the evaluation. The NAP result-framework is organised around children's rights as per the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The evaluation was performed along OECD DAC evaluation criteria:

Relevance – The extent to which NAP is relevant to the context and needs of children and families.

Effectiveness - The extent to which the NAP achieved its set goals. The objectives under each NAP priority area were used to measure progress. The evaluation also analysed NAP contribution to SDGs.

Sustainability: The extent to which the achieved outcomes for children are likely to sustain after the programme period.

The evaluation methodology involved a set of data collection methods (desk review, key informants interviews and focus group discussions) and analytical methods (stakeholders' analysis, qualitative and content analysis).



Desk research: The desk research was based on the available sources of secondary information concerning children's right interventions and gaps, data on achievements towards SDGs, available national data, evaluations, monitoring data collected, etc.

Key Informants Interviews (KIIs) and Focus group discussions (FGDs): The data collection was conducted in the period 10 Oct – 31 Dec 2021. It comprised online interviews. The evaluator conducted 19 interviews with key informants, individually and in a group. Data collection on velayat level was supported by 8 Young SDG ambassadors after receiving an ethical training by the consultant. The SDGs Ambassadors conducted 18 FGDs with children and parents.

Key findings

Relevance

The context of planning of the NAP is that of modernising the care systems in Turkmenistan following the country's independence, the ratification of the UNCRC in 1991 and other international human rights conventions and protocols. The state introduced a number of national programmes and regulative frameworks relevant to children's rights regarding health, education, family upbringing, social support, protection of the child from economic exploitation, etc. Some targeted children specifically (e.g. Law of Turkmenistan on Promotion and Support to Breastfeeding, 2016; the law on State Guarantees of the Rights of the Child, 2014, National Programme of Turkmenistan on early development and preparation of children to school for 2011-2015, etc.). The NAP was approved by the Decree of the President of Turkmenistan of 22.06.2018. The Plan was elaborated considering the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of a Child (2015), with the participation of respective ministries and agencies, institutions and public organizations of Turkmenistan, together with the UNICEF CO in Turkmenistan.

The evaluation did not identify government-led comprehensive needs assessments of children groups and their families, national programmes' evaluation reports or impact assessments of legislation or policies that may have informed the design of the NAP. It had been informed by situational analysis conducted by UNICEF in 2019.

The process of planning the NAP has employed a mixed approach to defining goals and objectives. On the one hand the planning was based on the rights of the children generally (benefitting all children), and on the other hand a focus was placed on certain groups in terms of vulnerability.

The NAP is equipped with a results framework but it was formulated as insufficiently specific, measurable and realistic. Furthermore, the NAP has a wide strategic focus against a limited timeframe i.e. 5 years.

The NAP is generally aligned to the strategic priorities of child-rights' national strategies as well as strategic priorities identified in UN recommendations. The design of the NAP is moderately relevant to the needs of the children as it is oriented to all children but some vulnerable groups identified by the preliminary analysis as priority were not covered by the NAP on the level of objectives.

Effectiveness

The NAP priorities are organised under six goals areas with 36 objectives under these goals. An overall strategic goal is missing. There has been considerable progress in establishing an enabling environment for realising children's rights in Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan has built on previous effort for ensuring an environment for realization of human rights and child's rights in the country in the area of human rights protection, gender equality, protection of women's, children's rights and rights of people with disability, youth policy, implementation of international conventions in the area of human rights protection.

Turkmenistan made some progress in improving children's health and contributing to the targets on children's health such as high immunisation rates (achieved with UNICEF support), access to clean water, reduction of malnutrition. There is significant progress in reducing stunting and development of young children. Further effort is required to reduce mortality rates and prevalence of anaemia as well as enabling better access of children with disabilities to specialised healthcare.

There is progress towards schools becoming more child-friendly, mostly in the area of early education for children. These efforts have produced a notable increase of the children attending pre-school and pre-primary school but coverage is still insufficient. There is a conducive environment for increasing placement of children with special educational needs in boarding schools, often away from their families. Whilst such placement serve good educational purpose, it poses some limitations in exercising the child's right to live with its family, especially for children with disabilities.



There is no conclusive evidence that NAP interventions have contributed to better employment rates and living standards of families. For the most vulnerable children and their families, support is still insufficient, in particular single parents or parents with disabilities. Disability is a significant factor on the family income as well as in terms of social inclusion. Among the most significant changes during the NAP implementation has been the introduction of a modern concept of social services in the community and introducing the profession of social worker. This is an achievement of a number of programmes and interventions of which the NAP, being a national strategic child's-rights document, is overarching. This has contributed to a more enabling environment for family-support programmes in the community and is a ground for developments in other areas e.g. child protection and child justice.

An important step is the introduction of a specialised approach to children in contact with the law.

Turkmenistan justice provides some essential elements of a child justice system in line with international standards. This needs to be built on by shifting the system orientation from 'correction' to 'resocialization' and ensure that interventions are based on interdisciplinary assessments which respond to the needs of each child, including psychological and emotional needs. The concept of coordination for effective governance of child protection and child justice is present but requires coordination mechanism for oversight of children's rights to be operationalised, including by describing the functions of agencies and law enforcement bodies in terms of joint working and reporting.

Child-centred systems are still in the process of understanding what child participation is. Turkmenistan has made the most progress regarding protecting the child's right to participation and the least progress in creating space for actual participation.

In terms of COVID it should be noted that although some NAP interventions had to be readjusted, the government put efforts to ensure the overall implementation of the NAP. Importantly, with support of UN agencies, GoT did manage to sustain all essential health and education services in the country without interruption.

Sustainability

The NAP ensured high level of sustainability of child's rights mechanisms specifically in terms of establishing the Ombudsman's office.

NAP is fully aligned with the SDGs which demonstrates the high Government commitments towards Sustainable Development Agenda. Data collection for children is strengthened in a sustainable way with UNICEF and UN sister agencies. UNICEF has contributed significantly through raising the country's capacity to collect data on children. However, the culture to develop policies and services based on strong detailed specific and measurable results frameworks according to the principles of strategic planning is not yet fully in place.

Universal inclusive services for young children are in place but their scaling up and full coverage depends on human resources investment and upgrading the capacity of education and healthcare. There is potential for sustaining the achievements in the child protection system, including child justice. General and specialised community-based support have a good replicable potential. The GoT has shown a commitment to updating its legislative and regulatory regimes in favour of children's rights, including in the area of child protection and child justice. New laws on the treatment of victims of crime and defining the social work function show important momentum in this area. To remain on this promising course of action it requires the conceptualization of a robust child justice system capable of realizing the full rights for *all* children who come into contact with the justice system, whether as victims, witnesses, accused of a crime, or in a civil or administrative proceeding.

Conclusions

In terms of relevance to the context, the NAP is generally aligned to the strategic priorities of child-rights' national strategies as well as international strategic priorities identified in UN recommendations. In terms of needs, there is moderate alignment between the needs addressed by the NAP and needs identified by CRC recommendations and situational analyses. The internal causal links between goals, objectives and interventions are mostly implicit. The result-framework is designed to capture outcomes for children mainly on the level of activities and needs to be strengthened to include more comprehensive and valid indicators on the level of goals and objectives.

In terms of effectiveness there has been considerable progress in establishing an enabling environment for realising children's rights as well as independent guarding of children's rights e.g. establishing the



Ombudsman body. However, establishing permanent interagency body monitoring children's rights in every sector has not yet been achieved.

Significant progress was made in terms of data collection e.g. State Committee of Statistics of Turkmenistan has been instrumental in collecting data for MICS 2019 and the country completed a voluntary review on the achievement of SDGs. Yet there are still gaps in terms of data collection coverage and data accessibility e.g. disaggregated data on children in conflict with the law and child victims and witnesses of crime collected and shared systematically would greatly improve the planning of targeted response to children in need.

Healthcare has improved in a number of areas e.g. immunisation, breastfeeding, nutrition, early childhood development, maternal mortality, etc. There is room for development in terms of accelerating the reduction of child mortality and further building on the existing achievements in the area of specialised care for children with disabilities. There is progress towards schooling becoming more child-friendly, mostly in the area of early education for children. However, there is a conducive environment for increasing placement of children with special educational needs in boarding schools, which prevents social inclusion being achieved for children with disabilities. Possible factors, among others, are social norms of parents, specialised skills in working with children with disability being more available in special schools vs. mainstream schools, community-based services for families of children with disabilities still not being widely available. Feedback from parents indicates that disability may be a great factor on the family income as well as on the level of social inclusion of children. The extent of this vulnerability requires further studies.

Introducing the concept of social work and community-based services is one of the most significant changes during NAP implementation. Family separations are on the increase hence gaps are wider for families who face difficulties in taking care of their children and there is a risk of children being separated. Main factors are: underdeveloped network of family-support services to address difficult life situations, lack of reintegration services, and underdeveloped inclusive education combined with the lack of services for disabled children. Turkmenistan has made progress mostly in terms of creating a more enabling environment for family-support programmes. Components of a child-friendly justice system are in place and provide good ground for modernising the child justice system towards shifting from "correction" to "socialisation"; improving the coordination among law enforcement and child protection entities; developing effective prevention and response programmes based on all needs of children in contact with the law and children victims or witness of violence.

In terms of sustainability there has been development towards child's rights mechanisms e.g. establishing the Ombudsman's office. Further promotion of child-friendly complaint mechanisms would strengthen the position of the Ombudsman as a voice for children's rights. Child's rights monitoring can be sustained by fostering data-driven decision-making culture and by introducing strong monitoring and evaluation results-frameworks that allow for measuring progress for children in accordance with the principles of strategic planning.

Lessons learned

It is vital to support child-rights legislation along with developing other enabling factors. Legislation alone is not a guarantee that these rights will be automatically exercised without also addressing social norms and professional norms, capacity building of the systems around the child (healthcare, education, child protection and justice).

High quality data is essential for priority setting, monitoring and achieving results. Continuous monitoring of children's rights across all areas ensures timely identification and development of interventions addressing the most urgent bottlenecks.

Children's needs are complex needs and cannot be addressed by each sector separately or on its own. An integrated approach should be fostered when designing new services and, therefore, capacities of all child-relevant systems need to be addressed simultaneously: education, health, child protection and justice.

Importance of focusing on a limited number of priorities. Achieving strategic and long lasting impact is challenging if NAP pursues multiple and too broad goals, and is spread too thin. Within the limited timeframe of the NAP long-term vision and one strategic goal need to guide and steer the NAP.

Strong partnerships and collaboration are essential to achieving strategic results. The nature of development challenges faced by Turkmenistan require extensive collaboration with various partners, collective planning, implementation and monitoring.



Public associations can be an indispensable partner to the GoT to assume the provision of services to children and families because they are closest to the communities and their needs. Social contracting legislation may boost nation-wide service providers as currently they largely depend on insecure own funding.

Child participation is a clear principle to understand, yet, very difficult to operationalise. Decision-makers should operationalise participation horizontally i.e. across various child-related areas e.g. when developing community-based social services, making schools more child-friendly, improving access to specialised healthcare for children with disabilities, etc.

Recommendations

Next NAP needs to preserve its comprehensive approach to children's rights. At the same time, a vision of change, one overarching strategic goal of the NAP and a detailed Theory of change should be developed along with a high-quality result-framework with SMART objectives. ToCs development should become a truly analytical and participatory exercise engaging multiple stakeholders.

The voice of children would be stronger in Turkmenistan if a permanent interagency body specifically coordinating the work of all agencies relevant to children's rights. It could be established as a separate body or a specialised structure specifically responsible for children's rights within existing human rights bodies such as ombudsman or Inter-agency commission.¹

The efforts in healthcare need to build on the work of the current NAP by extending access to specialised care for some groups of children (e.g. children with disabilities, especially in remote areas) as well as furthering the effort to reduce child mortality. Nutrition was reflected in the current NAP but there are still some gaps (e.g. reasons for anaemia prevalence) requiring further analysis to inform next NAP cycle. Next NAP needs to further address system changes that enable children with disabilities have better access to specialised healthcare and rehabilitation services close to their community. Early childhood development services need to be further developed and scaled up.

Rehabilitation services for children with disabilities at school age, too, need to be designed in a way that meet their educational needs to enable their participation in mainstream school and prevent their placement in a boarding school away from their families.

Any family-support services and child protection services (including child justice) need to be based on the concept of case management, which is currently being introduced in the country. The efforts towards creating the legislative environment for that as well as improving and expanding the workforce needs to be extended in the next NAP cycle.

Next NAP should place bigger emphasis on inclusive education i.e. mainstreaming inclusiveness in the meaning that any school is able to respond to the needs of every child, including children with special needs. Social and professional norms need to be addressed through campaigning and promoting the right of the children to receive quality education and live in its family at the same time.

Next NAP needs to extend its emerging good practices in child protection into the next period of planning. Building on the models for community-based services for children and families within JP, next NAP needs to address the need to scale these up. Service quality standards need to be elaborated in a way to include mechanisms for participation of children as one of the underlying quality principles.

Follow-up child justice reforms need to consider strengthening the child justice legislative environment in a way that ensures that rights of children in contact with the law are protected at all stages. Consideration needs to be made to strengthening interagency coordination in the area of child justice; enhancing prevention (comprehensive juvenile delinquency measures based on assessed risk factors) and response (well-coordinated community-based child support programmes enhanced with professionally trained workforce and developed on data-based pillars).

Data collection should be strengthened across all sectors of child well-being i.e. education, health, social protection and justice.

It is vital that NAP encourages public associations of parents' groups and grassroots organisations to be involved in provision of services through more enabling legislation and funding.

¹ The Inter-Agency Commission on Implementation of Turkmenistan's international human rights obligations and incorporation of the standards of the international humanitarian law is an advisory cross-sectoral body established to coordinate efforts of the state agencies, local executive authorities, and enterprises, institutions, organizations, and voluntary associations, to implement Turkmenistan's international human rights commitments.

2. Background

This is the final report of the Evaluation of the National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 (NAP) and UNICEF's contribution to its design, implementation and monitoring. It was developed after conducting an external evaluation commissioned by UNICEF Country Office (CO) Turkmenistan. The evaluation was undertaken between July 2021 to April 2022.

This section lays out the broader context in which the intervention was planned and implemented, including a brief introduction to the regional context in which the interventions under evaluation took place.

The National Action Plan (NAP) on Children's rights was approved in 2018 and has been instrumental in implementing the majority of the recommendations. The Plan identifies key areas of the state social policy in the interests of children based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Turkmenistan is a party.

All goals and objectives included in the NAP on Children's rights are aimed at the realization of rights and social safeguards for children, implementation of which requires an integrated approach, coordination and cooperation of state bodies and public associations. The aim, objectives, policies and indicators set forth in the NAP on Children's rights, represent an integrated 'roadmap' aiming at the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by Turkmenistan. NAP was developed with consideration of the UNICEF programmatic priorities and include all the areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan and Country programme Development (CPD). The CPD 2021-2025 was developed for addressing the main priorities and challenges identified during implementation of the NAP.

The current evaluation is part of the effort of the GoT and UNICEF to assess the progress of the country towards realisation of children's rights and fine-tune further efforts in the next planning cycle of the NAP.

2.1. Object of the Evaluation

The objects of this evaluation are:

- **The National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 (NAP)**, with a Road Map for Its implementation and Indicator's Framework.
- **UNICEF's contribution** to the design, implementation and monitoring of the NAP
- **Impact of COVID-19** global pandemic on the implementation of NAP
- **Contribution of the NAP** to the implementation of SDGs.

2.2. Theory of change

The NAP was not based on a clearly stipulated Theory of Change (ToC). The Theory of change was reconstructed here, as requested by ToR, for the purpose of being tested during the data collection to better understand the logic behind the interventions. Additional emphasis was given at reviewing UNICEF's core roles towards addressing bottlenecks in child's rights implementation and improving effective coverage with evidence-based interventions. The evaluation findings will be used by UNICEF and Government of Turkmenistan to refine the paths of change to follow during the next implementation period of NAP.

Turkmenistan created a favourable environment to realize rights of children and women. It ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and aligned a number of national laws with the Conventions. The new Constitution recognizes the primacy of universally accepted norms of international law.

However, at the time of inception of NAP there was not a separate governance entity specifically focusing on children's rights in Turkmenistan, child mortality rate was still high and access to healthcare services



was improved but remained reduced for vulnerable groups of children and families. Cross-sectoral strategies for addressing child's rights implementation and data collection systems were underdeveloped leading to insufficient data to enable proper instalment of individualized and community-based services.

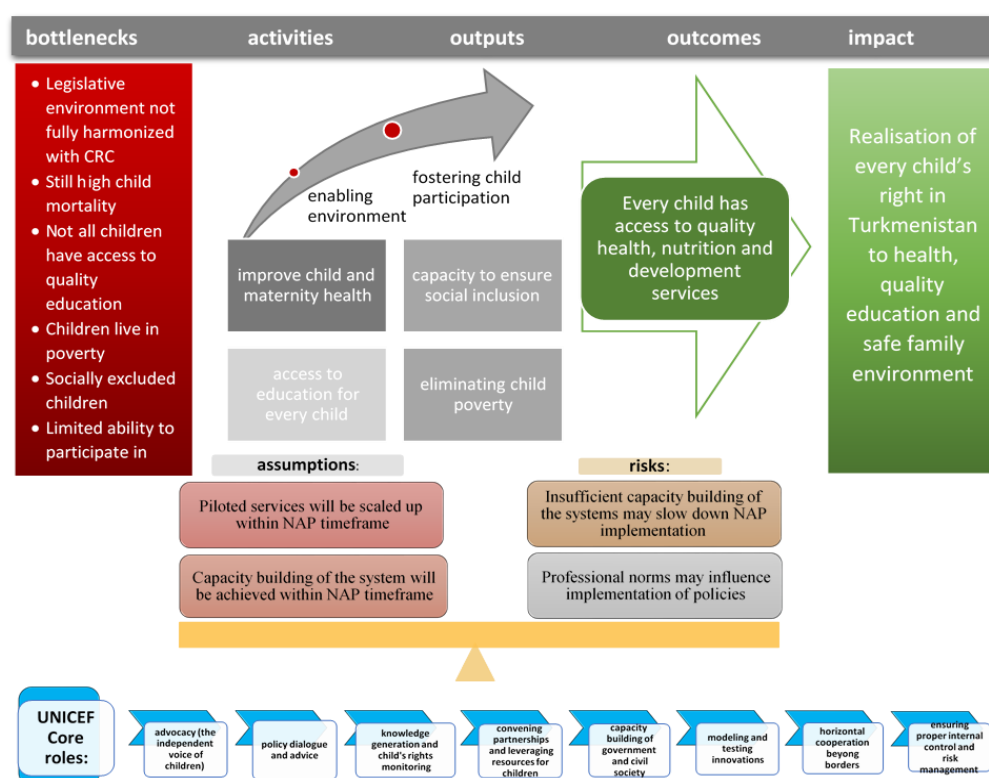
The "final destination" of the NAP is the full realisation of rights and safeguards for children in Turkmenistan. The rationale behind NAP is that by creating enabling legislation and fostering child participation, the capacity of the support systems will be strengthened to reach to every child in the country, including the most vulnerable. NAP foresees capacity building interventions towards systems that safeguard child rights e.g. introduction of social work profession and piloting community-based services for children and families.

The assumption has been that the capacity of the child-oriented systems will be built and services scaled up nationally within the timeframe of the NAP so that goals can be achieved by 2022.

Risks analysis was not clearly identified in NAP but other documents reviewed during desk research indicate that possible risks might be related to the slow and complex process of building the capacities of the child-related systems. That includes the influence of professional norms (social work was yet to be introduced as a profession, case management not yet introduced as an approach, etc.) as well as social norms (formal care outweighs family-based care for some parents due to limited access to community-based care especially for children with special needs).

The NAP framework reveals that goals and objectives are of different dimensions e.g. goals are defined as rights and sometimes objectives are defined as interventions. There is justification of the NAP but it is insufficient to determine which bottlenecks it addresses specifically as well as what is the specific intended outcome and impact and how these will be measured on goal level (in addition to interventions level). **Figure 1** is a visualization of perceived ToC at NAP inception, as it was recreated by the evaluator based on the result-based framework of the NAP at the stage of the desk review:

Figure 1. Theory of Change



In implementing this pathway of change, the NAP places responsibility on government, line ministries and agencies. However, the efforts at the government level are to be enhanced by the activity of public associations, partnership with media and international organisations.

In this process, UNICEF has contribution through its core roles e.g. supporting government systems in data collection capacity to better monitor child's rights realization, advocating for child's rights, providing advice to government, building partnerships with civil society and other UN agencies, modelling and testing support services in the community, as well as bringing together international best practices.

2.3. Stakeholders and their Role

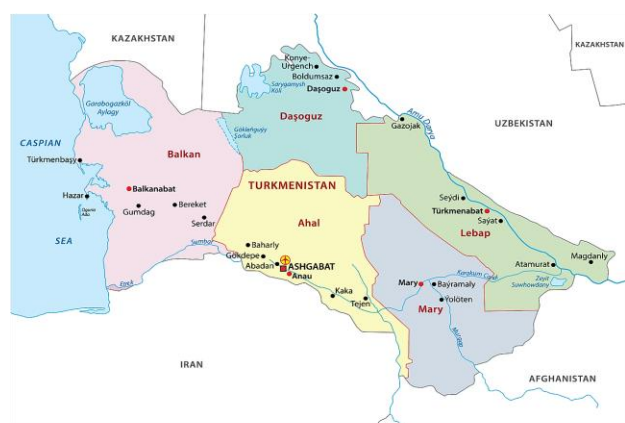
The implementation of the NAP involve a range of stakeholders: *See Table 1*

Table 1 NAP stakeholders

UNICEF CO Turkmenistan	Supports the Government to design, implement and evaluate the NAP. Makes sure there is alignment between the NAP and UNICEF Country Programme Document. UNICEF is a lead agency in the Joint Programme (JP) on Introduction of the community based social services, piloting community based social services and specialized social services together with other UN agencies. The JP partly addresses some of the NAP goals.
ISLD and Inter-ministerial Commission	Coordinate the design and implementation of the NAP. Provide general oversight to all agencies involved.
UN agencies	UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC together with national partners support the design, implementation and evaluation of the JP in alignment of child-related components with NAP goals.
Parliament	Explores best international practices and uses them towards harmonising the national legislation according to the CRC and other important treaties to which Turkmenistan is a party.
Ministries	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Health and Medical Industry, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Culture are involved in thematic areas of the NAP in terms of design and implementation
Municipalities (Hakimliks)	Ensure harmonization of the NAP nation-wide actions with local actors to collectively deliver results for children.
Partner NGOs and Civil Society Organisations	Involved in implementation of activities such as service provision and direct work with children and families as per NAP priorities.

2.4. Context

Turkmenistan is a Central Asian country with a territory of 491,200 km², much of which is barren land. Turkmenistan's neighbouring countries are Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (in the North and North-East), Afghanistan and Iran (in the South), and in the West along the Caspian Sea, it borders on Azerbaijan and Russia. The most densely populated areas are the southern, eastern, and northeastern oases, with approximately 15.5 % of the population living in the capital of Ashgabat².



Map of Turkmenistan, source worldatlas.com

² ToR, citing The State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan, Statistical Yearbooks of Turkmenistan 2020

2.4.1. Political, Socio-Economic and Legal Context

In 1924, Turkmenistan became one of the republics of the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Turkmenistan gained independence. Turkmenistan is a democratic, law-based and secular presidential republic. Turkmenistan adheres to the status of "permanent neutrality", as stated in the resolution of the UN General Assembly of December 12, 1995, and, therefore, it is not a member of any political association or regional integration organization³.

The President is the highest official acting as Head of state, Head of Government and Commander in chief of the armed forces, who has the power to appoint and remove members of the Cabinet of Ministers, heads of local authorities of the executive power, state prosecutors and judges, make recommendations to the Parliament on the Ombudsman, and take decisions about holding elections and referendums.

At the initiative of the President of Turkmenistan new constitutional law was adopted in September 2020 introducing amendments to the Constitution of Turkmenistan⁴: introduction of bicameral system of the representative body of legislative power, with Halk Maslahaty and Mejlis forming the Milli Gengesh of Turkmenistan – the Parliament. Changes to the Constitution came into force as of 1 January 2021, and elections to Halk Maslahaty were held at the end of March 2021.

An important development is that an office of the Ombudsman for human rights was established in 2017 covering children's rights too.

Turkmenistan has extensive natural gas reserves ranking 4th place globally. The state-dominated economy is strongly dependent on oil and gas, which comprised more than 90 percent of national exports in 2015⁵. Turkmenistan has achieved relatively high levels of socio-economic development. Turkmenistan's Human Development Index⁶ value for 2019⁷ is 0.715, which places the country in the high human development category - positioning it at 111 out of 189 countries and territories. Between 2010 and 2019, Turkmenistan's HDI value increased from 0.666 to 0.715, an increase of 7.4%.

Between 1990 and 2019, Turkmenistan's life expectancy at birth increased by 5.4 years, mean years of schooling increased by 0.4 years and expected years of schooling increased by 1 year. Estimations⁸ of Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI⁹) indicate that in Turkmenistan 0.4 percent of the population (24 thousand people) are multidimensionally poor while an additional 2.4 percent are classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty (141 thousand people). The MPI, which is the share of the population that is multidimensionally poor, adjusted by the intensity of the deprivations, is 0.001¹⁰, where average for Europe and Central Asia MPI value is 0.004.

Situation of children. The total population of Turkmenistan is estimated at 6,126,746 people for 2021¹¹, of which children comprise 33.3% of the population¹². With its independence in 1991, Turkmenistan has been transitioning through a number of changes in its political, social and economic life. In the recent years there have been a number of reforms in many areas of social life including education, healthcare

³ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, *Analysis of Situation of Children's and Women's Rights in Turkmenistan*, Ashgabat, 2019

⁴ In its meeting of 25 September 2020, the People's Council of Turkmenistan adopted the Constitutional Law of Turkmenistan "On amendments and additions to the Constitution of Turkmenistan".

⁵ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, *Analysis of Situation of Children's and Women's Rights in Turkmenistan*, Ashgabat, 2019

⁶ Human Development Index is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living

⁷ http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/TKM.pdf

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The 2010 Human Development Report introduced the MPI, which identifies multiple overlapping deprivations suffered by individuals in 3 dimensions: health, education and standard of living.

¹⁰ Source: ToR; Since 2018, HDRO and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative jointly produce and publish the MPI estimates. The latest release from July 2020 covers 107 developing countries (countries that lack survey data that allow for the calculation of the MPI are not included). The most recent survey data that were publicly available for Turkmenistan's MPI estimation refer to 2015/2016.

¹¹ Turkmenistan Population – live (2021) - Worldometer (<http://srv1.worldometers.info/world-population/turkmenistan-population/>)

¹² ToR, citing State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan, 2020.

and social support. It is in this context that the country adopted a range of new legal acts, programmes and strategies aimed at protection of the rights of children.

The Government of Turkmenistan (GoT) is committed to advancing the 2030 Agenda and adopted SDGs in 2016 and has been working on integration of SDG targets and indicators into national programmes and plans of actions, including the NAP, as well as on design of an SDG monitoring system with technical assistance from UN. The country adopted 148 SDG targets and 175 SDG indicators, 30 per cent of which directly concern children¹³. UNICEF has actively supported the government to improve the availability and use of child-related data¹⁴.

Turkmenistan created a favourable enabling environment to realize rights of children and women. It ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and aligned a number of national laws with the Conventions. There is no separate governance entity specifically focusing on children's rights in Turkmenistan.¹⁵ However, the basic principles of the CRC have been incorporated into national laws e.g. Law On State Guarantees of the Rights of the Child that provides for the state guarantees for a healthy living environment, adequate care, protection from exploitation at work. Similarly, the State Programme of Youth Policy for 2015-2020 focuses on creating favourable conditions for full participation of young people in the socioeconomic, political and cultural life of the state and society.

Despite the significant progress, the NAP addresses a number of challenges lying ahead. Specifically, there is a need to further expand health facilities in rural areas, introduce inclusive education, build the systems' capacity in the field of healthcare and education in line with international standards, ensuring the rights of all children to quality education with special attention to children with disabilities. There is also a need to focus more efforts on ensuring the practical implementation of legal and policy frameworks and strengthening coordination between various policy makers on both central and local level. Moreover, the need remains to further build the systems' workforce in order to improve the provision of services to children in need of protection, e.g. children victims or witness of violence and children in contact with the law or in proceedings.

NAP is putting more focus on vulnerability and vulnerable groups as identified in situational analysis¹⁶: the care for children dominated by medical mode of disability that prevent inclusion of children with disabilities; children in rural areas and selected regions experiencing gaps in education, health and social services; gaps in the legislation and its realization in relation to stateless children, etc. As vulnerable groups are often excluded from decision-making process and their perspectives are not considered, the NAP considers participation as an area of particular attention as a way of making national policies more effective in addressing gaps in rights realization in supporting vulnerable groups of children and women.

The National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 was adopted as a response to this new context and specifically to the 2015 Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Stemming from the Committee's recommendations as well as national strategic priorities in maternity and child healthcare, juvenile justice, early childhood development, education and social inclusion of children, NAP focuses on key topical priorities for children.

The NAP covers the following priority areas in the interests of children and SDGs implementation:

1. Ensure realization of general measures for implementation of the CRC in Turkmenistan;
2. Ensure the rights of the child for life and survival, in particular through strengthening maternal and child health and promotion of a healthy life style;
3. Ensure the rights of the child for education and development, so all children were able to fully realise their potential, in particular, through quality education and social protection provided to them;

¹³ ToR

¹⁴ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, Baseline Assessment for Child-related SDG indicators in Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, 2018

¹⁵ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, *Analysis of Situation of Children's and Women's Rights in Turkmenistan*, Ashgabat, 2019

¹⁶ *ibid*

4. Improve living conditions and ensure economic well-being for children and families, including issues of protection in emergency, while focusing on disaster risk reduction through strengthening the actions on preparedness to emergency and response;
5. Protect the rights of all children for the life free from violation, exploitation, cruel and negligent treatment, in particular, through enhancing the efficiency of the system of services for protection and support of vulnerable children and through implementation of measures aimed at prevention of placing children without parental care in orphanages and children's homes;
6. Ensure the rights of children for freedom of expression on all issues related to their interests and rights to actively participate in social, cultural, economic and public life.

The National Action plan on Children's rights incorporates a result-based framework with goals and objectives. It is organised around topics and subtopics, each of them referring to a list of interventions along each topical section. Indicators are available for interventions and activities, but not on the level of goals.

The National plan on Children's rights has a special focus on ensuring the rights of disadvantaged children, such as the children with disability, migrant children, stateless children, low-income children, children without parental care and children in the conflict with the law.

NAP budget. Comprehensive data on the budget of the NAP was not provided for this evaluation since this data from the government is not accessible

2.5. Significance of the evaluated intervention

The NAP is significant in terms of bringing together the effort of UNICEF, national partners, other UN agencies and public organisations in delivering towards children's rights across. This is the first ever such comprehensive and multi-lateral effort to ensure rights of the children of Turkmenistan and a comprehensive strategic document that is endorsed at the highest political level. The NAP is a strategy towards modernising all child-relevant sectors.

3. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The main purpose of the evaluation is to:

- **generate substantive evidence-based knowledge** by identifying good practices and lessons learned from the implementation of NAP.
- **adjustment/redirection** necessary for the planning and implementation of support under the current CPD 2021-2025 and provide a basis for the development of the new NAP 2023-2028.
- **strengthening UNICEF contribution** to the realization of child rights and protection of children's access to quality services.

The timing of the evaluation is critical as the new Country Programme of Cooperation with the UN and UNICEF was signed in 2020, current NAP will be completed in 2022 and the development of a new NAP 2023-2025 will start the same year. Thus, the evaluation will help to shape the programming and policymaking in child-rights, including main elements of cooperation with UNICEF. The evaluation's findings will also inform the update of the Situation Analyses on children and women, the state-party report to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and CRC Committee in 2022 and SDG-related progress reports

Objective: The key objective of this evaluation is to explore progress in the implementation of the priority areas that constitute the program of work under the National Action Plan and identify the main successes, challenges and lessons arising from the implementation of the NAP 2018-2022.

In terms of accountability, the evaluation independently assesses the overall progress towards intended outcomes, and, where possible, seeks indications of possible effects on the most vulnerable groups of children (including children living in the rural area, children with disabilities, children in conflict with the



law, etc.). An analysis of UNICEF's added value to the implementation of the NAP was included in the evaluation design.

Scope of the evaluation

The programmatic focus are all the six Goal areas of the NAP with the exclusion of the activities covered in other up-coming or past evaluations.

The following components of the NAP **were excluded** from this evaluation:

- **3.4.1. Ensure enabling conditions for social integration and realization of the rights of children with disabilities, including legislative measures, data on children with disabilities, access to inclusive social services and support services, and encouraging the participation of CWD in public life.** This component is covered by the ECD Evaluation, current survey on people with disabilities and partly by up-coming Evaluation of the Joint Programme of Social Services.
- **4.2.3. Ensure the necessary volume and level of social services to protect and support a disadvantaged child.** This will be covered by the up-coming Evaluation of the Joint Programme of Social Services.
- **Efficiency** – comprehensive data on the budget of the NAP was not provided for this evaluation since this data from the government is not accessible. Hence, the ToR excludes efficiency as an evaluation criterion given that insufficient financial data will not enable cost-effectiveness analysis of the NAP.

The NAP is due to be completed in 2022 and the evaluation is being performed in the last year of implementation. Therefore, the evaluation has both summative and formative dimensions. It provides recommendations for improvements of the effectiveness, scale up and sustainability of Government's work on child rights and UNICEF's support. Furthermore, the evaluation adds value for Ministry of Education and Ministry of Healthcare and Medical Industry in terms of planning their next cycle of NAP implementation based on the findings, conclusions and recommendations from this evaluation.

Special emphasis was placed on ensuring that children (boys and girls), who are direct beneficiaries of the interventions are heard, have opportunities to communicate their views, and participate in the evaluation process. Other stakeholders whose participation was important to assess the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the programme include parents (both mothers and fathers). Central Government, local community leaders, municipality management and public organisations were consulted in assessing the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the NAP implementation.

Time scope: 2018 to 2021

Geographic scope: national, covering Ashgabat city and 5 velayats: Ahal, Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap and Mary. The evaluation was conducted online. Young SDG Ambassadors were involved to conduct Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) in all velayats with children and parents, while the consultant provided online support. The FGDs could not be run face-to-face due to the pandemic situation. All except one FGD were conducted online via Zoom.

Intended use: The knowledge generated by the evaluation will be used by:

- ISLD and line Ministries for planning and implementation purposes of the relevant state programmes;
- Municipalities, NGOs and other stakeholders for improving their activities;
- UNICEF Turkmenistan for further expanding and improving its programmatic activities in this field.

The evaluation findings targets the following users as indicated in Table 2 below:



Table 2. Evaluation Users and Uses

Users	Uses
ISLD and Inter-ministerial Commission	Take decisions and develop strategic orientations on the NAP implementation and development of the new NAP, including the allocation of human, material and financial resources based on the evidence generated by the evaluation. Use best practice lessons to accelerate child rights agenda implementation towards national SDG targets.
UNICEF Country Office	Improve the programme strategic notes, tailor strategic approaches depending on the changing context. Document lessons learnt and best practices that can inform development of a new NAP. Incorporate best practice and draw on lessons learned (i) to improve the performance of future interventions in the field of child rights; (ii) to improve planning/programming of the future interventions; (iii) to strengthen the ME component and ensure strong evidence-based approach in planning and strategizing
Municipalities (Hakimliks)	Adjust and optimize the NAP implementation mechanisms on local level based on the lessons learned from the evaluation. Adjust monitoring approaches to enhance quality program delivery. Improve budget allocation and effective budget usage procedures, harmonization of actions with all actors to minimize expenses and avoid leaving gaps or overlapping in covering critical needs Use best practice lessons to accelerate reform implementation towards national SDG targets.
NGOs and other Civil Society Organisations	Build on the evidence generated by the evaluation to improve performance in the implementation of NAP interventions. Strengthen capacity where it is lacking.
Donors and other development partners	Influence the future design and scale-up of child-rights agenda

Secondary audiences: MPs need to be informed in order to introduce necessary legislative changes. International, academic, private and civil society organizations including UN agencies and educators will use the results of the evaluation to gain more knowledge and to improve their advocacy and practical actions in introduction and implementation of the child rights programmes.

4. Evaluation Methodology, Quality Assurance, and Ethics

This section covers the evaluation design, the methodology, the evaluation limitations, constraints and mitigation strategies applied, as well as description of the evaluation oversight and management and the research ethics.

4.1. Evaluation design

The evaluation has both summative and formative dimensions and uses mixed-methods. The evaluation was guided by the **participatory**¹⁷ approach as it engaged all key stakeholders during all stages of the evaluation - inception, implementation, analysis, and dissemination. The evaluation was informed by the opinions, experiences, and suggestions of key stakeholders, including UNICEF staff from all sectorial departments (health, child's rights, education, and child protection) and partners from public organizations, line ministries, other UN agencies active in the country, Parliament, Prosecutor's Office and human right's independent institutions i.e. the Ombudsman Office. The methodology for this evaluation involved a set of data collection methods (desk review, key informants interviews and focus group discussions) and analytical methods (stakeholders analysis, qualitative and content analysis) to assess along the evaluation criteria i.e. relevance, effectiveness and sustainability.

4.2. Conceptual framework

The evaluator conducted the analysis along an evaluation framework developed to respond to the evaluation questions stipulated by the ToR. The evaluation framework is provided as Annex 1 to this report. Some of the ToR evaluation questions were regrouped by the ET and equipped with sub-questions, evaluation indicators, data sources and evaluation data collection methods.

¹⁷ **Participatory evaluation** is an approach that involves the stakeholders of a programme or policy in the evaluation process. This involvement can occur at any stage of the evaluation process, from the evaluation design to the data collection and analysis and the reporting of the study

4.3. Evaluation criteria

The evaluation was performed along OECD DAC evaluation criteria as follows:

Relevance – The extent to which NAP is relevant to the context and needs of children and their families.

Effectiveness - The extent to which the NAP achieved its set goals.

Sustainability: The extent to which the achieved outcomes for children are likely to sustain after the programme period.

4.4. Data sources, collection methods and sampling

The evaluator used qualitative and quantitative approach for this evaluation. The approach enabled cross-verification or validation of data gathered from different sources, including the secondary evidence. The methodological approach enabled achieving depth and coverage, authenticity, reliability, and triangulation of findings. The methods used for the evaluation are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Evaluation methods



The methodology for this evaluation involved a set of data collection methods (desk review, key informants interviews and focus group discussions) and analytical methods (stakeholders' analysis, qualitative and content analysis).

These methods have been elaborated in the following sections.

Desk research

The desk research was based on the available sources of secondary information concerning children's right interventions and gaps, data on achievements towards Sustainable development Goals (SDGs), available national data, evaluations, monitoring data collected, etc.

The evaluator reviewed **more than 40** documents. Annex 6 provides a full list of reviewed literature. The desk review continued throughout the evaluation and enabled better understanding of the context, intervention, results, challenges and learning. A systematic approach was applied during desk research which entailed initial screening and classification (whereby documents were organised and catalogued according to the type of documents), broader themes were identified (while keeping in view the Evaluation Matrix), and relevant information was extracted through general reading. The information gathered was used to appropriately respond to evaluation questions either on its own or with the support of the primary data collected through field research.

Training

As per ToR, data collection on velyat level was supported by **8 Young SDG ambassadors** (2 in each velayat) as part of UNICEF's overall vision of youth inclusion and professional development. They are socially active people, leaders of their local communities. In order to ensure quality data collection by them, the consultant provided **1.5-day online training** for SDGs Ambassadors to prepare them to conduct FGDs. The training consisted of theoretical and a practical skills component, covering the following topics: Purpose of the training and purpose of the evaluation; Roles and responsibilities of the SDG

ambassadors; FGD as a data collection method; following the FGD guides; Method of collecting the data, recording data and reporting data to the consultant; Confidentiality issues and ethical considerations in interviewing adult respondents and children.

The evaluator was available to the SDG ambassadors for assistance by email to support any clarification prior to and during the focus group discussions.

Key Informants Interviews (KIIs) and Focus group discussions (FGDs)

A non-probability sampling method (purposive sampling) was used to select the sites and participants for this qualitative evaluation study.

The sampling methods for respondents' selection below were based on the following criteria:

- country geographical coverage and a diversity of beneficiaries;
- balance of government and non-government partners; inclusion of all relevant UN sister agencies and other development agencies;
- coverage of all main stakeholders

Using the method of in-depth semi-structured interviews and expert consultations, the evaluation gained the perceptions, opinions and practices of the stakeholders. A non-probability sampling method (purposive sampling) was used to select the participants for this evaluation study.

The data collection stage of the evaluation was conducted in the period 10 Oct – 31 Dec 2021. It comprised online interviews.

The evaluator conducted **19 interviews** with key informants, both individual and group interviews as follows:

- Programme managers of UN agencies involved with the government in a Joint programme to develop and establish services for specific vulnerable people including children,
- The government of Turkmenistan with the relevant line ministries and agencies responsible for the implementation of the related components of the 6 goal areas in the NAP: Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Internal Affairs (responsible for juvenile justice)
- Managers of residential institutions under the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population
- Public associations – non-governmental organisations involved in NAP implementation

The SDGs Ambassadors conducted **18 FGDs** with children and parents from the following specific populations: Parents (mixed male and female) of young children, Parents (mixed male and female) in need of government support, Parents (mixed male and female) of children with disabilities. Children of school age i.e. 16-17 in all 5 velayats covering all country. Young people (aged 18 or above) leaving formal care (residential institution).

(A list of Key informants is attached as Annex 2 to this report).

4.5. Data analysis

The following tools for data analysis will be employed:

Qualitative analysis – description of the facts in the context of the relations among them, argumentation and evidence. This analysis is based on data from interviews and desk review and will explain the review findings.

Quantitative data analysis - analysis of secondary quantitative data i.e. available statistics will be analysed to look at patterns and trends.

Stakeholder analysis – analysis of the perspectives of different stakeholders and how these help mapping strengths and weaknesses. Also this method will facilitate the analysis on the coherence criteria.



Comparative analysis – comparing approaches and their relevance to implement certain policies.

Comparative analysis will demonstrate the similarities and differences between the concept and process of providing social support within the framework of the traditional state service providers and the newly emerging service models.

Most significant change – the ToR specifically asks the evaluator to use the technique during all assessment methods alongside other more rigorous approaches. The most-significance-change analysis is based on generating and analysing personal accounts of people of change and deciding which of these accounts is the most significant, and why. It will also seek to identify changes that would not have occurred without UNICEF.

4.6. Ethics

The evaluation adhered to all applicable UNEG ethical norms and standards¹⁸, and UNICEF procedure on ethical standards¹⁹ as are prescribed in the relevant key guiding documents. The description below outlines key aspects of each dimension:

- **Independence and impartiality:** The evaluator ensured independence from the Programme during all phases of evaluation. The evaluator had no conflict of interest and no role in the implementation of Programme activities.
- **Credibility:** The evaluation was planned with inclusive and participatory data collection methodology (involving a range of relevant stakeholders for feedback) and triangulation of reported findings by using an analysis of evidence from both secondary and primary data sources
- **Human Rights and Gender Equality:** The evaluator integrated the principles of Human Rights and Gender Equality (HRBA and UNSWAP) at all stages of the evaluation.
- **Evaluation ethics:** The evaluator considered and respect local culture, beliefs, customs, and values during fieldwork. She upheld the rights of institutions (organizations) and individuals (organization's representatives) by requesting verbal informed consent and maintaining the confidentiality of all respondents. The evaluation process was conducted with sensitiveness to beliefs, manners, and customs of the social and cultural environment in Turkmenistan. All interviews and preliminary contacts were organised in a culturally appropriate way. The evaluator did not assess the personal performance of individuals and balanced an assessment of management functions with due consideration of this principle.
- **Professionalism:** The evaluator is professional with extensive knowledge, training, and experience working with multiple clients on local and international projects.
- **Privacy of Participants:** The participants were informed of who would have access to their private data, and that an authorised team member will remove all identifying information of the respondents. All the data was saved in separate folder that was end-to-end encrypted and accessed to core evaluator only.

Since the evaluation involved children in the data collection, the evaluation methodology and data tools underwent an ethical review by the Ethics Review Board (ERB). Research Ethics Approval is attached as an annex to this report.

4.7. Limitations, constraints and mitigation strategies

Find below a list of limitations and constraints for this evaluation with mitigation measures applied:

The following limitations of the evaluation were factored in:

- **Incomplete result-based framework** of NAP – The result-based framework of the NAP (Appendix to NAP) is equipped with objectives to the goals but with no objectives indicators and expected outcomes. Where indicators are available, they refer to the key actions only. Where indicators to key actions refer to numbers, baseline and targets are missing, which makes the assessment of progress difficult.
- **Mitigation strategy:** The consultant rearranged result framework under each goal to the extent possible. Where indicators for the goal were missing, the goal was decomposed to outcomes and indicators were suggested to enable the judgment of progress.

¹⁸ UNEG Norms and Standards of Evaluation (2017); UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards (2015).

¹⁹ UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards (2015).

- **Limited data** availability, including disaggregation: The justification section and the evaluation framework of NAP does not contain limited baseline data to ground the goals on. The mid-term review conducted in 2020 documented limited comparative data or mid-term data (with very few exceptions of some non-quantified data). Narrative component to the mid-term review was not identified to feed information on any relevant trends that might have occurred during NAP implementation. No publicly available data on child-related indicators is available on the official website of the State Statistical Committee of Turkmenistan.
- *Mitigation strategy:* MICS data had been provided to inform previous UNICEF publications as part of joint initiatives/projects and these were used for this evaluation. MICS 2015 and Transmonee data were used as baseline on some of NAP indicators. Additionally, the consultant also relied on data provided by officials during primary data collection (interviews) and internationally recognised sources such as WHO, World Bank, UN, etc. Additionally, judgments were made based on trends indicated in previous publications or/and last publicly available data in English or Russian.
- **No pre-existing theory of change** was developed to justify the NAP.
- *Mitigation strategy:* A large number of documents were reviewed to inform the reconstruction of the Theory of change retroactively.
- **Limited use of data collection tools:** Due to Covid-19 situation, no travel was foreseen under this assignment. This limited the efficiency of data collection as well as reduced some of the methods that could be used e.g. on-the-field observation. Also, no national consultant or team consultants with specialised knowledge under each topical area was envisaged in the ToR to support the work of the Evaluator.
Mitigation strategy: The Evaluator trained young SDG Ambassadors to cover data collection in regions. Additional topic-specific literature was explored to deepen the knowledge of the consultant on the developments under each sector in the country.

5. Evaluation management

This section covers the evaluation management arrangements, evaluation team and functions, implementation phases and deliverables under each evaluation phase.

5.1. Evaluation Oversight – Evaluation Steering Committee

The evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF CO Turkmenistan and was supervised by Child rights monitoring and evaluation specialist at UNICEF acting as Evaluation Manager for this evaluation. Support for this evaluation was provided by all UNICEF programme staff.

The Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) comprised of the representatives of the major stakeholders including Evaluation Manager, Deputy Representative (or OIC), UNICEF Programme staff, Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor.

5.2. Work plan

The evaluation was implemented between August and December 2021. The implementation did not face any major delays. The field work related to FGDs with children and parents was originally planned for October 2021 as part of the field work schedule. However, COVID-19 pandemic situation caused change of format (from face-to-face to online) as well as rescheduling the groups to December 2021. This caused minor internal rearrangement of the original work plan without affecting the overall evaluation being on track. A full list of scheduled and conducted meetings during the data collection stage is provided as an annex to this report.

The evaluation was conducted with a participatory approach engaging all relevant stakeholders. The evaluation process followed a phased approach with five key phases i.e., inception, fieldwork, data processing and analysis, validation & preliminary findings and reporting. Each phase had a series of activities/tasks (implemented both concurrently and sequentially) and associated deliverables. A detailed presentation of the process is presented as an annex to this report.



5. Gender Equality, Equity, and Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)

This section discusses the extent to which the evaluator finds integration of gender equality, equity and Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) in the evaluated interventions- design and implementation of both the evaluation itself and the evaluated programme.

HRBA in evaluation design and implementation: The whole evaluation was guided by the principles underlying the Convention on the Rights of the Children. The principle of gender equality, equity and Human Rights Based Approach was applied in the design of the evaluation. Assessment of the extent HRBA principle was included in the overall evaluation framework by including principle-specific questions and sub-questions. The principle of participation was applied to the evaluation design by involving beneficiaries of policies addressed by the NAP, namely parents and children, seeking their opinions and views on all areas of the NAP. The principles of gender equality and representing the most vulnerable guided the evaluation design in terms of data collection, namely FGDs were designed to represent equally boys and girls, as well as mother and fathers. Most vulnerable groups (children with disabilities, children victims of violence, migrant or refugee children, children in conflict with the law, children in residential institutions) were given voice during data collection in three ways:

- Desk research specifically focused on identifying data on the most vulnerable children and families;
- Key informants representing NAP design and implementation were specifically asked about the most vulnerable groups of children and families;
- Children with disabilities (parents); children in residential institutions (care leavers) were represented in the FGDs with children and parents. Child-sensitive language was used in the FGDs

HRBA in NAP design and implementation: In addition to the evaluation questions regarding the main evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness and sustainability), the NAP was assessed with a gender equality, equity and HRBA lens. These principles were applied in the NAP design and implementation to further the realization of human rights and ensure that human rights standards and principles guide all phases of NAP implementation. It focuses on the development of the capacities of 'duty-bearers' to meet their obligations and of 'rights-holders' to claim their rights.

The gender equality is also a normative principle to ensure that priorities in the NAP reflect the country's commitments to achieving gender equality and that the results contribute to these gender equality goals. Gender mainstreaming is a key strategy to examine how women and men and boys and girls experience problems differently, and how they relate to one another and the societal forces that shape power relationships. The NAP design has benefitted from the available secondary literature. A dedicated gender assessment and equity gaps were outlined in situational analysis informing the design of the NAP deepen understanding around gender-specific determinants.

Gender considerations were made across the NAP for instance women and girls were of special focus in terms of improving health (maternity health, health of women in reproductive age, measures to reduce adolescent pregnancies) and education (teachers certified in comprehensive gender sensitive and age appropriate reproductive health education). HRBA was explicitly used in identifying the vulnerable groups and developing strategies to promote their rights. The design of goals 4 and 5 of the NAP, for example, was fully informed by children's rights based approach in identifying the biggest vulnerabilities for children i.e. disability, violence, conflict with the law, family separation and migrancy. However, the scale of interventions as they are documented did not affect any nationwide equity unless they are implemented nation-wide with sufficient coverage.

6. Evaluation findings

6.1. Relevance

This section looks at the extent to which the NAP was relevantly designed and planned in accordance to the country needs, priorities and policies. The section ends with preliminary conclusions. The analysis was based on:

- The relevance to context of the NAP i.e. the extent it is aligned to national and international priorities and needs
- The relevance of the logical framework of the NAP i.e. the extent to which the NAP was designed in a way that the logic of intervention articulates the objectives related to child rights and demonstrates the causal links of the interventions.

In terms of relevance, the evaluator has made the following judgments of the main components of the NAP relevance: (See Table 4)

Table 3 Assessment of relevance

Relevance criteria	Level of relevance	Justification
Relevance to context	HIGH	The NAP is aligned with priorities targeted by other child-related national strategies and programmes e.g. on education, early child development, etc. The NAP puts together all national effort under one comprehensive strategic document. The NAP is generally aligned with priorities and gaps identified in situational analyses and recommendations of the international organisations, such as UNICEF and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The NAP was not based on detailed and comprehensive assessment of needs of children and families, however, situational analysis informed the NAP design in terms of existing gaps and specific vulnerable groups. Most of these groups of children are covered by the NAP. However, some groups of children were not explicitly addressed on the level of objectives and expected outcomes e.g. children victims of sale, child prostitution and child pornography or other forms of sexual exploitation, children placed in institutions, children in rural areas, etc., which runs the risk of the plan not fully addressing those groups. At the same time other groups of children are targeted without clear justification of their need.
Relevance of the logical framework	MODERATE	The NAP is equipped with a results framework. However, it contains formulations of goals and objectives that are insufficiently specific, realistic or measurable. Expected outcomes for children were not identified. Indicators for measuring progress of activities are in place but no indicators for measuring progress towards the objectives and goals were formulated, which limits the government and the stakeholders in the judgment of how well the designed interventions performed for children and their families.

Relevance to context

The context of planning of the NAP is that of modernising the care systems in Turkmenistan following the country's independence, the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991 as well as other international child-rights conventions and protocols. (See Figure 3) The state introduced a number of national programmes and regulative frameworks relevant to children's rights regarding health, education, family upbringing, social support, protection of the child from economic exploitation. etc. Some of them targeted children specifically (e.g. Law of Turkmenistan on Promotion and Support to Breastfeeding, 2016; the law on State Guarantees of the Rights of the Child, 2014, National Programme of Turkmenistan on early development and preparation of children to school for 2011-2015, etc.).

Other milestones of the pre-NAP context are related to efforts targeting the whole population or whole sectors but benefit children among other groups. Among them are the Family Code of Turkmenistan, 2012; the Code of Turkmenistan of Social Protection of Population 2012; the Programme of President of Turkmenistan on social and economic development of the country for 2014-2018; the General Programme of Supply of clean drinking water in residential areas of the country, National Action Plan for Ensuring Gender Equality for the years of 2015-2020, National Action Plan in the Area of Human Rights for the years of 2016-2020, etc.

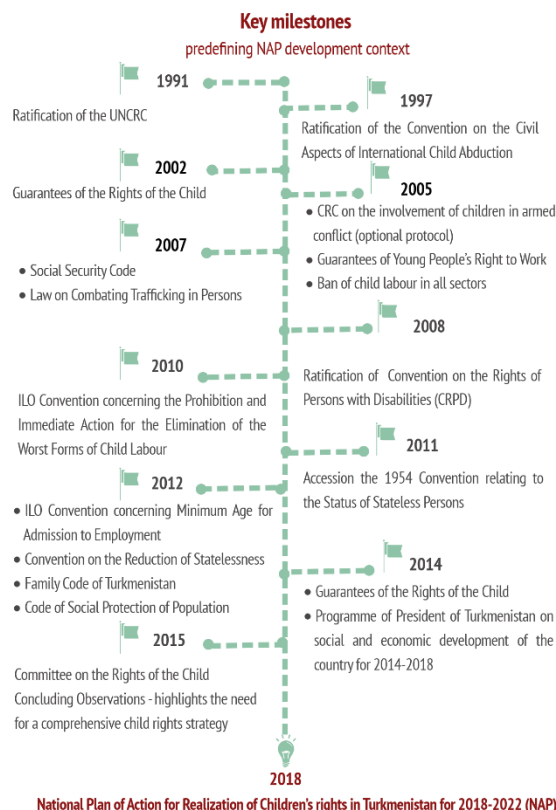
In 2015 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child presented the Concluding Observations to Turkmenistan, in which the Committee highlighted the need for developing a comprehensive data collection and monitoring system as well as expanding the support systems for vulnerable groups of children. Specifically, the Committee recommended the setting up of a comprehensive child rights national strategy.

The National Action Plan on realization of children's rights in Turkmenistan for the years of 2018-2022 was approved by the Decree of the President of Turkmenistan of 22.06.2018. The Plan was elaborated with the consideration of recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of a Child, with the participation of respective ministries and agencies, institutions and public organizations of Turkmenistan, together with the UNICEF Representative Office in Turkmenistan. This has been the first child-related national strategy which targets all areas of children's rights as per CRC as opposed to taking fragmented approach. Furthermore, the NAP brings together the responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders (agencies, ministries, UN agencies, civil organisations) under one policy document for children.

The conceptualising of the NAP was based on the recommendations of the UNCRC as well as analyses of the situation²⁰ conducted by UNICEF with close collaboration with the government of Turkmenistan. The evaluation did not identify government-led comprehensive needs assessments of children groups and their families, national programmes' evaluation reports or impact assessments of legislation or policies which may have informed the design of the NAP. The Institute of State, Law and Democracy, coordinator of the NAP implementation, organised a poll among children and young people seeking to prioritise their needs and wishes in various areas of life. The poll was run in November 2020 i.e. two years after the NAP was designed. The evaluation did not identify documented re-designing of the NAP based on the results of these polls or any analysis, conclusions and recommendations stemming from the poll results.

The overall observation is that the process of planning the NAP has employed a mixed approach to defining goals and objectives. From the one hand the planning is based on the rights of the children generally (benefitting all children), and on the other hand a focus is placed on certain groups in terms of vulnerability.

Figure 3 Key milestones predefining NAP development



UNICEF

"The most significant thing about the NAP is that it brought many stakeholders to work together."

²⁰ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, *Analysis of Situation of Children's and Women's Rights in Turkmenistan*, Ashgabat, 2019 and UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP in Turkmenistan, *Situational Analysis on Youth in Turkmenistan*, Ashgabat, 2019

The evaluation finds that the NAP has been generally aligned with priorities highlighted in a number of national and international child rights policy documents: *See Table 5.*

Table 4 Relevance to context

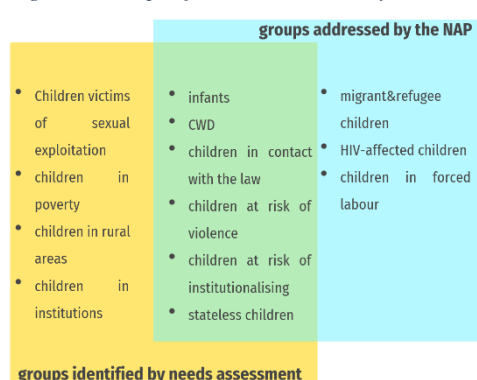
Policy	Identified needs	Group of children	Alignment	Justification
National policies	Turkmenistan has taken a course towards modernising the child-related systems in the country. In achieving this goal a number of national policies target pursue of the best interest of the child in terms of accessible healthcare (breastfeeding, access to quality healthcare, maternal health), access to quality education, social support to vulnerable children and their families, etc.	All children including vulnerable children	HIGH	The National Action Plan on Children is based on the principles and provisions of the Constitution of Turkmenistan, the Law of Turkmenistan "On State Guarantees of the Rights of a Child", UN Convention on the Rights of a Child and other international agreements in the interests of children, the participant of which is Turkmenistan. The key priorities of the National plan on Children's rights are guided by the goals and objectives of national policies, programmes and plans, such as the National Programme of Turkmenistan for Socio-economic Development for 2011-2030, the new edition of the National Programme of the President of Turkmenistan on the Development of Social and Living Conditions of Residents of Villages, Communities, Towns and Regional Centres until 2020, the Programme of President of Turkmenistan on social and economic development of the country for 2018-2014, the General Programme of Supply of clean drinking water in residential areas of the country, the General Programme of Turkmenistan on Development of Juvenile Justice, the National Strategy and Action Plan for 2015–2019 on Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health. The National plan stipulates 6 goal areas which are aligned with the key SDGs related to children's well-being.
Committee on the rights of the Child	Improvement of Turkmenistan's data collection system on children's rights disaggregated by, inter alia, sex, age, national and ethnic origin, geographical location, and socioeconomic status, in order to facilitate analysis on the situation of children at risk and children victims of offences prohibited by the Protocol.	All children	HIGH	The NAP stipulates the increase the availability and access to data on realization of the rights of the child, especially those related to Sustainable Development goals. In the year of 2017, the first assessment of availability of basic indicators related to children was held together with UNICEF. The NAP makes arrangements to address the data collection and data availability issues regarding children's rights monitoring identified both by CRC and UNICEF ²¹ .
	Full incorporation of measures (prohibition, reporting, investigation, victims support and prevention) against the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography are not clearly and specifically defined and prohibited in the national legislation	Children victims of sale, child prostitution and child pornography or other forms of sexual exploitation	LOW	The NAP has made arrangements for harmonization of national legislation with international standards in the field of human rights and the protection of children from all forms of violence and ill-treatment as well as plans for preventive measures. Although child sale, prostitution and pornography are among the form of violence against children, no explicit plans were identified in the NAP against these specific forms of violence.
UNICEF Country Programme Document 2015-	Absence of professional social and protection services including social workers with the capacity to respond adequately to the needs of vulnerable children. There is no 'continuum of services' for child	All vulnerable children, including children with disabilities	HIGH	The NAP has been designed to address the need of conceptualising and establishment of child protection system oriented to provide community-based social services in support to children at risk and their families.

²¹ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, *Analysis of Situation of Children's and Women's Rights in Turkmenistan*, Ashgabat, 2019

	protection that could assure protection and welfare of the child at all times and at all levels			
	Insufficient access to quality health and education services, especially for children with disabilities and their families. The Situational analysis indicates insufficient access to support to children with disabilities and their families.	All children, specifically children with disabilities and young children	HIGH	The NAP has been designed to address the need of higher quality health services for children, specifically infants and women in reproductive age. Furthermore, the NAP outlines priorities related to improved access to quality education, specifically for children with disabilities.

The Observations of the Committee on the rights of the Child in 2015 and the situational analyses²² on children and youth informing the development of the NAP indicated gaps for certain groups of children (children victims of sexual exploitation, children in rural areas, children in institutions, etc.). The evaluation finds that on the level of goals and objectives the NAP prioritises most of these groups. At the same time, there are groups of children that are not explicitly addressed by the NAP (e.g. children victims of sexual exploitation, children placed in institutions), while other groups appear in the NAP with no documented justification of needs or at least no data was identified to demonstrate the need for such prioritization (e.g. HIV-affected children, migrant children or children in forced labour). See Figure 4.

Figure 4 Groups of children covered by the NAP



Relevance of the logical framework

There is no documented rationale or detailed justification demonstrating how and why the NAP priorities were selected to contribute to the greater aim or the way they complement each other to produce results for children or what specific results for children are expected. For example the needs assessment and the reconstruction of the ToC indicates the need for an enabling environment. At the same time it is not explicitly described how the “Harmonization of legislation with key international agreements and conventions related to promotion and protection of Children's rights”²³ is expected to contribute to specific results for children and what specific changes are expected to happen as a result of the legislation.

The analysis of the results framework of the NAP finds that there is no overall aim formulated for the NAP. The evaluator assumes that this may be stemming from the idea that the plan targets all children, as it is based on the CRC. However, the lack of an overall goal (on strategic level) makes the judgement of the overall progress more difficult as well as makes the assessment of the extent the objectives and outputs sufficiently covering the strategic aim less feasible.

The NAP is equipped with a results framework, where each goal area contains objectives and priorities concerning group of children or certain interventions. Some of the goals seem to be formulated as interventions rather than changes in the lives of children and their families (e.g. “*Harmonization of legislation with key international agreements and conventions related to promotion and protection of*

²² UNICEF in Turkmenistan, *Analysis of Situation of Children's and Women's Rights in Turkmenistan*, Ashgabat, 2019 and UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP in Turkmenistan, *Situational Analysis on Youth in Turkmenistan*, Ashgabat, 2019

²³ NAP, Goal 1

Children's rights"), while others are formulated as rights (e.g. *"All children without exception have a right to education"*).

The goals and objectives in the NAP were formulated as insufficiently measurable and time-bound (e.g. Improve the quality of secondary education) , or in a way that their achievement is not realistic within the lifespan of the plan (5 years) such as *"All children without exception have a right to be free from violence, exploitation, ill-treatment in the family..."*.²⁴

Many of the goals and objectives are formulated too generally or broadly (e.g. *"Expand existing information and data on national standards of living standards"*, or *"Media"*). This limits the possibilities of better understanding the extent to which the interventions have indeed made a difference to the lives of children and their families and whether the most needy have been actually reached in a good way.

Indicators for measuring results for children were not identified on impact level, goal level and objectives level. The results framework contains indicators on outputs level only i.e. specific actions rather than indicators for impact, expected results and objectives.

An operational plan explicitly demonstrating how the results in each goal area will be achieved was not identified. Data²⁵ indicates that each goal area is allocated to a relevant ministry or agency, which takes responsibility over the implementation. The overall implementation is managed by an inter-agency coordination group representing relevant agencies and is chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs with the secretariat at the Institute of State, Law and Democracy.

Box 1: Preliminary conclusions: Relevance

- **RELEVANCE 1:** The NAP is generally aligned to the strategic priorities of child-rights' national strategies as well as strategic priorities identified in UN recommendations. The NAP is the first national policy document putting together a comprehensive plan towards advancing children's rights in Turkmenistan.
- **RELEVANCE 2:** The design of the NAP is moderately relevant to the needs of the children as it is oriented to all children but some vulnerable groups identified by the preliminary analysis as priority were not covered by the NAP on the level of formulating objectives. The internal causal links between goals, objectives and interventions are implicit and the results framework is insufficiently designed to capture outcomes for children.

6.2. Effectiveness

This section analyses the extent to which the NAP has achieved its goals, objectives and set targets. It also discusses the overall progress of NAP as well as NAP contribution to SDGs. The description ends with preliminary conclusions.

6.2.1. Progress towards goals

The section presents an overview of the general assessment on effectiveness and discusses each of the goals (1-6).

The NAP priorities are organised under six goals areas with 36 objectives under these goals. There is no overall strategic goal formulated. (See Annex). The quality of the result framework is evaluated as low:

- The NAP was not fully equipped with targets and indicators on the level of objectives and goals (but for activities only), nor with expected outcomes for children.
- The goals and objectives were not formulated as sufficiently realistic, specific and measurable. Goals were largely formulated as rights rather than goals.

²⁴ NAP, Goal 5

²⁵ Interviews with implementing agencies

- Goal 1 (*Ensure the implementation of the CRC and its optional protocols [...]*) and Goal 6 (*All children have a right to participate in the decision-making affecting their life, well-being and development and express their opinion, which is to be taken into account*) are formulated as separate thematic areas whilst they are actually horizontal and cross-cutting approaches.
- The NAP makes provisions that a mid-term review be performed in 2020. It was conducted in the form of the Narrative reports and collection of quantitative data by each ministry. The data were organised along the NAP result-framework but there were sometimes inconsistencies (e.g. targets and progress not clear enough or missing). The available indicators are on the level of activities only which decreases the validity of the indicators when applied to objectives and goals. That limits the possibilities of conducting an analysis of effectiveness per se and measuring the specific progress towards outcome for children. For the purpose of this evaluation, the analysis covers measurable achievements that are possible to identify, and analysis of the causal links behind those achievements.

Each goal is evaluated separately and preliminary conclusions on progress are presented in tables under each goal. Where the result frameworks are incomplete or incoherent, additional outcome indicators were included in the analysis. For better presentation of the progress, achievements under each goal and objective were assessed against the extent of achieved targets and colour-coded in the following way:

Sufficient data not identified to assess progress

The trend is not sufficient to achieve progress

Ongoing progress

Target achieved

Since the evaluation is taking place one year before the last implementation period of the NAP, all conclusions on lack or little progress towards goals are made here in the context of likelihood to be achieved by the end of NAP lifecycle i.e. by the end of 2022.

Goal 1: Ensure the implementation of the CRC and its optional protocols in Turkmenistan with the maximum use of available resources and within the framework of international cooperation

Below is a summary of the progress against this goal. See Table 6. Details are presented after the table.

Table 53 Progress towards Goal 1

<i>Goal 1: Ensure the implementation of the CRC and its optional protocols in Turkmenistan with the maximum use of available resources and within the framework of international cooperation</i>		
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Indicators as per NAP</i>	<i>progress</i>
1.1. Harmonization of legislation with key international agreements and conventions related to promotion and protection of children's rights		
1.1.1. Accession to key international agreements and conventions related to promotion and protection of children's rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optional protocol approved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions in progress
1.1.2. Improve and harmonize legislation of Turkmenistan on children in order to achieve further consistency with the CRC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and harmonize with the CRC the legislative acts related to realization and protection of the rights of the children. Number of adopted legislative acts related to children, harmonized with the CRC as compared to the total number subject to harmonization. Procedures and criteria developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 legislative acts adopted by Parliament Not identified
1.2. Coordination		
1.2.1. Strengthen coordination between various agencies and stakeholders responsible for providing rights and services to children by the end of the implementation period of the NPAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective coordination mechanism for monitoring of observation of children's rights established Coordination mechanism provided with adequate resources for its efficient performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions on a central-level body responsible for broader child rights issues in line with the CRC in progress Not identified
1.3. Data collection and resources for children		
1.3.1. Increase the availability and access to data on realization of the rights of the child, especially those related to SDGs, disaggregated by gender, age, disability, ethnicity, geographical location in accordance with the Concluding Observations of the CRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparative disaggregated data available Statistical compendium available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In progress- MICS 2019 available; SDG reporting available; Sectoral management information systems pending Yes (not available online)

1.4. Training on and dissemination of the Convention on the Rights of the Child		
1.4.1. Raise awareness on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Concluding Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio of implemented activities to planned activities. No of officials and professionals trained on realization of the rights of the child. Level of knowledge among trained officials and professionals about the CRC increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of activities implemented 719 training events conducted No outcome evaluation identified
1.5. Cooperation		
1.5.1. Ensure the involvement of public associations in promoting and realizing the rights enshrined in the CRC and the NPAC, both in their independent activities and in cooperation with state bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of actions with designated role of public associations available % increase of public associations involved in the monitoring of children's rights and NPAC implementation as compared to the year 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 5 organisations²⁶ involved in various activities Still to be addressed restrictions on the functioning of independent civil society organizations, including those working on children's rights
1.6. Independent monitoring		
1.6.1. Development and implementation of a mechanism for independent monitoring of observance of children's rights, enabling to receive, investigate and handle complaints from children, taking into account children's specifics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational mechanism for independent monitoring of children's rights available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ombudsman established and capacity strengthening in progress to advocate for strategy and mechanism for independent monitoring across all systems
1.7. Intersectoral coordination		
1.7.1. Ensure intersectoral coordination in the field of early childhood policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National ECD strategy for 2019-2024 adopted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes
Assessment of progress on this goal		
<p>From ToC perspective, the interventions along this goal were envisaged to contribute to creating an enabling environment for realisation of child rights in Turkmenistan. Analysis of the main parameters reveals that Turkmenistan has built on previous effort for ensuring an environment for realization of human rights and child's rights in the country in the area of human rights protection, gender equality, protection of women's, children's and disabled people's rights, youth policy, implementation of international conventions in the area of human rights protection. A number of amendments and improvements were made to existing legislation as well as child-related programmes. Establishing permanent interagency body ensuring that children's rights are implemented in every sector related to children has not been achieved during the reviewed period and there are no indications that it is likely to be achieved by the end of the NAP implementation period. Significant progress was made in terms of data collection, yet there are still gaps in terms of data collection and data accessibility. The environment for public associations to be able to respond to children's needs is improving but not yet sufficiently. A significant step in ensuring independent guarding of children's rights is the establishment of the Ombudsman²⁷ currently in a GANHRI accreditation process for compliance with Paris Principles.²⁸ UNICEF contributed to strengthening the capacity of the Ombudsman by conducting joint awareness raising on child rights.</p>		

Goal 1 of the NAP is addressing gaps in creating an enabling environment for exercising children's rights rather than setting objectives in terms of achieving those rights for children. This is a crosscutting approach rather than a goal with direct outcomes for children. Below are the main parameters identified in Goal 1 as important for creating a more enabling environment for implementing a children's rights strategy in the country.

Harmonisation of legislation

In 2019 constitutional reforms was launched in Turkmenistan. The main goal of these reforms is expansion of representation of people in the supreme organs of state power, further democratization of public and political life, strengthening foundations of constitutional framework, improving democratic foundations of public administration, enhancing the role of powers of the Medjlis, Halk Maslahaty and establishing a bicameral Parliamentary system of the law-making body with the consideration of national achievements and advanced world practice.

The NAP builds on the progress that Turkmenistan had previously made toward creating an enabling environment for children by enacting new laws on Trafficking in persons Equality of Women, Education and Youth, and the Law on Child Rights Guarantees. (See Figure 3 in Relevance section). In addition, the Parliament has adopted several Codes governing child protection, including the Code of Turkmenistan on Social Protection of the Population and the Family Code, which brought the age of marriage in line with that of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, and the Labour Code were also updated so that they would align with recommendations made by treaty bodies.

²⁶ Women's Union of Turkmenistan, Mahtumkuli Youth Union, National Red Crescent Society, Professional Unions of Turkmenistan, public association Yenme

²⁷ The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions - GANHRI, through the [Sub-Committee on Accreditation](#) (SCA), is responsible for reviewing and accrediting NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles.

²⁸ <https://www.tm.undp.org/content/turkmenistan/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2021/UNDP-and-APF-assist-the-Office-of-the-Ombudsperson-in-the-process-of-GANHRI-accreditation.html>

In the evaluation period Turkmenistan has built on previous effort for ensuring an environment for realization of human rights and child's rights in the country in the area of human rights protection, gender equality, protection of women's, children's and rights of people with disabilities, youth policy, implementation of international conventions in the area of human rights protection. A number of amendments and improvements were made to existing legislation as well as child-related programmes were adopted, among which:

- Law on the State Guarantees on the Rights of the Child (amended to ensure better harmonization with international standards)
- Law on Migration – regulates the realisation of migrant and stateless children
- Early Childhood Development Strategy of Turkmenistan 2020-2025
- Law for Psychological Services – introduces the requirement for the presence of legal representative in case of psychological service provision to children
- endorsement of the National Programme on Health Nutrition of the Population for 2020-2025
- endorsement of the Program for improving the activities of preschool institutions in the field of early development and pre-primary preparation of children in Turkmenistan for 2020-2025
- endorsement of the National Action Plan to eliminate statelessness in Turkmenistan for 2019–2024
- endorsement of the National Action Plan of Turkmenistan to combat trafficking in human beings for 2020-2022”
- endorsement of the National Action Plan for ensuring gender equality in Turkmenistan for 2021-2025
- endorsement of the Action Plan for the implementation of the “State Programme in the field of state youth policy of Turkmenistan for 2021-2025”
- Law of Turkmenistan on Breast Feeding Support and Propaganda.
- The National RMNCAH Strategy 2015-2019, 2021-2025
- The National Concept of Introduction of Developmental Paediatrics and Early Intervention, 2015-2020
- MOH Order No 220 on Strengthening of the Infant Young Child Programmes.
- National Nutrition Programme 2015-2019, 2020-2025.

As a follow up to Turkmenistan's 2019-2024 State Programme on Eliminating Statelessness a new priority area has been added to the 2021 plan and new partnership with the Ministry of Justice was agreed in the area of improvement of civil registration system and development of unique IDs, as per the Law on Civil Registration approved in 2020.

Amendments were introduced across various legislative acts towards improving the realisation of children's rights e.g. better access to school for children with disabilities; early retirement for mothers with eight or more children, state support for people in institutions including children (the Code of Turkmenistan on Social Protection of the Population); special protection of mothers of infants 0-3 (Criminal Code); improvement of birth registration (Law on Acts of Civil Status), regulating child labour limitations (Law on the State Guarantee of the Right to Work for Youth).

An important milestone is the introduction of the figure of the Ombudsman in Turkmenistan through the adoption of the Law of Turkmenistan “On the Ombudsperson” adopted in 2016 and coming into force on 1st January 2017. Although there is no separate Ombudsman for children, the Ombudsman is also responsible for acting as voice for children.

UNICEF contribution is key in this process in terms of assisting the Parliament not only regarding adoption of legislation but also research and advice on international best practices as well as education of MPs of such practices. Furthermore, UNICEF is currently supporting the Government to join the CRC Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, which allows children to file complaints, appeals and petitions in situations where their rights have been violated. The Interagency commission on Turkmenistan international responsibilities in the area of human rights and international humanitarian law is studying the possibility of approving this Optional Protocol.

Coordination

The implementation of the NAP is being coordinated by an inter-agency group chaired by the Institute of State, Law and Democracy. This is a positive demonstration of looking at the realisation of children's rights in strategic and coordinated terms. At the same time, efforts are still needed to incorporate coordination mechanisms on more operation level as well as on system level. This means establishing permanent interagency body ensuring that children's rights are implemented in every sector related to children i.e. education, healthcare, social protection and justice. More importantly, mechanisms need to



be put in place to enable the development and provision of services for children happening not within one sector alone but is an inter-systemic effort and ensures an integrated character of those services. On a positive note, in the context of the Ministry of Justice exploring the possibility for a central-level body to coordinate the work of Commissions on Minors, UNICEF advocates for establishing a central-level body responsible for broader child rights issues in line with the CRC concluding observation.

Coordination mechanisms should be oriented to three levels: enabling environment (laws and regulation paving the path for an effective child well-being system), systems (supporting systems towards provision of integrated services for children and families) and individuals (professionals competences).

Data collection and resources for children

No effective child well-being system can be developed without properly targeting the needs of children and their families. Policy-making is unlikely to happen without good and accessible data. Prior to the NAP adoption, in 2017 the first assessment of availability of basic indicators related to children was held together with UNICEF. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by all UN member states in 2015 constitute the framework of the Sustainable Development Agenda for the period up to 2030 at the global level. The Government of Turkmenistan (GoT) is committed to advancing the 2030 Agenda being one of the first countries to nationalise SDGs and establish a mechanism for monitoring their implementation, having already adapted and adopted 84%²⁹ SDGs into the national plans and strategies by 2018. Of them, 44 indicators (30%) directly concern the 2030 Agenda's most vulnerable constituency: children. In 2019 Turkmenistan conducted the first Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the achievements towards SDGs. The Review is an important element of the follow-up activities towards better data gap response and an opportunity to strengthen national policies. UNICEF in Turkmenistan just recently published an assessment of child-related SDG indicators in Turkmenistan.³⁰

Within the period under review the GoT, assisted by UNICEF, contributed to the Multi Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS 6) in 2019. The data were launched in 2020 and became publicly available. Turkmenistan demonstrates understanding that data should be the core of evidence-based policy-making. However, it takes time and continuous effort to continue to foster a culture of using data for decision-making by:

- introducing strong monitoring and evaluation results-frameworks on the level of policy, national strategy, programme and service provision to allow for measuring progress for children and their families;
- digitalising data, including national indicators data (For instance the data collected by the State Committee of Statistics of Turkmenistan is not available online).
- making data easily accessible to the public, researchers and policy stakeholders.

Training on and dissemination of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Raising awareness on the rights of the child is important, especially among policy-makers and decision-makers. Turkmenistan has made efforts towards disseminating the CRC and provide appropriate training for policy-makers, professionals and children. At the same time it is an objective that goes beyond the lifespan of the NAP. This is because training and dissemination alone does not bring change if it is not accompanied by continuous technical support for policy-makers on how to practically translate the children's rights into service provision concerning all aspects of a child's life, including policies in support to a child's family. Dissemination of the CRC per se only makes sense if followed up by targeted advocacy and awareness raising campaigns related to existing social and professional norms in the country concerning relevant gaps in child welfare e.g. attitudes to children with disabilities (right to quality education), attitudes of parents or professionals regarding placing children in residential institutions, including boarding-schools (right to live in the family), etc.

Cooperation

Civil society may of immense support in the full realization of children's rights in a country. As the NAP does not specify the measure by which this will be considered successful or the need such cooperation responds to, the evaluation cannot objectively justify the progress, hence effectiveness.

There are only 124³¹ public associations in the country. Some of them provide services to children (Yenme) or youth engagement (Youth Union). However, the spectrum of civil organisations is still

²⁹ COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (2020), The combined fifth and sixth Periodic Reports of States Parties

³⁰ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, Updated Assessment of child-related SDG indicators in Turkmenistan, 2021

³¹ *ibid*

insufficient to cover the broad array of areas relevant to children's rights, including advocacy. To effectively act as guardians children's rights, advocacy organisations need a non-restrictive legislative environment.

According to an analysis³² of the International Centre for Non-profit Law, there are some legal developments in Turkmenistan that have positive aspects on free association of citizens and forming public organisations, including:

- The Law on Volunteering, which came into effect on January 20, 2016, and establishes a legal framework for volunteerism;
- The Law on Combating Human Trafficking, which was adopted on October 15, 2016, and includes norms for governing public associations' activities, including cooperation with the state bodies and administration; and
- The Law on Ombudsman, which entered into force from January 1, 2017, and regulates the functioning of the new State Institute of the Authorized Human Rights Representative (Ombudsman).

Generally, however, the legal environment public association for in Turkmenistan remains generally restrictive and insufficiently removing barriers to registration, activities, advocacy work, international contact, assembly and resources of civil groups. On August 22, 2020, the Mejlis of Turkmenistan adopted the Law of Turkmenistan "On Introducing Changes and Amendments into the Law of Turkmenistan "On Public Associations". Further analysis may be needed to elicit the impact of those amendments and outlining ways to further improve the environment for public associations to act as a promoter of children's rights. Based on KII, one way possibility for improvement could be in terms of easier and quicker registration.

Independent monitoring

The NAP envisaged the development of a strategy and mechanism for independent monitoring of observance of children's rights, enabling to receive, investigate and handle complaints from children, taking into account children's specifics. An overall strategic document arranging such mechanisms was not identified until now for this evaluation nor indications that such strategy will be developed by the end of the NAP timeframe.

The Ombudsman establishment is a positive step towards guarding children's rights. However, independent monitoring cannot be ensured by one act of strategy development only. Independent monitoring of children's rights and complaints mechanisms should be a cross-section on a number of strategies and policies concerning children. The following are pillars of independent monitoring:

- Data collection for children and easy public access to data;
- Integrating evidence-based results framework in every policy, strategy, programme or action plan where monitoring and evaluation is based on measurable indicators;
- Strengthening the environment for independent civil groups and public associations to act as monitors independent of the state;
- Principles of child participation underlie each child-related policy in all areas of children's life i.e. education, social protection, healthcare and justice. Child participation is not only a legislative norm, it is a philosophy of working with children where the opinion of the child is sought in a child-appropriate way and is taken into consideration.
- Complaints mechanism need to be developed on each level of service provision and in a child-appropriate way.

Intersectoral coordination

In broader terms intersectoral cooperation incorporates the concepts of partnership, collaboration and cooperation and aims at networking professionals from different agencies to work together to meet the needs of a specific target group(s) of children. In specific terms it may address national regulatory frameworks on child protection that expressly require the horizontal and vertical cooperation between guardianship authorities, as well as intersectoral cooperation in the field of child protection.

In more specific terms, intersectoral cooperation may be defined on various levels of a system (ministry, agency, service provider). For instance, on service level it can be described as a process in which several professional groups, various knowledge and skills bases, as well as coming from different agencies, are brought together in a network to provide services (case management).

³² <https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/turkmenistan>




Although in essence cooperation should be seen as an activity or approach rather than an objective for children, in the NAP intersectoral cooperation is defined as an objective as well as one that goes beyond the lifespan of the NAP. As it is not defined specifically and measurable success indicators are missing, the extent to which such cooperation is existent, is hard to evaluate. The envisaged measures are oriented to field of early childhood policy only without justifying why it was selected among other possible areas or what specifically is targeted in terms of intersectoral cooperation in that area.

Due to the nature of early intervention, it can be assumed that this part of the NAP targets the development of integrated services for young children. The extent to which that integration was achieved is discussed in a separate evaluation report³³. Based on the lessons learnt, next-period NAP should target principles of intersectoral cooperation to be practically translated into other areas of children's needs based on proper needs assessment.

Goal 2: Children in Turkmenistan should have all conditions for physical, mental and social well-being, including medical aid, protection and improvement of their health, disease prevention, high level of nutrition, access to safe drinking water and high level of sanitation

Below is a summary of the progress against this goal. See Table 7. Details are presented after the table.

Table 6 Progress towards Goal 2

Goal 2: Children in Turkmenistan should have all conditions for physical, mental and social well-being, including medical aid, protection and improvement of their health, disease prevention, high level of nutrition, access to safe drinking water and high level of sanitation		
SDGs contribution	 SDG 1  SDG 2  SDG 3	
2.1. Children's health		
Objective	Indicators as per NAP	progress
2.1.1 Reduce the infant mortality rate (children under 1 year of age) and the mortality rate of children under 5 years of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease of neonatal mortality rate by 15% by 2022 as compared to 2015• Decrease of infant mortality rate by 20% by 2022 as compared to 2015• Decrease of mortality rate of children under 5 by 20% by 2022 as compared to 2015• Exclusive/% breastfeeding of children under 6 months should be not less than 60%• Indicators from the Mother and Children Health Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase by 0.81% (by 2020)• Decrease by 0.96% (by 2020)• Decrease by 1.02% (by 2020)• 56.5% as of 2019³⁴• Evaluation in progress
2.1.2 Ensure that all children have access to free and high-quality healthcare, regardless of their place of residence, social status, disability status or income of their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immunization coverage of children > 95%, according to National calendar of preventive vaccination• No of approved Orders and protocols on early intervention services and for the prevention and treatment of the most common diseases among children and adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 98.3³⁵• (target 35)³⁶ 25³⁷ orders/protocols
2.2. Maternal health		
2.2.1. Strengthen the reproductive, physical and mental health of women and reduce maternal mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decrease of maternal mortality rate to 3,0 per 100 000 live births by 2022.• No of national protocols, clinic manuals on emergency obstetric care.• % /Indicator of duration of breastfeeding up to 2 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced from 4.6 (2018) to 2.4 (2020)³⁸• (target 20)³⁹ 52 (2020)⁴⁰• Reduced 37% (2006) to 20.2% (2019)⁴¹

³³ Pluriconsult (2020), Evaluation of the Government of Turkmenistan's Policy on Early Childhood Development (2012-2019) and UNICEF's contribution to its design, implementation and monitoring

³⁴ 2019 MICS

³⁵ Ministry of health and Medical Industry

³⁶ The target of 35 was not indicated in the NAP but appears in some documented reports

³⁷ Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/17632-24.02.2021

³⁸ ibid

³⁹ The target of 20 was not indicated in the NAP but appears in some documented reports. Baseline was not identified.

⁴⁰ ibid

⁴¹ MICS 2006, 2019

2.2.2. Ensure universal access to quality maternal health services, regardless of place of residence, social status and family income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of mothers who received at least 4 antenatal care visits, based on effective technologies. Ratio/% of obstetric facilities providing comprehensive emergency obstetric and neonatal care in accordance with adopted national protocols. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% (target 99%)⁴², achieved 78-80% (2020)
2.3. HIV and AIDS and Reproductive health		
2.3.1. Develop a regulatory framework and increase the capacity of the health system to combat HIV infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No of cases of HIV-related diseases, including mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Ratio of health facilities carrying out infection control and risk assessment according to international standards. National legislation aligned with international standards. New HIV prevention Programme approved by the end 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 cases of HIV reported 100% 80 SOP developed Not identified No new programmes approved
2.4. Nutrition		
2.4.1. Reduce the level of anaemia among children, pregnant and non-pregnant women of reproductive age and vitamin A deficiency among children under 5 years of age.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce Prevalence of anaemia by 20% among children of 6-9 months of age, women of reproductive age, including pregnant women, by 2022 as compared to 2012. To reduce by 20% the proportion of children with vitamin A deficiency among children of 6-9 months of age by 2022 as compared to 2012. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For children of 6-9 increase by 7.47% i.e. from 30.8% (2012) to 33.1% (2019); For women increase by 5.14% i.e. from 25.3% (2012) to 26.6% (2019)⁴³ Not identified
2.4.2. Reduce the rate of malnutrition and slow growth in children under 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator of exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 months should not be less than 60%. Reduce the prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years of age by 15% by 2022 compared with 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 56.5% as of 2019⁴⁴ Reduced by 63% i.e. from 19% (2018) to 7% (2020)⁴⁵
2.5. Water and sanitation		
2.5.1. Reduce the diseases caused by poor quality drinking water and non-observance of sanitary and hygienic norms and rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio of population using organized water supply services with safety requirements. Ratio of population using organized sanitary services, including tools for washing hands with soap and water, in accordance with safety requirements. No of outreach activities for target groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase from 82% (2010) to 98.2% (2019)⁴⁶ 99.4% (2019), progress cannot be measured (no baseline and target) From 3367 (2018) to 13592 (2020)⁴⁷
Assessment of progress on this goal		
<p>Turkmenistan made some progress in improving children's health and contributing to the targets on children's health. High immunisation rates (achieved with UNICEF support), access to clean water, reduction of malnutrition – all of this contribute to better chances of life for a children. There is significant progress in reducing stunting, with the target overachieved but still more than twice higher than the rates considered by WHO-UNICEF as successful. Within the health sector 18% of country etraps provide the early identification services addressing developmental delays in children. Regardless of the achieved progress, more efforts are required to reduce mortality rates, as they remained insignificantly changed. NAP is underachieving on reduction of anaemia prevalence as levels of anaemia among children 6-59 and women in reproductive age are increasing. COVID-19 is one of the factors limiting the efforts to understand hidden gaps in malnutrition. According to WHO database, HIV-related diseases is the third most common cause of death for children aged 1-4 but data is not sufficient to indicate possible impact of the NAP on this outcome. Data on contribution to unclean water-related diseases is not available, however, Turkmenistan has made good progress in ensuring access to clean and affordable water across the country and ranks best among neighbouring countries. Regional disparities continue to exist but are gradually reducing. There are indications that access to quality healthcare may be limited for some groups of children e.g. children in disabilities and children in remote places.</p>		

The analysis of the NAP's intervention logic (theory of change) suggests that if children have access to high-quality healthcare, the mortality of children (neonatal mortality⁴⁸, infant mortality⁴⁹ and mortality of children under 5⁵⁰) and mothers is reduced, nutrition and sanitation is improved, then children's health will be better ensured. In results framework of the NAP the goal is not defined through outcomes and indicators of its own, which limits the evaluation of all results for children but there are activity indicators. In the next phase of planning the NAP will benefit from strengthening the framework by distinguishing indicators for objectives and activities separately. This will allow for a more precise picture of how well the activities target the expected outcomes. For example, breastfeeding is a means (among others) to reduce mortality but is less valid to be used for measuring reduced mortality. Some indicators do not fully define the objective e.g. "immunization coverage" and "number of orders and protocols on early intervention services and for the prevention and treatment of the most common diseases among

⁴² The target was not indicated in the NAP but appears in some documented reports. Baseline was not identified.

⁴³ Source: WHO global database

⁴⁴ 2019 MICS

⁴⁵ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, Updated Assessment of child-related SDG indicators in Turkmenistan, 2021

⁴⁶ Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/17632-24.02.2021

⁴⁷ Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/17632-24.02.2021

⁴⁸ Probability of dying during the first 28 days of life, expressed per 1,000 live births

⁴⁹ Infant mortality rate (IMR): the probability of dying between birth and exact age 1, expressed per 1,000 live births

⁵⁰ Under-five mortality rate (U5MR): the probability of dying between birth and exact age 5, expressed per 1,000 live births

children and adolescents" do not exhaust the objective "Ensure that all children have access to free and high-quality healthcare[...]"

In measuring progress on Goal 2 findings are presented in the following areas of national priorities:

- Children's health
- Maternal health
- HIV and AIDS and Reproductive health
- Nutrition
- Water and sanitation

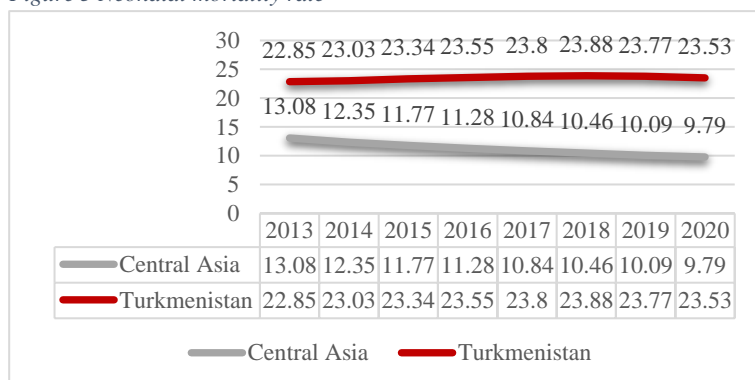
The main findings and conclusions based on them are presented below.

Children's health

The NAP defines children's health through reduced mortality rate and ensuring access of all children to free and high-quality healthcare, regardless of their place of residence, social status, disability status or income of their families

Mortality is one of the most significant indicator of the health, cultural and material well-being of the population. The NAP includes three main aspects of child mortality⁵¹: neonatal mortality, infant mortality and under-five mortality. The NAP targets 15% reduction compared to the rates in 2015. Neonatal mortality has not changed over the reviewed period – it varies between 23.88 in 2018 to 23.53 in 2020. Against the rate in 2015 it has actually not decreased but remains at the same levels with very slight variations. Turkmenistan continues to rank higher in neonatal mortality in comparison to other countries in the region. (See Figure 5)

Figure 5 Neonatal mortality rate

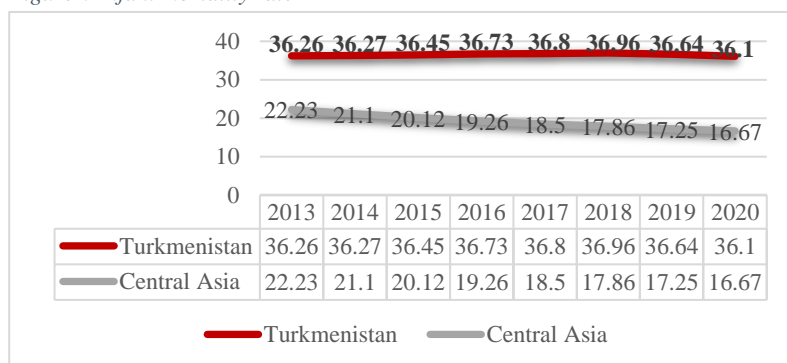


In terms of infant mortality the country demonstrates similar trends i.e. the mortality rate of children below one does not exhibit a visible trend. (See Figure 6) The NAP targets 20% reduction compared to the rates in 2015.

The infant mortality has reduced by 0.76 compared to the beginning of the NAP and by 0.35 against 2015. See

Figure 6. This represents progress but the trend is insufficient for achieving the target by the end of the NAP i.e. 2022. The rates of infant deaths in Turkmenistan remains high, being more than twice as much as the other countries in Central Asia.

Figure 6 Infant mortality rate

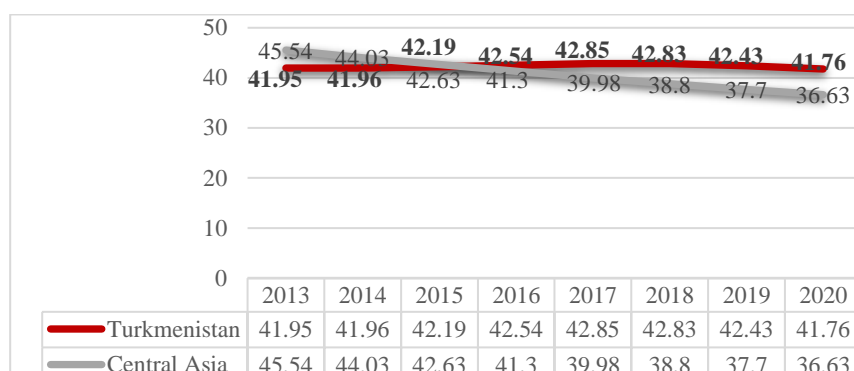


The NAP targets 20% reduction compared to the rates in 2015 in terms of the third component of mortality i.e. mortality of children under age 5. The data indicates that there is a slight decrease (by 0.43 p.p.) compared to 2015, which represents 1.02% reduction. However, the rate of under-5 mortality remains generally

⁵¹ The data for the same periods varies across different sources (e.g. World bank, UN, desk research reports, etc.). So for the purpose of consistency the evaluator has used UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, <https://childmortality.org/data/Turkmenistan>

unchanged. (See Figure 7) and the trend is not sufficient to achieve the target by the end of this NAP. Additionally, the trend of Turkmenistan having a lower rate of under-5 mortality rate compared to the countries in the region has shifted in 2015.

Figure 8 Under-5 mortality rate



The main causes of death for children under 1 are the following⁵²:

- neonatal conditions (2216.54 per 100 000 population in 2019⁵³),
- congenital anomalies (550.13 per 100 000 population in 2019)
- lower respiratory infections (521.59 per 100 000 population in 2019).

For children under 5 the top three causes of death⁵⁴ are:

- lower respiratory infections (29.72 per 100 000 population in 2019)
- HIV/AIDS (21.1 per 100 000 population in 2019)
- diarrhoeal diseases (12.45 per 100 000 population in 2019)

Overall, mortality among children in Turkmenistan ranks lowest during the last decade but still remains high. The data indicates that since the start of the NAP the mortality among children has not been influenced significantly by the measures. The NAP is still in its last year of implementation but given the trend so far, the likelihood of the targets been met is estimated as low.

The reasons behind this need to be analysed in more depth. Limited data does not allow for detailed analysis of disaggregation of mortality by regions but such analysis may shed light on whether access to health care in some regions is a determinant in this.

Although not directly affecting mortality, breastfeeding is one of many important factors affecting children's health. 97% of all maternity hospitals in the country are certified baby-friendly. The NAP targets rates of exclusive breastfeeding of children 0-5 months not less than 60%. By 2019 the rate has increased dramatically compared to 2006. See Figure 9. The trend is sufficient to ensure reaching the target by the end of the NAP period.

During the reviewed period the GoT adopted a National Strategy and Action Plan on Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health for 2015-2019 has been adopted emphasizing the importance of investments made throughout the life cycle of development. These policies include capacity-building in health care system required for the implementation of an integrated package of basic measures and services for health care of mothers, new-borns, children and adolescents, and for strengthening the mechanisms for sustainable financing and rational use of allocated resources.

Figure 7 Main causes of death

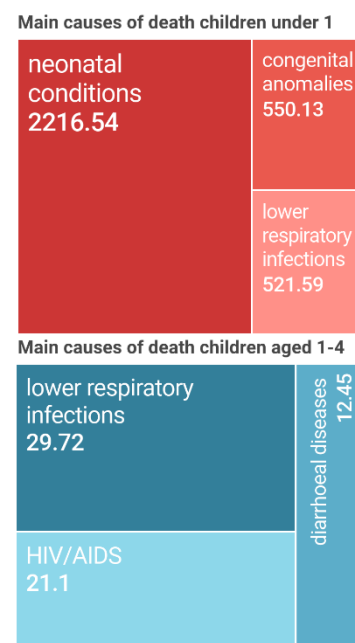
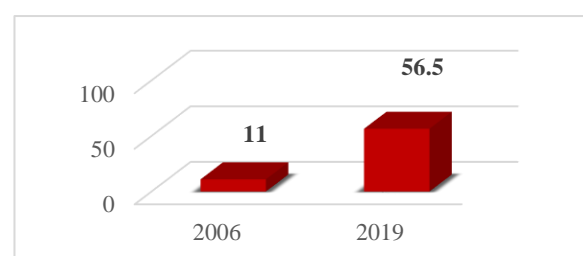


Figure 9 Exclusive breastfeeding of children 0-5 months (%)



⁵² <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics>

⁵³ Latest available data

⁵⁴ <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics>

The programme is currently undergoing evaluation⁵⁵, which will contribute to better understanding of results for children.

The NAP defines that access to healthcare for children through the immunisation coverage and the orders/protocols on early intervention services and for the prevention and treatment of the most common diseases among children and adolescents.

The immunisation coverage within the national calendar of preventive vaccination of children has slightly dropped from 98.7% (in 2018) to 98.3% (2020) but still remains above the targeted minimum of 95%.

Data on the achievement of universal health coverage (UHC), including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services, and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all was not identified for Turkmenistan. However, there are indications from the FGDs that access to quality healthcare may be limited for some groups of children e.g. children with disabilities and children in remote areas. The FGDs indicate that general medical practitioners are widely available for parents in all velyats – all parents in FGDs indicated that they have access to a general medical practitioner.⁵⁶ On the other hand, access for specialised medical care is perceived by some FGDs parents as difficult, especially by the parents of children with disabilities. Public associations build on the existing government medical services by providing community-based rehabilitation services for children with disabilities, which is a positive step. At the same time their capacity is not sufficient to respond to needs of families from all over the country as many of the users come from other cities or velayats⁵⁷. Specifically for children with impaired hearing, the MOH, with UNICEF support is currently introducing a newly developed comprehensive Regulation on Establishment of Audiological Support System.

Parents of children with disabilities

“My child has issues with hearing. But we don't have a good medical centre. Specifically for children with disabilities we should go to Ashgabat.”

“We face a lot difficulties when it comes to medical drugs for autistic. They are too expensive and sometimes we should order these drugs from other countries. The system is organized not well. We barely find good speech therapist. We get the general medical help but specifically for autistic kids it's quite hard to get help.”

Affordability is an issue raised by almost half of the parents in the FGDs, particularly when it comes to ability to purchase medical services and medication. In the context of an increasing number of children with disabilities⁵⁸, this gap may potentially open wider for more children.

Out-of-pocket as percentage of Current Health Expenditure (CHE) was estimated at 71% in 2015, 72.72% in 2017 to reach 76.34%⁵⁹, which is quite significant especially for vulnerable households that have to pay. FGDs with parents reveal that COVID-19 may have further exacerbated the dimension of accessibility and affordability of quality healthcare due to increased burden of the medical establishments as well as closed borders making it difficult for some parents to seek special medical help in other countries – for example travel restrictions have prevented planned rehabilitation or surgery for some children with disabilities.

A positive step in ensuring better access to healthcare is that within the health sector 14% of country etraps started to provide the early identification services addressing developmental delays in children on primary healthcare level.

⁵⁵ Source: Ministry of Healthcare and Medical Industry, Деятельность МЗиМПТ в рамках реализации Национального плана действий по реализации прав детей в Туркменистане на период 2018 – 2022 годы

⁵⁶ Family doctors are available with a density of 1 doctor per 1000 person, also the distribution is geographically based. Source: UNICEF KII

⁵⁷ Source: Interview with public associations, FGDs with parents

⁵⁸ Based on share of disability pensioners who are children: 2012-2019: % respectively 10.63, 10.78, 10.89, 10.91, 11.69, 12.95, 13.16 and 13.34. Source: Transmonee

⁵⁹ WORLD Bank, Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.OOPC.CH.ZS?locations=TM>

Maternal health

The NAP sees maternal health as a prerequisite for children's health and defines maternal health through reduced levels of maternal mortality and improved access to quality maternal health services. For the reviewed period the target for maternal mortality has been overachieved by significantly reducing it from 4.6 (2018) to 2.4 (2020).⁶⁰ See Figure 10.

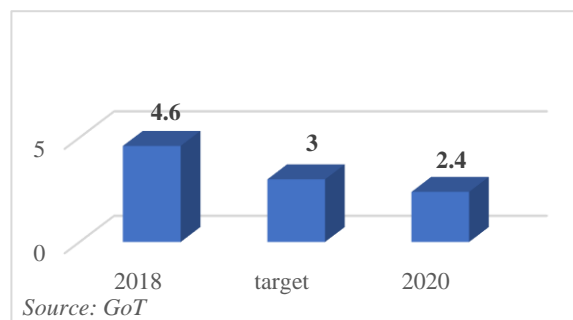
One of the conditions for reduced maternity mortality is ensuring access to quality maternal health services. The NAP targets 99% of the obstetric facilities providing comprehensive emergency obstetric and neonatal care in accordance with adopted national protocols. The evaluation cannot be conclusive about the extent of this factor contributing to lower maternity mortality rates because there is no baseline. However, by 2020 almost 80% of those facilities are reported to provide high-quality comprehensive obstetric and neonatal care.

Healthcare has made progress in a number of important areas. Significant recent changes in health policy include the adoption of the Strategy and Action Plan for Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (MCHNCH) for 2015-2019, the Concept for the Implementation of Developmental Pediatrics and Early Intervention in Turkmenistan for 2016-2020 and the Law of Turkmenistan "On promotion and support of breastfeeding". Efficient strengthening of data access and quality has been achieved as well as increasing the number of physicians per capita, strengthening funding and using available resources. Active work is underway to improve the early childhood nutrition program and the Baby-Friendly Initiative in primary care and obstetric institutions has been introduced everywhere. Compared to the data of the MICS conducted up to 2015-2016, there were improvements in some indicators: early breastfeeding (from the first hour after birth) - 73.4% (59.8%); the number of children who are exclusively breastfed up to 6 months - 59.8% (11%); timely introduction of complementary foods - 82.3% (41.3%). In accordance with the Order "On feeding infants and young children" (2017) of the MHMI of Turkmenistan; primary healthcare institutions are certified to introduce the recommendations of the WHO on breastfeeding. Currently, 65 maternity hospitals and 3 health houses are certified. As part of the implementation of the Concept for the implementation of developmental pediatrics and early intervention in Turkmenistan for 2016-2020, with the support of UNICEF, specialists from Ankara University trained 15 trainers in 3 national and pilot etraps to use the electronic application of the International Guidelines for Monitoring Child Development (RMRR). In the velayat Centers for Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and homes/health centers, rooms for early child development have been established and 784 specialists have been trained in this field. With the support of specialists from Ankara University, trainers from Turkmenistan were the first in the world to start using the RMPP electronic application. In the velayat MCH centers, specialized rooms have been created for screening newborns at risk. Neonatal screening is carried out at the Scientific and Clinical Center for Maternal and Child Health, which in turn contributes to the timely diagnosis and treatment of genetic diseases and the reduction of disability. Among other things, effective work with the media continues. On the program "First 1000 days" of the radio channel "Char tarapdan" regular performances by healthcare professionals are organized.

HIV and AIDS and Reproductive health

An issue of HIV-infected children in Turkmenistan has not been clearly raised in situational analysis or other type of analysis justifying the inclusion of such objective in the NAP. Key informants to the evaluation did not raise HIV infections among children as an issue but pointed out the need of prevention interventions, which is the reason why the NAP targets HIV/AIDS. GoT reports 0 registered cases on HIV for the period prior to and during NAP implementation.⁶¹

Figure 10 Maternal mortality



⁶⁰ Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/17632-24.02.2021

⁶¹ Data cannot be corroborated, as WHO reports on "Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population" are not available for Turkmenistan.

However, WHO data on child mortality⁶² reveals that for Turkmenistan HIV-AIDS is among the top three causes of death for children aged 1-4. There have been 49 reported HIV-related deaths in 2015, 51 deaths in 2016 and 55 deaths in 2017⁶³. This number is slightly increasing over the years but data after 2017 is not available to indicate whether or not NAP has in any way made a difference. More in-depth research is needed to demonstrate the actual dimensions of the challenge and what has been the impact of the new edition of the Law "On Countering Spread of Disease Caused by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV-Infection)" (adopted in 2016) as well as the National HIV Programme 2012-2016. UNICEF has provided technical support to the GoT in developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in managing cases of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in general. Introduced into the healthcare practice, the SOPs may potentially facilitate HIV-infections prevention and adequate response by the health system.

Nutrition

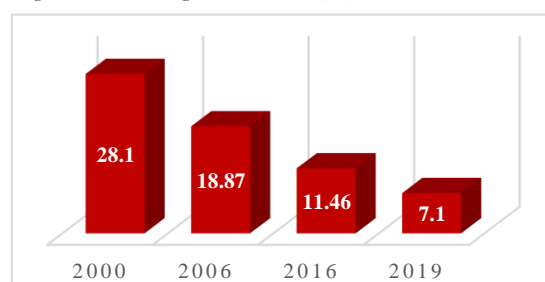
Reduced malnutrition and slow growth in children under 5 (stunting)

Stunting, or chronic malnutrition, is the result of failure to receive adequate nutrition in early life over an extended period and/or recurrent or chronic illness. The prevalence of stunting has been reduced to 7.1 (in 2019)⁶⁴ and compared against 2016 (11.46) this is a significant progress overachieving the target in the NAP, which is set to 15% less than 2012. At the same time it is still above 3% i.e. the rate considered as successful⁶⁵.

(See Figure 11)

Prevalence of wasting and overweight were not included among the objectives nor indicators of the NAP, hence targets were not set. However, the evaluator considers that these, too, are important signs of levels of nutrition among children and it is recommended plans follow-up the NAP should include them in child-related outcomes. Therefore, this analysis is also looking at overweight and wasting. The trend is similar as in stunting i.e. the trend is one of decrease over the last decades with levels still remaining above the target. Research⁶⁶ indicates that there are regional variations in the prevalence of stunting in Turkmenistan e.g. rates are relatively higher in Dashoguz, Lebap and Mary than the rest of the country. The NAP does not identify specific interventions for the regions of higher incidence of stunting.

Figure 11 Stunting 2000 - 2019 (%)



Reduced level of anaemia among children, pregnant and non-pregnant women of reproductive age and vitamin A deficiency among children under 5 years of age

According to expert analysis by WHO,⁶⁷ anaemia is associated with poor cognitive and motor development in children, and work capacity in adults, influencing country economic development. Among pregnant women, iron deficiency anaemia is also associated with adverse reproductive outcomes such as preterm delivery, low-birth-weight infants, and decreased iron stores for the baby, which may lead to impaired development. Failure to reduce anaemia may result in millions of women experiencing impaired health and quality of life, and may impair children's development and learning. Anaemia is an indicator of both poor nutrition and poor health.

⁶² <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/number-of-deaths>

⁶³ ibid

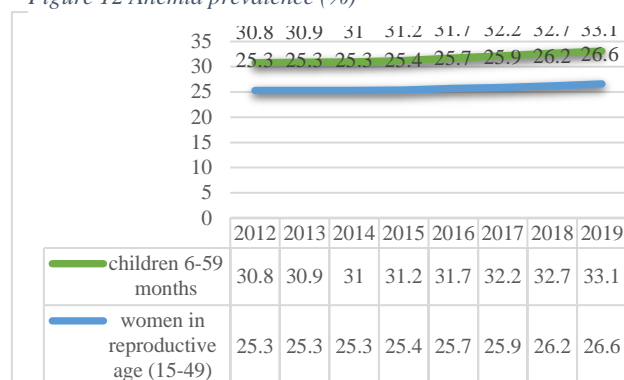
⁶⁴ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, Updated Assessment of child-related SDG indicators in Turkmenistan, 2021

⁶⁵ WHO-UNICEF rules consider as 'target met' the situation where a stunting, wasting or overweight prevalence is <3 per cent.

⁶⁶ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, Updated Assessment of child-related SDG indicators in Turkmenistan, 2021

⁶⁷ https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/anaemia_in_women_and_children

Figure 12 Anemia prevalence (%)



The target set in the NAP is to reduce the prevalence of anaemia among women in reproductive age and children aged 6-9 months by 20% compared to 2012. The available data used for this analysis only refers to children aged 6-59 months, therefore it will be used to track trends. WHO data⁶⁸ both on women in reproductive age and children 6-59 months indicates that the levels of anaemia is not decreasing and has actually been slightly but steadily rising since the comparison year 2012. (See Figure 12). Turkmenistan has put effort in diminishing malnutrition such as mandatory flour fortification with iron and folic

acid micronutrients since 2006 within a state-financed flour fortification programme. Fortification is the practice of deliberately increasing the content of an essential vitamins and minerals in food to improve its nutritional quality. Furthermore, a National Nutrition Programme for 2013-2017, 2019-2025 was adopted. Flour fortification and Salt Iodization is ensured through state financing.

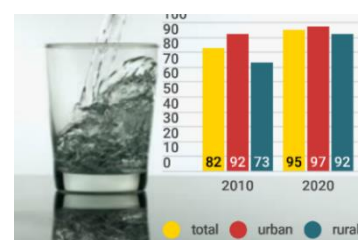
Further analysis is required to better understand the reasons behind the negative trend of anaemia rates. UNICEF has plans to support additional micro nutrition research such as development of a Dietary Profile Study of Mothers and Children that will collect data uncovering the causes of anaemia. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic these plans have been delayed. Positively, the endorsement of National Nutrition Programme for 2020-2025 serves as a strategic document, based on which number of documents and orders were introduced such as: the National Guidance on the Nutrition of Adolescents Girls and pregnant women for health workers. This programme is also a basis for UNICEF to provide support activities.

Water and sanitation

One area where achievement was noted is the access to safe and affordable drinking water facilities. Baseline and targets were not defined in the NAP but Turkmenistan has made good progress on SDG 6 for the last ten years i.e. from 82% of the population having access to clean and safe water in 2010 to 95% in 2020.⁶⁹ Regional disparities have also been reduced. See Figure 13. There are still places, especially in rural areas such as Dashoguz, where there are issues with centralised water supply due to the ecological crisis in the region.

Still, Turkmenistan ranks best among other countries in the region on this indicator.⁷⁰ All of the parents and children in the FGDs indicated that they have access to drinking water and sanitation. Assumptions can be made that this has had a positive impact on children's health, however, data on the burden of disease caused by unclean water was not available.

Figure 12. % of population having access to clean water



In terms of outcomes for children, the overall conclusion based on the findings so far is that Turkmenistan has made some progress in improving children's health and most of the targets on children's health could be achieved. High immunisation rates, access to clean water and reduction of stunting and wasting, contribute to the improvement of child wellbeing. Despite the efforts, the interventions towards child mortality seem not sufficiently effective. This requires a dive-in into the reasons leading to that challenge. A special focus needs to be placed on the quality of the healthcare system in terms of accessibility.

⁶⁸ <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/indicator-groups/indicator-group-details/GHO/sdg-target-2.2-child-malnutrition>

⁶⁹ ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, Key INDICATORS For ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, August 2021, Source: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/720461/ki2021.pdf>


⁷⁰ *ibid*

Although sufficiently disaggregated data is not available on all health issues among children, gaps can be expected in terms of regions or vulnerability. For example, stunting is visibly prevalent on some regions than others as well as prevalence in rural vs. urban areas.

Goal 3: All children without exception have a right to education and comprehensive and full development of their abilities

Below is a summary of the progress against this goal. See Table 8. Details are presented after the table.

Table 7 Progress towards Goal 3

Goal 3: All children without exception have a right to education and comprehensive and full development of their abilities		
SDGs contribution	 SDG 4	
Objective	Indicators as per NAP Roadmap	progress
3.1. Education		
3.1.1. Ensure the quality of secondary education by introducing international standards and best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of certified schools by 2022 (78 schools) % of pedagogical personnel trained on implementation of standards for a quality education environment in pedagogic colleges, universities and refresher courses. Available reports on school certification and plans for introduction of regulations/normative documents for quality improvement of education environment Document national concept of inclusive education adopted % of schools meeting safety standards Pilot system of data collection and analysis developed and tested in a pilot velayat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 78 certified schools (progress cannot be validated)⁷¹ Not identified Not identified Not adopted Not identified⁷² Pilot system developed and tested, 180 trained professionals
3.2. Development of young children		
3.2.1. Ensure that all young children have access to quality and inclusive services for preschool education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State standards introduced in the system of preschool education. Preschool education curricula and programmes for professional training and re-training updated in accordance with state standards % of preschool and primary school teachers trained/re-trained on updated programmes % of children covered by compulsory programme of preschool education System of assessment of child's readiness for school implemented % of preschools providing broad variety of developmental and educational services % of children of 5-6 years of age covered by preschool education and preschool preparation who demonstrate the competence of readiness for school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards' introduction in progress School professionals' training in progress Not identified 46.2%⁷³ to 49.8%⁷⁴ (target not set) Yes 100% of kindergartens (no target) Increase from 44.1%⁷⁵ (2015) 52.4%⁷⁶ (2019)
3.3. Recreation and cultural life		
To expand opportunities for all children to participate in inclusive recreation, leisure, art, creativity and in information-educational and sports activities that promote the development of a healthy lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No of registered children and youth clubs, groups, organizations and out-of-school institutions at the place of residence engaged in recreational activities, entertainment, information, sports areas and promotion of a healthy lifestyle, receive state funding and provide accessible and free services for all children, including children with disabilities and children from socially disadvantaged families from 2018 to 2022. % of children members of children/youth clubs/groups, organizations and who participate in cultural and sports events, disaggregated by disability and geographic location. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change⁷⁷ Not identified

⁷¹ It is not feasible to measure progress since there is no baseline. The evaluator cannot validate target and progress by 2020 since 78 certified schools was indicated by some documents as target (Roadmap) while in other 78 schools were referred to as progress by 2020 (Interview with Ministry of Education; baseline was not identified and Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/19206 dated 21.02.2021).

⁷² Baseline, target and progress cannot be validated, across available document sources data varies to the extent that trends cannot be assessed

⁷³ MICS 2015

⁷⁴ MICS 2019

⁷⁵ MICS 2015

⁷⁶ MICS 2019

⁷⁷ Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/16889 dated 19.02.2021 indicates the following baseline: under Ministry of culture 567 activity clubs, 80 musical clubs and 12 art clubs functioning across the country. These numbers are reported to not have changed by 2020.

3.3.2. Provide wide access to active entertaining, creative and information-educational programmes for all groups of children, regardless of their social origin or place of residence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of a state order and approval of the state plan for production of annual entertainment, creative and information-educational programmes based on needs of all children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not identified
3.4. Children with Disabilities		
3.4.1. Ensure enabling conditions for social integration and realization of the rights of children with disabilities, including legislative measures, data on children with disabilities, access to inclusive social services and support services, and encouraging the participation of children with disabilities in public life.	<i>This component is excluded from the analysis in this evaluation because it is covered by separate evaluations - the ECD Evaluation, current survey on people with disabilities and partly by up-coming Evaluation of the Joint Programme of Social Services.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N.a.
Assessment of progress on this goal		
<p>There is progress towards schooling becoming more child-friendly within the period of NAP implementation, mostly in the area of early education for children. These efforts have produced a notable increase of the children covered by pre-school and pre-primary formats. However, the share of traps providing early intervention services to children under 5 years of age is still insufficient i.e. 14% in 2019. During the reviewed period there is a slight increase in primary school attendance and a slight decrease in the secondary school attendance. The country has started an irreversible process of demonstrating commitment to making schools more inclusive regardless of the child's disability status, place of living or gender. This process still needs to be more steered towards adapting flexible educational format and making them available to the families of young children in a way that meets their individual needs. Data gaps are making the assessment of academic performance not feasible to compare over the years and against other countries in the region. There is progress among young learners: Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI) is rising by 5 p.p. to 95.3% in 2019. There is a conducive environment for increasing placement of children with special educational needs in boarding schools. Social norms among parents combined with still insufficiently inclusive education for children with disabilities foster this process. As NAP is comprehensively based on all children's rights, consideration must be made to reducing the misbalance between fulfilling the right of the child to education and the right to live in its family. This is even more important since the CFS concept means that a child-friendly school thinks of the child as a whole with all its needs and rights.</p> <p>The learning content in schools in Turkmenistan are gradually modernizing towards including topics beyond main subjects' knowledge but also competences in the area of health and gender. Turkmenistan has achieved significant progress in staff investment to support this development.</p>		

Goal 3 in the NAP is linked to SDG 4 and refers to education. The goal is defined as a right rather than a goal equipped with indicators on goal level. For the purpose of the evaluation the available NAP activity indicators were used See Table 8. For a richer analysis additional dimensions were also explored.

This area of the NAP works with three key concepts about education: "equal access", "quality education" and "inclusiveness". However, they are not explicitly defined and operationalised in the NAP in terms of objectives and goal indicators. Therefore, some conceptual consideration should be elaborated here for the purpose of clarity on the approach to evaluating this goal's progress.

When reviewing the objectives and the measures stipulated in the results-framework, it looks like access is prioritised in the context of early childhood development. Quality is not explicitly defined in the NAP but is operationalised through the concept of child friendly schools (CFS).

The CFS models embrace a concept of quality that goes well beyond pedagogic excellence and performance outcomes. UNICEF defines quality education as "education that works for every child and enables all children to achieve their full potential".⁷⁸ Since the CFS concept is rights-based, quality standards should make it possible for all children to access school, survive from grade to grade and complete the cycle on time; they should also provide an enriched educational experience through which students can thrive, develop and achieve their full potential.⁷⁹

In that sense, access is not a separate determinant of the right to education but is component of quality education. Furthermore, if quality education can be extended to all groups as a matter of routine, then it may be called fully inclusive.⁸⁰ In that sense the modern understanding of inclusiveness is not restricted to physical environment only and not to children with disabilities only, but to every child and the unique learning that each child has. Inclusiveness is a vertical principle of a quality educational system, rather than a separate component.

It is in that conceptual framework that the analysis of the progress towards Goal 3 was made here. There are various frameworks for assessing quality education⁸¹. Upon reviewing all of these as well as the interventions prescribed by the NAP, in the context of data availability and the lack of specific goal indicators, the evaluator has made use of the following aspects of quality education:

⁷⁸ Manual, Child Friendly Schools, UNICEF 2009

⁷⁹ ibid

⁸⁰ ibid

⁸¹ Defining Quality in Education, 2000, United Nations Children's Fund; European Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (2014); Manual, Child Friendly Schools, UNICEF 2009

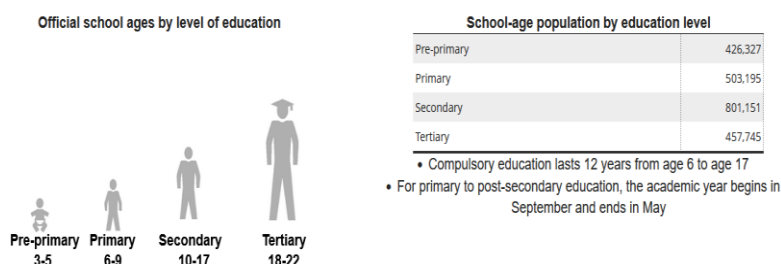
- Access
- Outcomes
- Content
- Environment and IT

Access

Access is a prerequisite for ensuring the right of every child to education. A child-friendly school is not just a child-welcoming school but also a child-seeking school. It works to attract and retain children from different backgrounds and respects diversity.⁸²

The school system in Turkmenistan has gone through some major changes in the last decade, among which is the introduction of 12-year compulsory education for children from 6 to 17 years of age. See Figure 14

Figure 13 Official school ages and school age population



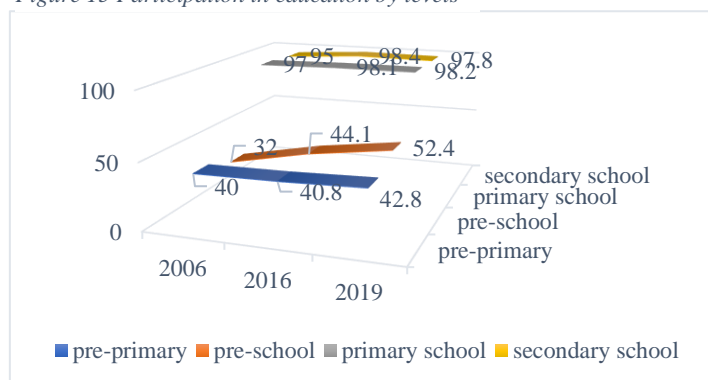
Source: UNESCO, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/tm> (accessed 2021)

Parents of children with disabilities

"I know UNICEF provided Lebap Rehabilitation center with equipment that allows children to play games for development of their memory, motor skills, hearing skills, drawing skills. We don't have such things here and it is difficult to ensure them because we have much spending on medicine."

The attendance of children in the compulsory levels of school (primary and secondary) in the country is high. During the reviewed period there is a slight increase in primary school attendance (from 98.1% in 2016 to 98.25 in 2019)⁸³ and a slight decrease in the secondary school attendance (from 98.4% in 2016 to 97.8% in 2019). See Figure 15.

Figure 15 Participation in education by levels



The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2019) reports out-of-school rates of 0.9% for secondary education and 1.3% for primary education. It is not possible to analyse the trends over time since this indicator was not reported in the previous MICS. Turkmenistan does not report drop-out rates, however considering such an attempt in the future would give the system of education the opportunity to explore the reasons behind the cases of drop-out so that causal links can be studied and addressed.

The NAP priorities for interventions specifically oriented to improving the access of young children to the system of education. This logic is relevantly set since participating in quality early childhood education and care has been shown to be an important factor to prevent early school leaving.⁸⁴ Furthermore, returns on investment in early stages of education are the highest of all educational stages, particularly for children in a disadvantaged situation.⁸⁵

⁸² Manual, Child Friendly Schools, UNICEF 2009

⁸³ MICS

⁸⁴ European Commission (2014), Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care in preventing early school leaving.

⁸⁵ The Economics of Human Development and Social Mobility. Annual Reviews of Economics, Vol.6 (2014), 689-733

With UNICEF support the system of assessment of children's readiness for school was upgraded towards international standards.

UNICEF continued supporting Turkmenistan's efforts to measure and achieve SDG 4 targets. Technical assistance was focused on strengthening the quality and inclusive early learning with a focus on universal pre-primary preparation and inclusive education approaches. The GoT's commitment is recognized by the recently adopted Early Childhood Development Strategy of Turkmenistan 2020-2025. It builds on previous important milestones such as National Programme of Turkmenistan for the Early Development of Child and His Preparation for School 2011–2015⁸⁶.

These efforts have produced a notable increase of the children covered by pre-school and pre-primary formats. However, the share of etraps providing early intervention services to children under 5 years of age is still insufficient i.e. 14% in 2019.⁸⁷

Studies⁸⁸ indicate significant disparities between urban and rural pre-school children. Turkmenistan still has a long way to go to achieve full coverage⁸⁹ and address regional gaps by developing flexible form of young learners based on their individual needs. However, by considering and adopting a national concept of inclusiveness the country has started an irreversible process of demonstrating commitment to making schools more inclusive regardless of the child's disability status, place of living or gender. This process still needs to be more steered towards adapting flexible educational format and making them available to the families of young children in a way that meets their individual needs. This is especially valid for remote rural areas where disparities are more significant. Positive example is the Saturday parent schools to cover children who do not attend early learning formats.

Targeting social norms as well as professional norms with regards to children with disabilities is part of that process, too. Legislative norms need to be practically enforced by supporting school professionals to develop competences to work with every child based on the child's individual needs or vulnerability e.g. child with a disability, migrant child, etc. Parents of children with disabilities sometime face challenges in ensuring access to mainstream schools for their children.⁹⁰

Educational centres for young children were piloted with UNICEF support and these need to be further scaled up. The decision by the Government to develop a full-fledged programme for the nation-wide improvement of the pre-school education system. Parents in the FGDs indicated the need to develop flexible community-based forms for young children's development.

Outcomes

Academic achievement is yet another component of quality education. Literacy in the 21st century is about constructing and validating knowledge, not just the ability to read and write. In the absence of a standardized methodology to measure and compare learning outcomes of children, it is a challenge to make conclusions on this aspect of quality education, especially across different age groups.

Turkmenistan is not a participating country in global literacy measurements such as PISA⁹¹, which may give a perspective on both how school children develop competences forming the main literacy levels to meet real-life challenges as well as how the country compares against the region or world leaders. MICS indicators are designed and developed for both national policy development and SDG reporting. MICS 2019 gives data on the percentage of children achieving at least minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics e.g. in grades 2/3 minimum proficiency is achieved by 71.3% (reading) and 53.2% (mathematics). In the absence of previous data on this indicator, however, it is difficult to gauge whether or not there is progress compared to previous periods, and whether or not NAP has contributed to such progress.

⁸⁶ Turkmenistan's progress in early childhood development have been discussed in more details in a separate evaluation report.

⁸⁷ UNICEF Country Programme Document 2020

⁸⁸ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, Updated Assessment of child-related SDG indicators in Turkmenistan, 2021

⁸⁹ In the context of SDG the target is considered met at or above 95 per cent.

⁹⁰ KIIs

⁹¹ PISA is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

In terms of young learners, Turkmenistan MICS Survey indicates rising of the Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI) – from 90.5 in 2016 to 95.3 in 2019. Given that data collection has occurred before the actual publication of the results, it can be assumed that these results were valid prior to the launch of NAP, hence, possible contribution of the NAP may be visible during the next MICS cycle.

There is no disaggregated data available on the performance of children in specialized educational environment such as boarding schools. Data from interviews⁹² indicate that the curriculum for mainstream schools and boarding schools are not the same but are based on similar educational standards. Furthermore, the evaluation did not find any significant mismatch between the levels of parents' satisfaction with the learning outcomes from their children in boarding schools, on the one hand, and mainstream schools on the other hand. This means that the boarding schools are able to fulfil their educational task.

However, the social price of that is the fact that most of the children studying in boarding schools are separated from their families for a long time – most often a week and sometimes for weeks and months. In early childhood the child's developmental assessment and identification of his/her future educational path, is guided by the medicalized and defectology-based approach which often leads to segregation and institutionalization of children with developmental delays and disabilities.⁹³ Additionally, social norms among parents combined with still insufficiently inclusive education for children with disabilities further foster placement of children in boarding schools. As NAP is comprehensively based on all children's rights, consideration must be made to reducing the misbalance between fulfilling the right of the child to education and the right to live in its family. This is even more important since the CFS concept means that a child-friendly school thinks of the child as a whole with all its needs and rights.

Content

The learning content in schools in Turkmenistan are gradually modernizing towards including topics beyond main subjects knowledge but also competences in the area of health and gender. Turkmenistan has achieved significant progress in staff investment to support this development. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in strengthening resilience for climate change adaptation by introducing climate change, environment and energy (CEE)-related formal curricula in 17 schools in the Akhal and Dashoguz velayats. The curriculum was approved by the Government for nation-wide implementation but has not yet been rolled out.

The share of secondary school Basics of Life Skills teachers certified in comprehensive gender sensitive and age appropriate reproductive health education has increased dramatically over the reviewed period: from 68% in 2018 to 95% in 2020. A teacher training manual to guide interactive teaching and learning for five environment-related subjects across primary and secondary education was developed and introduced in 2019.

In presenting the content to students, teachers have at disposal various teaching tools and materials. The FGDs both with teachers and parents indicated that the availability of teaching tools varies a lot across schools. Interactive boards and technology is available in some schools, while in others teachers have to invent and print out their own handouts and materials.

In some boarding schools insufficient specialized tools are preventing children from full access to the learning content e.g. hearing aids for children with impaired hearing and oftentimes the availability of hearing aids depends on the financial abilities of the parents.

FGD, Parents

“Teachers’ knowledge should modernise. Teachers are aware of the modern standards, however they are not equipped with relevant books for that; Mostly, teachers are trying to find these books and print it on their own. Despite the teachers’ hard work, this is not how modernized education should be.”

⁹² Interviews with Ministry of Education, FGDs with teachers

⁹³ Evaluation of the Government of Turkmenistan's Policy on Early Childhood Development (2012-2019) and UNICEF's contribution to its design, implementation and monitoring, Evaluation Report, Pluriconsult Ltd., 17.11.2020



COVID-19 has inevitably affected schooling, particularly as the period under review has predominantly been part of the pandemic time. Classes were reduced to 25 minutes over certain periods of time. Parents from the FGDs shared concerns that this has affected their children's learning and required additional support from the families. Teachers in FGDs, too, indicated that due to COVID-19 pandemics they had limited opportunities to interact with students and to encourage communication among the children. However, the GoT has managed to prevent discontinuation of school studies at all times.

Environment and IT

Within this intersectoral and holistic framework, CFS models are concerned as much with the learning content as well as with the school environment. For Turkmenistan, data are available only for one part of WASH indicator, sanitation, and according to the latest data⁹⁴, the goal is achieved, as 100% of schools has single-sex basic sanitation facilities. As part of the COVID-19 response, UNICEF procured personal hygiene products for targeted schools in provinces and capital Ashgabat. Due to high demand, 60,000 posters on respiratory etiquette and handwashing were re-printed to support hygiene promotion in primary healthcare facilities and schools all over the country.

Turkmenistan's schools are 100% provided with electricity. Computers are available for pedagogic purposes for 99.2%⁹⁵ of the schools. Data is not available on whether every teacher has access to a computer or whether internet for pedagogic purposes has become more available against the start of the NAP, when the rate was 28.2% schools. Improving internet availability in schools may potentially improve teachers' access to best practices and teaching materials. At the beginning of December 2019 the delegation of the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE) visited Turkmenistan for a series of meetings with the Ministry of Education, Academia of Turkmenistan and UN partner organizations in promotion of ICT competencies for teachers and strengthening knowledge sharing and dissemination of best practices.⁹⁶

Data is not available on the extent to which there is adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities. However, evidence from the field⁹⁷ indicate that school environments are not sufficiently adapted to the needs of students with disabilities. Architectural barriers and social norms (children with disabilities are better provided for by the state at special schools) prevent children with disabilities from being fully accepted in mainstream schools.

Looking at education comprehensively, prior to the NAP start in 2017 the share of schools that implement quality and inclusive education standards was 4.2%.⁹⁸ The target had been set to 5.5%, however, data trends are not sufficient to assess progress. Generally, the NAP identifies increase of certified schools as a success measure, where the baseline is missing. Within the reviewed period 78 schools certified as child-friendly were reported.⁹⁹

In general, there is progress towards schools becoming more child-friendly within the period of NAP implementation, mostly in the area of early education for children. In order to extend positive developments across all educational establishments where schooling is provided to children, next NAP needs to reformulate the objectives into very specific and realistic, and define specific and measurable outcomes describing the objective and the goal separately to activities. In the framework of CFS these changes require more than just transformations within the existent schools themselves. Rather, transformations need to be targeted in systems such as health (e.g. early detection of disabilities) and social support (e.g. early identification and referral of vulnerable families with children, including the most vulnerable: victims of violence, migrant children, children in contact with the law and children separated from their families).

⁹⁴ Voluntary National Review of Turkmenistan, 2019

⁹⁵ Voluntary National Review of Turkmenistan, 2019

⁹⁶ <https://iite.unesco.org/news/iite-visit-to-turkmenistan/>

⁹⁷ KIIs with NGOs

⁹⁸ 2020 UN TURKMENISTAN ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT


⁹⁹ Interview with Ministry of Education



Goal 4: All children have a right to decent material living standards and safe environment required for comprehensive physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development

Below is a summary of the progress against this goal. See Table 9. Details are presented after the table.

Table 8 Progress towards Goal 4

Goal 4: All children have a right to decent material living standards and safe environment required for comprehensive physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development		
SDGs contribution	 SDG 1	
Objective	Indicators as per NAP Roadmap	progress
4.1. Improved quality of life		
4.1.1. Raise livelihoods for parents and legal guardians, especially for women of children with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of real income growth in families with children on an annual basis Level of income in families with children No/% of children with disabilities living in families where there are no working adults in 2022 as compared to 2018. No of preschool groups (extended care) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase¹⁰⁰ from 109,1 to 109,5 (in 2020 against 2018)¹⁰¹ Increase¹⁰² from 1795,5 to 2205,5¹⁰³ Increase 21059 (2018) to 23365 (2020)¹⁰⁴ Not identified
4.2. Social protection		
4.2.1. Expand existing information and data on national standards of living standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment made, assessment results are used for efficient planning and budgeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not identified
4.2.2. Provide the necessary level of budgetary allocations for universal and targeted social protection programmes to maintain the living standards of families with children, especially vulnerable families with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid-term budget for 2020-2022 includes allocations sufficient for social care and support for families with children, especially for families and children from vulnerable families. Level of purchasing power. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not identified Not identified¹⁰⁵
4.2.3. Ensure the necessary volume and level of social services to protect and support a disadvantaged child ¹⁰⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms of protection of the child's rights and support are adopted and operating. No of children from single-parent or divorced families, receiving benefits and alimonies. No of children placed in residential care due to material reasons (Infant's and children's homes) in 2022 as compared to 2018. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline and target not identified; social payments raised by 10% annually but recipients decrease; social services provided to 886 children¹⁰⁷ Not identified children in formal care 4485 (2018) increased to 5115 (2019)¹⁰⁸
Assessment of progress on this goal		
There is no conclusive evidence that NAP interventions have contributed to better employment rates and living standards of families with children. For the most vulnerable children and their families monetary support is increasing but is still insufficient for all parents, in particular single parents or parents with disabilities. Support beyond social payments is still scarce and available for 0.07% of the children in need. The NAP's most significant progress is introducing the concept of social work and community-based services for families most in need.		

Goal 4 of the NAP is formulated as a right rather than a goal with specific and measurable indicators on goal level, hence limiting measuring progress through the conventional means of evaluation of effectiveness i.e. based on outcomes, baseline and targets. The goal is equipped with specific and measurable indicators on the level of activities only. Some formulations for interventions were used on the level of objectives (e.g. "Expand existing information and data"), rather than being formulated as

¹⁰⁰ This indicator does not reflect inflation

¹⁰¹ UNICEF data on NAPC indicators with government input

¹⁰² This indicator does not reflect inflation

¹⁰³ Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/19858 dated 26.02.2021 Measurement unit was not specifically indicated but evaluator assumes it is reported in local currency (manats)

¹⁰⁴ Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/19858 dated 26.02.2021

¹⁰⁵ Since purchasing power (PP)-specific data was not identified for Turkmenistan, the evaluator attempted to analyse proxy indicators e.g. available data on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) (knoema.com). PPP has increased from 0.5 (2000) to 1.6 (2019). This may be indicative of possible inflation process over the years. The 10% increase of payments by Presidential decrees annually may be countering such effects. However, it is hard to estimate the extent to which this, or other factors, has contributed to higher purchasing power of the population and specifically families with children in the country.

¹⁰⁶ This area has been excluded from detailed analysis in this evaluation (see p. 16, Scope of evaluation) due to upcoming evaluation of JP social services in 2022. It is expected to provide in-depth analysis on the volume and level of social services to protect and support a disadvantaged child

¹⁰⁷ By Aug 2021, based on preliminary reporting JP data, Обзор прогресса по реализации совместной программы, Powerpoint presentation

¹⁰⁸ Transmonee

measurable objectives for children. Next NAP would greatly benefit from a strengthened result framework that includes indicators on the level of goals and objectives in addition to activities.

The intervention logic behind the theory of change is that ensuring decent living standards and safe environment for a child is dependent on:

- Good livelihood of the child's family if the parents are employed and have income to ensure basic living standard for their children
- Disadvantaged families receive sufficient social payments and enabled to ensure its livelihood
- Disadvantaged families are supported to be better able to take care of the child through provision of necessary volume and level of social services

There are national programmes focusing specifically at social aspects of country's development: The National Socioeconomic Development Programme for the period 2011–2030, the revised National Presidential Programme on the improvement of social and living conditions in villages, towns, cities and district centres for the period up to 2020, and the Presidential Programme on socioeconomic development for the period 2018–2024.

Every year, a Presidential decree is issued whereby pensions, social benefits, scholarships and wages in all sectors of the economy are raised by 10 percent.¹⁰⁹ In 2016, Turkmenistan adopted a Law on Employment of the Population, which entitles that orphans, single parents, large families, people with disabilities, and victims of human trafficking and victims of domestic violence to state support.¹¹⁰ It defines unemployment and stipulates the rights of population for employment and for social protection in case of unemployment.

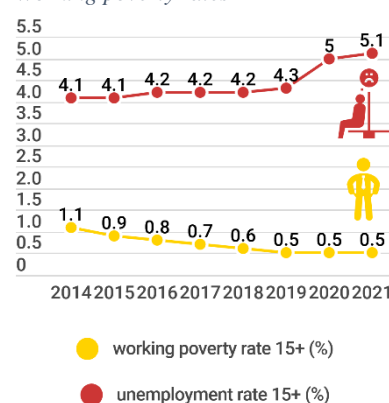
Livelihoods and income of families

The NAP is quite relevantly targeting better incomes for the families, particularly those with vulnerabilities, and this goal is harmonising with the other NAP goals because it demonstrates a comprehensive approach to fostering the development of the youngest citizens of Turkmenistan. Child poverty is defined as the lack of public and private material resources to realise rights such as those to good nutrition, health, water, education and shelter.¹¹¹ As such it cannot be discussed outside the context of family poverty.

Family income may be a factor for better outcomes for children along with parental capacity. Income increase is reported for families with children from 1795,5 manats (2018) to 2205,5 manats (2020).¹¹² National data on employment of families with children was not available for this analysis. However, estimates¹¹³ may be used here to at least capture any trends during the NAP implementation period. It should be emphasized that employment rates or income increase should be looked at simultaneously with other indicators, e.g. working poverty.¹¹⁴ This is because being in employment alone cannot guarantee that a family would be able to sufficiently support its children.

Estimates of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) indicate that the share of employed population living below \$1.9 PPP¹¹⁵ is on a positive trend of decreasing. See Figure 16.

Figure 16 Unemployment rates and Working poverty rates



¹⁰⁹ UNICEF in Turkmenistan, Analysis of Situation of Children's and Women's Rights in Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, 2019

¹¹⁰ UNDP, INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION, 2020

¹¹¹ UNICEF, Source: <https://data.unicef.org/sdgs/goal-1-no-poverty/>

¹¹² Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/19858 dated 26.02.2021

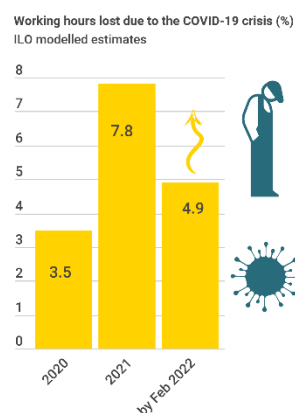
¹¹³ International Labour Organisation (ILO) Modelled estimates, Source: <https://www.ilo.org>

¹¹⁴ There is no national definition of poverty in Turkmenistan. The evaluator has applied SDG 1.2 definition on international poverty line. It is recommended to work on defining the national measurement of wellbeing or poverty.

¹¹⁵ purchasing power parity (PPPs). This refers to the dollar-a-day international poverty line

The decreasing trend of the working poverty rates dates long before the NAP design so it cannot be concluded that NAP interventions have contributed to this process.

Figure 1714 Working hours lost due to the COVID-19

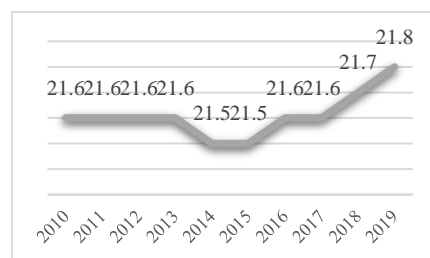


At the same time there is a negative trend of unemployment rates going up – very slightly until 2018 and more significantly in 2019. This process might be due to COVID-19 pandemic situation, as ILO estimates show significantly increasing impact of COVID-19 on loss of working hours. *See Figure 17.* However, data is not disaggregated by family status (children/no children) or vulnerability to indicate specific contributions of the NAP interventions to the living standards of families with children, in particular families with children with disabilities or other disadvantaged families.

Some of the NAP interventions are oriented towards improving the access to the labour market of women and young people specifically. National disaggregated employment data are not available, however estimates indicate that the share of youth not in employment (NEET), education or training is increasing¹¹⁶ during the NAP implementation period. *See Figure 18.*

This is an alarming trend and more detailed analysis are required to identify

Figure 18 Share of youth not in employment



the reasons behind this process as well as make a profile of the youngsters who most often get trapped in a situation of NEET.¹¹⁷ Evidence from the FGDs with parents and KIIs with service providers demonstrate that most often children with disabilities and care leavers (children leaving state care institutions) have difficulties in finding a job. Opportunities for supporting these groups of children at the entrance of adulthood are still very limited.

Support to disadvantaged families through social payments

Social payments to families with children may be of the following types:

- Pregnancy and child birth state allowance
- Childcare state allowances – paid until the age 3 of the child
- Disability state pension
- Mothers of multiple children (8+) who are given the honorary title Ene mähri (“Mother’s Love”) receive 30% supplement to their pension or the state childcare allowance, disability state pension and state social benefits. In addition, now mothers with many children will be able to retire two years earlier, that is, at 52 years old.¹¹⁸
- Subsidies for natural gas, electricity and water – these subsidies are available for all families and not just those with children, however, they have been partially removed in 2019¹¹⁹

Social payments to children directly may be of the following types:

- State disability allowance (children with disabilities under 18)
- Pensions for loss of a breadwinner orphans and children deprived of parental care
- Annual one-time cash assistance for the purchase of writing and educational supplies, as well as material assistance

Amendments to the Code of Turkmenistan on social protection of the population came into force at the beginning of 2022 introducing annual increase by at least 10% of pensions for loss of a breadwinner of child orphans, state allowances for childbirth and state allowances for childcare. Purchasing power (PP)-specific data was not identified for Turkmenistan, however there are available data on Purchasing Power

¹¹⁶ International Labour Organisation (ILO) Modelled estimates, Source: <https://www.ilo.org>

¹¹⁷ The evaluator has used ILO definition of NEET. The share of youth not in education, employment or training (also known as “the NEET rate”) conveys the number of young persons not in education, employment or training as a percentage of the total youth population. It provides a measure of youth who are outside the educational system, not in training and not in employment, and thus serves as a broader measure of potential youth labour market entrants than youth unemployment (Source: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/resources/concepts-and-definitions/description-youth-neet/>)

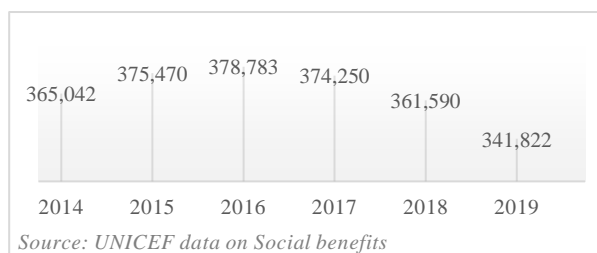
¹¹⁸ <https://turkmenportal.com/en/blog/42956/new-laws-in-support-of-large-families-come-into-force-in-turkmenistan>

¹¹⁹ UNDP, INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION, 2020

Parity (PPP). PPP has increased from 0.5 (2000) to 1.6 (2019).¹²⁰ This may be indicative of possible inflation process over the years. The 10% increase of payments by Presidential decrees annually may be countering such effects. However, it is hard to estimate the extent to which this, or other factors, has contributed to higher purchasing power of the population and specifically families with children in the country.

It is difficult give a proper assessment of the effectiveness of the coverage of the state social payments, specifically for most vulnerable ones. Children in the households that received any type of social transfers amount to 68.1%¹²¹ in 2019. This may include also one-time monetary support payments (for instance for school supplies). Disaggregated data is not available nor data on previous periods to trace any trends.

Figure 19 Recipients of childcare social benefits



A decreasing trend is observed in the number of recipients of childcare allowances, which may be a result of a natural demographic process such as decreasing fertility rate¹²². See Figure 19.

It should be noted that these payments only cover families of children aged 0-3. FGDs with parents reveal that generally parents of both young children and older children manage relatively well in

terms of financially supporting their children. This is not the case for families where there is either a child or adult with a disability. The number of children with disability has increased to 13.34% in 2019 (See Figure 22) as well as the number of children with disabilities in families with no working adult reaching 23365¹²³ children in 2020, of them boys being a larger share. See Figure 20.

FGDs with parents indicate that disability is a factor on the family income – there are costs for medication, rehabilitation and medical services, and very often travel expenses are additional rehabilitation-related costs since specific services are only available in larger cities and sometimes abroad e.g. Turkey. This FGDs finding implies that disability is a major factor for social inclusion for these children. Often the outcome is that parents are only able to have a proper job if the child is placed in a specialized school. Visiting a mainstream school means that a parent should always accompany the child to move around the school as it is not sufficiently accessible and a child needs special support within the mainstream education. In FGDs almost 100% of the parents of children with disabilities indicated that their children visit a boarding schools, while 2-3 children receive home schooling (a teacher visits the family's home). Of the children receiving their education in a boarding school, almost 50% live there and visit their families on the weekends or more rarely.

In the light of the above data and in the context of an increasing number of children with disabilities (Figure 20) the social support system needs to extend its support beyond monetary help only but also social support within the community.

Support to disadvantaged families through social services

¹²⁰ Source: knoema.com

¹²¹ Percentage of children under age 18 living in the households that received any type of social transfers in the last 3 months, Source: MICS 2019

¹²² Fertility rate for the period 2016-2019 is respectively 2.90, 2.80, 2.70 and 2.50, Source: Transmonee

¹²³ Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/19858 dated 26.02.2021

Figure 20 Percentage of disability pensioners who are children

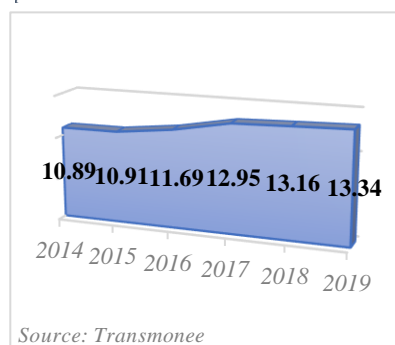
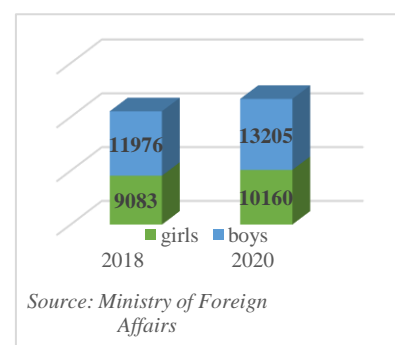


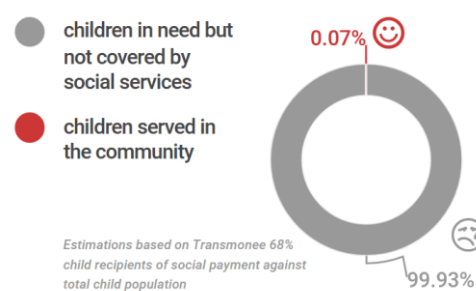
Figure 21 N of children with disabilities living in families with no working adults



Community-based care is provided mainly to adults in the format of patronage care for elderly people. The social system in Turkmenistan does not provide specific social services to children except residential care – special boarding schools (for children with disabilities) and orphanages (for children without parental care). Social services for children in the community is a new concept. The most significant change during the NAP implementation has been the introduction of the the modern concept of social services in the community and introducing the profession of social worker. Social services in the community were piloted in 2020 within a Joint Programme (JP) involving UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC and national partners: Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Health and Medical Industry, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Parliament, Institute of State, Law, and Democracy. During the NAP implementation period the programme has piloted a community-based social worker model engaged in identification, assessment and case management as well as piloting **12 specialised social services** to meet specific needs and support people to live independent lives in their communities. Most of them have a big potential of reaching out to children i.e. they are oriented to children or to adults whose families may have children. (A full list of JP piloted services is attached as annex). The JP is currently developing a mechanism for social contracting, improving a social work curriculum and supporting drafting of legislative amendments and other institutional framework (standards, service specifications).

As these services are still in pilot phase, their capacity, hence coverage is still very low – 2200 individuals served of which 886 children¹²⁴. See Figure 22
Following evaluation of their effectiveness and assessment of their efficiency in 2022, the government will make decisions about future scale up.

Figure 22 Coverage of community-based services for children



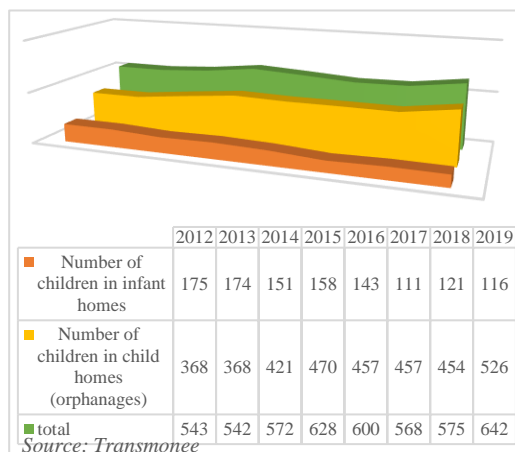
Disaggregated data is not available to analyse trends in the number of children living in single-parent families and receiving some form of state support. Data is available about pensions paid to people who have lost a breadwinner (5962 in 2019)¹²⁵ but that number is only available for 2019 and only refers to pensions paid on occasion of the death of breadwinner i.e. does not include divorce alimonies.

This part of the analysis looks at possible progress on the NAP indicator related to the number of children placed in residential care due to material reasons (Infant's and children's homes) in 2022 as compared to 2018. There are two homes for children without parental care and five infant homes, where healthy children stay until the age of three and children with disabilities stay until the age of four. The total placements in these two types of residential care has remained relatively stable over the last few years but is starting to increase in 2018 by 11,65%. See Figure 23.

¹²⁴ By Aug 2021, based on preliminary reporting JP data, Обзор прогресса по реализации совместной программы, Powerpoint presentation

¹²⁵ Source: UNICEF data on Social benefits

Figure 23 Placements in infant homes and child homes



Available data about the children placed in institutions is not disaggregated by reasons of placement. Interviews with infant and child homes directors as well as FGDs with care leavers¹²⁶ indicate that most of the children have at least one living parent and there are complex reasons behind children being placed there, mostly related to socio-economic difficulties of the families and mostly in single-parent and multiple-children families. A trend specifically for placements of young children in infant homes cannot be specified as data varies significantly.¹²⁷

The targeted state monetary support to families with young children is important but it alone cannot address the reasons behind placements of children as they are quite complex.

This means that monetary aid needs to be complemented by comprehensive family-support programmes in the community and based on families' individual needs. The focused effort towards early child development in the country with UNICEF support needs to continue. Additionally, community-based social service were piloted specifically targeting reintegration of infants placed in infant homes. Interviews with Infant homes indicate that where such work took place the number of infants reunited with their biological families is higher.

The effect of the community-based pilot services still remains to be assessed in an prospective evaluation. It has to be emphasised that the indicator refers to placements where parental rights are transferred to the state as per the definition of residential care.¹²⁸ However, excluding some types of residential living for children such as boarding schools runs the risk of missing some significant processes related to the capacity of the family to take care of their children. In the context of children's rights, indicators relevant to residential living should include all places where children reside outside their family home. Evidence from FGDs with parents of children with disabilities indicate that the disability status of their child affects their financial ability to look after them. Limited financial abilities and underdeveloped inclusive education combined with the lack of services for children with disabilities brings many parents to the practice of placing their children in boarding schools either because these provide better care for basic necessities such as clothing and food (i.e. placement due to the financial ability of the household) or are the only educational alternative for children with special needs (due to disability).

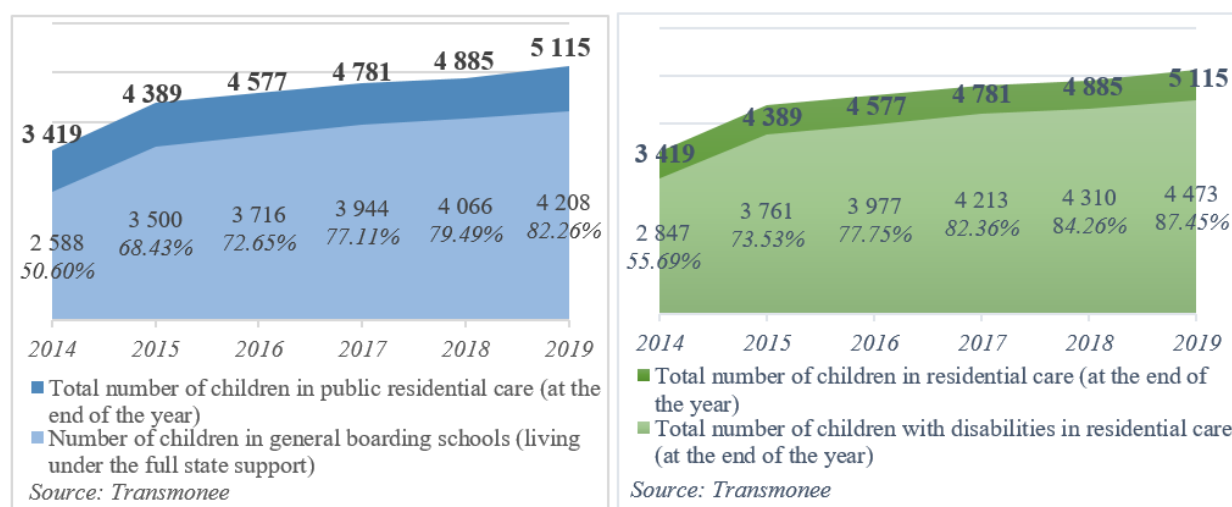
This represents a major factor in family separations for economic reasons masked by educational purposes. Placements in children institutions are on the increase. The trend of continued placements in institutions mostly affects children with special educational needs i.e. with some type of disability – they form the largest share of children placed in institutions and most of the placements outside the family are placements in boarding schools. See Figure 24

¹²⁶ Children leaving care in children's home

¹²⁷ Transmonee reports 116 children in infant homes, two Infant homes directors report around 40 children placed in each (estimates indicate around 200 for all 5 infant homes), while Ministry of Healthcare and Medical Industry reports 404 children in 2018 and 417 children in 2019 (Source: Джоанна Роджерс (2020), Базовый перечень социальных услуг в Туркменистане, Отчет выполнен для Совместной программы фонда ЦУР с целью развития качественных, инклюзивных социальных услуг в Туркменистане на местном уровне)

¹²⁸ Residential care is provided in a non-family-based group setting with paid and/or unpaid staff where some children live and receive care and are placed by order of a competent authority. Parental rights are transferred to the state in the case of these children. Definition based on a working definition used by the Data and Analytics Section of, UNICEF New York (2019)

Figure 24 Share of residential care placements in boarding schools and share of CWD in public residential care



Goal 5: All children without exception have a right to be free from violence, exploitation, ill-treatment in the family and society and cannot be abandoned without care and guardianship

Below is a summary of the progress against this goal. See Table 10. Details are presented after the table.

Table 9 Progress towards Goal 5

Goal 5: All children without exception have a right to be free from violence, exploitation, ill-treatment in the family and society and cannot be abandoned without care and guardianship		
SDGs contribution	SDG 5 SDG 8 SDG 16	
Objective	Indicators as per NAP	progress
5.1. Prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse		
5.1.1 Ensure the harmonization of national legislation with international standards in the field of human rights and the protection of children from all forms of violence and ill-treatment	No of amended and adopted legislation harmonized with international standards in the area of prevention and combating child abuse as compared to the total No of legislation to be amended	Within the NAP implementation, 50% of the planned activities towards legislation amendment and adoption were implemented ¹²⁹ a number of laws were amended and adopted Review of legislation on the best Interests of a child was conducted as part of CRC National Report development and provided recommendations for the amendment of a number of Laws. Review on legislative and normative frameworks for children in contact with the law undertaken in 2020 by GoT in partnership with UNICEF. Actionable recommendations available. Regulation on child justice in process of strengthening. ¹³⁰
5.1.2 Develop evidence base for domestic violence and child abuse	Data collection and reports writing	UNDP training conducted on data collection for SDG 16. MICS 2019 provided data on violent disciplining on children. Gaps still remain e.g. violence-specific study, regular reporting monthly/annually on violence and using for decision-making; evidence base not yet in place or not available for this assessment.
5.1.3 Increase the effectiveness of national measures to prevent violence and child abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No and % of government officials, law enforcement officers, local self-government officials with raised awareness on violation and abuse of children Ratio of held activities to planned activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> more than 40000 officers trained in events delivered by either the Ministry of Internal Affairs or in partnership with international trainers

¹²⁹ GoT reports on implementation of the NAP

¹³⁰ Turkmenistan shows commitment to make existing justice system more child-specific e.g. provision of specific rules for children in conflict with the law, including a distinct chapter on children in the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedural Code; separate norms for children in the Criminal Executive Code and the Code of Administrative Offences; and Supreme Court Resolution of the Plenum of the Supreme Court No. 7 of 2020 entirely devoted to children in conflict with the law. This is complemented by child-specific orders of further relevant authorities, and most recently by a new law on social services (2021). Source: Child Frontiers, 2021, Review and Analysis of legislative and normative frameworks concerning children in contact with the law

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of schoolchildren of 10-15 years of age who received information on abuse prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50%¹³¹ of planned activities (baseline and target not identified) Not identified
5.2. Children in conflict with the law		
5.2.1.Ensure compliance with the key international principles of juvenile justice: the rights of the child, the best interests, the right to freely express their views and be heard, non-discrimination and the priority of preventing the child from entering the justice system and re-integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures for prevention of juvenile delinquency and their re-integration tested in a pilot region, their effectiveness assessed and recommended for dissemination throughout the country. % of children, risk groups covered by measures for prevention of juvenile delinquency and their re-integration into society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One pilot community-based service for youth at risk of contact with criminal justice (within JP); UNICEF-supported programme towards reforming justice for children; A Roadmap for strengthening child justice; introduction of a specialized approach towards children in contact with the law Not identified
5.3. Child labour		
5.3.1.Improve the provision of information to the population, aimed at issues of protection of the rights of children, including prohibiting the use of the worst forms of child labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compendium published 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not identified
5.3.2. Ensuring enabling conditions for labour for persons under 18, in accordance with the legislation effective in Turkmenistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No of enterprises, organizations and institutions using the labour of persons under 18 in harmful and dangerous (especially harmful and especially dangerous) labour conditions 	19 children ¹³² employed through agencies. Employees are forbidden ¹³³ to use child labour in harmful and hazardous conditions. Reports on potential breach of law were not identified.
5.4. Refugees, migrants and displaced children		
5.4.1.Promote social and psychological rehabilitation and integration of children from families of displaced persons, refugees and forced migrants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No and % of children from refugee families, displaced persons and forced migrants who receive access to services by 2022 No and % of non-registered children from displaced families, refugees and forced migrants in 2021 as compared to 2015. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not identified Not identified
5.5. Alternative care and adoption		
5.5.1.Increase the effectiveness of measures to prevent child abandonment and their placement under the state custody (Infant homes, orphanages and residential institutions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of laws and regulations and practices to prevent child abandonment and their placement under the state custody carried out in 2018. Actions developed and introduced. No and % of children under state care disaggregated by gender, age, disability and location of institution. Reports on the situation with children include disaggregated (by gender, age and disability) data about children deprived of parental care and placed in the family and institutional form of arrangement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews of legislation specific to child abandonment prevention were not identified. However, prevention of abandonment and placement in formal care can be addressed by development of community-based support services. Legislative efforts are in place to introduce such social services. Increase of placements in state care by 6%¹³⁴ and more than double for children with disabilities where a 13% increase is recorded¹³⁵ Data is available but is not always consistent across different sources] disaggregated by type of institution, disability status (but not disability type) age and gender (with some gaps), but not by reason for placement.
Assessment of progress on this goal		
<p>Turkmenistan has made many important commitments for child protection under International Human Rights Law. The concept of coordination for effective governance of child protection and child justice is present but requires coordination mechanism for oversight of children's rights to be operationalised, including by describing the roles and functions of each agency and law enforcement body, as well as their responsibilities for joint working and reporting. Introducing open and fare reporting of suspected child abuse and response to violence into Turkmenistan's legislation and improving the data collection capacity of the system can increase the visibility of the child protection system and the child justice components. In terms of children in contact with the law Turkmenistan justice system offers a wide range of child-specific rules, and specialized professionals and institutions are available to some degree. The legal system provides some essential elements of a child justice system in line with international standards. This needs to be built on by shifting the system orientation from 'correction' to 'resocialization' and ensure that interventions are based on interdisciplinary assessments which respond to the needs of each child, including psychological and emotional needs. The capacity of the child protection system and children's access to justice could be improved by scaling up existing pilot community-based support services for children, continuing the efforts to introduce social work profession and increasing the number of social workers, ensuring training and ongoing professional development on case management protocols, including individual assessment and planning for every child and family in need of support. Positively, some standard operating procedures have been already established and they need to be further expanded to children-specific vulnerabilities, developing standardised tool for regular administrative data collection and a monitoring and accountability mechanism. Follow-up progress towards ensuring violence-free environment for children would be easier for the GoT to assess accurately if the NAP logical framework is strengthened by specifying the objectives orienting them to results for children rather than interventions and equipping goal and objectives with valid and measurable indicators; revising protocols for collection of regular, standardised administrative data, alongside regular population-based survey data</p>		

¹³¹Source: Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/19206 dated 25.02.2021

¹³² 2020, COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

¹³³ the Law of Turkmenistan "On guarantees of the right of youth for the right to work", adopted in 2005

¹³⁴ Data refers to the period 2017-2019 and to children placed in all types of institutional care (infant homes, homes for children, boarding schools including Residential Rehabilitation and Education Centres. Total for all institutions: 4836 (2017), 4932 (2018), 5142 (2019) Source: State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan (2021) (quoted by Elayn M. Sammon, Functional Assessment of the Child Protection System in Turkmenistan, 2021)

¹³⁵ ibid

Analysis along the different levels of interventions required in an effective child protection system indicate that Turkmenistan has made progress mostly in terms of creating a more enabling environment for family-support programmes: mostly for children in conflict with the law and least for children affected by violence and abuse as well as those living in alternative care. In terms of refugee, migrant and displaced children, the legislation in Turkmenistan ensures access to universal basic services available in the country for such children. Stateless children are reported as zero.¹³⁶ Data was not identified for migrant or refugee children in the country. Therefore, the assumption is that the mainstream services are prepared to work with such vulnerability. However, neither the education system nor the available social services report to have worked with such children or families.¹³⁷

Goal 5 of the NAP is formulated as a right rather than a goal with specific and measurable dimensions, baseline and targets were not defined in some cases, so measurement through conventional means of evaluation of effectiveness is challenging. Mostly quantitative data is available. Furthermore, some interventions were formulated on the level of objectives, rather than being formulated as measurable objectives and outcomes for children. For instance “Develop evidence base for domestic violence and child abuse” and “Ensure the harmonization of national legislation with international standards in the field of human rights and the protection of children from all forms of violence and ill-treatment” are set as objectives, while they both are actually interventions (activities) towards creating enabling environment. Goal 5 is about protecting children from all forms of violence and abuse, especially the most vulnerable. UNICEF defines child protection as the prevention of, and response to, exploitation, abuse, neglect, harmful practices and violence against children.¹³⁸ It is embedded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals. Child Protection is universal: it is for all children everywhere.

The NAP does not indicate or explain which conceptual frameworks were used in developing high-quality interventions towards ensuring the right of children to be protected from violence. Because the child protection system means to serve children coming from diverse circumstances presenting equally diverse protection needs, it needs a service continuum matched to this diversity. Turkmenistan has only started to develop the foundations of a quality child protection system. This is why it is important to always consider that one hallmark of the systems approach to child is the holistic view of children, families, and communities. The NAP is relevantly takes a comprehensive approach to addressing vulnerabilities of children and families to ensure that children remain in their families and in their families they receive proper care.

The GoT has shown commitment to strengthen its enabling environment for implementing children's rights, including in the area of child protection. New laws on the treatment of victims of crime and defining the social work function demonstrate key momentum in this area. The GoT, assisted by UNICEF, are putting effort into conceptualisation of a more comprehensive child justice system capable of realizing the full rights for all children who come into contact with the justice system, whether as victims of violence, witnesses of violence, accused of wrongdoing, or in a civil or administrative proceeding for issues such as custody, adoption, and violations of their rights.

The NAP ToC envisages that strengthening such a protective system in the country is the selected pathway of realising children's right to be free from any form of violence and living in its family under proper care. The assumption has been that legislative changes, robust data development and strengthening service provision would contribute to ensuring that right. This is a valid pathway; however, making it work also requires effective coordination. Line ministries are accountable to the Cabinet of Ministers, which has overall jurisdiction for governance and coordination. However, coordination for effective governance of child protection continues to be identified as a challenge by the 2015 report of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The GoT introduced the concept of a coordination mechanism for oversight of children's rights in the NAP although this commitment has yet to be operationalised.

Prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse

¹³⁶ Interview with Ombudsman Office

¹³⁷ Джоанна Роджерс (2020), Базовый перечень социальных услуг в Туркменистане; Отчет выполнен для Совместной программы фонда ЦУР с целью развития качественных, инклюзивных социальных услуг в Туркменистане на местном уровне

¹³⁸ UNICEF definition, Source: <https://www.unicef.org/documents/child-protection-strategy>

This component of NAP is in line with CRC expectation that countries are to address all forms of violence while in the care of a parent, guardian or other person.¹³⁹ The analysis of interventions towards this objective indicates that this component promotes legislation harmonization to enable protection of children from all forms of violence and increase effectiveness of violence prevention measures. No specific forms of violence were flagged except for making special reference to domestic violence and abuse in the context of the need to develop evidence base.

A recently conducted review on legislation¹⁴⁰ lead by GoT and UNICEF indicates that the country has taken steps towards prohibiting all forms of violence against children¹⁴¹, although the specific forms of violence criminalised were not analysed in detail. Commendably, specific criminalisation of gender-based violence against girls is addressed by a National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2021-2025 as approved by the Decree of President of Turkmenistan No2007, December 4, 2020. This development opens up opportunities for creating legislative space for targeting domestic violence and developing comprehensive prevention and response programmes for children (both boys and girls) experiencing specific forms of violence, including sexual violence, domestic violence and child abuse. Also, it is very timely because such effort would speed up the development of the evidence base for domestic violence and child abuse, being one of the priorities in the NAP and still pending. Currently, data on prevalence of violence is available but there are still gaps on the specific dimensions, forms of violence, place of occurrence, child population disaggregation, etc. The increased capacity of the Turkmenistan Statistical Office for data collection¹⁴² is instrumental to make the dimensions of violence against children in the country more visible so that they can be targeted effectively by strengthening reporting mechanisms as well as response services. Cultural norms in the society define an environment of tolerance to domestic violence and specifically gender-based violence – 35% of women 15-49 justify a husband beating or hitting his wife.¹⁴³ This has implications on the children in the family witnessing violence, thus becoming victims themselves. Parents from the FGDs indicated that they would never use violence towards their children nor do they have knowledge of teachers of their children using violence. Yet, data shows that children in Turkmenistan experience high levels of violent disciplining methods both psychological and physical (68.6% of children aged 1-14).¹⁴⁴

Positive developments are that NAP addresses a more gender-tolerant attitudes in schools by training and certifying secondary school teachers on gender-sensitive educational topics. (discussed in Goal 3) Teachers and the Inspectorate on Minors Affairs appear to have a strong presence in the community around the child and working closely with families may be potential to leverage the identification and reporting capacity in the child protection system. Expanding their functions, upgrading their skills towards support rather than sanction and building their reporting and referral capacity may be linked with the newly developing social workers resource on etrap level.

Turkmenistan recently enacted two laws (Law on State Protection of victims, witnesses and other participants in criminal proceedings (2016) and the Law on Combatting Human Trafficking (2016, amended 2018)) which provide a wide range of protection measures for victims and witnesses, and comprehensive assistance and support for victims of human trafficking. Making the measures articulated in these laws operational in practice requires making them available and accessible for all child victims (and witnesses), further capacity building of the system, training of professionals, developing child-specific standard operational procedures and guidance (both methodological documents and case supervision for workers).

Identification, reporting and referral services are at their onset. SOPs were developed in 2020 for health workers, social system professionals and police persons acting in case of reported cases of domestic violence, although they are not specifically for children but for any person victims of violence. Of course, proper referral would only make sense if there are community-based services to refer to. Comprehensive

¹³⁹CRC, Article 19: States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment, or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

¹⁴⁰ Child Frontiers, 2021, Review and Analysis of legislative and normative frameworks concerning children in contact with the law

¹⁴⁰Source: Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reference document N06/19206 dated 25.02.2021

¹⁴¹ Law on the State Guarantees on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 2002

¹⁴² Contributing to MICS 2015 and MICS 2019

¹⁴³ Analysis Of Situation Of Children's And Women's Rights In Turkmenistan, February 2019

¹⁴⁴ MICS 2019



social support service for prevention of domestic violence against women has been piloted within the JP. Presumably, it may potentially cover children also since domestic violence response is intrinsically linked with care for the child of the victim. It is very important that these are further developed and scaled up to further strengthen the support system of the country e.g. incorporating social work training into government and university training curricula; using a 'training of trainers' approach to ensure multiplication of results; and moving from 'pilots' to model specialized social services with a view to scaling initiatives.

Children in conflict with the law

It is generally considered that children who break the law do not do so of their own free will, but rather because of restricted opportunities available for their development. Juveniles from risk groups that could get in conflict with the law are often victims of abuse and neglect, negligent and poor parenting and economic difficulties. These children need support while they are still children on primary level of prevention and as part of basic universal services available to all children e.g. as part of general education and healthcare.

The concept of children being in conflict with the law is gradually changing in Turkmenistan towards modernising and becoming more child-friendly. The GoT has placed great attention on juvenile justice in the context of rule of law and justice sector reforms. Building on that readiness to reform the juvenile justice system, in 2021, UNICEF and the GoT considered opportunities to extend the approach to a wider sector of justice for children in Turkmenistan. To advocate for further changes, UNICEF convened a series of workshops to start the implementation of the Concept's activities applying the best experiences of specialized approaches and alternative sanctions of other countries.

The positive outcome is the introduction of a specialized approach towards children in contact with the law. The NAP most significant change has been initiation of upgrading the existing workforce of the systems components which are related to child justice i.e. police and judicial system, towards more child-friendly justice. Commissions of minors are functioning on local level and externally to the Ministry of Interior (MoI). They are part of the safety net of services targeting prevention of family separation due to delinquency. In 2021, the Ministry of Interior prepared an Inter-Agency Concept for Establishing Specialized Procedures for Protecting Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime at the pre-trial stage. Community-based social services for adolescents at risk of contact with criminal justice (assessment, family therapy, life skills, and referral) were piloted in 2020 within the JP. Their coverage is still very low¹⁴⁵ so their scaling up is crucial for ensuring linkages of child protection components in the context of the wider concept of child justice and ensuring better prevention. Commendably, options for scaling up are currently considered by the GoT with UNICEF strong support. These options should be considered in conjunction with upgrading and expanding the existing components of a child protection system in Turkmenistan, specifically by: addressing human resource gaps, insufficient funding and weak inter-agency coordination.

While the Turkmenistan justice system offers a wide range of child-specific rules and legislative safeguards, it is limited with the availability of alternatives to deprivation of liberty and does not yet have specially assigned judges to consider cases involving children in the contact with the law. MoI is keeping a register of dysfunctional families but targeted social support to such families is not available nor is needs assessment analysis, including regional trends and risk factors – 59% of the children in correctional facilities are residents of Lebap and Mary welayats.¹⁴⁶

Practices of juvenile diversion and approaches holding youth accountable for their behaviour without resorting to legal sanctions, court oversight or the threat of confinement are still not fully established. Foundations for such practices were laid by the 2012-2016 General Juvenile Justice Programme provides for juvenile justice processes that are more child-friendly.

Detention procedures are becoming more child-friendly e.g.:

- juvenile units have been set up in the police departments to ensure that children are housed separately from regular police detention places;
- staff recruitment is increasingly considered in child-friendlier terms i.e. Juvenile affairs inspectors with academic background in education now total at 30%.

¹⁴⁵ in Ashgabat and Turkmenabat

¹⁴⁶ Ombudsman report 2018

- the academic curriculum for prospective police officers includes child-rights related topics. More specialized topics, such as child-friendly interviewing techniques, have been introduced through UNICEF-supported training, however not part of the regular curriculum yet.

Convicted children are detained in colonies separate from adults and separate for boys and girls. The number of children in colonies reduced over the years (2017- 85¹⁴⁷, 2018- 68¹⁴⁸ children, all being boys and one girl). The reduction of the number of detained children is a positive aspect but in the absence of community-based prevention social services and effective diversion programmes, the reduction is due to children reaching the age for leaving the colony as well as gate-keeping control resulting from the tendency of more lenient sentences regarding minors, not related to deprivation of liberty.

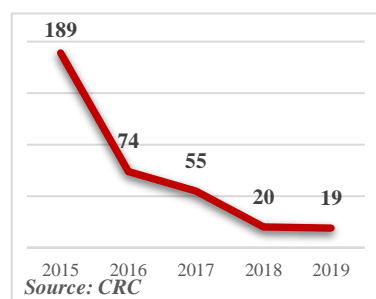
There are interventions to facilitate the social integration of children in colonies back to society: education is provided and transition to independent living is provided, although their effectiveness is not analysed and documented. However, children stay in these facilities mostly until the end of their childhood and the transition programmes do not include reintegration components to facilitate the child's shorter stay and returning to the family sooner.

Child labour

In line with the Law of Turkmenistan "On state guarantees of the right of youth for the right to work", parents are forbidden to use children below 18 in works related to permanent employment, especially in works related to absence from studies. Also, employees are forbidden to use the labour of workers below 18 in works with harmful and (or especially hazardous) conditions of labour. Still, it has to be noted that studies on possible informal use of child labour were not identified.

Due to the legislative changes of minimum recruitment age from 16 to 18, the number of children aged 16 engaged in branches of economy of Turkmenistan has been shrunk to a nullity. The number of children aged under 18 engaged in the branches of economy, made 36 persons, or 0.005% of the employed in them.¹⁴⁹ Of them, 19 children were employed through employment agencies. *See Figure 25.* The trend indicates that the objective of eliminating child labour had been achieved before the adoption of NAP. Furthermore, discussions with Ministry of Internal Affairs and Prosecutors' Office did not indicate that child labour was an issue for Turkmenistan, which might be demonstrating that high preventive measures are working and enabling environment was created to prevent child labour.

Figure 25 N of children employed through employment agencies



Refugees, migrants and displaced children

The legislation in Turkmenistan ensures access of all children from migrant, refugee or displaced families to universal basic services available in the country.

Specific data on migrant or refugee children in the country was not identified, however, discussions with Ministry of Internal Affairs and Prosecutors' Office did not indicate that there are issues with such groups of children, and, stateless children are reported as zero. Further analysis with robust data on migrant and refugee children may help identifying the specific vulnerabilities and needs of such children. This will be useful to the GoT to plan accordingly, develop support services for children coming from migrant or refugee families, and improve the scope of the existing universal services in a way that support is tailored to the specific needs of this group of children. Government officials state that such children have access to mainstream services.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, the assumption is that the mainstream services are prepared to work with such vulnerability. However, neither the education system nor the available social services report to have worked with such children or families.¹⁵¹ Disaggregated data on the placements in institutions in

¹⁴⁷ Irina Urumova (2018), International Consultant, Assessment of the General Programme on the Development of Juvenile Justice System in Turkmenistan for the Period of 2012-2016

¹⁴⁸ Ombudsman report 2018

¹⁴⁹ 2020, COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

¹⁵⁰ KII's

¹⁵¹ Джоанна Роджерс (2020), Базовый перечень социальных услуг в Туркменистане; Отчет выполнен для Совместной программы фонда ЦУР с целью развития качественных, инклюзивных социальных услуг в Туркменистане на местном уровне

terms of their refugee status was not identified. Refugee or migrant children have not been reported by interviewed residential facilities for children (infant homes, orphanage).

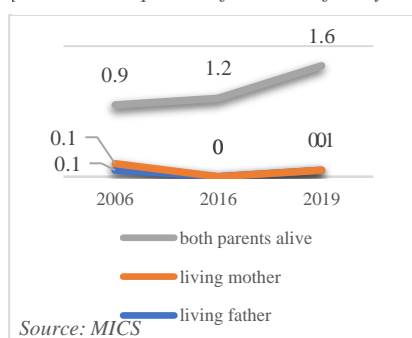
Although migration does not come across as a demonstrated vulnerability risk, it is still reasonable to keep track and explore possible issues of children affected by migration that may not be very visible. The recent report of the Ombudsman Office states that 11% of appeals coming from families are related to impacts of migration. Furthermore, 10% of children are reported to have at least one parent abroad.¹⁵² This trend may be indicative of much of the labour migration being informal thus unprotected and vulnerable children remaining below the radar of the protective system. The evaluation did not identify a specific research on possible migration flows from or to Turkmenistan from neighbouring source countries nor on the effects of labour migration on families and children.

It is recommended that the Government determine the situation of migrant families and the protection needs of their children left behind through a study. The proposed study will enable the policy and decision-makers to better understand the current situation and support the development of a policy framework on mitigation of the negative consequences of migration.

Alternative care and adoption

In line with Article 85 of the Family Code of Turkmenistan, raising a child in the family is recognized as a priority form, which in the best way shall ensure rights and lawful interests of a child. The implication of this is that universal services (e.g. education, healthcare, ECD) should be designed in a way to enable families to take care of all children's needs by themselves.

Figure 26 Children with at least one living parent and separated from their family



The number of children with living parents but separated from them is on the increase. See Figure 26. It is important to address this need and study the reasons behind it so that the risks are addressed properly. Tailored counselling and social support for families experiencing difficulties in caring for their children is still not widely available within the existing social support system of the country. Possibilities for children separated from their families (and who are not living with a guardian, close relative, or adopted), are one of the following types of institutions: 5 infant homes (for healthy infants 0-3 or infants with disabilities 0-4); 2 children's homes (orphanages), 10 boarding-schools and 6 rehabilitation health complexes. All of them provide long-term care. There are no documented analysis on

the duration of the average stay but mostly children spend there all their childhood (interviewed management report that main reason for leaving is reaching full age).

The number of adoptions remains relatively stable over the years¹⁵³ In this context institutions are increasingly the most commonly available social services for families in need of support, where most children are children with disabilities and their share is growing. (See Figure 20 and 24). FGDs with children leaving institutions indicates that the support provided is mainly related to basic needs and education. There is still no individual planning or case management towards reintegration with the family in order to ensure quick permanent solution¹⁵⁴ for the child and shortening the duration of placement in the institution.

¹⁵² MICS 2019

¹⁵³ For the period of 2017-2020 the civil registry offices registered the following number of adoptions: 2690 (2017), 2589 (2018), 2659 (2019) and 1180 (first 6 months of 2020), Source: 2020, COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

¹⁵⁴ Permanent solutions are reunification with the biological family or adoption.

Public associations providing social services report to have served 9 983 persons (both adult and children) and this represents 6% decrease of users compared to 2018 (10 607).¹⁵⁵ However, these refer to users of all types of

vulnerabilities, not necessarily parents and not necessarily in terms of family separation prevention.

Comprehensive social support service aimed at preventing child abandonment and service for teenage pregnancy is now being piloted with the JP and is hence with limited coverage, available for Ashgabat and Turkmenabat.

There are emerging opportunities for creating models of reintegrating services: reunification programme is piloted within the JP in the Infant homes in Mary and

Turkmenabat under UNICEF guidance as well as earlier attempts towards reforming the care model. The services is still at pilot phase and its effectiveness and efficiency is still under review, however, Mary Infant home management reported positive results for children i.e. 95% of the children leaving the institution in 2020 were reintegrated to their biological families.

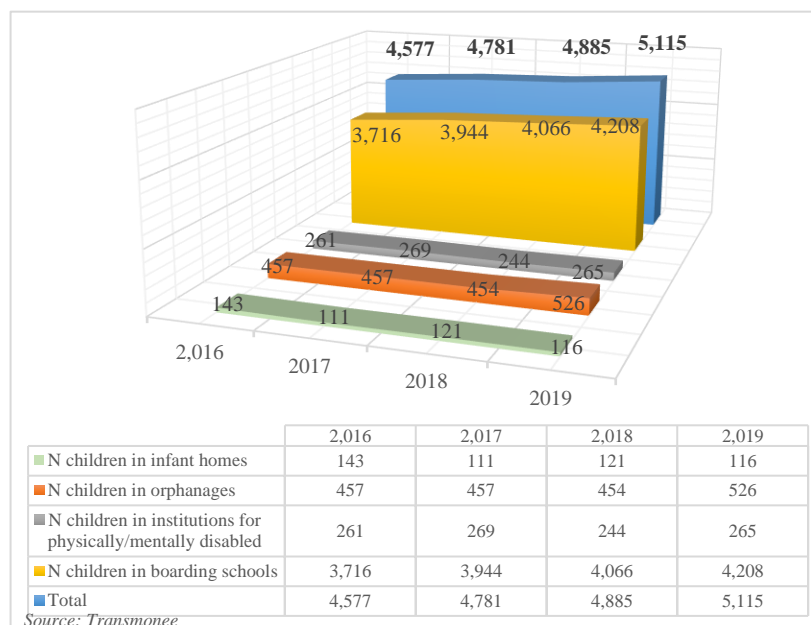
On the overall, only 0.25%¹⁵⁶ of Turkmenistan child population lives in residential institutions. The rate of children living in residential care institutions is below the regional average¹⁵⁷; however, this is above the global average of 120 children per 100,000 child population. It is not meant to indicate that children are not having negative experiences in their family but only that negative family experiences for children do not generally leave to separation of the family. Family separations are on the increase and that means that gaps are wider for those families who face difficulties in taking good care of their children and there is a risk of children being separated.

National statistics does not indicate removal from parents by reasons although it is important to discuss separation reasons to inform further analysis across the determinants (MoRES)¹⁵⁸ as evidence of why children are separated from their families would indicate different bottlenecks, hence analysis would inform different interventions strategies.

The factors contributing to the unsatisfactory trend of reduction of the number of family separations are manifold:

- Underdeveloped network of sufficient services in support of biological families, especially for families with children with disabilities.;
- The lack of reintegration services as well as largely unreformed institutions (with emerging positive practices in infant homes). The quality of reintegration services is key to reducing family separations. Quality reintegration services should foster quick family reunions; and

Figure 27 Children placed in institutions



¹⁵⁵ Джоанна Роджерс (2020), Базовый перечень социальных услуг в Туркменистане; Отчет выполнен для Совместной программы фонда ЦУР с целью развития качественных, инклюзивных социальных услуг в Туркменистане на местном уровне

¹⁵⁶ Author's estimates based on the following data: total population of Turkmenistan (6031000), 33.3% child population (source: ToR), total number of children in residential care (5115, Transmonee)

¹⁵⁷ UNICEF's estimate is that Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia was found to have the highest rate worldwide, with 666 children per 100,000 living in residential care, over 5 times the global average of 120 children per 100,000. Source: <https://www.unicef.org/kyrgyzstan/press-releases/least-27-million-children-are-living-residential-care-worldwide-unicef-says>

¹⁵⁸ The Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES) is a conceptual framework for effective planning, programming, implementation, monitoring and managing for results to achieve desired outcomes for the most disadvantaged children. Central to the MoRES approach are three key elements: equity refocus, management for results, and bottleneck and barrier analysis.

- Underdeveloped inclusive education combined with the lack of services for disabled children brings many parents to the practice of placing their children in boarding schools either because these provide better care for basic necessities such as clothing and food (i.e. placement due to economic reasons) or are the only educational alternative for children with special needs (due to disability).

Although social norms¹⁵⁹ view family care as best care, boarding schools are not viewed as institutions in the traditional sense of the term e.g. for children without parents (orphanages). Quality data from interviews with parents of children with disabilities indicate that most of them are in favour of boarding schools due to lack of better alternative. Many of them say that the family cannot provide care at the same quality level as a boarding school, especially when the child has a disability. This fosters a conducive environment to placing children in educational institutions i.e. boarding schools are seen by the public as a place with an educational task rather than a residential institution per se. This is a negative trend because with insufficient support services for families in difficult life situations this process might affect an increasing number of children but at the same time is easy to overlook as it is masked by educational purpose reforms.

The analysis above indicates that during the reviewed period the most significant changes in the network ensuring that children live in a safe and violence-free family environment are:

- efforts towards creating enabling environment: introducing the modern concept of social work and the profession of social worker; a new Law on Social Services is underway¹⁶⁰; considerations are made with UNICEF and other UN agencies to introduce working arrangements in the legislation for social contracting. This is a positive step and in the long run would allow the GoT to encourage a wider array of services along more levels on the continuum of needs and a much wider coverage nationally. It is crucial that scaling up JP pilot community-based services accelerates.
- ECD programmes which are part of the universal network of prevention of family separations

Internationally, there are various frameworks for planning and assessing whether child protection systems provide necessary and suitable options for the child¹⁶¹ e.g. continuum of care¹⁶² as defined by World Health Organisation (WHO) as well as UNICEF¹⁶³; the concept of service quality defined through the European Common Quality Framework for Social Service of General Interest; the principles of quality childcare systems that are able to prevent family separation as defined in the "Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children"¹⁶⁴ or the Intervention pyramid¹⁶⁵ for mental health and psychosocial support among others.

To help the GoT to further plan high quality child protection services, the consultant has applied an approach to analysis of existing services resting upon an adaptation of the common principles of the above-mentioned frameworks. The analysis is presented as an annex to this report.

¹⁵⁹ FGDs with parents

¹⁶⁰ Existing services in the form of social services were regulated only by a separate section of the Code of Turkmenistan on social protection of the population, and a special Law "On Social Services" was adopted on December 18, 2021.

¹⁶¹ The principles of necessity and suitability are defined as quality principles underlying child protection systems preventing children from being separated from their families due to some vulnerability. Cantwell, N.; Davidson, J.; Elsley, S.; Milligan, I.; Quinn, N. (2012). *Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'*. UK: Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland.

¹⁶² "Continuum of care" is an applicable tool for assessment of services targeting client populations with a great variety of needs (http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/66584/4/WHO_MSD_MSB_00.2d.pdf)

¹⁶³ Adapting a Systems approach to child protection: key concepts and considerations, https://www.unicef.org/french/protection/files/Adapting_Systems_approach_to_CP_concepts_and_considerations.docx

¹⁶⁴ Cantwell, N.; Davidson, J.; Elsley, S.; Milligan, I.; Quinn, N. (2012). *Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'*. UK: Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland.

¹⁶⁵ IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings

Goal 6: All children have a right to participate in the decision-making affecting their life, well-being and development and express their opinion, which is to be taken into account

Below is a summary of the progress against this goal. See Table 11. Details are presented after the table.

Table 10 Progress towards Goal 6

Goal 6: All children have a right to participate in the decision-making affecting their life, well-being and development and express their opinion, which is to be taken into account		
6.1. Capacity building for promotion of participatory approach		
6.1.1. Build the capacity of children to participate effectively in decision-making that affects their well-being and development	No of established organizations, committees, councils led by children and young people by 2022 as compared to 2018	(Target and baseline was not identified) The Ministry of Justice has considered a project on the statute of the children's organisation Altyn Nesil by the Central council of the Mahtumkuli Youth organisation of Turkmenistan. For the first time, views and ideas were collected from 150 children from all regions of Turkmenistan to provide insights for the CRC report (in partnership with the ISLD and UNICEF) in Oct 2020
6.1.2. Build the capacity of government officials and professionals working with children to make decisions in the best interests of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National guidelines ready by 2021. No of government officials and professionals prepared for participation of children by 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing preparatory work on development of national guidelines for increasing children's access to information e.g. a compendium of international and legal acts regarding women's rights. A leaflet was issues presenting the Programme on State Youth Policy of Turkmenistan 2021-2025. A secondary school textbook update is underway to publishing on the topic "Foundations of the state and rights of Turkmenistan". (N or % not identified, target and baseline not identified) There has been training with the Ombudsman Office staff and UNICEF on child's right to access to justice
6.2. Media		
6.2.1. Provide age-appropriate information through various media sources available to children and young people.	No and quality of children and youth media by 2022	(Target and baseline was not identified) A radio programme "The first 1000 day's of a child's life" was prepared to go on air - 36 episodes. 15 TV broadcasts are underway.
Assessment of progress on this goal		
The progress towards ensuring the right of participation is difficult to assess accurately in conventional evaluation approaches due to predominantly qualitative data. There is no overarching policy to encourage children participation. Analysis of the main areas of child participation reveal that Turkmenistan has put most effort towards the legal protection of the child's right to participate and least progress in creating space for actual participation. The systems oriented to the child are at the stage of laying the foundations of an understanding of what child participation is. More effort and time is required to operationalise such understanding into a sustainable model and a policy across all sectors related to children. For the first time children's opinions were sought for policy-making, which is a positive practice. UNICEF has the capacity to advise national systems to develop good practices of child involvement.		

The NAP itself does not contain information on identified and assessed needs of children or adults related to practicing child participation. It implies that this topic is externally motivated, which of course does not mean it is not significant. A difficulty in evaluating the progress to this goal has been, on the one hand, the framework which has some indicators but not sufficiently valid to fully describe the goal, and on the other hand, the still underdeveloped mechanism of collecting monitoring data and other relevant information on this goal. These may be adjusted for next NAP to describe a more realistic and specific goal. For instance "Provide age- appropriate information ...[in various media]" is set in the NAP as an objective while it is activity towards an end result. Moreover, measuring progress towards such result would twist the actual assessment since the media content cannot be attributed to the NAP (the NAP does not specify which media are within its influence, hence attributable to potential progress).

Goal 6 uses concepts, which are not explicitly defined in the NAP i.e. "participation". The evaluator clarifies and defines the concept of participation for the purpose of this analysis and to enable measurement of progress.

Participation as the informed and voluntary involvement of children, including those from marginalized groups, children of different ages and different abilities, in every issue that affects them, either directly or indirectly.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ UNICEF definition of child and youth participation, <https://www.unicef.org/bulgaria/en/child-and-youth-participation>

The topic of participation is relevantly included in the NAP as it is one of CRC rights. However, it is a horizontal and cross-cutting principle rather than a goal on its own. The evaluator finds that Goal 6 is very much linked with Goal 1 (specifically with its dimension of "Harmonization of legislation with key international agreements and conventions related to promotion and protection of children's rights") because both goals are addressing the creation of an enabling environment of exercising the rights targeted by Goals 2-5. See Theory of change.

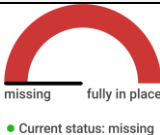

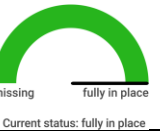
Capacity building for promotion of participatory approach

The theory of change behind NAP is that the limited possibility of children to participate in decision-making is a bottleneck for realising children's rights. Furthermore, the pathway to realising every child's right goes through creating space for participation (mechanisms, formats and practices) but also building capacity to promote participatory approaches. This is relevantly formulated as objective 1 under this goal. In an attempt to unpack the specific dimensions of "capacity for participation", the evaluator has analysed them through the following two dimensions underlying the NAP framework of priorities and planned interventions:

- Capacity of children to participate effectively in decision-making that affects their well-being and development i.e. empowering children by providing information, awareness and spaces for participation,
- Capacity of government officials and professionals working with children to make decisions in the best interests of children - i.e. to protect the right of children to participate (linked to Goal 1) and promote the child's right to participate (by informing, training awareness raising, providing tools and guidelines, etc.).





The analysis below is based on the above priorities of the NAP but for additional depth of the review and to enable assessment of progress the evaluator has decomposed the objective to allow for measurable elements were added to fully describe each dimension of the NAP objective.¹⁶⁷ See Table 12

Table 11 Evaluation of child participation

Benchmark	Assessment	Justification
CAPACITY OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH CHILDREN		
PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE¹⁶⁸		
1 Legal protection for children and young people's right to participate in decision-making is reflected in the national Constitution and legislation concerning education, health, social protection, justice, etc.		An unequivocal commitment to children's right to participate in decisions affecting them is not enshrined in national primary legislation. The Constitution makes reference to participation of citizens in "managing the affairs of the society and state" (Article 45), however, it is not explicitly stated for children. Legal reference to the child's right to express views and for those views to be given due weight were not identified in laws directly affecting children.
2 Explicit inclusion of children and young people's right to participate in decision-making in a cross sectorial national strategy to implement children's rights		There is reference to child participation as part of a cross sectorial national children's rights strategy (NAP, Goal 6). However, it has to be noted that the dedicated set of objectives needs refinement and there is no established lead responsibility such as a child or youth agency, rather responsibility is allocated on the bodies with no specific competence power in terms of children's rights e.g. State Committee on TV and Radio of Turkmenistan, Ministry of Culture.
3 An independent children's rights institution is in place and protected by law		An ombudsperson is established in November 2016 and protected in law with a specific mandate to pursue campaigns or address concerns on behalf of children. The ombudsperson is not a stand-alone children's right institution but is part of a broader human rights ombudsman office.

¹⁶⁷ The suggested elements were adapted from the conceptual framework of the Council of Europe¹⁶⁷ for measuring progress in implementing Article 12 (respect for the views of the child) both as a fundamental right and as a general principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the NAP priorities in Goal 6 fully correspond to them.

¹⁶⁸ Linked with this Goal but also with Goal 1, Objective 1.1.2. Improve and harmonize legislation of Turkmenistan on children in order to achieve further consistency with the CRC.

4 Child friendly complaints procedures are in place		No complaints or feedback child-friendly ¹⁶⁹ mechanisms in place in any of the areas: schools and education settings; care and protection; health; criminal proceedings; family law proceedings; immigration proceedings. Practice of filing complaints from children was identified in this evaluation in terms of the Ombudsman Office. However, the extent to which it is established as a child-friendly procedure requires additional analyses.
PROMOTING AWARENESS OF THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE		
5 Children's right to participate in decision-making is embedded in pre-service training programmes for professionals working with and for children		Competency-based training specifically on children's right to participation is not embedded in pre-service training programmes for professionals working directly with and for children. Juvenile affairs inspectors receive training on children's rights as part of their academic curriculum, although the effectiveness of their ability to transfer this knowledge into practice is yet to be analysed. There is ongoing preparatory work on development of national guidelines for increasing children's access to information.
6 Children are provided with information about their right to participate		No specific requirements were identified to government departments and those delivering key services to children to systematically produce information on children and young people's right to participate in decision-making. Education on children's rights, including the right to participate, is not a mandatory component of school curricula. Ad hoc public education/information initiatives are in place to raise awareness of children's right to participate and to association e.g. in 2019, in order to achieve potential of the Turkmen youth, UN Scientific-Methodical SDG Centre, Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan held a competition to present ideas on how they can promote awareness raising about SDGs on the national level. Young SDG ambassadors have the right to self-organize, prepare work plans and conduct awareness raising about the child's rights. In partnership with the Institute of State Law and Democracy UNICEF provided technical support for the development of 5th and 6th National Report to the CRC, which was submitted by the Government in October 2020. For the first time, views and ideas for the CRC report were collected from 150 children from all regions of Turkmenistan online and provided insights on further improvements of child rights protection and realization in Turkmenistan.
CAPACITY OF CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE (CREATING SPACES FOR PARTICIPATION¹⁷⁰)		
7 Children are represented in forums, including through their own organisations, at school, local, regional and national governance levels		There are no systematic practices to enable children of all ages and gender to participate in a variety of forums where they can address relevant authorities, including government, at school, local, regional and national level e.g. schools councils, child/youth councils, children/youth parliaments, children/youth forums. As of 2020 there are 8 youth organisations. ¹⁷¹ Youth Union of Turkmenistan, with support of UNFPA and Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan, piloted the Leadership Academy and Innovative Laboratory as a platform for a broad participation of young people and children in decision-making process. In partnership with the Institute of State Law and Democracy UNICEF provided technical support for the development of 5th and 6th National Report to the CRC, which was submitted by the Government in October 2020. For the first time, views and ideas for the CRC report were collected from 150 children from all regions of Turkmenistan online and provided insights on further improvements of child rights protection and realization in Turkmenistan. ¹⁷²
8 Child-targeted feedback mechanisms on local services are in place		Children do not have opportunities (e.g. evaluation forms or surveys that are easily accessible to and adapted to children of different ages and backgrounds) to offer feedback on local public services including education and schools,

¹⁶⁹ To be child-friendly, a complaints procedure must include the following elements: It is safe and accessible; Children receive information and assistance to enable them to lodge and pursue a complaint; Information is made available in age and disability appropriate formats including leaflets, brochures, posters for schools, and dedicated websites and disseminated in locations where children are able to find them; Follow up, referral and response mechanisms are well-established and effective and can demonstrate that changes are implemented in response to legitimate complaints; Feedback to such complaints is communicated directly to children within a reasonable period in a manner that is adapted to their age and understanding. Source: Council of Europe (2016), CHILD PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT TOOL

¹⁷⁰ UNICEF (2019) links child participation to a process of power transfer from adults to children, which transforms children from passive recipients to active, informed agents capable of influencing decisions that affect their lives.

¹⁷¹ COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (2020), Consideration of reports submitted by states parties under article 44 of the convention on the rights of the child; The combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of states parties, Annex 2

¹⁷² UNICEF Annual report 2020


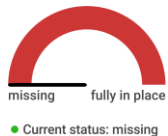
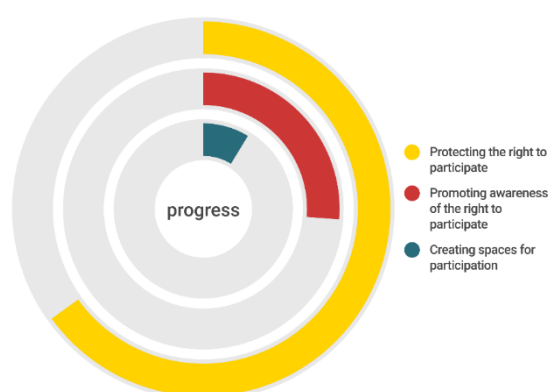
	 missing fully in place ● Current status: missing	alternative care (e.g. children's homes), child protection services, Family support and pre-school services. These services are not required to offer such opportunities.
9 Children are supported to participate in the monitoring of the UNCRC (including in CRC shadow reporting) and relevant Council of Europe instruments and conventions	 missing fully in place ● Current status: missing	Ideally, children and their representative organisations should be supported with resources to participate in the monitoring of the implementation of children's rights instruments. This should include opportunities for children to participate in shadow-reporting, or to develop their own report. In Turkmenistan no arrangements are in place to support children's participation in monitoring the implementation of children's rights instruments

Figure 28 Progress in ensuring child participation across child-related sectors



To sum up the findings on each of the above aspects of child participation below is an overall visualisation of the extent to which child participation is ensured in policy-making and policy-implementation as well as how much child-related systems are ready to ensure child participation. See Figure 28. It reveals that Turkmenistan has put most effort towards the legal protection of the child's right to participate and least progress is identified in creating space for actual participation. Any such progress is not necessarily attributable to the NAP, as some of the identified practices towards child participation did not occur as a result or at the time of the NAP.

Participation cannot be a stand-alone thematic area, it is a

cross-cutting approach to making policies and delivering services not only to children, but also adults. Participation is a democratic value so child participation is not possible where the participation of all citizens in general are not sought and considered at every level of human services provision. Across the other areas of the NAP, the interventions targeting improvement of service quality did not specify for addressing participation as a particular aspect of quality.

Media

Media has a role to play in informing children (but also adults i.e. parents and professionals) on why participation is important and how it is exercised. Although participation is easy to understand at first glance, its unpacking into practice varies a lot across different cultures, gender, generation gaps, etc. This is where media can be quite helpful. The NAP under this goal makes arrangements for provision of age-appropriate information through various media sources. The evaluation did not find extensive reports on how the forms for participation were messaged to different audiences of children (e.g. age group targeting or gender targeting). It did find however, that a radio series was developed to explain the main aspects of CRC in a child-appropriate language. This series is currently undergoing preparation for TV broadcasting. Until the end of the NAP and in the next planning cycle the potential of technological devices to promote children's participation may also be considered. This is especially relevant in the context of the growing use of internet and internet users. The number of users of Internet mobile and fixed networks today count more than 2,5 million subscribers. As at June 1, 2020, the number of subscribers of mobile communication makes more than 5,9 million people with a wide range of access to 3G and 4G networks.¹⁷³ Recent studies¹⁷⁴ find that the digital environment can mobilise different levels and types of civic participation and e-participation.

In resume, in Turkmenistan the systems oriented to the child are at the stage of laying the foundations of an understanding of what child participation is. More effort and time is required to operationalise such understanding into a sustainable model and a policy across all sectors related to children. New ideas such as this can be widely recognized in follow up policies but when not truly understood they hold potential

¹⁷³ COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (2020), The combined fifth and sixth Periodic Reports of States Parties

¹⁷⁴ Hart, 1992; White, 1996; Trilla & Novella, 2001; Tambouris et al., 2007; Guilló & Mancebo-Aracil, 2017; Unesco, 2019

risks of manipulation and tokenism. *Tokenism* is defined as an instance in which children are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions.¹⁷⁵

In considering further planning of improving opportunities and capacities for participation, it is also useful to consider child participation in terms of levels of participation.¹⁷⁶ (See Annex 11: Levels of participation)

6.2.2. Overall NAP progress and contribution to SDGs

Overall in effectiveness, the evaluator has reviewed a total of 82 indicators under the priorities within the six goals in the NAP. See Figure 29.

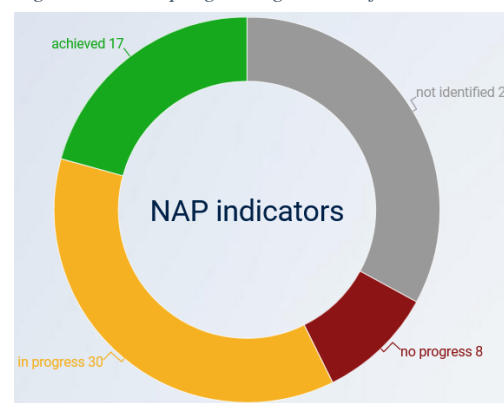
Within the reviewed period the NAP has already achieved or overachieved on 17 indicators prior to its ending.

Work is underway on 30 indicators with various extents of likelihood to be achieved by the end of the NAP.

On 8 of the indicators there is a need of acceleration because progress is not in place.

On 27 indicators data needs to be further strengthened or completed in order to indicate progress accurately.

Figure 29 NAP progress against N of indicators



In terms of SDGs it can be concluded that NAP has contributed to most SDGs related to children. Below is an overview of NAP contribution to child-related SDGs that are:




SDG	Contributing NAP goal	Contribution of NAP to SDGs
1 NO POVERTY 	End poverty in all its forms everywhere. Goal 4: 4.1. Improved quality of life 4.2. Social protection	↑ Proportion of employed population below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 (PPP) per day (the working poor) (15+): decrease from 0.8 (2016) to 0.5 (2021) ¹⁷⁷ ↑ Current introduction of community-based social services in support of the most vulnerable and building the system capacity and workforce
2 ZERO HUNGER 	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Goal 2: 2.4. Nutrition	↑ Stunting reduced by 63% i.e. from 19% (2018) to 7% (2020) ↑ Wasting reduced from 4.2 (2016) to 4.1 (2019) ↑ Overweight reduced from 5.9 (2016) 3.1 (2019)
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Goal 2: 2.1. Children's health 2.2. Maternal health 2.3. HIV/AIDS, and Reproductive health	↑ Decreased under-five mortality by 1.02% (by 2020) ↓ Increased neonatal mortality rate by 0.81% (by 2020) ↑ Maternal mortality rate reduced from 4.6 (2018) to 2.4 (2020) ↑ 0 cases of HIV reported
4 QUALITY EDUCATION 	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 3: 3.1. Education 3.2. Development of young children Goal 2:2.5. Water and sanitation	● in grades 2/3 minimum proficiency is achieved by 71.3% (reading) and 53.2% (mathematics) ¹⁷⁸ ↑ Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI) – from 90.5 in 2016 to 95.3 in 2019 ↑ 100% of schools have access to WASH
5 GENDER EQUALITY 	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls Goal 5: 5.1. Prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse	↑ There are two providers of services to violence victims. Social service for prevention of domestic violence against women piloted within JP (potentially covering children, as domestic violence

¹⁷⁵ (1992). Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship, Innocenti Essay no. 4, Source: <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/100-childrens-participation-from-tokenism-to-citizenship.html>

¹⁷⁶ Hart, Roger. (2008). Stepping back from "The ladder": Reflections on a model of participatory work with children.

¹⁷⁷ ILO

¹⁷⁸ In the absence of previous data on this indicator, it is difficult to gauge whether or not there is progress

			response is linked with care for the female victim's child). Teachers trained on gender-specific topics
	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	Goal 2: <i>2.5. Water and sanitation</i>	↑ Progress for the last ten years i.e. from 82% of the population having access to clean and safe water in 2010 to 95% in 2020. ¹⁷⁹ Regional disparities have also been reduced.
	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.	Goal 5: <i>5.3. Child labour</i>	↑ Employees are forbidden ¹⁸⁰ to use child labour in harmful and hazardous conditions. Cases of employed children is decreased to nullity.
	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	Goal 5: <i>5.1. Prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse</i>	↑ Functional assessment of the child protection system. Review on legislative and normative frameworks for children in contact with the law undertaken in 2020 by GoT in partnership with UNICEF. Actionable recommendations available. Regulation on child justice in process of strengthening. ¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, Key INDICATORS For ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, August 2021, Source: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/720461/ki2021.pdf>

¹⁸⁰ the Law of Turkmenistan "On guarantees of the right of youth for the right to work", adopted in 2005

¹⁸¹ Turkmenistan shows commitment to make existing justice system more child-specific e.g. provision of specific rules for children in conflict with the law, including a distinct chapter on children in the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedural Code; separate norms for children in the Criminal Executive Code and the Code of Administrative Offences; and Resolution of the Plenum of the Supreme Court No. 7 of 2020 entirely devoted to children in conflict with the law. This is complemented by child-specific orders of further relevant authorities, and most recently by a new law on social services (2021). Source: Child Frontiers, 2021, Review and Analysis of legislative and normative frameworks concerning children in contact with the law

Box 2: Preliminary conclusions: Effectiveness

- **EFFECTIVENESS 1:** There has been considerable progress in establishing an enabling environment for realising children's rights in Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan has built on previous effort for ensuring an environment for realization of human rights and child's rights in the country in the area of human rights protection, gender equality, protection of women's, children's and right of people with disabilities policy, implementation of international conventions in the area of human rights protection. Establishing permanent interagency body ensuring that children's rights are implemented in every sector related to children has not yet been achieved. Significant progress was made in terms of data collection, yet there are still gaps in terms of data collection coverage and data accessibility. A significant step in ensuring independent guarding of children's rights is the establishment of the Ombudsman currently undergoing GANHRI accreditation.
- **EFFECTIVENESS 2:** Turkmenistan made some progress in improving children's health and contributing to the targets on children's health. High immunisation rates (achieved with UNICEF support), access to clean water, reduction of malnutrition – all of this contribute to better chances of life for a children. Regardless of the achieved progress, more efforts are required to reduce mortality rates, as they remained relatively unchanged for a number of years now. There is significant progress in reducing stunting, with the target overachieved. NAP is underachieving on reduction of anaemia prevalence as levels of anaemia among children 6-59 and women in reproductive age are increasing. Turkmenistan has made good progress in ensuring access to clean and affordable water across the country and ranks best among neighbouring countries. There are indications that access to quality healthcare may be limited for some groups of children e.g. children in disabilities and children in remote places.
- **EFFECTIVENESS 3:** There is progress towards schooling becoming more child-friendly within the period of NAP implementation, mostly in the area of early education for children. These efforts have produced a notable increase of the children covered by pre-school and pre-primary formats but coverage is still insufficient i.e. 14% in 2019. The country has started an irreversible process of demonstrating commitment to making schools more inclusive. However, there is a conducive environment for increasing placement of children with special educational needs in boarding schools, which prevents social inclusion being achieved for children with disabilities. They form the largest share of children placed in institutions and that share is increasing rapidly. Medical model in planning for the child is still predominant. The learning content in schools in Turkmenistan are gradually modernizing towards including topics beyond main subjects knowledge but also competences in the area of health and gender. Turkmenistan has achieved significant progress in staff investment to support this development.
- **EFFECTIVENESS 4:** There is no conclusive evidence that NAP interventions have contributed to better employment rates and living standards of families. For the most vulnerable children and their families support is still insufficient for all parents, in particular single parents or parents with disabilities. Disability seems to be a great factor on the family income as well as on the level of social inclusion that can be ensured for the child (i.e. living with its family and visiting a mainstream school). The most significant change during the NAP implementation has been the introduction of the modern concept of social services in the community and introducing the profession of social worker. The coverage of the newly developed and piloted social services is still low i.e. 0.07% of the children.
- **EFFECTIVENESS 5:** Turkmenistan has made progress mostly in terms of creating a more enabling environment for family-support programmes. Only 0.25% of Turkmenistan child population lives in residential institutions but family separations increase. That means that gaps are wider for those families who face difficulties in taking good care of their children and there is a risk of children being separated. Main factors are: Underdeveloped network of family-support services families to address difficult life situations, lack of reintegration services, and underdeveloped inclusive education combined with the lack of services for disabled children. The concept of coordination for effective governance of child protection and child justice is present but requires coordination mechanism for oversight of children's rights to be operationalised and capacity built.
- **EFFECTIVENESS 6:** Turkmenistan has put most effort towards the legal protection of the child's right to participate and least progress in creating space for actual participation. The systems oriented to the child are at the stage of developing an understanding of what child participation is. More effort is required to operationalise such understanding into a sustainable model and a policy across all sectors related to children.

6.3. Sustainability

This section looks at the extent to which the most significant achievements are likely to sustain after the current NAP timeframe. The description ends with preliminary conclusions. The section presents an overview of the general assessment on sustainability in the following areas:

- Sustainability in terms of guarding child's rights
- Sustainability of child rights monitoring systems
- Universal inclusive services for young children
- Child protection services in the community

In terms of overall sustainability, the evaluator has made the judgments of the main achievements identified under the Effectiveness section. Cost effectiveness and likelihood of investment of financial resources is an important part of analysing sustainability. It has to be noted that the ToR asked for efficiency to be excluded from this evaluation due to unavailability of financial data on government spending. Therefore, the following analysis on sustainability is limited in terms of judging the likelihood of the achievements to be sustained in time based on available resources and financial spending plans. (See Table 13):

Table 4 Assessment of sustainability

Sustainability area	Level of sustainability	Justification
<i>Guarding child's rights</i>	HIGH	Human rights legislation has been upgraded. Ombudsman establishment stipulated by law and currently under GANHRI accreditation for compliance with the Paris principle. To maintain the high potential of this component and extend the country's capacity of guarding child's rights means that the envisaged coordination mechanism for oversight of children's rights be functionally operationalised (either by establishing a permanent body or reforming existing child protection bodies by empowering them and increasing their capacity on guarding child's rights).
<i>Child rights monitoring system</i>	MODERATE	Turkmenistan shows high level of commitment to SDGs in all sectors covered by NAP. UNICEF has contributed significantly through raising the country's capacity to collect data on children. The culture to develop policies and services based on strong detailed specific and measurable results frameworks according to the principles of strategic planning is not yet fully in place.
<i>Universal inclusive services for young children</i>	MODERATE	Universal inclusive services for young children are in place but their scaling up and full coverage depends on much needed human resources investment and upgrading the capacity of two key systems: education and healthcare.
<i>Child protection services in the community (including child justice)</i>	HIGH	Methodological documents package are in place and commitment is high on part of UNICEF, the GoT and other UN agencies to ensure conducive legislative environment for wide introduction of modern social services in support to children and families in the community, including child justice. However, scaling up of pilot services in child protection and access to child justice needs to be accelerated in order to ensure service continuity beyond the JP budget. As of 2022 the state budget fully funds the first 45 trained social workers. Efforts are put by all partners to ensure fiscal room for funding social workers covering the whole country. Out of all 12 specialised community-based services highest replicability potential exists for the service Personal assistance for people with disabilities, as it can be easily replicated by the territorial social centres and extended to children and families.

		<p>The GoT has shown a commitment to updating its legislative and regulatory regimes in favour of children's rights, including in the area of child protection and child justice. New laws on the treatment of victims of crime and defining the social work function show important momentum in this area. To remain on this promising course of action it requires the conceptualization of a robust child justice system capable of realizing the full rights for <i>all</i> children who come into contact with the justice system, whether as victims, witnesses, accused of a crime, or in a civil or administrative proceeding. To maintain the sustainability potential of this component, some additional efforts should be put towards: stronger interagency coordination in the area of child justice, training and specialisation of system professionals, continuing the work to introduce social work profession and increasing the number of social workers, ensuring training and ongoing professional development on case management protocols, including individual assessment and planning for every child and family in need of support; introducing mandatory reporting of suspected child maltreatment and record of follow up response; continuing the reform in child justice; ensure a continuum of prevention and response services¹⁸²</p>
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Guarding child's rights

The establishment of the Ombudsman as an independent guardian of child's rights, although as part of a general human rights watch, is a major achievement of Turkmenistan. This achievement is judged as highly sustainable since its functioning was legally stipulated (Law of Turkmenistan "On the Ombudsperson") in 2017. UNICEF contribution to building the capacity of the Ombudsman office in child's rights monitoring has been key in this process. Further promotion of child-friendly complaint mechanisms would further strengthen the position of the Ombudsman as a voice for children's rights.¹⁸³ There are indications from the field¹⁸⁴ Ombudsman office that resources are sufficiently available for this establishment to represent the voice of some of the most vulnerable groups of children i.e. the Ombudsman has performed visits to children's detention places as well as has acted on complaints of children with disabilities with relation to their limited access to education. The voice of children would be stronger in Turkmenistan if a permanent interagency body specifically on children's rights. This is not likely to occur within the end of this NAP.

Child rights monitoring system

Policies for children are possible and stronger when there is solid and unbiased data on children. Much has been achieved by NAP and its partners in terms of ensuring more data availability. UNICEF has contributed significantly through raising the country's capacity to collect data on children. Turkmenistan demonstrates achievements by doing the first ever voluntary national review, and collect data on national child-related indicators with technical support of UNICEF. These achievements are likely to sustain as the systems are becoming more aware that policy-making is not possible without solid data indicating the processes which have to be steered by policy-makers. Turkmenistan shows high level of commitment to SDGs in all sectors covered by NAP. The sustainability potential of the so far established child's rights monitoring components may increase when SDG data reporting coverage becomes even wider (on more indicators) and the process of digitalizing of national statistical data advances to allow better public access to information. Most importantly, child's rights monitoring will be ensured highest level of sustainability when there is a culture of using data for decision-making by introducing strong monitoring and evaluation results-frameworks on the level of policy, national strategy, programme and service

¹⁸² For detailed guidance towards addressing gaps please refer to the analysis on Availability of child protection interventions across the three levels of prevention (in the Annex) as well as the specific recommendations in Elayn M. Sammon, Functional Assessment of the Child Protection System in Turkmenistan, 2021 as well as Child Frontiers, 2021, Review and Analysis of legislative and normative frameworks concerning children in contact with the law

¹⁸³ The Annual Work Plan for 2022 signed between the Office of the Ombudsman and UNICEF in Turkmenistan, an event is planned on "Technical support for studying the practice of an individual Deputy Ombudsman for Children's Rights or the relevant department in foreign countries and promoting the capacity building of the Ombudsman Office in observing the best interests of the child ". (Source: Office of Ombudsman, Turkmenistan)

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Ombudsman Office

provision to allow for measuring progress for children and their families. Building such management culture goes beyond the timeframe of the NAP as it requires more efforts and investment in financial and human resources, and systems' capacities but it would guarantee that data collection for children in a scientifically robust manner will be sustained as a valuable practice.

Universal inclusive services for young children

The main achievements of the NAP have been in terms of early child development services. Their sustainability aspects have been analysed in more details in a separate evaluation report¹⁸⁵. However, for completeness of this analysis it has to be noted that the likelihood of sustaining ECD interventions depends on a number of factors. On policy level there is a high level of ownership and commitment. ECD is one of the key programme priorities in UNICEF Country Programme Document 2021-2025 and this programme will be implemented in partnership with the Turkmen state. On the other hand, full coverage and scaling up of ECD services is not realistically expected to happen within the timeframe of this NAP. Scaling up requires increased investments to go to scale particularly in terms of human resources capacity development across all sectors, cross-sectoral coordination, data and monitoring systems, and targeted support to the most vulnerable children, families and communities.¹⁸⁶

Partnership is a key enabler: facilitating the mechanisms of delegating services by the state to non-state providers (e.g. public associations) i.e. social contracting would strongly push the process and ensure scaling up and sustaining the achievements so far. This requires ensuring effective social contracting legislation.

Child protection and justice for children

The newly piloted community-based support models within the JP and coordinated by UNICEF considerably extend the access to services for children and their families as part of a wider population in need. COVID-19 pandemic restrictions affected the implementation timing of the programme (delay) but a non-financial extension of the JP in 2022 will enable to complete the programme within the NAP timeframe. The delay, on the other hand, gave time for the strengthening the advocacy for the programme and to ensure higher commitment to the JP on part of the government hence higher sustainability potential.

General community-based support is provided by 45 trained social workers on etrap level in 20 etraps i.e. little less than 50% of the country covering adults and children. As of beginning of 2022 all 45 social workers are funded entirely by the state budget, which ensures high level of sustainability of this component of the JP. UNICEF is committed to advocate for a full scale up in 2023, which is beyond the timeframe of the current NAP but is very likely to be addressed by the next NAP. This is an important factor in making etrap social workers the statutory social workers following a case management approach, thus ensuring that people in need receive proper assessment of their needs and get customised support based on their needs. The JP is highly committed to support the GoT that by May (when the budgeting for 2023 begins) to create fiscal space for increasing the number of social workers in all etraps i.e. covering all the country. The JP is highly committed to establishing degree courses in social work in universities as a way of increasing the workforce. There are indications that this is likely to be completed within the timeframe of the NAP i.e. curriculum and training syllabus are being developed currently, teachers are being trained and the first intake in universities is planned to be opened in the spring of 2022 so that first students can start as early as 2022/2023 academic year. This process is strongly supported by the Ministry of Education.

The specialised social service models are equipped with a full packages of documents such as guidelines, procedures, standards, etc. to enable sustaining the service quality over time. UNICEF and together with the other UN sister agencies put strong effort towards amending the existing Code of Turkmenistan on the Social Protection of the Population and thus introduce a modern concept of social service and social worker as a profession, as well as putting together a new Law on Social services. Bylaws are currently developed and are likely to be in place by the end of the current NAP. Out of all 12 specialised

¹⁸⁵ Pluriconsult (2020), Evaluation Of The Government Of Turkmenistan's Policy On Early Childhood Development (2012-2019) And UNICEF's Contribution To Its Design, Implementation And Monitoring

¹⁸⁶ UNICEF Turkmenistan Country Programme Document 2020-2025

community-based services¹⁸⁷ highest replicability potential exists for the service Personal assistance for people with disabilities, as it can be easily replicated by the territorial social centres and extended to children and families. There is political will as well as commitment by UN agencies to technically support the process.

The GoT has shown a commitment to updating its legislative and regulatory regimes in favour of children's rights, including in the area of child protection and child justice. New laws on the treatment of victims of crime and defining the social work function show important momentum in this area. To remain on this promising course of action it requires the conceptualization of a robust child justice system capable of realizing the full rights for *all* children who come into contact with the justice system, whether as victims, witnesses, accused of a crime, or in a civil or administrative proceeding.

Supporting the GoT towards system level changes in terms of child protection remain high on UNICEF agenda as the child protection component is introduced in the new Country Programme Document for the next 5 years. Partnership is a key enabler: facilitating the mechanisms of delegating services by the state to non-state providers (e.g. public associations) i.e. social contracting would strongly push the process and ensure scaling up and sustaining the achievements so far. This requires ensuring effective social contracting legislation.

¹⁸⁷ Existing services in the form of social services were regulated only by a separate section of the Code of Turkmenistan on social protection of the population, and a special Law "On Social Services" was adopted on December 18, 2021.



Box 3: Preliminary conclusions: Sustainability

- **SUSTAINABILITY 1:** The NAP ensured high level of sustainability of child's rights mechanisms specifically in terms of establishing the Ombudsman's office. Further promotion of child-friendly complaint mechanisms would further strengthen the position of the Ombudsman as a voice for children's rights. To extend the country's capacity of guarding child's rights the envisaged coordination mechanism for oversight of children's rights should be operationalised (either by establishing a permanent body or reforming existing child protection bodies by empowering them and increasing their capacity on guarding child's rights).
- **SUSTAINABILITY 2:** Data collection for children is strengthened in a sustainable way with UNICEF and UN sister agencies. Child's rights monitoring will be ensured higher level of sustainability when there is a culture of using data for decision-making by introducing strong monitoring and evaluation results-frameworks allow for measuring progress for children and their families on the level of policy and in accordance to the principles of strategic planning.
- **SUSTAINABILITY 3:** Universal inclusive services for young children are in place but their scaling up and full coverage depends on much needed human resources investment and upgrading the capacity of two key systems: education and healthcare.
- **SUSTAINABILITY 4:** There is a conducive environment for sustaining the achievements in upgrading the child protection system. General and specialised community-based support have a good replicable potential and indications are for high level of sustainability. The sustainability potential can be increased by additional efforts towards: continuing the efforts to introduce social work profession, increasing the number of social workers, ensuring training and ongoing professional development on case management protocols, including individual assessment and planning for every child and family in need of support; introducing mandatory reporting of suspected child maltreatment and record of follow up response; continuing the reform in child justice; ensure a continuum of prevention and response services.
- **SUSTAINABILITY 5:** The GoT has shown a commitment to updating its legislative and regulatory regimes in favour of children's rights, including child protection and child justice. New laws on the treatment of victims of crime and defining the social work function show important momentum in this area. To maintain the sustainability potential it requires some additional efforts should be put towards: stronger interagency coordination in the area of child justice, training and specialisation of system professionals, continuing the work to introduce social work profession and increasing the number of social workers, ensuring training and ongoing professional development on case management protocols (including individual assessment and planning for every child); introducing mandatory reporting of suspected child maltreatment and record of follow up response; continuing the reform in child justice; ensure a continuum of prevention and response services

7. General conclusions and lessons learned

The evaluators have identified the following conclusions per evaluation area, based on the evidence described in each section on the findings.

Relevance:

In terms of context, the NAP is generally aligned to the strategic priorities of child-rights' national strategies as well as strategic priorities identified in UN recommendations. The NAP is the first national policy document putting together a comprehensive plan towards advancing children's rights in Turkmenistan. In terms of relevance of the logical framework, there is moderate alignment between the needs addressed by the NAP and identified needs. The internal causal links between goals, objectives and interventions are implicit and the results framework is insufficiently designed to capture outcomes for children. To better align further efforts with the needs of the children, follow up planning activities may further consider gaps identified by evidence-based analysis, particularly on vulnerable groups of children e.g. children with disabilities, children separated from their families, children in rural areas, children victims of violence. Putting such planning efforts in the mode of detailed and widely consulted theory of change will help next NAP better gauge the interventions towards specific needs and gaps.



Effectiveness:

There has been considerable progress in establishing an enabling environment for realising children's rights in Turkmenistan as well as independent guarding of children's rights. However, establishing permanent interagency body ensuring that children's rights are implemented in every sector related to children has not yet been achieved. Significant progress was made in terms of data collection, yet there are still gaps in terms of data collection coverage and data accessibility. Turkmenistan has made some progress in improving children's health and most of the targets on NAP Goal related to Health were achieved. High immunisation rates, access to clean water, reduction of stunting and wasting indicating on a well-functioning mechanism for realisation of health related Targets. Regardless of the efforts made, mortality rates remained at the same level for some time now and required deeper attention. There are indications that access to quality healthcare may be limited for some groups of children e.g. children in disabilities and children in remote places. There is progress towards schooling becoming more child-friendly, mostly in the area of early education for children. However, there is a conducive environment for increasing placement of children with special educational needs in boarding schools, which prevents social inclusion being achieved for children with disabilities. Disability seems to be a great factor on the family income as well as on the level of social inclusion that can be ensured for the child. A significant change has been the introduction of the concept of social work and community-based services for families most in need. Family separations are on the increase and that means that gaps are wider for those families who face difficulties in taking good care of their children and there is a risk of children being separated. Main factors are: Underdeveloped network of family-support services families to address difficult life situations, lack of reintegration services, and underdeveloped inclusive education combined with the lack of services for disabled children. Turkmenistan has made progress mostly in terms of creating a more enabling environment for family-support programmes. The capacity of the child protection system and children's access to justice could be improved by operationalising the envisaged coordination mechanism for oversight of children's rights; scaling up existing pilot community-based support services for children victims of violence and children in contact with the law, continuing the efforts to introduce social work profession and increasing the number of social workers, ensuring training and ongoing professional development on case management protocols, including individual assessment and planning for every child and family in need of support.

Sustainability

The NAP ensured high level of data collection for children and of child's rights mechanisms specifically in terms of establishing the Ombudsman's office. Further promotion of child-friendly complaint mechanisms would further strengthen the position of the Ombudsman as a voice for children's rights. Child's rights monitoring can sustain if a culture is further fostered of using data for decision-making by introducing strong monitoring and evaluation results-frameworks allow for measuring progress for children in accordance to the principles of strategic planning. There is a conducive environment for sustaining the achievements in upgrading the child protection system. Universal inclusive services for young children are in place but their scaling up and full coverage depends on much needed human resources investment and upgrading the capacity of two key systems: education and healthcare, as well as encouraging social contracting. To increase the sustainability potential of the progress on children victims of violence and child justice, efforts need to continue towards: stronger interagency coordination, introduce social work profession and increasing the number of social workers, ensuring training and ongoing professional development on case management protocols, including individual assessment and planning for every child and family in need of support; introducing mandatory reporting of suspected child maltreatment and record of follow up response; ensure a continuum of prevention and response services.

Lessons learned

It is vital to support child-rights legislation along with developing other enabling factors. Legislation alone is not a guarantee that these rights will be automatically exercised without also addressing social norms and professional norms, capacity building of the systems around the child (healthcare, education, child protection and justice). The GoT and its partners are in good timing to use the momentum and



accelerate the investment on systems and professional workforce. Looking ahead, further improvement of legislation needs to be combined with efforts to strengthen the capacity of systems enforcing that legislation e.g. upgrading management competences, pre-service and in-service training and supervision of staff as well as continuous monitoring of the results for children and families accordingly.

High quality data is essential for priority setting, monitoring and achieving results. Continuous monitoring of children's rights across all areas ensures timely identification and development of interventions addressing the most urgent bottlenecks. For instance, while child mortality or anaemia prevalence are decreasing, this is not happening at the speed targeted by the NAP. With little data behind what the root causes are, next planning efforts would be insufficiently gauged to produce good results for children.

Children's needs are complex needs and cannot be addressed by each sector separately or on its own. As in early child development, where all sectors come together to comprehensively meet the needs of a child, integrated approach should be fostered when designing new services and, therefore, capacities of all child-relevant systems need to be addressed simultaneously: education, health, child protection and justice. For example, improving the access to quality education for children with special needs (which is the prerogative of the MoE) has to be considered in conjunction with the child's right to live in its family. This calls for common planning of responses on behalf of the educational authorities, the authorities responsible for socially supporting families who place their children in institutions as well as providers of health and rehabilitation services for children with special needs delivered close in the community of those children and their families. In designing services for children and their families, integrated nature should be considered in order to make those services match the complex needs of every child.

Importance of focusing on a limited number of priorities. Achieving strategic and long lasting impact is challenging if NAP pursues multiple and too broad goals, and is spread too thin. It is possible to address the bottlenecks systemically and holistically only when a limited number of strategic priority areas are pursued by NAP and all efforts are focused on them within the limited timeframe of the NAP. Long-term vision and one strategic goal need to guide and steer a comprehensive strategy such as the NAP.

Strong partnerships and collaboration are essential to achieving strategic results. In times of transition, the nature of development challenges faced by Turkmenistan require extensive collaboration with various partners, collective planning, implementation and monitoring. Such multi-partners systematic interventions required merging organizational capacity, knowledge and experience. Follow-up response to the needs of the most vulnerable children and their families need to continue the practice of cross-agency planning thus ensuring that not one institution is solely responsible for the complex needs of children and families.

Public associations can be an indispensable partner to the GoT to take over the provision of services to children and families. This is because they are closer to the communities, can quickly adopt innovative approaches to serving children and families and are most flexible in terms of organisational capacity as opposed to government systems and structures. Social contracting legislation may give boost to national-wide service providers as currently they largely depend on insecure own funding.

Child participation is a clear principle to understand, yet, very difficult to operationalise in the practice of child-relevant systems. Protecting the right of children to participate through legal arrangements is not the same as creating space for practical implementation. It is only through systemic changes promoting child participation and training of professionals that participation can be applied as a cross-cutting principle of quality care. Further planning may consider integrating the principle of participation across various levels and areas of service planning. For instance, decision-makers should particularly operationalise how to ensure participation of children (but also parents, professionals and other stakeholders) across various child-related areas e.g. when developing community-based social services, making schools more child-friendly, improving access to specialised healthcare for children with disabilities, etc.

8. Recommendations

This section presents a series of recommendations and associated actions drawn from the evaluation findings and conclusions. The description relates the actions to the findings/preliminary conclusions and at the same time each one is tagged for in terms of the priority status.¹⁸⁸ See Table 14

The evaluator evidenced impressive commitment of both governmental agencies, UNICEF CO staff and other partners, who showed remarkable dedication in extremely difficult realities of global and national challenges due to pandemic constraints. The recommendations below were developed in consultations with UNICEF staff from all sections related to child protection, education, justice for children, child's rights monitoring and health and nutrition, as well as government officials in a series of two presentation events with discussions. Furthermore, the evaluator assisted the process of developing a management response where recommendations and associated actions were also discussed. In developing the recommendations, the evaluator reflected the perspective of duty-bearers but it was also aligned with feedback and recommendations received by children and parents during data collection stage. The next NAP should leverage the role of the government and partners, and make it more relevant and effective, thanks to clear priorities setting, a realistic plan, better formulated results and indicators, a close involvement and participation of multiple partners and national counterparts, a regular monitoring, and the flexibility to accommodate possible emerging issues. The NAP should reflect a clearer focus and strategic intent, with a limited number of expected results.

Table 5 Recommendations with priority status

1	Area of recommendation	Priority status
	<p>Next NAP needs to keep its systemic approach to children's rights. At the same time, a vision of change, one overarching strategic goal of the NAP and a detailed Theory of change should be developed by GoT assisted by UNICEF. It is recommended that the GoT elaborate a coherent high quality result-framework with SMART objectives. All objectives need to be specified and formulated with outcomes for children. It is strongly recommended that the GoT develops measurable and valid indicators on each level of the result-framework of the next NAP i.e. common strategic aim, goals, objectives, outcomes and impact for children and families, and not just activities and interventions. The GoT is advised to invest time and funds into developing baseline data and monitoring it during the implementation of the NAP. Clear baselines and well-articulated target indicators are particularly important to help decision makers and government partners to manage the NAP strategically, knowing where they are, and what objectives they want to reach. ToCs development should become a truly analytical and participatory exercise engaging multiple stakeholders.</p> <p>UNICEF can provide capacity building and technical support to the GoT in elaborating ToC and defining results framework.</p> <p>UNICEF core role: Policy dialogue and advice</p>	short-term
2	<p>The voice of children would be stronger in Turkmenistan if GoT establishes a permanent interagency body specifically on children's rights. This could be either established as a separate body or a specialised structure within existing human rights bodies. This would require the efforts of GoT and legislative bodies in Turkmenistan i.e. Parliament.</p> <p>UNICEF is in a position to assist this process by bringing best international practices in cross-sector coordination mechanisms.</p> <p>UNICEF core role: <i>Policy dialogue and advice</i> and <i>Horizontal cooperation beyond-borders</i></p>	Medium-term
3	<p>GoT needs to address healthcare for children in terms of access (for children in remote locations, children with disabilities) and in terms of quality in order to reduce child mortality and socially significant disease such as caused by anaemia, HIV/AIDS and malnutrition. Gaps in nutrition require detailed investigation and analysis.</p> <p>UNICEF is in a position to assist the GoT in research and identifying gaps.</p> <p>UNICEF core role: <i>Knowledge generation and child's rights monitoring</i></p>	Medium-term

¹⁸⁸ Priority status: Immediate (1-3 months), Short-to-medium term (3-6 months), Medium to Long term (6-12 months)

4	<p>Next NAP needs to further address system changes that enable children with disabilities have better access to specialised healthcare and rehabilitation services close to their community. This requires that the GoT designs interventions in a way that meet the needs of both young children and children at school age. Early childhood development services need to be further developed and scaled up by the GoT. Rehabilitation services for children with disabilities at school age, too, need to be designed by MLSP and MHMI in a way that meet their educational needs to enable their participation in mainstream school and prevent their placement in a boarding school away from their families. Any such services need to be based on the concept of case management, which is currently starting to be introduced in the country.</p> <p>UNICEF can raise provide support through modelling and piloting services UNICEF core role: <i>Modelling and testing innovations</i></p>	Medium to long-term
5	<p>In the context of child care reform in Turkmenistan, where most children separated from their families live in educational institutions, more focus should be placed by the GoT on conducting an analysis of the needs of families whose children are placed in boarding schools. Next NAP should place bigger emphasis on inclusive education for all children i.e. mainstreaming inclusiveness in the meaning that any mainstream school should be able to respond to the need of every child, including children with special needs. Social and professional norms require being addressed through campaigning and promotion of children's right to both quality education and remaining in its family. Standards of quality education need to be elaborated, including mechanisms for participation of children as quality principle. Data collection for education indicators should be strengthened and elaborated by the Ministry of Education in a way that covers all aspects of quality education.</p> <p>UNICEF should give more voice to the need of the rights of those children and continue its efforts advocating for inclusive education. UNICEF core role: <i>Advocacy (the independent voice), Knowledge generation and child rights monitoring and Capacity development of government and civil society</i></p>	Short to medium-term
6	<p>The next NAP needs to extend its emerging good practices in child protection into the next period of planning. Building on the models for community-based services for children and families within JP, in the next NAP the GoT needs to address the need to scale these up and in a more strategic perspective, expand them along the whole continuum of needs of children and their families (see Annex 10). The increase of workforce, in number as well as competence level, needs to remain a priority for the GoT. The efforts of the Parliament towards ensuring legislative environment for child protection services (including child justice) need to continue, also in terms of social contracting. Standards of quality need to be elaborated by the MLSP, including mechanisms for participation of children as quality principle. Data collection around child protection indicators should be strengthened.</p> <p>UNICEF needs to further its efforts to assist the GoT in developing functional regulation for child protection service system through conceptualising social work and its key principles i.e. need oriented and quality case management. UNICEF core role: <i>Policy dialogue and advice, Knowledge generation and child rights monitoring and Modelling and testing innovations</i></p>	Short-term
7	<p>Parliament and the GoT should strengthen the child justice legislative environment in a way that ensures that rights of children in contact with the law are protected at all stages. That includes children in conflict with the law, child victims and witnesses of crime, and children in civil proceedings. Specifically, bring the legislative and regulatory framework in line with UNCRC and General Comment 24, and best international practices; shift system orientation from 'correction' to 'resocialization' and ensue that interventions are based on interdisciplinary assessments that respond to the needs of each child, including psychological and emotional needs. Strengthening interagency coordination in the area of child justice. Enhancing prevention (comprehensive juvenile delinquency measures based on assessed risk factors) and response (well-coordinated community-based child support programmes enhanced with professionally trained workforce and developed on data-based pillars)</p> <p>UNICEF is in good position to advise the GoT in conceptualising the possible approaches to reforming child justice in a way that protects the best interest of the child.</p>	Short-term

UNICEF core role: *Policy dialogue and advice, Knowledge generation and child rights monitoring and Modelling and testing innovations*

- | | | |
|----------|---|-------------|
| 8 | Public associations can be an indispensable partner to the GoT to take over the provision of integrated services to children and families to respond to comprehensive needs i.e. education, social support, health and rehabilitation, justice and general developmental activities. It is vital that GoT and Parliament address the need to encourage public associations (including parents groups and grass root organisations) on local level be involved in provision of services through making legislation more enabling and supporting them by establishing funding mechanisms. | Medium-term |
|----------|---|-------------|

UNICEF may assist GoT in exploring and sharing best international practices in community involvement as well as legislative regulations enabling civil organisations get involved in various activities advancing children's' rights in all areas of a child's living.
UNICEF core role: *Convening partnerships and leveraging resources for children and Horizontal cooperation beyond-borders*



ANNEXES

Annex 1 Evaluation matrix

area	Research/evaluation questions as per ToR	Sub question developed by the consultant	Evaluation indicator	Source and data collection methods
RELEVANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is the NAP relevant to the governmental policies and priorities and needs of children in Turkmenistan, particularly of those from vulnerable groups? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which government's policies and partners' priorities has the NAP been aligned to? How? Which social policy reform agendas has the NAP been aligned to? How? 	Number of areas of NAP fully aligned to the governmental child-oriented policies and priorities	<p>Desk review of sector documents; national development plans, policies and reports</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies, Parliament and Ombudsman</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the needs of children and young people and priorities of NAP identified in developing the intervention (appropriate needs assessment?) and has the intervention been properly designed to meet the identified needs and priorities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there a needs assessment on which NAP was based? If yes, did it cover all children and did it take into account the most vulnerable? What was the logic of the interventions, causal link, assumptions, risk identifications 	Needs assessment done prior to NAP and link to the NAP-yes/no	<p>Desk review of sector documents; national development plans, policies and reports</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p> <p>Focus group with beneficiaries</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent the NAP articulated the objectives related to child rights implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there coherence in the internal logic of the NAP e.g. are the objectives and outputs relevant to the needs and the strategic aim of the NAP? Do the objectives and output sufficiently cover the strategic aim? The reconstructed ToC (activities, outputs, outcomes and intended impacts) allows for paying particular attention to the needs of the most vulnerable children 	<p>Availability of ToC or programme logic description</p> <p>Number of vulnerable groups remaining of little or no focus in the NAP implementation logic</p>	<p>Desk review of sector documents; national development plans, policies and reports</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p>
EFFECTIVENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did NAP contribute to the implementation of SDGs? To what extent did NAP contribute to the implementation of child rights, equity and gender equality, aspects? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What available data on national SDG indicators is there to indicate possible contribution of the NAP to the SDGs? What evidence is in place to support the link between the NAP implementation and possible contribution to the SDGs? Are there groups of children or needs that were not identified in the NAP? 	<p>SDG indicators for Turkmenistan</p> <p>Evidence of cross-cutting themes (gender, children's rights, disability and accountability) incorporated in the project design and implementation</p>	<p>Desk review of sector documents; national development plans, policies and reports</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent the NAP goals have been achieved and attained its intended results in general, and by intervention component, geographical area, category of population etc.? What were the achievements in terms of improving well-being of Turkmenistan children, both planned and unplanned? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence is there to demonstrate progress across objectives? How is progress balanced across all regions; all groups of children and families; all children at risk, both boys and girls? What evidence is there that progress was planned and comes out of the NAP implementation? Were there are other actors aspiring to the same or similar objectives? 	<p>Evidence of achievements against proxy indicators along each goal (due to missing targets)</p>	<p>Desk review of sector documents; national development plans, policies and reports</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p> <p>Focus group with beneficiaries</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent were the M&E framework and processes adequate/credible/reliable/accurate to measure outputs, outcomes, and progress? Were the expected results clearly stated and measurable through identifiable indicators? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are objectives equipped with adequate and sufficient output indicators? Is the NAP equipped with output and monitoring indicators separately? Are there target indicators by which progress can be measured? How was data collected and by whom? How was the data collection used to fine-tune implementation in its course? 	<p>frequency of reporting, development and updating of useful databases</p> <p>Instances where monitoring reports/databases for management decision making</p> <p>disaggregated beneficiary data has been collected and used in decision making in the programme- yes/no</p>	<p>Desk review of management reports, monitoring database with line agencies/ministries</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant professionals</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were the causal links, enabling/success factors and constraints/bottlenecks related to the achievement of results? To what extent have the relevant systems been strengthened? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where there are evidence of progress/lack of progress, what were the reasons behind in terms of different levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> system capacity – resources, management, etc. professional capacity – design of services and interventions individuals (professionals but also beneficiaries) - knowledge, skills, social and professional norms 	<p>Changes in the operational context that facilitated/hindered achieving/contribution to project outcomes and goals</p>	<p>Desk review of sector documents; national development plans, policies and reports</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant professionals</p> <p>Focus group with beneficiaries</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How extensive, effective, and efficient is the transfer of intervention approaches to NGOs and government actors? What were the coordination mechanisms, and did they help? Have IPs effectively and jointly identified and addressed gaps in geographic or vulnerable/at risk group coverage? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What child-related interventions were modelled/piloted? By whom? For which groups of children and families? What evidence is there of their effectiveness, efficiency, impact and replicability? 	Involvement of NGOs in NAP planning and implementation – yes/no	<p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the NGO collaboration promoted good working relationships with the government/ local administration to collaborate on community resilience issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any partnerships between NGOs and government/local administration? In what areas? Is there any evidence of how these partnerships impact the systems' capacity? What partnerships are likely to continue and why? 	<p>Partnership agreements between government and NGOs relevant to NAP goal areas – yes/no</p> <p>Stakeholders consider engagement was effective yes/no</p>	<p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the barriers to the approach adopted by UNICEF and its partners in delivering interventions, and how has UNICEF and partners worked to identify and address these barriers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is UNICEF approach to delivering interventions? In what areas? What difficulties were faced at implementation? 	<p>Changes in the operational context that facilitated/hindered achieving/contribution to project outcomes and goals</p> <p>Evidence that these changes were analysed and responded to – management responses, planning documents, new ToCs – available/not available</p>	<p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p> <p>In-depth interviews with local administration</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p>
SUSTAINABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the NAP achievements sustained after the withdrawal of external support? To what extent have the decision-making bodies (government, civil society, development agencies) and implementing partners undertaken the necessary decisions and course of actions to ensure the sustainability of the NAP? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What external support is there in place that is likely to phase out or remain? Which achievements of NAP represent one-off investment vs. continuous investment (financial, know-how, technical assistance, etc.)? 	<p>Strategies, actions and results of sustainability – available/not available</p> <p>Implementing partners state continued support – yes/no</p>	<p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with local administration</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the NAP identify and build on existing national, velayat, local capacities? To what extent do the partners have sufficient resources to keep up the benefits produced by the programme? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What capacity was there in place across child-related systems to improve child welfare? How did NAP specifically contribute to improving those capacities? How sustainable is that improvement? How replicable is that improvement across the remaining systems? 	Number of system components improved by NAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership agreements with NGOs In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies Focus group with beneficiaries In-depth interviews with local administration In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the NAP interventions that are still on-going or just completed, did they include appropriate measures to ensure sustainability of the processes, activities, stakeholders, outputs, outcomes and results after the withdrawal of all forms of support from the external development agency? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which interventions are still on-going or just completed? How significant to the system are they? Of them which are entirely or substantially dependent on external support? 	Number of interventions/achievements likely to continue after NAP expiration (e.g. services established)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies In-depth interviews with local administration In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the interventions supported by UNICEF sustainable and scalable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which interventions were supported by UNICEF? What is the significance of that contribution? Which core roles of UNICEF were applied? What is the capacity of government and local administration for sustaining and scaling up? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of interventions supported by UNICEF (services or programmes) to which there is government's commitment to sustain and scale up Number of SDG covered by NAP, which UNICEF has contribution to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review of UNICEF CP In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies In-depth interviews with local administration In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were/are and will be the enabling factors contributing to sustainability? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are external factors (e.g. global Covid pandemic, political environment or other realities) likely to affect the implementation or readjusting of the NAP? 	<p>Adopted legislation and/or availability of regulation contributing to sustainability and follow up</p> <p>International organisations' commitment to support follow-up developments – yes/no</p> <p>Number of interventions international organisations (e.g. UN agencies) are committed to sustain</p>	<p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with local administration</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are inequities between best-off and most marginalized groups likely to increase, remain stable, or decrease when support is withdrawn? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence of inequities is there? Which groups of children and families are most affected? Are such inequities impacted by future NAP interventions dependent on external support? 	<p>Number of most vulnerable groups included in disaggregated quantitative data</p> <p>Follow-up policies are oriented to most vulnerable groups – yes/no</p> <p>Number of relevant policies oriented to vulnerable groups specifically</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Focus group with beneficiaries</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with local administration</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will new NAP be more widely replicated or adapted? Are [NAP activities] likely to be scaled up? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are external factors (e.g. global Covid pandemic, political environment or other realities) likely to affect the implementation or readjusting of the NAP? What is the capacity of government and local administration for sustaining and scaling up? 	<p>Availability of government policy analysis – yes/no</p> <p>Government views on child-related priorities take into account external factors – yes/no</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with local administration</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has UNICEF support enabled systemic level changes ensuring longer-term sustainability of new services and approaches? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What systemic changes can be observed that could not have happened without UNICEF? How likely is it that these changes endure? 	<p>Government claims that significant changes could not have happened without UNICEF</p>	<p>In-depth interviews with relevant government ministries/agencies</p> <p>In-depth interviews with partners and donors e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, NGOs</p>

Annex 2. List of Key informants

KEY INFORMANTS INTERVIEWS				
№	Institution/Organisation	Position	№ of participants	Date/time ¹⁸⁹
1	UNICEF	CP Specialist and Officer, Social protection Specialist, Child Rights Specialist, Education Specialist, Health Specialist, ECD Specialist, M&E officer	Group interview with 13 UNICEF staff	14.10.2021/11 am
2	Institute of State, Law and Democracy	Programme manager	1	15.10.2021/ 11 am
3	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population	Manager responsible for the respective components on NAP	1	15.10.2021/ 14 am
4	Ministry of Education	Manager responsible for the respective components on NAP	1	18.10.2021/ 11 am
5	Ministry of Health and Medical Industry	Chief paediatrician	1	18.10.2021/ 14 am
6	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Manager responsible for the components on NAP on juvenile institutions	2	19.10.2021/ 11 am
7	Parliament (Mejlis of Turkmenistan)	Representative involved in child-related legislative initiatives	2	19.10.2021/ 14 pm
8	UN Joint Programme	Manager of the Joint Programme and JP team	6	15.10.2021/ 10-12 (Ashgabat time)
9	National Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan (NRCST)	Programme manager	2	20.10.2021/ 11 am
10	NGOs Yenme	Programme manager	1	20.10.2021/ 14 am
11	Y-PEER	Programme manager on Youth activities	1	20.10.2021/ 16 am
12	Residential institution for children	Infant home manager in Ashgabat	2	21.10.2021/ 11 am
13		Infant home manager in Mary	1	
14	Residential institution for children	Balkanabat Children's home - Балканабата	1	21.10.2021/ 14 am
15	Residential institution for children	boarding school No 3manager, Lebap	1	21.10.2021/16 am
16	Teachers	Teachers of primary and secondary level, mixed	Group interview with 10-12 teachers	22.10.2021/14 am
17	Local Centres for Social Protection and etrap social workers	Managers, social workers in big cities At least 50% involvement in direct service provision, 50% managers, randomly selected	Group interview with 10-15 persons	22.10.2021/17 am
18	General Prosecutor's office	Representative who is familiar with the work of UNICEF and has been involved in either planning or implementation of the NAP	1	25.10.2021/11 am
19	Ombudsman office		1	25.10.2021/14 am

¹⁸⁹ Ashgabat time

Annex 3. NAP framework of goals and objective

Goal 1: Ensure the implementation of the CRC and its optional protocols in Turkmenistan with the maximum use of available resources and within the framework of international cooperation	
1.1. Harmonization of legislation with key international agreements and conventions related to promotion and protection of children's rights	
1.2.1. Accession to key international agreements and conventions related to promotion and protection of children's rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optional protocol approved
1.2.2. Improve and harmonize legislation of Turkmenistan on children in order to achieve further consistency with the CRC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and harmonize with the CRC the legislative acts related to realization and protection of the rights of the children. Number of adopted legislative acts related to children, harmonized with the CRC as compared to the total number subject to harmonization. Procedures and criteria developed.
1.3. Coordination	
1.2.1. Strengthen coordination between various agencies and stakeholders responsible for providing rights and services to children by the end of the implementation period of the NPAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective coordination mechanism for monitoring of observation of children's rights established Coordination mechanism provided with adequate resources for its efficient performance
1.3. Data collection and resources for children	
1.3.1. Increase the availability and access to data on realization of the rights of the child, especially those related to SDGs, disaggregated by gender, age, disability, ethnicity, geographical location in accordance with the Concluding Observations of the CRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparative disaggregated data available Statistical compendium available
1.4. Training on and dissemination of the Convention on the Rights of the Child	
1.4.1. Raise awareness on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Concluding Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio of implemented activities to planned activities. No of officials and professionals trained on realization of the rights of the child. Level of knowledge among trained officials and professionals about the CRC increased.
1.5. Cooperation	
1.5.1. Ensure the involvement of public associations in promoting and realizing the rights enshrined in the CRC and the NPAC, both in their independent activities and in cooperation with state bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of actions with designated role of public associations available % increase of public associations involved in the monitoring of children's rights and NPAC implementation as compared to the year 2015
1.6. Independent monitoring	
1.6.1. Development and implementation of a mechanism for independent monitoring of observance of children's rights, enabling to receive, investigate and handle complaints from children, taking into account children's specifics	Operational mechanism for independent monitoring of children's rights available
1.7. Intersectoral coordination	
1.7.1. Ensure intersectoral coordination in the field of early childhood policy	National ECD strategy for 2019-2024 adopted
Goal 2: Children in Turkmenistan should have all conditions for physical, mental and social well-being, including medical aid, protection and improvement of their health, disease prevention, high level of nutrition, access to safe drinking water and high level of sanitation	



2.1. Children's health	
2.1.1 Reduce the infant mortality rate (children under 1 year of age) and the mortality rate of children under 5 years of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease of neonatal mortality rate by 15% by 2022 as compared to 2015 • Decrease of infant mortality rate by 20% by 2022 as compared to 2015 • Decrease of mortality rate of children under 5 by 20% by 2022 as compared to 2015 • Exclusive/% breastfeeding of children under 6 months should be not less than 60% • Indicators from the Mother and Children Health Programme
2.1.2 Ensure that all children have access to free and high-quality healthcare, regardless of their place of residence, social status, disability status or income of their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immunization coverage of children > 95%, according to National calendar of preventive vaccination • No of approved Orders and protocols on early intervention services and for the prevention and treatment of the most common diseases among children and adolescents
2.2. Maternal health	
2.2.1. Strengthen the reproductive, physical and mental health of women and reduce maternal mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease of maternal mortality rate to 3,0 per 100 000 live births by 2022. • No of national protocols, clinic manuals on emergency obstetric care. • % /Indicator of duration of breastfeeding up to 2 years.
2.2.2. Ensure universal access to quality maternal health services, regardless of place of residence, social status and family income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of mothers who received at least 4 antenatal care visits, based on effective technologies. • Ratio/% of obstetric facilities providing comprehensive emergency obstetric and neonatal care in accordance with adopted national protocols.
2.3. HIV and AIDS and Reproductive health	
2.3.1. Develop a regulatory framework and increase the capacity of the health system to combat HIV infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of cases of HIV-related diseases, including mother-to-child transmission of HIV. • Ratio of health facilities carrying out infection control and risk assessment according to international standards. • National legislation aligned with international standards. • New HIV prevention Programme approved by the end 2018
2.4. Nutrition	
2.4.1. Reduce the level of anemia among children, pregnant and non-pregnant women of reproductive age and vitamin A deficiency among children under 5 years of age.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce Prevalence of anemia for 20% among children of 6-9 months of age, women of reproductive age, including pregnant women, by 2022 as compared to 2012. • To reduce for 20% Ratio of children with vitamin A deficiency among children of 6-9 months of age by 2022 as compared to 2012.
2.4.2. Reduce the rate of malnutrition and slow growth in children under 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicator of exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 months should not be less than 60%. • Reduce the prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years of age by 15% by 2022 compared with 2012
2.6. Water and sanitation	
2.5.1. Reduce the diseases caused by poor quality drinking water and non-observance of sanitary and hygienic norms and rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratio of population using organized water supply services with safety requirements. • Ratio of population using organized sanitary services, including tools for washing hands with soap and water, in accordance with safety requirements. • No of outreach activities for target groups.
Goal 3: All children without exception have a right to education and comprehensive and full development of their abilities	
3.1. Education	
3.1.1. Ensure the quality of secondary education by introducing international standards and best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of certified schools by 2022 (78 schools) • % of pedagogical personnel trained on implementation of standards for a quality education environment in pedagogic colleges, universities and refresher courses. • Available reports on school certification and plans for introduction of regulations/normative documents for quality improvement of education environment • Document national concept of inclusive education adopted • % of schools meeting safety standards • Pilot system of data collection and analysis developed and tested in a pilot velayat



3.5. Development of young children	
3.2.1.Ensure the quality of secondary education by introducing international standards and best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State standards introduced in the system of preschool education. • Preschool education curricula and programmes for professional training and re-training updated in accordance with state standards • % of preschool and primary school teachers trained/re-trained on updated programmes • % of children covered by compulsory programme of preschool education • System of assessment of child's readiness for school implemented • % of preschools providing broad variety of developmental and educational services • % of children of 5-6 years of age covered by preschool education and preschool preparation who demonstrate the competence of readiness for school
3.6. Recreation and cultural life	
To expand opportunities for all children to participate in inclusive recreation, leisure, art, creativity and in information-educational and sports activities that promote the development of a healthy lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of registered children and youth clubs, groups, organizations and out-of-school institutions at the place of residence engaged in recreational activities, entertainment, information, sports areas and promotion of a healthy lifestyle, receive state funding and provide accessible and free services for all children, including children with disabilities and children from socially disadvantaged families from 2018 to 2022. • % of children members of children/youth clubs/groups, organizations and who participate in cultural and sports events, disaggregated by disability and geographic location.
3.3.2. Provide wide access to active entertaining, creative and information-educational programmes for all groups of children, regardless of their social origin or place of residence.	Formation of a state order and approval of the state plan for production of annual entertainment, creative and information-educational programmes based on needs of all children.
3.7. Children with Disabilities	
3.7.1.Ensure enabling conditions for social integration and realization of the rights of children with disabilities, including legislative measures, data on children with disabilities, access to inclusive social services and support services, and encouraging the participation of children with disabilities in public life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of reviewed legislation in accordance with the CRC • Update of legal framework on social services • Drafting and adoption of a law on state order for social services • Disaggregated data on children with disabilities presented in annual reports on children. • No and % of families with children with disabilities, receiving benefits for disability, children benefits and social support services by 2022 as compared to 2018 (benefits) and 2019 (support services). • No and % of children examined for early detection by 2020. • Strategy tested in a pilot region and assessed for scaling up in the country. • No and % of children with disabilities studying in secondary schools and preschools by 2022. • No and % of pedagogical personnel/teachers trained on inclusive education by 2022. • No and % of schools and preschools equipped by supporting devices for access of children with disabilities by 2022. • No and % of children with disabilities involved in children events, school committees, children organizations, study groups and clubs by 2022 as compared to 2019. • No and % of state facilities and services accessible and safe for children with disabilities by 2020. • Number of parental community councils or other forms of parent community organizations. • No of trained professionals providing consultancy services for parents/guardians of children with disabilities • No of research ECD centres with barrier-free space for children with disabilities by 2022 as compared to 2016.
Goal 4: All children have a right to decent material living standards and safe environment required for comprehensive physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development	
4.1. Improved quality of life	
4.1. Raise livelihoods for parents and legal guardians, especially for women of children with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of real income growth in families with children on an annual basis • Level of income in families with children • No/% of children with disabilities living in families where there are no working adults in 2022 as compared to 2018. • No of preschool groups (extended care)



4.2. Social protection	
4.2.1. Expand existing information and data on national standards of living standards	Assessment made, assessment results are used for efficient planning and budgeting.
4.2.2. Provide the necessary level of budgetary allocations for universal and targeted social protection programmes to maintain the living standards of families with children, especially vulnerable families with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-term budget for 2020-2022 includes allocations sufficient for social care and support for families with children, especially for families and children from vulnerable families. • Level of purchasing power.
4.2.3. Ensure the necessary volume and level of social services to protect and support a disadvantaged child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms of protection of the child's rights and support are adopted and operating. • No of children from single-parent or divorced families, receiving benefits and alimonies. <p>No of children placed in residential care due to material reasons (Infant's and children's homes) in 2022 as compared to 2018.</p>
Goal 5: All children without exception have a right to be free from violence, exploitation, ill-treatment in the family and society and cannot be abandoned without care and guardianship	
5.1. Prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse	
5.1.4 Ensure the harmonization of national legislation with international standards in the field of human rights and the protection of children from all forms of violence and ill-treatment	No of amended and adopted legislation harmonized with international standards in the area of prevention and combating child abuse as compared to the total No of legislation to be amended
5.1.5 Develop evidence base for domestic violence and child abuse	Data collection and reports writing
5.1.6 Increase the effectiveness of national measures to prevent violence and child abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No and % of government officials, law enforcement officers, local self-government officials with raised awareness on violation and abuse of children • Ratio of held activities to planned activities. • % of schoolchildren of 10-15 years of age who received information on abuse prevention
5.6. Children in conflict with the law	
5.6.1. Ensure compliance with the key international principles of juvenile justice: the rights of the child, the best interests, the right to freely express their views and be heard, non-discrimination and the priority of preventing the child from entering the justice system and re-integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures for prevention of juvenile delinquency and their re-integration tested in a pilot region, their effectiveness assessed and recommended for dissemination throughout the country. <p>% of children, risk groups covered by measures for prevention of juvenile delinquency and their re-integration into society.</p>
5.7. Child labour	
5.3.1. Improve the provision of information to the population, aimed at issues of protection of the rights of children, including prohibiting the use of the worst forms of child labour	Compendium published
5.3.2. Ensuring enabling conditions for labour for persons under 18, in accordance with the legislation effective in Turkmenistan	No of enterprises, organizations and institutions using the labour of persons under 18 in harmful and dangerous (especially harmful and especially dangerous) labour conditions
5.8. Refugees, migrants and displaced children	
5.8.1. Promote social and psychological rehabilitation and integration of children from families of displaced persons, refugees and forced migrants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No and % of children from refugee families, displaced persons and forced migrants who receive access to services by 2022 <p>No and % of non-registered children from displaced families, refugees and forced migrants in 2021 as compared to 2015.</p>



5.9. Alternative care and adoption	
5.9.1. Increase the effectiveness of measures to prevent child abandonment and their placement under the state custody (Infant homes, orphanages and residential institutions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of laws and regulations and practices to prevent child abandonment and their placement under the state custody carried out in 2018. • Actions developed and introduced. • No and % of children under state care disaggregated by gender, age, disability and location of institution. • Reports on the situation with children include disaggregated (by gender, age and disability) data about children deprived of parental care and placed in the family and institutional form of arrangement.
Goal 6: All children have a right to participate in the decision-making affecting their life, well-being and development and express their opinion, which is to be taken into account	
6.1. Capacity building for promotion of participatory approach	
6.1.1. Build the capacity of children to participate effectively in decision-making that affects their well-being and development	No of established organizations, committees, councils led by children and young people by 2022 as compared to 2018
6.1.2. Build the capacity of government officials and professionals working with children to make decisions in the best interests of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National guidelines ready by 2021. • No of government officials and professionals prepared for participation of children by 2021.
6.2. Media	
6.2.1. Provide age-appropriate information through various media sources available to children and young people.	No and quality of children and youth media by 2022



Annex 4. Compliance to UNICEF Ethical Standards Research, Evaluation

Ethical Considerations	Description	Compliance Measures
Avoidance of Harm	Avoiding harm or injury to participants, both through acts of commission or omission; ensure no harm comes to participants by virtue of inappropriate, unskilled researchers or enumerators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Evaluator took pre-emptive measures for any unforeseen event in the field and respond accordingly to any security threats. This applies to respondents as well as data collection team. The data collection team was briefed on the security protocols
Informed Consent	The voluntary agreement of an individual to participate in an evidence generating activity based on sufficient knowledge and understanding regarding it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose and scope of the evaluation was duly informed to participants. Verbal informed consent was requested from the participants, and they were able to withdraw at any time of the process and consent was taken from participant if personal information was to be used the participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation.
Privacy of Participants	It refers to the rights of the individuals to limit access of others to aspects of their person that can include their thoughts and identifying information. Measures must be taken to ensure participants' privacy during and after the data collection process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The privacy and confidentiality of the participants was maintained at all time, and findings were summarised to an appropriate level of aggregation in such evaluation reports individual level analysis was not done and participants were also given a clear indication of who would have access to their private data and for what purpose.
Storage of Data	Confidential participant information or data that is collected must be securely stored, protected, and disposed of.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The information and collected data was encrypted or password protected, and only authorised person had access to the data. The data was only disclosed according to consent of the participants. Furthermore, hard copies such as interview notes, prints of photographs, or video or audio tapes were to be kept securely locked away. After decided terms and conditions data will be deleted and destroyed

Annex 5. Research Ethics Approval



Research Ethics Approval

24 September 2021

Dessislava Ilieva
c/o UNICEF Office Ashgabat
UN House
21, Archabil Shayoly
744036 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

RE: Ethics Review Board findings for: *Evaluation of the National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 (NAP) and UNICEF's contribution to its design, implementation and monitoring* (HML IRB Review #437TURM21)

Dear Dessislava Ilieva,

Protocols for the protection of human subjects in the above study were assessed through a research ethics review by HML Institutional Review Board (IRB) on 13 – 24 September 2021. This study's human subjects' protection protocols, as stated in the materials submitted, received **ethics review approval**.

You and your project staff remain responsible for ensuring compliance with HML IRB's determinations. Those responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- ensuring prompt reporting to HML IRB of proposed changes in this study's design, risks, consent, or other human protection protocols and providing copies of any revised materials;
- conducting the research activity in accordance with the terms of the IRB approval until any proposed changes have been reviewed and approved by the IRB, except when necessary to mitigate hazards to subjects;
- promptly reporting any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others in the course of this study;
- notifying HML IRB when your study is completed.

HML IRB is authorized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Research Protections (IRB #1211, IORG #850, FWA #1102).

Sincerely,

D. Michael Anderson, Ph.D., MPH
Chair & Human Subjects Protections Director, HML IRB

cc: Sofiya Yuvshanova, Alexandru Nartea, Saltanat Rasulova, Aygul Byashimova, Penelope Lantz, JD

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Annex 6 Data collection tools

In-depth interview guidelines

Key Informant Interview Protocol 1: UN agencies

1. Introduction and warm-up (5 min)

- Greetings and introduction of the moderator
- Explanation about the project and method of work
- Explaining about confidentiality approach and information on audio recording
- Participant introduction

2. Relevance (15-20 min.)

- What is your involvement in the development and implementation of the NAP 2018-2022? Technical knowledge-wise? Budget-wise?
- Was your organisation involved in NAP planning response for this region?
- How were needs of children and their families assessed in this process? Which needs were most pressing? What evidence was there for that?
- How is the NAP aligned with your agency's country programme? Regarding which components and which groups of beneficiaries?
- Which major child protection risks were you targeting? Which target groups were you targeting? Why? What analyses were these decisions based on?
- Were there any particular grave violations and other serious protection concerns for children and women that your planned interventions had to address?
- Did you target any specific most vulnerable groups of children? Which ones? Why?
- How is data collected to monitor children's rights in the country? Who is responsible?

3. Effectiveness (30-40 min.)

- What legislation and regulation was adopted in the country to safeguard for children's' rights? What other legislation and regulation needs to be in place to ensure safeguarding of children's rights in this country?
- Was your agency involved in the implementation of the NAP? In which components?
- Were you involved in monitoring the progress of the NAP and specifically in the components where your agency was involved? How?
- Was your agency's involvement in NAP affected by Covid situation in any way?
- How did your agency ensure cooperation with the government and other stakeholders?
- What evidence of progress/lack of progress of the child protection system of the country do you see in terms of different levels:
 - system capacity – resources, management, etc.
 - professional capacity – design of services and interventions
 - individuals (professionals but also beneficiaries) - knowledge, skills, social and professional norms
- Did the Covid situation have any influence on this progress/lack of progress?



- What do you consider the country's most significant change in terms of realizing children's rights in the last years since 2018 generally for all children? For the most disadvantaged children (probe for specific groups e.g. children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children survivors of violence, children in contact with the law, migrant children)?
- Are there any groups of children left behind?
- How is child participation approached in the country? Was there any significant progress in encouraging children to participate in developing child-related policies? What evidence is there for that?
- Did anything change in the existing child protection system here because of UNICEF? (probe for any system changes in service delivery e.g. new services, improved services, better knowledge of professionals, etc.)

4. Sustainability (10-15 min.)

- Which of the changes we discussed do you think will continue to exist? What capacities should be in place to sustain those changes?
- Which components of the child protection system have been strengthened? Which components of the system need capacity building?
- Does your agency plan to continue to invest in supporting the country towards realization of children's rights? If yes, how?
- What partnerships are in place that will sustain and continue to support the reforms in the child protection system?

5. Wrap up (10 min)

- What are the main problems, obstacles?
- Any solutions/recommendations for the follow-up to the NAP for the next planning period?



Key Informant Interview Protocol 2: national and local authorities

1. Introduction and warm-up (5 min)

- Greetings and introduction of the moderator
- Explanation about the project and method of work
- Explaining about confidentiality approach and information on audio recording
- Participant introduction

2. Relevance (15-20 min.)

- What is your involvement in the development and implementation of the NAP 2018-2022? Technical knowledge-wise? Budget-wise?
- Was your organisation involved in NAP planning response for this region?
- How were needs of children and their families assessed in this process? Which needs were most pressing? What evidence was there for that?
- Which major child protection risks were you targeting? Which target groups were you targeting? Why? What analyses were these decisions based on?
- Were there any particular grave violations and other serious protection concerns for children and women that your planned interventions had to address?
- Did you target any specific most vulnerable groups of children? Which ones? Why?
- How is data collected to monitor children's rights in the country? Who is responsible?

3. Effectiveness (40-50 min.)

- What legislation and regulation was adopted in the country to safeguard for children's rights? What other legislation and regulation needs to be in place to ensure safeguarding of children's rights in this country?
- Was your agency involved in the implementation of the NAP? In which components?
- Were you involved in monitoring the progress of the NAP and specifically in the components where your agency was involved? How?
- What evidence of progress/lack of progress of the child protection system of the country do you see in terms of different levels:
 - system capacity – resources, management, etc.
 - professional capacity – design of services and interventions
 - individuals (professionals but also beneficiaries) - knowledge, skills, social and professional norms
- Did the Covid situation have any influence on this progress/lack of progress?
- What do you consider the country's most significant change in terms of realizing children's rights in the last years since 2018 generally for all children? For the most disadvantaged children (*probe for specific groups e.g. children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children survivors of violence, children in contact with the law, migrant/stateless children*)?
- Are there any groups of children left behind?
- How is child participation approached in the country? Was there any significant progress in encouraging children to participate in developing child-related policies? What evidence is there for that?
- Did anything change in the existing child protection system here because of UNICEF? (*probe for any system changes in service delivery e.g. new services, improved services, better knowledge of professionals, etc.*)



- What are the connections with the other sectors engaged (social, education, judicial system)? Is there cooperation and communication between them? What does it look like? Is it perceived as satisfactory so that the ministry can do their job properly?
- What changes in the communication and interaction with other sectors might improve the work of the ministry?

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION OF THE POPULATION:

- What information is available about the number of children from disadvantaged groups by 2020 (*probe for specific groups e.g. children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children survivors of violence, children in contact with the law, migrant/stateless children*) How is it collected? By whom?
- How is service **planning** performed by your agency/ministry related to services for the above groups of children? Who **participates**? Are **other sector** representatives involved in planning?
- To your knowledge, what are the main areas of **needs** for the above groups of children and their families? Which of those needs are met? Which are not met? Why?
- How is **needs assessment** for the above groups of children and their families performed? How do children and families participate in needs assessment process?
- What services are **available** for the above groups of children?
- What type of support might be relevant for the above groups of children and their families that is not available or not sufficient at the moment?
- Do all children of the above groups of children have **access** to the following services:
 - pre-school care and education?
 - education?
 - health care services?
 - rehabilitation services?
 - outreach support and rehabilitation services?
 - recreation and play opportunities?
 - cultural and artistic opportunities?
 - preparation for employment?
 - social welfare services?
 - child protection services?
- Who is involved in the **planning** (incl. assessment of needs) and **evaluation** of services generally?
- Do children and families get involved in planning/implementation/evaluation of services generally?
- Is there a criteria to define the service quality?
- How are services evaluated in terms of quality and impact?
- What is the severity of the issue of child labour in the country? What up-to-date data is available in support to this?

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

- Are there inclusive education arrangements making it possible for all children to follow mainstream education? (*probe for specific groups e.g. children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children survivors of violence, children in contact with the law, migrant/stateless children*)



- Does the state provide trained and qualified specialists within education to integrate children with disabilities to meet the demand, according to quality standards?
- What quality standards are used to ensure quality education for all children? (probe for specific groups e.g. children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children survivors of violence, children in contact with the law, migrant/stateless children) How is it measured? What up-to date data is available for demonstrating quality education for all children in the country?
- What type of support might be relevant for children and their families that is not available or not sufficient at the moment? (*probe for specific groups e.g. children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children survivors of violence, children in contact with the law, migrant/stateless children*)

MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

- What arrangements are in place for supporting children in contact with the law?
- What data is available for the number of children in contact with the law? Disaggregated data by age, gender, background, etc.?
- What type of support might be relevant for children in contact with the law and their families that is not available or not sufficient at the moment?

4. Sustainability (10-15 min.)

- Which of the changes we discussed do you think will continue to exist? What capacities should be in place to sustain those changes?
- Which components of the child protection system have been strengthened? Which components of the system need capacity building?
- Does your agency commit to sustain those changes in the country towards realization of children's rights? If yes, how?
- What partnerships are in place that will sustain and continue to support the reforms in the child protection system?

5. Wrap up (10 min)

- What are the main problems, obstacles?
- Any solutions/recommendations for the follow-up to the NAP for the next planning period?



Key Informant Interview Protocol 3: NGOs and partners

1. Introduction and warm-up (5 min)

- Greetings and introduction of the moderator
- Explanation about the project and method of work
- Explaining about confidentiality approach and information on audio recording
- Participant introduction

2. Relevance (15-20 min.)

- Which major child protection risks were you targeting? Which target groups were you targeting? Why? What analyses were these decisions based on?
- Were there any particular grave violations and other serious protection concerns for children and women that your planned interventions had to address?
- Did you target any specific most vulnerable groups of children? Which ones? Why?
- How is data collected to monitor children's rights in the country? Who is responsible?

3. Effectiveness (30-40 min.)

- What evidence of progress/lack of progress of the child protection system of the country do you see in terms of different levels:
 - system capacity – resources, management, etc.
 - professional capacity – design of services and interventions
 - individuals (professionals but also beneficiaries) - knowledge, skills, social and professional norms
- Did the Covid situation have any influence on this progress/lack of progress?
- What do you consider the country's most significant change in terms of realizing children's rights in the last years since 2018 generally for all children? For the most disadvantaged children (*probe for specific groups e.g. children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children survivors of violence, children in contact with the law, migrant children*)?
- Are there any groups of children left behind?
- How is child participation approached in the country? Was there any significant progress in encouraging children to participate in developing child-related policies? What evidence is there for that?
- Did anything change in the existing child protection system here because of UNICEF? (*probe for any system changes in service delivery e.g. new services, improved services, better knowledge of professionals, etc.*)

4. Sustainability (10-15 min.)

- Which of the changes we discussed do you think will continue to exist? What capacities should be in place to sustain those changes?
- Which components of the child protection system have been strengthened? Which components of the system need capacity building?
- Does your agency plan to continue to invest in supporting the country towards realization of children's rights? If yes, how?
- What partnerships are in place that will sustain and continue to support the reforms in the child protection system?

5. Wrap up (10 min)

- What are the main problems, obstacles?
- Any solutions/recommendations for the follow-up to the NAP for the next planning period?



Key Informant Interview Protocol 4: Group interview with Local Centres for Social Protection workers and Etrap social workers

1. Introduction and warm-up (5 min)

- Greetings and introduction of the moderator
- Explanation about the project and method of work
- Explaining about confidentiality approach and information on audio recording
- Participant introduction

2. Relevance (15-20 min.)

- Which major child protection risks were you targeting? Which target groups were you targeting? Why? What analyses were these decisions based on?
- Were there any particular grave violations and other serious protection concerns for children and women that your planned interventions had to address?
- Did you target any specific most vulnerable groups of children? Which ones? Why?
- How is data collected to monitor children's rights in the country? Who is responsible?

3. Effectiveness (30-40 min.)

- What services are provided here? What are the aims of the services provided? Who do they target?
- What is the leading principle of the division of work (e.g. by type of clients; by type of service; other)?
- How much of the work is with families vs children? Is there any work done in the home of the clients and what, with whom? How much of a portion is that, if any? If work in the home of the clients is done, is this a requirement in the methodology or is it up to the service provider to include this in the service design?
- How is service **planning** performed by your organisation related to services for children (*probe for specific groups e.g. children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children survivors of violence, children in contact with the law, migrant children*)? Who **participates**? Are **other sector** representatives involved in planning?
- To your knowledge, what are the main areas of **needs** for the above groups of children and their families? Which of those needs are met? Which are not met? Why?
- How is **needs assessment** for the above groups of children and their families performed? How do children and families participate in needs assessment process?
- What services are **available** for the above groups of children?
- What type of support might be relevant for the above groups of children and their families that is not available or not sufficient at the moment?
- Do all children of the above groups of children have **access** to the following services:
 - pre-school care and education?
 - education?
 - health care services?
 - rehabilitation services?
 - outreach support and rehabilitation services?
 - recreation and play opportunities?



- cultural and artistic opportunities?
- preparation for employment?
- social welfare services?
- child protection services?
- Who is involved in the **planning** (incl. assessment of needs) and **evaluation** of services generally?
- Do children and families get involved in planning/implementation/evaluation of services generally?
- Is there a criteria to define the service quality?
- How are services evaluated in terms of quality and impact?
- Did the Covid situation have any influence on this progress/lack of progress?
- What do you consider the country's most significant change in terms of realizing children's rights in the last years since 2018 generally for all children? For the most disadvantaged children (*probe for specific groups e.g. children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children survivors of violence, children in contact with the law, migrant children*)?
- Are there any groups of children left behind?
- How is child participation approached in the country? Was there any significant progress in encouraging children to participate in developing child-related policies? What evidence is there for that?
- Did anything change in the existing child protection system here because of UNICEF? (*probe for any system changes in service delivery e.g. new services, improved services, better knowledge of professionals, etc.*)

4. Sustainability (10-15 min.)

- Which of the changes we discussed do you think will continue to exist? What capacities should be in place to sustain those changes?
- Which components of the child protection system have been strengthened? Which components of the system need capacity building?

5. Wrap up (10 min)

- What are the main problems, obstacles?
- Any solutions/recommendations for the follow-up to the NAP for the next planning period?

Focus group discussion guidelines

Key Informant Interview Protocol 5: Focus group discussion with beneficiaries - parents/carers

1. Introduction and warm-up (5 min)

- Greetings and introduction of the moderator
- Explanation about the project and method of work
- Explaining about confidentiality approach and information on audio recording
- Participant introduction

2. Background information

- Tell us something about your families – how many family members? How many children and what age?
- Is every adult in the family employed? Any family members with disabilities?

3. Material well-being

The respondents are asked to describe their main needs as parents

Material conditions and living standards

Let's talk about how you family lives:

- How would you describe your material living conditions and housing? (probe for living space for every family member and specifically children having separate space, running water and sanitation, etc.)
- Can you provide for your family? (probe for who is unemployed, is salary enough, what is not sufficiently provided for)

4. Health and nutrition

Nutrition and health

Let's talk about health:

- Nutrition is important for health? Do you experience any difficulties in providing good food for your children? Please describe what is difficult.
- What health issues are there for any of the children?
- How do you solve these issues? Who can you ask for help? Is it difficult to receive medical health when in need?
- Who do you count on for advice/answer/help?
- What other help do you need when your child is sick?
- What are your main issues and questions as a parents – i.e. in regard to the health? What are the hardest moments you have?
- In terms of your child's health, what are your dreams as a parent?

5. Education for children

Let's talk about education of your children:

- Where do your children/child get their education? At home or some organised place (school, kindergarten, centre, boarding school, etc.)?
- If at home, what were the reasons for that decision?
- If the child a boarding school how long is he or she staying away from the family (specify period – week, months?)
- Do you think your child progresses and develops well?



- Is your child happy there? (if the child visits an organised form of learning)
- What issues or difficulties do you see? What needs to change?
- Sometimes teachers face children's difficult behaviour. Can you think of such situation which affected your child – what was the situation, how did the teacher deal with the situation? (probe for any violence or abuse in school/kindergarten) Do you know of an adult ever hitting your child?
- In terms of your child's education, what are your dreams as a parent?

6. Social support

Let's talk about when you experience difficulties in life and parenting becomes difficult:

- Have you ever felt like you no longer can take care of you child and you need help? What was your life situation at the time and what happened? Who helped you?
- Have you ever felt like you need to leave the child in state care outside your family? (*probe for leaving a child in an institution*)
- Sometimes parents face difficulties to deal with their children's behaviour. Can you think of situations when you had such difficulties – what was the situation, how did you deal with the situation? (*probe for any violence or abuse in the family – between family members and adult to child violence*) Have you ever felt like hitting your child? What did you think at that moment?
- Has your child ever had any contacts with the law or police? (*probe for juvenile delinquency*) What was the situation? Did any of the authorities (police, school, social centres) help your family and you specifically as a parent in that situation? How did that situation end?

7. Expectations

- What could be supportive for your child in the future? Do you expect some challenges?
- Have you received support from the state? What else would be useful for you and your children as a support from the state?
- What do you wish for your child for the future?
- What problems/ challenges could your child face in the future? What could help him/her avoid/overcome them?



Key Informant Interview Protocol 6: Focus group discussion with beneficiaries – children

1. Introduction and warm-up (5 min)

- Greetings and introduction of the moderator
- Explanation about the project and method of work
- Explaining about confidentiality approach and information on audio recording
- Participant introduction

2. Background information

8. Tell us something about where you live and with whom? (*probe for family background e.g. how many family members? Any parents working away from home? Siblings?*)
9. Where do you live? Do you have a room or space of your own? (*probe for living space for every family member and specifically children having separate space, running water and sanitation, etc.*)

3. Health and nutrition

- Food is important for health. Do you feel you get enough good food to be healthy?
- Children sometimes get sick, it probably happened to you, too. What happens when you get sick? Who takes care of you? Do you go to the doctor?
- When you go to the doctor, does the doctor ever ask for your opinion on the things they want to do to you?
- What do you wish could happen differently, when children are sick?

4. Education

Let's talk about school:

- Where do you go to school? (If the child visits a boarding school how long is he or she staying away from the family (specify period – week, months?))
- Are you happy there? (probe about how they feel about having friends, about their teachers)
- Do you think you are progressing well? How do you know?
- Do teachers ever want to know about your opinion on any aspect of your life in school? If yes, can you give examples. Do you feel your opinion is taken into consideration by the adults?
- What do you most like about going to school?
- What do you most dislike about school?
- What issues or difficulties do you see? What needs to change?

5. Social support

- Have you ever experienced a difficult situation in your life, either at school or in your family? What was the situation? Who do you mostly count on for advice/answer/help?

6. Recreational life

- What do you do in your leisure time and holidays? Is there anything you want to do but you cannot for some reason?
- What is our favourite activity?
- What is your dream about spending your free time?

7. Expectations

- What could be supportive for you in the future?
- What do you wish for yourself for the future? Dreams?
- What problems/ challenges could you in the future? What could help you avoid/overcome them?



Key Informant Interview Protocol 7: Focus group discussion with beneficiaries – care leavers

1. Introduction and warm-up (5 min)

- Greetings and introduction of the moderator
- Explanation about the project and method of work
- Explaining about confidentiality approach and information on audio recording
- Participant introduction

2. Background information

- How old are you?
- Tell us something about where you live now and with whom? (*probe for family background e.g. how many family members? Siblings?*) Do you have a job or do you study? Do you have any contacts with you family now?

3. Life in the institution

- When you went to the children's home how old were you?
- What brought you there?
- How long did you stay?
- Did you have a room of your own?
- During that time did you have any contacts with your family? How often? If you had contacts. How did these happen – where, for how long, did anyone assist you to have contacts, how was it organised?
- What was life like in the children's home? What was good about that? What was bad about that?
- Who was the closest person to you during your stay?
- What do you wish could have happened differently?

4. Health and nutrition

- Food is important for health. Did you feel you were getting enough good food to be healthy when you lived there?
- Children sometimes get sick, it probably happened to you, too. What happened when you get sick? Who took care of you? Did you go to the doctor?
- When you went to the doctor, did the doctor ever ask for your opinion on the things they want to do to you?

5. Education

- Where did you go to school?
- Were you happy there? (*probe about how they feel about having friends, about their teachers*)
- Do you think you were progressing well? How do you know?
- What did you most like about school?
- What do you most dislike about school?
- What issues or difficulties did you have? What do you wish could have happened differently?

6. Social support

- Have you ever experienced a difficult situation in your life, while living there? What was the situation? Who do you mostly count on for advice/answer/help?
- When time came for you to leave the children's home, how did you prepare for that moment? Did anyone also help you in that moment? What do you wish could have happened differently?

7. Expectations

- What could be supportive for you in the future?
- What do you wish for yourself for the future? Dreams?
- What problems/ challenges could you in the future? What could help you avoid/overcome them?



Legal guardian/ legal representative consent form

TO BE TRANSLATED AND PRESENTED IN THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE

LEGAL GUARDIAN/ LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE CONSENT FORM

I (legal guardian/legal representative) _____
give my consent for the child _____ to participate
in the interview carried out by
[INSERT NAME OF THE SGD AMBASSADOR] for the purpose of conducting Evaluation of the National
Plan of Action for Realization of Children's rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 (NAP) and UNICEF's
contribution to its design, implementation and monitoring.

I hereby confirm that:

1. I have read the information provided through the introductory letter.
2. Details of procedures have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to audio recording of child's participation.
4. I understand that:
 - The child I represent will not directly benefit from taking part in this evaluation.
 - The child is free to withdraw from the interview at any time and is free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - While the information gained in this evaluation will be published as explained, the child I represent will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
5. I understand that the information the child provides in this interview will only be used by the consultant Dessislava Ilieva for the evaluation purpose. I also understand that the consultant Dessislava Ilieva will transmit information to UNICEF confidentially and will not copy, store or transmit it for any other purpose than this.

First name: _____ Last name: _____

Date: _____

Contact telephone number: _____

N.B. This form should be filled and signed in two copies, one to be retained by SDG Ambassador and one by legal guardian/legal representative



Introductory letter for parents/legal representative of the child

TO BE TRANSLATED AND PRESENTED IN THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE

[DATE]

Dear Madam / Dear Sir,

Dessislava Ilieva is an international consultant which was selected by UNICEF to conduct an evaluation of the the National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 (NAP) and UNICEF's contribution to its design, implementation and monitoring (*an introductory letter from UNICEF Regional Office is attached*).

The evaluation will assess the results achieved by Turkmenistan in realizing the child's rights to be safe, healthy, to receive quality education, to live in a healthy family environment. Another objective of the evaluation is to offer a better understanding on how results were made possible and which strategies were most effective. The evaluation will also assess UNICEF's contribution to these changes. More importantly, this is a learning process for UNICEF and also for the government.

A young SDG ambassador is collecting data locally from service users (parents and children) by undertaking interviews and organizing group discussions. The young SDG ambassador will summarize the opinions and arguments of those participating in the data collection process, translate it to English and send a report to the international consultant who will analyse the data.

Children will have a voice in this evaluation by participating in interviews and sharing their experiences and their views. We are interested to discuss with children who are directly experiencing the services offered: family type services and are approaching the age of exiting the care system (16-17 years old). Therefore, we ask for your support in facilitating such an interview with children benefiting of care services. We are attaching a short letter for children explaining the process and their rights. While discussing with children about their participation, please provide them with this introductory letter.

The interview process

The interview will be carried out in a facilities children are familiar with. If children feel safer to be accompanied by a trusting adult, they have the right to do so. The discussion will be audio recorded and will last approximately **20-30 minutes**.

Privacy and confidentiality

The information will be treated anonymously and verbatim quotes will only be qualified by the respondent's role.

Documentation and data such as audio recordings, consent forms, interview notes or reporting templates will be collected the international consultant Dessislava Ilieva, who will retain them for a maximum period of 10 months from the date of receipt. If requested by UNICEF, interview notes will be forwarded to UNICEF.

If the child you represent is willing to participate in the evaluation and if you are willing for the child to participate, please complete the 'Legal Guardian/Legal representatives Informed Consent Form'.

If you have any further questions regarding this evaluation, please do not hesitate to contact me, [NAME OF THE SDG ambassador].

Respectfully yours,

[NAME OF THE SDG AMBASSADOR]

Telephone

Email



Introductory letter for the child

TO BE TRANSLATED AND PRESENTED IN THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE

Hello,

My name is [NAME OF SDG AMBASSADOR] and I would like to present to you a study we are carrying out and you might like to take part.

Children are sometimes in situations when they experience difficult situations in their lives and parents cannot always take good care of them. In these cases, there are services which aim to provide the care necessary for children to grow up healthy and safe. These services change overtime.

Our study aims to identify how you feel about these changes. Children are part of this study and will have the chance to express their views and share their experiences along with the adults taking care of them.

We will make a report with all these opinions and send it to UNICEF, an international organization working for children's rights. UNICEF will share with all countries the good things and will work with authorities to improve services in order to ensure that all children are living either in their family or in a place that makes children feel like home.

1. We would like to audio record the interview, if you agree. Your name will be kept separately from the recording, therefore people listening the audio or reading the notes from the interview will not know your name.
2. If you agree to take part in this study, a person you trust can be present, if you want, during the interview.
3. Your name and other information about you will not be mentioned in our report.
4. The interview will take no more than 20-30 minutes.
5. You can stop the interview at any time without having to give a reason.
6. If there are questions you don't want to answer you can just leave them out.
7. You can ask me (the interviewer) about anything that is not clear.

If you would like to participate, you have to tell the adult who gave you this letter that you agree to be interviewed.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact me, [NAME OF THE SDG AMBASSADOR].

Thank you very much,

[NAME OF THE SDG AMBASSADOR]

Telephone

Email



Annex 7. Evaluation implementation approach

<p>Stage 1</p> <p>INCEPTION</p>	<p>Purpose: Refinement and agreement of the methodology, timeline and structure of final report.</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off meeting with UNICEF • Initial desk review of secondary information, identifying different sector strategies, partnerships, available reports, log frames, monitoring reports, etc.; • Defining frameworks and tools to be used for data collection and analysis; • Development of interview guides, including case study typologies and a precise methodology with criteria for assessment; • Defining a strategy to address ethical concerns throughout the work <p>Outputs: inception report to include an evaluation matrix, evaluation methodology, work plan, interview guide and other data collection tools</p>
<p>Stage 2</p> <p>FIELDWORK</p>	<p>Purpose: Data collection and analysis</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth desk-review • Recruitment of respondents according to typology agreed with UNICEF • Primary data collection from key informants according to the field work schedule and methodology agreed with UNICEF <p>Outputs: field work schedule</p>
<p>Stage 3</p> <p>VALIDATION</p>	<p>Purpose: Incorporating preliminary feedback</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary data analysis and processing • Summarising preliminary findings • Consulting preliminary findings with UNICEF <p>Outputs: PPT and a draft report</p>
<p>Stage 4</p> <p>REPORTING</p>	<p>Purpose: Reporting and communicating final results of the analysis</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and submission of draft report • Consolidation of feedback by UNICEF • Submitting a final report <p>Outputs: final report</p>

Annex 8. Documents reviewed

1. National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's Rights in Turkmenistan For 2018 – 2022
2. UNICEF CO Turkmenistan Country programme document, 2015-2020
3. UNICEF CO Turkmenistan Country programme document, 2020-2025
4. Комитет по правам ребенка, Рассмотрение докладов, представленных государствами-участниками в соответствии со статьей 44 конвенции о правах ребенка; Объединенный пятый и шестой периодические доклады государств-участников
5. NAPC mid-term review indicators (xls file)
6. Analysis Of Situation Of Children's And Women's Rights In Turkmenistan, February 2019
7. UNICEF, UNPA, UNDP in Turkmenistan, Situational Analysis on Youth in Turkmenistan,
8. Ashgabat, 2019
9. COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (2020), Consideration of reports submitted by states parties under article 44 of the convention on the rights of the child; The combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of states parties
10. Baseline Assessment For Child-Related SDG Indicators In Turkmenistan, Unicef Co Turkmenistan
11. Pluriconsult (2020), Evaluation Of The Government Of Turkmenistan's Policy On Early Childhood Development (2012-2019) And UNICEF's Contribution To Its Design, Implementation And Monitoring
12. UNICEF Evaluation Management Response ECD
13. UNICEF in Turkmenistan, Baseline Assessment For Child-Related SDG Indicators In Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, 2018.
14. UNICEF in Turkmenistan, Updated Assessment of child-related SDG indicators in Turkmenistan, 2021
15. Unicef And Mohmi (2013): A Study To Formulate Recommendations For Developing National Policies With A View To Preventing Institutionalisation Of Children Aged 0-3 Years
16. Jeroen Huisman, Anna Smolentseva, Isak Froumin: 25 Years of Transformations of Higher Education Systems in Post-Soviet Countries. Reform and Continuity
17. Methodological Briefs Impact Evaluation No. 2: Theory of Change, Patricia Rogers
18. Manual, Child Friendly Schools, UNICEF 2009
19. UNDP Database on SDG <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>
20. UN Results Report on Turkmenistan 2020
21. Voluntary National Review of Turkmenistan, 2019
22. Defining Quality in Education, 2000, United Nations Children's Fund; European Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (2014); Manual, Child Friendly Schools, UNICEF 2009



23. European Commission (2014), Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care in preventing early school leaving.
24. The Economics of Human Development and Social Mobility. Annual Reviews of Economics, Vol.6 (2014), 689-733
25. UNDP, INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION, 2020
26. Обзор прогресса по реализации совместной программы, Powerpoint presentation
27. Джоанна Роджерс (2020), Базовый перечень социальных услуг в Туркменистане, Отчет выполнен для Совместной программы фонда ЦУР с целью развития качественных, инклюзивных социальных услуг в Туркменистане на местном уровне
28. Cantwell, N.; Davidson, J.; Elsley, S.; Milligan, I.; Quinn, N. (2012). Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'. UK: Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland
29. Adapting a Systems approach to child protection: key concepts and considerations
30. IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings
31. Juvenile Justice Reform Commission, UNICEF Montenegro (2007), THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW
32. Ombudsman reports 2018, 2019, 2020
33. Irina Urumova (2018), International Consultant, Assessment of the General Programme on the Development of Juvenile Justice System in Turkmenistan for the Period of 2012-2016
34. 2006, 2015/2016 and 2019 Turkmenistan MICS
35. Council of Europe (2016), CHILD PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT TOOL
36. (1992). Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship, Innocenti Essay no. 4
37. Hart, Roger. (2008). Stepping back from "The ladder": Reflections on a model of participatory work with children
38. CRC, The combined fifth and sixth Periodic Reports of States Parties, 2020
39. Hart, 1992; White, 1996; Trilla & Novella, 2001; Tambouris et al., 2007; Guilló & Mancebo-Aracil, 2017; Unesco, 2019
40. Hart, Roger, Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship, Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1992 <www.unicef-irc.org/publications/100-childrens-participation-from-tokenism-to-citizenship.html>
41. Official websites of:
42. Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population,
43. Ministry of Education,
44. Ministry of Healthcare and Medical Industry,
45. State Committee of Statistics of Turkmenistan

Annex 9. List of piloted community-based services

The following list presents the pilot services developed within the UN Joint Programme

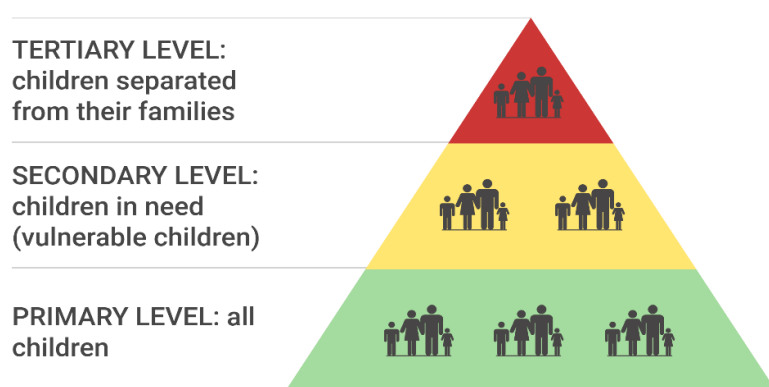
N	Name of service	Relevance to children
1.	Personal assistant service to support independent life of adults with official status of disability	Not directly for children but is relevant for children when adults with disabilities are also parents.
2.	Social service to support lonely elderly people	Not directly for children
3.	Socio-medical services at home for people with chronic illnesses	Not directly for children but is relevant for children when targeted adults with are also parents.
4.	Comprehensive social support service for prevention of domestic violence against women	Not directly for children but is relevant for children when targeted women are also mothers.
5.	Comprehensive social support service aimed at preventing child abandonment and service for teenage pregnancy	Directly addressing children
6.	Intensive Family Support Service with children at community level	Directly addressing children
7.	Reintegration of children from infant homes	Directly addressing children
8.	Individual psycho-social accompaniment of youth in the process of reintegration from residential institutions into the family and community	Directly addressing children
9.	Family support services for children with disabilities	Directly addressing children
10.	Social services for parents with addictions (assessment, family therapy, parenting skills, referral)	Directly addressing children
11.	Social services for adolescents at risk of contact with criminal justice (assessment, family therapy, life skills, referral)	Directly addressing children
12.	Social service for families with children in difficult life situations (assessment, family therapy, life skills, referral)	Directly addressing children

Annex 10. Availability of child protection interventions across the three levels of prevention

Internationally, there are various frameworks for planning and assessing whether child protection systems provide necessary and suitable options for the child¹⁹⁰ e.g. continuum of care¹⁹¹ as defined by World Health Organisation (WHO) as well as UNICEF¹⁹²; the concept of service quality defined through the European Common Quality Framework for Social Service of General Interest; the principles of quality childcare systems that are able to prevent family separation as defined in the "Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children"¹⁹³, or the Intervention pyramid¹⁹⁴ for mental health and psychosocial support among others.

An effective child protection system is developed on all three levels of preventing ultimate separation of the child with its family due to some vulnerability (disability, violence, conflict with the law, displacement, etc.).

Figure 15 The levels of preventive interventions



80 The three levels of interventions around which a system should be designed around the child and its family are the following: See Figure 22

PRIMARY LEVEL: At its primary level, prevention is achieved by ensuring the general population's access to basic services, social justice and the protection of human rights without discrimination. Prevention is therefore grounded in a wide range of CRC provisions, from health care (CRC Article 24) and education (CRC Article 28) to birth registration (CRC Article 7), social security (CRC Article 25) and non-discrimination (CRC Articles 2, 30). The overall aim is to enable and empower parents to care for their children so that families can remain together without negative family experiences for the child.

SECONDARY LEVEL:

This is the 'safety net' and is targeted at families who are identified or have declared themselves as being vulnerable, and for whom, for whatever reason, primary prevention measures have proved inadequate. The children concerned here include those who are at risk of being

¹⁹⁰ The principles of necessity and suitability are defined as quality principles underlying child protection systems preventing children from being separated from their families due to some vulnerability. Cantwell, N.; Davidson, J.; Elsley, S.; Milligan, I.; Quinn, N. (2012). *Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'*. UK: Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland.

¹⁹¹ "Continuum of care" is an applicable tool for assessment of services targeting client populations with a great variety of needs (http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/66584/4/WHO_MSD_MSB_00.2d.pdf)

¹⁹² Adapting a Systems approach to child protection: key concepts and considerations, https://www.unicef.org/french/protection/files/Adapting_Systems_approach_to_CP_concepts_and_considerations.docx

¹⁹³ Cantwell, N.; Davidson, J.; Elsley, S.; Milligan, I.; Quinn, N. (2012). *Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'*. UK: Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland.

¹⁹⁴ IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings

relinquished due to a negative family experience and those whose removal from the parental home on protection grounds may have to be considered. Measures should be directed towards a) providing tailored family support for parents experiencing difficulties in caring for their child, and b) focuses on children for whom the risk of being relinquished or withdrawn from the parental home is imminent or current. These steps include offering counselling and social support to enable the parents to continue looking after the child themselves.

TERTIARY LEVEL: Actions taken in cases where neither primary nor secondary prevention have succeeded, making – in this instance – entry into the alternative care system unavoidable. Efforts at this stage focus on securing conditions that enable a positive re-start and prevent a return to alternative care. Prevention at this level is aimed at returning a child in alternative care to the care of his or her parents wherever possible, at an appropriate moment and under appropriate conditions. Promoting family reintegration implies a professional assessment of the possibilities for reintegration, and outlines the tasks and responsibilities that need to be assigned and carried out if the assessment is to take place in the child's best interests.

- 81 Below is an analysis of the extent to which prevention of family separation is taking place in Turkmenistan with particular focus to the vulnerabilities specifically outlined by the NAP.



Availability of interventions in child protection

risk	Primary level	Secondary level	Tertiary prevention
	Partly available	Partly available	Not available
Violence and abuse	<p>Children in Turkmenistan experience high levels of violent disciplining methods both psychological and physical (68.6% of children aged 1-14).¹⁹⁵ Cultural norms in the society define an environment of tolerance to domestic violence and specifically gender-based violence – 35% of women 15-49 justify a husband beating or hitting his wife.¹⁹⁶</p> <p>NAP addresses a more gender-tolerant attitudes in schools by training and certifying secondary school teachers on gender-sensitive educational topics. The share of certified teachers has increased dramatically over the reviewed period: from 68% in 2018 to 95% in 2020.</p>	<p>Identification, reporting and referral services are at their onset. SOPs were developed in 2020 for health workers, social system professionals and police persons acting in case of reported cases of domestic violence. They are not specifically for children but for all persons victims of violence.</p> <p>The approach to cases of violence in the family is still largely based on sanction (parental rights may be removed), rather than support. Psycho-social support programmes for victims of violence are missing.</p> <p>There are only two providers of services to violence victims – 2 public associations and 0 governmental organisations.¹⁹⁷</p> <p>Comprehensive social support service for prevention of domestic violence against women has been piloted within the JP. Presumably, it may potentially cover children also since domestic violence response is intrinsically linked with care for the child of the victim. However, the coverage of this service is still low i.e. Ashgabat and Turkmenabat.</p>	<p>Shelters specifically for children surviving domestic violence are not available. In case of family separation due to violence children may potentially be placed in institutions for children without parental care. In the case of such placement, counselling and rehabilitation programmes for the child's non-violent parent are not available to facilitate quick reunification with the family.</p> <p>Perpetrator may be removed from the family home for three months and sent to a correctional centre.</p>
Conflict with the law	<p>Available</p> <p>It is generally considered¹⁹⁸ that children who break the law do not do so of their own free will, but rather as a result of restricted opportunities available for their development. Juveniles from risk groups that could get in conflict with the law are often victims of abuse and neglect, negligent and poor parenting and economic difficulties. These children need support while they are still children on primary level of prevention and as part of basic universal services available</p>	<p>Partly available</p> <p>Community-based social services for adolescents at risk of contact with criminal justice (assessment, family therapy, life skills, and referral) were piloted in 2020. Their coverage is still very low i.e. in Ashgabat and Turkmenabat. Options for scaling up are currently considered by the GoT with UNICEF strong support.</p> <p>Specialized courts or judges are still not available in the country although the establishment of "blue rooms"¹⁹⁹ is considered in 2022. The NAP most significant change has been initiation of upgrading the existing workforce of the systems components which are related to child justice i.e. police and judicial system, towards more child-friendly justice. Commissions of minors are functioning on local level and externally to the Ministry of Interior (MoI). They are part of the safety net of services targeting</p>	<p>Available</p> <p>Detention procedures are becoming more child-friendly e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - juvenile units have been set up in the police departments to ensure that children are housed separately from regular police detention places; - staff recruitment is increasingly considered in child-friendlier terms i.e. Juvenile affairs inspectors with academic background in education now total at 30%. - the academic curriculum for prospective police officers includes child-rights related topics. More specialized topics, such as child-friendly interviewing techniques, have been introduced through UNICEF-supported training, however not part of the regular curriculum yet.

¹⁹⁵ MICS 2019¹⁹⁶ Analysis Of Situation Of Children's And Women's Rights In Turkmenistan, February 2019¹⁹⁷ Джоанна Роджерс (2020), Базовый перечень социальных услуг в Туркменистане; Отчет выполнен для Совместной программы фонда ЦУР с целью развития качественных, инклюзивных социальных услуг в Туркменистане на местном уровне¹⁹⁸ Juvenile Justice Reform Commission, UNICEF Montenegro (2007), THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW¹⁹⁹ child-friendly interrogation room

	<p>to all children e.g. as part of general education and healthcare.</p> <p>The concept of children being in conflict with the law is gradually changing in Turkmenistan towards modernising and becoming more child-friendly.</p> <p>On the level of basic services prevention work is done in schools by educational talks to children by police officers or Red Crescent Society workers promoting healthy living.</p>	<p>prevention of family separation due to delinquency. However, interventions were not identified towards special strengthening the capacity of those commissions to make risk assessment, develop individual planning, provide tailor-made support to both the child and its environment, as well as monitoring the effectiveness of such work. Special operational procedures for working with children and their environment were not identified.</p> <p>MoI is keeping a register of dysfunctional families but targeted social support to such families is not available nor needs assessment analysis, including regional trends – 59% of the children in correctional facilities are residents of Lebap and Mary welayats.²⁰⁰</p> <p>Practices of juvenile diversion and approaches holding youth accountable for their behaviour without resorting to legal sanctions, court oversight or the threat of confinement are still not fully established. Foundations for such practices were laid by the 2012-2016 General Juvenile Justice Programme provides for juvenile justice processes that are more child-friendly. Such processes are slow as they are dependent largely on change in professional norms and attitudes.</p>	<p>Judicial proceedings involving juvenile offenders are conducted by regular trial courts. Introduction of juvenile courts is not planned, rather juvenile cases are allocated to judges that receive regular training in juvenile justice-related topics.</p> <p>Convicted children are detained in colonies separate from adults and separate for boys and girls. The number of children in colonies is reduced over the years (2017- 85²⁰¹, 2018- 68²⁰² children, all boys except for one girl). The reduction of the number of detained children is a positive step but in the absence of community-based prevention social services and effective diversion programmes, the reduction is due to children reaching the age for leaving the colony as well as gate-keeping control resulting from the tendency of more lenient sentences regarding minors, not related to deprivation of liberty.</p> <p>There are interventions to facilitate the social integration of children in colonies back to society: education is provided and transition to independent living is provided, although their effectiveness is not analysed and documented. However, children stay in these facilities mostly until the end of their childhood and the transition programmes do not include reintegration components to facilitate the child's shorter stay and returning to the family sooner.</p>
Forced labour and the worst forms of child labour	<p>Available</p> <p>Due to the legislative changes of minimum recruitment age from 16 to 18, the number of children aged 16 engaged in branches of economy of Turkmenistan has been shrunk to a nullity. The number of children aged under 18 engaged in the branches of economy, made 36 persons, or 0.005% of the employed in them.²⁰³ Of them, 19 children were employed through employment agencies. See Figure 23. The trend indicates that the objective of eliminating child labour had been achieved before the adoption of NAP. Enabling environment was created to prevent child labour.</p>	<p>Available</p> <p>In line with the Law of Turkmenistan “On state guarantees of the right of youth for the right to work”, parents are forbidden to use children below 18 in works related to permanent employment, especially in works related to absence from studies.</p> <p>Employees are forbidden to use the labour of workers below 18 in works with harmful and (or especially hazardous) conditions of labour.</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>

²⁰⁰ Ombudsman report 2018

²⁰¹ Irina Urumova (2018), International Consultant, Assessment of the General Programme on the Development of Juvenile Justice System in Turkmenistan for the Period of 2012-2016

²⁰² Ombudsman report 2018

²⁰³ 2020, COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD



Refuge, migrancy and displacement	Available The legislation in Turkmenistan ensures access of all children from migrant, refugee or displaced families to universal basic services available in the country. There are no data on migrant or refugee children in the country. Stateless children are reported as zero. ²⁰⁴	Not available In the absence of data it is assumed that support services for children coming from migrant or refugee families cannot be planned accordingly. Government officials state that such children have access to mainstream services. ²⁰⁵ Therefore, the assumption is that the mainstream services are prepared to work with such vulnerability. However, neither the education system nor the available social services report to have worked with such children or families. ²⁰⁶	Not available Disaggregated data on the placements in institutions in terms of their refugee status. Refugee or migrant children have not been reported by interviewed residential facilities for children (infant homes, orphanage).
	Partly available In line with Article 85 of the Family Code of Turkmenistan, raising a child in the family is recognized as a priority form which in the best way shall ensure rights and lawful interests of a child. The implication of this is that universal services should be designed in a way to enable families to take care of all children's needs: Education is accessible to all children but is still insufficiently able to ensure inclusiveness for all children and to avoid segregation of children with special educational needs. Healthcare is available for all children but is insufficiently effective to reduce child mortality and anemia prevalence as well as to fully respond to the health needs of children with disabilities. Early development services are emerging and are contributing to better development for young children: the children who are	Not available Tailored counselling and social support for families experiencing difficulties in caring for their children is not available within the existing social support system of the country. Currently family separation prevention services are underdeveloped and children who are left without parental care are subject to referral for care ²⁰⁹ to close relatives' family for adoption, under guardianship (custody). If there is no such possibility, then a child is placed in institutions for orphans or children left without parental care, to the institutions of social servicing and other institutions. The number of adoptions remains relatively stable over the years ²¹⁰ This increasing trend is also observed for children separated from their families and placed in state care. (See Figure 24). This implies that the secondary level of prevention of family separation is not functioning well. Public associations providing social services report to have served 9 983 persons (both adult and children) and this represents 6% decrease of users compared to 2018 (10 607). ²¹¹ However, these refer to users of all types of vulnerabilities, not necessarily parents and not necessarily in terms of family separation prevention. Comprehensive social support service aimed at preventing child abandonment and service for teenage pregnancy is now being piloted with the JP and is hence with limited coverage, available for Ashgabat and Turkmenabat.	Partly available Possibilities for children separated from their families (and who are not living with a guardian, close relative, or adopted), are one of the following types of institutions: 5 infant homes (for healthy infants 0-3 or infants with disabilities 0-4); 2 children's homes (orphanages), 10 boarding-schools and 6 rehabilitation health complexes. All of them provide long-term care. There are no documented analysis on the duration of the average stay but mostly children spend there all their childhood (interviewed management report that main reason for leaving is reaching full age). The support provided to children is mainly related to basic needs and education. There is no individual planning or case management towards reintegration with the family in order to ensure quick permanent solution for the child and shortening the duration of placement in the institution. Permanent solutions are reunification with the biological family or adoption. There are emerging opportunities for creating models of reintegrating services: reunification programme is piloted within the JP in the Infant homes in Mary and Turkmenabat under UNICEF guidance as well as earlier attempts towards reforming the care model, also with UNICEF support and international organisations. The services is still at pilot phase and its effectiveness and efficiency is still under review, however, Mary Infant home management report positive results for children i.e. 95% of the children leaving the institution in 2020 were reintegrated to their biological families. A model of supporting care leavers to resocialisation from
Child abandonment and placement under the state custody			

²⁰⁴ Interview with Ombudsman Office

²⁰⁵ KPIs

²⁰⁶ Джоанна Роджерс (2020), Базовый перечень социальных услуг в Туркменистане; Отчет выполнен для Совместной программы фонда ЦУР с целью развития качественных, инклюзивных социальных услуг в Туркменистане на местном уровне

²⁰⁹ In accordance with Article 105 of the Family Code of Turkmenistan

²¹⁰ For the period of 2017-2020 the civil registry offices registered the following number of adoptions: 2690 (2017), 2589 (2018), 2659 (2019) and 1180 (first 6 months of 2020), Source: 2020, COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

²¹¹ Джоанна Роджерс (2020), Базовый перечень социальных услуг в Туркменистане; Отчет выполнен для Совместной программы фонда ЦУР с целью развития качественных, инклюзивных социальных услуг в Туркменистане на местном уровне

developmentally on track has increased from 90.9% (2016) to 95% (2019)²⁰⁷

Childcare allowances provided by the state to every child 0-6 are generally sufficient to ensure the basic needs of children but not so much for families of children with disabilities.²⁰⁸

orphanages and other child institutions such as Rehabilitation centres for children with disabilities and boarding schools are emerging with support with UNICEF and other UN agencies.

²⁰⁷ 2015/2016 and 2019 Turkmenistan MICS

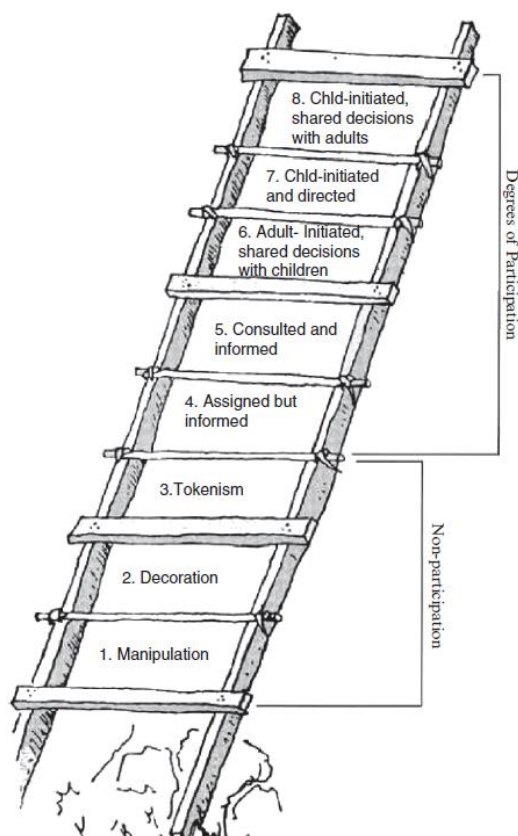
²⁰⁸ FGDs with parents, See section on Goal 4 of the NAP



Annex 11. Levels of participation

In considering further planning of improving opportunities and capacities for participation, it is helpful to consider child participation in terms of levels of participation.²¹²

Figure 16 Levels of participation



For the period under review, child participation, where it occurs, is at the level of informing i.e. still at the lowest level of the ladder. The ladder of participation is useful for helping policy-makers in Turkmenistan think about the follow-up design of children's participation policies. It should be noted that there are many factors affecting the extent to which children participate other than the design of a programme. The ability of a child to participate, for example, varies greatly with his development and background (cultural, ethnic, disability status, age, gender, etc.)

Also, it is not necessary that children always operate on the highest possible rungs of the ladder. The important principle is that of choice - policies, programmes and services should be designed in a way which maximize the opportunity for any child to choose to participate at the highest level of his ability.

Picture by Roger A. Hart, *Stepping Back from 'The Ladder': Reflections on a model of participatory work with children*

²¹² Hart, Roger. (2008). Stepping back from "The ladder": Reflections on a model of participatory work with children.

Annex 12. Terms of Reference

UNICEF Country Office in Turkmenistan

Terms of Reference

International Individual Consultant for Evaluation of the National Plan of Action for Realization of

Children's rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 (NAP) and UNICEF's contribution to its design, implementation and monitoring

Duration: 5 July 2021 - 3 May 2022 (30 Days)

Location: Out-of-country, in case if lockdown restrictions are reduced, two visits to Turkmenistan to be planned (Ashgabat city and selected velayats)

Background

The total population of Turkmenistan is estimated at 6.031 million people for 2020²¹³. In 2019, 50.77 percent of the population were women and 33.3% of the population was under 18²¹⁴. The country has a high fertility rate among women of reproductive age being 2.79 per woman in 2020²¹⁵.

The population pyramid has almost a classical conical shape that shows that the hardships of the 1990 made an impact on the families and negatively affected the birth rates. The birth rate has substantially increased in the 2000s due to economic growth and government targeted measures for protection of motherhood and childhood. The dependency ratio (the people outside of the normal 15-64 working age range compared to the population of working age) was 55.2% in 2020²¹⁶. There are on average 2 workers who can help support people who are too young or too old to work, which is a healthy demographic indicator by the international standards.

The most densely populated areas are the southern, eastern, and northeastern oases, with approximately 15.5 % of the population living in the capital of Ashgabat²¹⁷. Turkmen constitute more than 85% of the population, with Uzbeks, Russians and others as ethnic minorities.

The current political situation in Turkmenistan remains stable, yet complex. The President serves as head of state, head of government and commander in chief of the armed forces, who has the power to appoint and remove members of the Cabinet of Ministers, heads of local authorities, state prosecutors and judges, make recommendations to the Parliament on the Ombudsman, and take decisions about holding elections and referendums.

New constitutional law was adopted in September 2020 introducing amendments to the Constitution of Turkmenistan. In its meeting of 25 September 2020, the People's Council of Turkmenistan adopted the Constitutional Law of Turkmenistan "On amendments and additions to the Constitution of Turkmenistan". The Law was adopted at the initiative of the President of Turkmenistan on the introduction of bicameral system of the Supreme legislative body. According to the amendments, the People's Council and the Mejlis of Turkmenistan will form the upper and lower chambers of the Milli Gengesh – the Parliament accordingly, and the powers of both chambers have been defined. Changes to the Constitution came into force as of 1 January 2021, and elections to Milli Gengesh were held at the end of March 2021.

²¹³ [Turkmenistan Population \(2021\) - Worldometer \(worldometers.info\)](https://worldometers.info/turkmenistan/population/)

²¹⁴ State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan, 2020.

²¹⁵ The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>

²¹⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects 2019, Online Edition. Rev. 1.

<https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>

²¹⁷ The State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan, Statistical Yearbooks of Turkmenistan 2020



In August 2020 the Mejlis of Turkmenistan considered and approved amendments to a number of national laws, that include laws in the areas of International Humanitarian Aid in an Emergency Situation, Social Protection, Insurance, Air Control, On the Protection of Citizens' Health, On Education, on Insurance, on State Pension Insurance, on Certification, on Privatization, on implementation of Budget Code, on Veterinary, laws on ratification of the UN conventions in the areas of transport and many other laws, as well as amendments to the Labour code and Tax Code.

There were not officially registered cases of COVID in Turkmenistan until current time. However, the Covid-19 pandemic is set to slowdown the growth of Turkmenistan's economy in 2020. Turkmenistan's overall economic prospects remained positive in 2020 and 2021, however even through the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate forecasted by the Government was 6.3% in 2019, the actual growth for 2019 was 5.4% ²¹⁸. Turkmenistan right at the beginning of the pandemic took all necessary measures (e.g. closing borders and imposing travel restrictions, etc.) to prevent the penetration of COVID-19 to the country, taken as early as February 2020. These measures allowed to avoid internal lockdowns and keep the economy functioning until July when partial lockdown was introduced primarily affecting the services sector (retail trade, catering, culture, sports and leisure, etc.). Meanwhile, due to its high dependance on hydrocarbon exports and import of goods and components, the economy of Turkmenistan found itself exposed to external shocks triggered by the pandemic, such as the global oil price collapse and supply chain disruptions. The Economic Intelligence Unit's projections are further cautious forecasting the economy of Turkmenistan to contract by 1.1% in 2020 due to the pandemic and low global energy prices.

As of 27 October 2020, Turkmenistan has not reported to WHO any cases of COVID-19 in the country. The declared strategy of Turkmenistan has been to prevent the importation and spread of COVID-19 in the country. Among the fundamental organizational actions was the creation of the Emergency Anti-Epidemic Commission for COVID-19 (EAEC) to combat dangerous infectious diseases, which included members of the government, heads of ministries, departments, and local executive bodies, and which operates under the Cabinet of Ministers to lead national actions under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for health, with an operational headquarters located at the MoHMI.

Several plans associated with this strategy have been approved:

In January 2020, a Decree of the President of Turkmenistan approved the Comprehensive Plan of Measures to Prevent the Importation of COVID -19 into Turkmenistan

A Preparedness and Response Plan for Acute Infectious Disease/Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) was developed with the support of WHO/UN and approved by Turkmenistan (22 May 2020).

Immediate Socio-Economic Response Plan to acute infectious disease pandemic in Turkmenistan was developed with the UN support and approved by the Government (3 July 2020).

Turkmenistan has consistently declared its aim to be a socially oriented economy, and to protect the welfare of the population, by maintaining a system of subsidies and social benefits, and through public investment in the health, education sectors and social infrastructure projects. Prices for staples such as bread, electricity, gasoline, and water are low even by regional standards; primary and secondary education is free; and health care for those who are insured are reimbursed for 50 percent; housing for public sector employees (estimated at 25 percent²¹⁹ of the labour force) and public transport are heavily subsidized²²⁰. However, owing to the lack of up-to-date information and unavailability of recent household survey data, it is unclear to what extent Turkmenistan's economic growth is reflected in higher incomes, and better living standards, especially in rural communities²²¹.

²¹⁸ Statistical Year Book, 2020

²¹⁹ State Statistics Committee, 2017

²²⁰ World Bank Country Engagement Note for 2016-2017

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/371591467987825776/pdf/99556-CRN-P151985-Box393225B-OUO-9-R2015-0199.pdf> World Bank Country Engagement Note for 2016-2017

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/371591467987825776/pdf/99556-CRN-P151985-Box393225B-OUO-9-R2015-0199.pdf> World Bank Country Engagement Note for 2016-2017

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/371591467987825776/pdf/99556-CRN-P151985-Box393225B-OUO-9-R2015-0199.pdf>

²²¹ Trends in living standards are inferred from data on average wages and household income and expenditure, State Statistics Committee, 2016.



With all the necessary measures, in 2020 Turkmenistan has drafted and submitted its Fifth and Sixth joint reports with the information on implementation of Concluding Observations to the CRC. The National Action Plan (NAP) on Children's rights was adopted in 2015 and has been instrumental in implementing the majority of the recommendations. The Plan identifies key areas of the state social policy in the interests of children based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Turkmenistan is a party. All goals and objectives included in the NAP on Children's rights are aimed at the realization of rights and social safeguards for children, implementation of which requires an integrated approach, coordination and cooperation of state bodies and public associations. The aim, objectives, policies and indicators set forth in the NAP on Children's rights, represent an integrated 'roadmap' aiming at the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by Turkmenistan. The NAP's actions encompass all fields of political, social, economic, cultural and civil rights of children based on the current situation and needs of the children in the country.

Theory of Change (ToC) for the NAP was not clearly stipulated in the NAP, but is overall described as a long-term vision of change by 2030, in relation to national governance effectively working for children in Turkmenistan, consisting of projects that national development frameworks with child-focused commitments and measurable targets, explicitly focusing on the rights of all children to health, education, protection and participation, (including the most disadvantaged and/or children at risk of being 'left behind'), with appropriate financial resources allocated and accountabilities of duty-bearers clearly assigned. For this vision to materialise by 2030, the political commitment of national stakeholders and their capacity need to be significantly enhanced implying (i) a child-centred re-allocation of domestic financial resources; (ii) weaving child rights imperatives into national planning and accountability frameworks and (iii) upgrading national data collection and dissemination systems, to pinpoint and address particular vulnerabilities.

NAP was developed with consideration of the UNICEF programmatic priorities and include all the areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan and Country programme Development (CPD). The CPD 2021-2025 was developed for addressing the main priorities and challenges identified during implementation of the NAP.

The National plan on Children's rights identifies the key areas of the state social policy in the interests of children based on the principles of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, to which Turkmenistan is a party. All goals and objectives included in the National plan on Children's rights are aimed at realization of rights and social safeguards for children, implementation of which requires an integrated approach, coordination and cooperation of state bodies and public associations.

The key priorities of the National plan on Children's rights are guided by the goals and objectives of national policies, programmes and plans, such as the National Programme of Turkmenistan for Socio-economic Development for 2011-2030, the new edition of the National Programme of the President of Turkmenistan on the Development of Social and Living Conditions of Residents of Villages, Communities, Towns and Regional Centres until 2020, the Programme of President of Turkmenistan on social and economic development of the country for 2018-2014, the General Programme of Supply of clean drinking water in residential areas of the country, the General Programme of Turkmenistan on Development of Juvenile Justice, the National Strategy and Action Plan for 2015-2019 on Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health. The National plan on Children's rights is divided into corresponding topical sections which include activities for implementing the following key areas of the state policy in the interests of children and implementation of the SDGs:

1. Ensure realization of general measures for implementation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) (hereinafter referred to as the Convention of the Rights of the Child) in Turkmenistan;
2. Ensure the rights of the child for life and survival, in particular through strengthening maternal and child health and promotion of a healthy life style;
3. Ensure the rights of the child for education and development, so all children were able to fully realize their potential, in particular, through quality education and social protection provided to them;
4. Improve living conditions and ensure economic well-being for children and families, including issues of protection in emergency, while focusing on disaster risk reduction through strengthening the actions on preparedness to emergency and response;
5. Protect the rights of all children for the life free from violation, exploitation, cruel and negligent treatment, in particular, through enhancing the efficiency of the system of services for protection and



support of vulnerable children and through implementation of measures aimed at prevention of placing children without parental care in orphanages and children's homes;

6. Ensure the rights of children for freedom of expression on all issues related to their interests and rights to actively participate in social, cultural, economic and public life.

Each of these topical issues prioritizes allocation of resources (even though, the potential estimates were not included in the document), services and programmes to the most vulnerable groups of children, so all children would be able to develop their potential regardless of the place of their residence, income, family environment or any other factor. This is why the National plan on Children's rights has a special focus on ensuring the rights of disadvantaged children, such as the children with disability, migrant children, stateless children, low-income children, children without parental care and children in the conflict with the law.

Evaluation Rationale and Purpose

The Object of the Evaluation

The evaluation will have both summative and formative dimensions. It will provide recommendations for improvements of the effectiveness, scale up and sustainability of Government's work in the area of child rights and UNICEF's support.

Objects of the evaluation are:

- National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 (NAP), with a Road Map for Its implementation and Indicator's Framework
- UNICEF's contribution to the design, implementation and monitoring of the NAP
- Impact of COVID-19 global pandemic on the full implementation of NAP
- Contribution of the NAP into the implementation of SDGs

Specific aspects of the evaluation and its scope will be revisited/defined during the inception phase. It is envisioned, that 10 SDG Ambassadors (2 in each region) will accompany the evaluation processes as part of UNICEF's overall vision of youth inclusion and professional development. The youth will be expected to provide their insights and observations to contribute to informing the data analysis exercises. A role of youth in the evaluation process will need to be further specified in the scope of evaluation.

The Key stakeholders:

Table 1: Key stakeholders and their contribution towards the NAP

Stakeholders	Contribution towards the activities of the NAP
UNICEF Country Office	Technical assistance to the NAP, sharing of best practices, support in improvement of future interventions, support in M&E
Institute of State, Law and Democracy (ISLD)	Main coordinating body on implementation of the NAP, Secretary of the Inter-ministerial Commission on implementation of the the human rights obligations and humanitarian law
Interministerial Commission on implementation of the the human rights obligations and humanitarian law	Develop strategic orientations on the NAP implementation and ensure monitoring and implementation of the NAP
Office of Ombudsmen	Supported with the implementation of a number of Goals of the NAP and ensured efficient monitoring of child rights
Mejlis (Parliament)	Legislative body and main coordinator for implementation of the Goal 1 of the NAP, main partner in ensuring engagement of children and youth in monitoring and policy planning



Municipalities (Hakimliks), Line Ministries	Introduce corrective actions, to use the best available practices, to bridge the inequality gaps and to allocate enough funds. Accelerate reform implementation towards national SDG targets.
Partner NGOs and other Civil Society Organisations (Youth and Women Union)	Support with community engagement for the implementation fo NAP Activities
Donors and other Development partners	Support with additional funding and cost-sharing through the NAP implementation

Scope

Period to be covered: 2018 to date.

Time and Geographical coverage: The evaluation will cover the period of 2018 to 2020. The evaluation's geographic focus will be national. Focused assessment may be needed in selected areas to assess UNICEF contribution which will be further discussed and finalised during the inception stage. 2 SDG Ambassadors per velayat (region) will support with the coverage of the local level aspects where this will be required.

Programmatic coverage: The focus on the evaluation are all the six Goal areas of the NAP, with the exclusion of the activities covered in ECD Evaluation and up-coming Evaluation of the Joint Programme of Social Services.

Taking into account, that ECD Evaluation and the up-coming Joint Programme on Social Services Evaluation are covered across Nap Goal Areas, details on the excluded activities will be discussed with the Consultant at the Inception phase to clearly stipulate the scope. After this, the Consultant will prepare a mapping of all respective activities/projects covering relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of achieved results.

Stakeholders engagement: While all stakeholders are important, special emphasis will be placed on ensuring that children (both boys and girls) who are direct beneficiaries of the interventions are heard, enabled to communicate their priorities and needs, and participate in the evaluation process. Other stakeholders whose participation will be important to assess the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the programme include parents (both mothers and fathers). Central government, local community leaders, municipality management and Implementing Partners will also be consulted in assessing the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the NAP implementation.

Young SDG Ambassadors will be involved to cover visits into to the velayats to have interviews with local representatives in partnership with the Consultant, who will be supporting them on-line. The final list of sites/ institutions as well as respondents will be defined with the consultant.

If COVID related restrictions will remain, all interventions will be conducted on-line and since Young SDG Ambassadors are representatives of youth in each velayat, this will help to provide on-site information and support with logistics. Children will be invited to provide insights through Ministry of Education and on-line communication with them.

Young SDG ambassadors – are socially active people, leaders of their local communities. Each of them is advocating for one Global Goal among their peers, disseminate the information on sustainable development among youth, develop a platform for the collaboration at the national and regional levels to build new partnerships for SDGs.

The population group(s) covered under NAP: boys and girls, adolescents and youth, parents.

The specific activities for the consultancy:



1. Review background information on the implementation of the NAP, CRC Report, National Statistics, Global Statistics and analytical documents developed by UNICEF within the period of the NPAC implementation, MICS 2019, Evaluations of national programmes and other policy document for 2018-2021 period, including an analysis of gender-responsiveness of the state programmes and policies.
2. Reconstruct the Theory of Change (ToC) based on the UNICEF CPD 2016-2020 and potentially taking into account CPD 2020-2025
3. Test theory of change to examine pathways to NAP outcomes.
4. Conduct equity- and rights-based analysis from systems-point of view and with focus of the main principle of "leaving no one behind" (evaluation data should be disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, age and other categories). Particular emphasis should be given to issues of equity, such as the degree to current institutional arrangements of the government, the mandates, other.
5. Analyze if (and how) UNICEF have contributed to the achievement of NAP related to equity and inclusion at national and sub-national levels.
6. Evaluate progress in terms of : a) the initiatives and actions that have been implemented through the NAP; b) how initiatives and actions align with the National Action Plan's aims and priority areas; c) the results and outcomes arising as a consequence of actions undertaken under the National Action Plan
7. Evaluate the relevance and appropriateness of the national strategies and activities implemented in the goal areas of the NAP;
8. Investigate the progress on CRC Recommendations implementation vs implemented activities from NAP;
9. Investigate the level of inter-sectoral coordination (health, education, economic and social) in terms of planning, resource management and implementation
10. Evaluate the efficiency and challenges in the coverage of the most vulnerable groups of children;
11. In order to assess the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability for children, the consultants will undertake discussions with direct beneficiaries and indirect contributors to the Agenda 2030 and implementation of child rights: children (including children with disabilities), parents, NGOs, private sector. The suggested evaluation questions will be clustered around NPAC goals. Based on the findings, the evaluators will document lessons learned and best practices, and draw strategic and operational recommendations.
12. Together with various stakeholders, document important lessons learned and best practices and propose priority areas for strengthening the new NPAC.
13. Train 10 Young SDG Ambassadors to support with focus group discussions and reaching to velayat level
14. Propose the structure and format for the Focus groups and awareness raising with children and their parents on main aspects of NAP and CRC for building their capacity to use National programmes for the full realization of their rights (with coordination by Young SDG Ambassadors).
15. Review all UNICEF programmatic contribution during the period of 2018 to date;
16. Prepare a stakeholder mapping, identifying the roles and relevance of different stakeholders
17. Conduct on-line or country mission (depending on the restrictions due to COVID-19) interview with various stakeholders to document important lessons learned and best practices;
18. Suggest strategic and operational recommendations that can be used by Government of Turkmenistan and UNICEF in the ongoing and future activities to improve child rights implementation and achieve expected outcomes.
19. Validate the results of the evaluation through consultations with stakeholders
20. Support with drafting the Management Response Plan and agreeing on a follow-up steps for its implementation with UNICEF staff and Government Stakeholders

Budget: 10,500 USD.

Location: online, covering Ashgabat city and 5 velayats: Ahal, Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap and Mary.

Rationale and intended use:

Rationale: The timing of the evaluation is critical as the new Country Programme of Cooperation with the UN and UNICEF was signed in 2020, current NAP will be completed in 2022 and the development of a new NAP 2023-2025 will be started this year. Thus, the evaluation will help to shape the programming and policymaking in child-rights, including main elements of cooperation with UNICEF. The evaluation's findings will also inform the update of the Situation Analyses on children and women, the reporting of the country to Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and CRC Committee in 2022 and potentially SDG-related progress reports or other situation analyses.

The NAP evaluation aims to assess the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the NAP implementation, to analyse remaining bottlenecks and barriers that hamper the realization of child's rights, to identify the key lessons learned, to inform UNICEF country office in Turkmenistan on innovations and transformed engagement in these areas and to develop recommendations for the development of a new NAP on children's rights.

Purpose: The main purpose of the evaluation is to **generate substantive evidence-based knowledge** by identifying good practices and lessons learned from the implementation of NAP. The results of this evaluation will be highly useful to enable any **adjustment/redirection** necessary for the planning and implementation of support under the current UNICEF CPD 2021-2025 and will provide a basis for the development of the new NAP 2023-2028.

The evaluation findings and recommendations will contribute to strengthening UNICEF contribution to the realization of child rights and protection of children's access to quality services.

Objective:

The key objective of this evaluation is to explore progress in the implementation of the priority areas, that constitute the program of work under the National Action Plan and identify the main successes, challenges and lessons arising from the implementation of the NAP.

In terms of accountability, the evaluation will independently assess overall progress towards intended outcomes, and, where possible, seek indications of possible effects on the most vulnerable groups of children (incl. children living in the rural area, children with disabilities, children in conflict with the law, etc.). Indicative analysis of UNICEF's added value to the implementation of the NAP will be highly welcome.

In terms of organizational learning, the evaluation will identify and document good practices and lessons learned from the implementation of the NAP, inform decision-making on scaling up the different approaches adopted during the implementation and review existing strategies.

The knowledge generated by the evaluation will be used by:

- UNICEF Turkmenistan for further expanding and improving its programmatic activities in this field;
- ISLD and Line Ministries for planning and implementation purposes of the relevant state programmes;
- Municipalities, NGOs and other stakeholders for improving their activities.

The evaluation will meet the information needs of its intended users as indicated in the Table 1 below.

Table 2: Overview of evaluation Users and Uses



Users	Uses
UNICEF Country Office	Improve the programme strategic notes, tailor strategic approaches depending on the changing context. Document lessons learnt and best practices that can inform development of a new NAP.
All sections UNICEF Country Office, Monitoring & Evaluation unit	Incorporate best practice and draw on lessons learned (i) to improve the performance of future interventions in the field of child rights; (ii) to improve planning/programming of the future interventions; (iii) to strengthen the ME component and ensure strong evidence-based approach in planning and strategizing
ISLD and Interministerial Commission	Take decisions and develop strategic orientations on the NAP implementation and development of the new NAP, including the allocation of human, material and financial resources based on the evidence generated by the evaluation. Use best practice lessons to accelerate child rights agenda implementation towards national SDG targets.
Municipalities (Hakimliks)	Adjust and optimize the NAP implementation mechanisms on local level based on the lessons learned from the evaluation. Adjust monitoring approaches to enhance quality program delivery. Improve budget allocation and effective budget usage procedures, harmonization of actions with all actors to minimize expenses and avoid leaving gaps or overlapping in covering critical needs Use best practice lessons to accelerate reform implementation towards national SDG targets.
Partner NGOs and other Civil Society Organisations	Build on the evidence generated by the evaluation to improve performance in the implementation of NAP interventions. Strengthen capacity where it is lacking.
Donors and other Development partners	Influence the future design and scale-up of child-rights agenda

Secondary audiences: MPs need to be informed in order to introduce necessary legislative changes. International, academic, private and civil society organizations including UN agencies and educators should use the results of the Evaluation to gain more knowledge and to improve their advocacy and practical actions in introduction and implementation of the child rights programmes.

Advocacy and dissemination plan

Although the results of the evaluation will not be known until its completion, UNICEF together with the team of evaluators will work together to prepare an initial dissemination plan to help focus the project and identify key audiences.

To provide an overview of the critical considerations, following is a preliminary list of some of the key elements that will be included in the dissemination and advocacy plan.

- Project overview
- Dissemination goals
- Target audiences
- Key messages
- Sources/messengers
- Dissemination activities, tools, timing, and responsibilities



The Evaluation Report will be presented to the key national stakeholders at local and national levels, to NGOs, children and their parents. The Evaluation Report will be made available on the CO website and evaluation reports database. The visualization materials will be developed and used as an advocacy tool. Additionally, the Report will be shared among bilateral and development partners.

Suggested evaluation questions

The evaluation will employ relevant internationally agreed OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability.

For the purpose of this evaluation the following criteria were used:

Relevance: to what extent is the NAP relevant to the governmental policies and priorities and needs of children in Turkmenistan, particularly of those from vulnerable groups?

Effectiveness: is the NAP achieving its objectives? to what extent is the NAP contributing to the child right implementation at the national and local levels?

Sustainability: to what extent are the results of the NAP likely to sustain after the programme period?

Due to the nature of work with the Government, limited time frame for the Evaluation, Funding, online communication and data limitations, inclusion of coherence, efficiency and impact is not possible. For example, assessment of partnership dynamics will be fragmented, and complexity assessment is difficult.

Access to the information on financial, human and material resources allocated to the NAP by the Government is not sufficient to assess if they were adequate to meet the intended outcomes of the NAP and could be limited only on UNICEF contribution, while this is not what Government will welcome. With the same reasons, assessment of impact is difficult, especially taking into account, that NAP is still in the process of implementation and will not provide a broad picture on the extent to which NAP contributed to the expansion of child rights, particularly to those from vulnerable groups.

The evaluation will answer the following (preliminary) evaluation questions. These questions will be further elaborated and finalized during the inception phase.

RELEVANCE - to what extent is the NAP relevant to the governmental policies and priorities and needs of children in Turkmenistan, particularly of those from vulnerable groups?

- Were the needs of children and young people and priorities of NAP identified in developing the intervention (appropriate needs assessment?) and has the intervention been properly designed to meet the identified needs and priorities?
- To what extent the NAP articulated the objectives related to child rights implementation?
- To what extent NAP contributed to the implementation of SDGs?
- To what extent NAP contributed to the implementation of child rights, equity and gender equality, aspects?

EFFECTIVENESS - is the NAP achieving its objectives? to what extent is the NAP contributing to the child right implementation at the national and local levels?

- To what extent the NAP goals have been achieved and attained its intended results in general, and by intervention component, geographical area, category of population etc.? What were the achievements in terms of improving well-being of Turkmenistan children, both planned and unplanned?



- To what extent were the M&E framework and processes adequate/credible/reliable/accurate to measure outputs, outcomes, and progress? Were the expected results clearly stated and measurable through identifiable indicators?
- What were the causal links, enabling/success factors and constraints/bottlenecks related to the achievement of results?
- What lasting changes – attributable to programming — can be identified in the lives of individuals, families, communities and the broader environment?
- How extensive, effective, and efficient is the transfer of intervention approaches to NGOs and government actors? What were the coordination mechanisms, and did they help? Have IPs effectively and jointly identified and addressed gaps in geographic or vulnerable/at risk group coverage?
- To what extent has the NGO collaboration promoted good working relationships with the government/ local administration to collaborate on community resilience issues?
- What are the barriers to the approach adopted by UNICEF and its partners in delivering interventions, and how has UNICEF and partners worked to identify and address these barriers?

SUSTAINABILITY: to what extent are the results of the NAP likely to sustain after the programme period?

- To what extent did the NAP identify and build on existing national, velayat, local capacities? To what extent do the partners have sufficient resources to keep up the benefits produced by the programme?
- To what extent are the NAP achievements sustained after the withdrawal of external support?
- To what extent have the decision-making bodies (government, civil society, development agencies) and implementing partners undertaken the necessary decisions and course of actions to ensure the sustainability of the NAP? To what extent have the relevant systems been strengthened?
- For the NAP interventions that are still on-going or just completed, did they include appropriate measures to ensure sustainability of the processes, activities, stakeholders, outputs, outcomes and results after the withdrawal of all forms of support from the external development agency?
- Are the interventions supported by UNICEF sustainable and scalable?
- What were/are and will be the enabling factors contributing to sustainability?
- Are inequities between best-off and most marginalized groups likely to increase, remain stable, or decrease when support is withdrawn?
- Will new NAP be more widely replicated or adapted? Are they likely to be scaled up?
- To what degree did participating organizations change their policies or practices to improve HR & GE fulfillment (e.g. new services, greater responsiveness, resource reallocation, improved quality etc.)?
- Has UNICEF support enabled systemic level changes ensuring longer-term sustainability of new services and approaches?



Methodology

The evaluation will have a **theory-based evaluation design** and apply a mixed methods approach. Relevant data should be collected from programme beneficiaries and key implementation stakeholders and partners (implementing NGOs, partners, the central and local authorities, Interministerial commission on human rights, ISLD, UNICEF, etc.). Methodological rigor will be given significant consideration in the assessment of proposals. Bidders are welcome to indicate preferred methodologies, and succinctly relate these to the objectives of the evaluation and its questions. While the evaluation methodological approach will be finalized at the inception phase, initial advice on the comprehensiveness of the evaluation approach is expected at the proposal stage.

Given the complexity of the environments in which the UNICEF programme is being implemented a relevant perspective should inform evaluation approaches and methodologies, rather than simple linear causal models. The theory of change should be articulated in a way that shows UNICEF's *contribution* to a NAP system strengthening through a range of programme approaches.

The evaluation will be conducted according to UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation. It will integrate human rights, gender and equity in accordance with the relevant UNEG guidelines and will be conducted in accordance with the UNEG Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.

In order to deliver this assignment, one international consultant will develop an evaluation design, to undertake interviews and analysis, as well as train Young SDG Ambassadors to support the Team in this process from the regional perspective. The international + SDG Ambassadors will work jointly under guidance of the UNICEF CO and in close cooperation with both Ministries and other partners.

Taking into account, that Young SDG Ambassadors will be involved, ethical training will be provided to them and ensure that while meetings with children or other stakeholders all the ethical aspects were followed. If focus groups or interviews with children and/or parents will be planned and approved, confidentiality and consent will be taken into account.

Young SDG Ambassadors will be provided with the clear instructions on what is expected from them and will be explained what children should reasonably expect in terms of privacy and confidentiality when they participate in interviews and focus groups.

Considering, that in Turkmenistan there were no COVID registered cases, face-to-face meetings of national consultant and SDG Ambassadors with potential respondents are possible. However, the requirement is to follow a 2-meter distance, have protective tools (masks, gloves, sanitizers) and limited number of people, depending on the room size.

The **Evaluation Consultant** should clearly **identify any potential ethical issues** and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process in their proposal. Criteria for Ethical Review Checklist will be discussed at the inception phase and clearly described in the Inception Report. Taking into account, that participation of children and parents, are subject to Government approval, this could be clarified, only when Consultants will start their Inception Phase and propose intended meetings and focus groups. In this regards, Ethical Review approval might be required for those interventions, that will include children as respondents (Focus groups, Interviews with children or parents).

Consultants are expected to submit a work plan of assignment and to confirm the evaluation methodology and tools with the CRM Specialist within the framework of the Inception report development, after careful evaluability assessment and review of available data and information.

In gathering data and views from stakeholders, the consultant will ensure that it considers all the stakeholders (decision makers, programme personnel, beneficiaries, etc.) with potentially diverse views



to ensure the evaluation findings are as impartial and representative as possible. The approach followed from the outset of the evaluation will be as participative as possible. Stakeholders will participate in the evaluation through interviews, discussions, consultations, providing comments on draft documents and developing management responses to the recommendations of the evaluation.

The guiding questions for the evaluation against defined evaluation criteria will be further elaborated through evaluation matrix and used as a basis for development of the main data collection instruments (based on online tools for use during face-to-face meetings) such as interviews, focus groups and observations that should be selected considering COVID-19 related restrictions.

Data collection at two points are expected:

- **Desk review** of reference materials, including monitoring reports and other sources providing secondary data, project documentation, official and administrative statistics, regulatory framework and other related documents. Evaluations relevant to the NAP, both UNICEF and non-UNICEF, and other similar resources should also be sampled for review and analysis. This is important to understand other initiatives undergoing in human right area and the role of UNICEF's in this process. The evaluation is expected to generate clear outcome descriptions and comparators, and to harvest secondary data and apply some level of analysis at the national and velayat levels. All these materials will be prepared by UNICEF. If the volume is too large, the bidders are welcome to suggest approach to select the most appropriate. Detailed List of Documents presented in Annex 2.
- **Data collection with/from respondents (virtually);** data collection will be conducted in the selected sites/ institutions as well as respondents to obtain primary data from programme implementers, beneficiaries and other stakeholders, and to verify the results observed during the document review. Target groups including the families having children, community authorities and decision makers, services providers, concerned UNICEF staff and other relevant stakeholders in settlements and at the national and local levels will be identified during the inception stage. All data collection methods and tools shall be proposed suitable to the virtual mode. While evaluation bidders are expected to offer a gender, cultural and linguistic sensitive approach that will include field-based data collection and/or validation of findings from document analyses and survey findings, we propose that two types of analyses be given due consideration

Data analysis must measure the extent to which the NAP is contributing to the implementation of child rights in Turkmenistan and to what extent NAP contributed to the implementation of SDGs. The analysis will cover findings according to determined evaluation criteria, yet, should also demonstrate statistical validity between variables such as socio-economic and political issues and any other assumptions and risks that can potentially have effect on changing the course of the expected results.

Key evaluation stages to be conducted virtually by International Consultant, with some support of SDG Ambassadors:

During the **Planning phase** the Consultant should start with a review of UNICEF and its partners' relevant internal documents, including but not limited to project documents, quarterly reports submitted by partners to UNICEF, sitreps, partners' own internal evaluation reports, and policy notes, assessments, reviews etc related to NAP.

During the **Inception phase** Consultant should elaborate Inception Report which should outline detailed scope, evaluation framework; methodology; sampling, field visit timing or involvement of Young SDG Ambassadors as part of the Team, train them to ensure national and local coverage and modality



(considering the risks related to COVID-19), data collection methods, timeline for activities and submission of deliverables, dissemination plan etc. The Inception phase will be used as an evaluability phase and the Consultant should collect and review all available evidence. The Consultant also should assess reliability of data with focus on **disaggregated data for evidence generation to be in line with “leave no one behind” approach, so that evaluation data is disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, age and other categories, where possible.** The Consultant should use a qualitative, participatory approach, with stakeholders involved in all aspects of the evaluation and is therefore a shift away from conventional quantitative, expert driven evaluation methods toward a qualitative participant driven approach (with focus on the most significant effects on the lives of the beneficiaries).

During the **Fact-finding phase (field work)** the Consultant will be responsible for collecting data in the field with minimum involvement of partners or UNICEF's staff, but through the Young SDG Ambassadors, as a representative of a Team on the ground. However, UNICEF will facilitate the data collection and field work required for this exercise. Data collection instruments should be selected considering COVID-19 related restrictions. While the assessment criteria have been set above, UNICEF would like the Consultant to use the most significant change technique during all the methods adopted for the assessment alongside other more rigorous approaches. Consultant should conduct data interpretation and conceptual work using disaggregated data (by age, by gender, by place of residence (urban/rural), by the type of the provided services etc). The analysis will be built on triangulating information collected from different stakeholders through different methods including secondary data analysis and documentation review. It should critically examine the information gathered from the various sources and synthesize the information in an objective manner. If contradictory information is obtained from different stakeholders, an effort should be made to understand the reasons for such information, including any gender-based differences. The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods should also focus on equity, gender and human rights aspects, be responsive and appropriate for analysing the gender equality, human rights issues including child rights issues identified in the scope. **Gender equality, equity and human rights considerations** will be elaborated by the Consultant during this phase and addressed across the final report.

During the **Reporting phase** the Consultant should draft Evaluation Report and pay close attention to formulating good recommendations, clearly prioritizing 3-5 recommendations for concrete actions. The evaluation report to be produced must be compliant with the UNICEF Evaluation standards and GEROs Quality Assessment System.

During the **Dissemination phase**, the Consultant should pay close attention to involving the key stakeholders. The Evaluation Report will be disseminated to the UNICEF senior management, programme specialists/officers, including Field Offices. Findings and recommendations will inform the work planning process, as well as the CO's fundraising approach. The findings/recommendations will contribute to the development of the new NAP 2023-2028.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS AND LIMITATION

The following special conditions and limitation are to be taken into consideration:

- Limited data availability and evidence.
- Disaggregation of data is limited
- Baseline data was unavailable until the Mid-term review, conducted in 2020, that is now available for the Evaluation as a Results Framework Table and provide brief results achieved under each of the NAP goal areas
- No pre-existing theory of change and will require development of the Theory of change retroactively.



- Due to Covid-19 situation, no travel is foreseen under this assignment, but support of National Consultant and SDG Ambassadors should cover regions.

Lack of disaggregated data and baseline data for some of the NAP components might present a significant constraint for assessing evaluation effectiveness. The data mainly available from administrative sources and focus on aggregated numbers and not disaggregated by gender, location, disability, age, social status factors. Such approach presents a significant limitation to the Evaluation, as the reliability of poorly disaggregated administrative data will require additional methodological work though some reliable data on NAP might be retrieved from the 2006, 2015-16 and 2019 Turkmenistan MICS. Sensitivity of some indicators related to child rights, access to justice, children in conflict with the law and partially on children with disabilities might bring a challenge for evaluators especially during data collection stage, as respondents might not feel comfortable to talk openly.

Evaluability assessment will be undertaken during the inception phase based on the data and document review. The identified potential limitations should be closely considered during finalization of the evaluation methodology and data collection tools.

The evaluation report will not be used for academic publishing.

The following 7 determinants, or “conditions”, will help categorize critical bottlenecks and barriers:

Determinants	Description
<i>Social Norms</i>	Widely followed social rules of behavior that are followed within a society
<i>Legislation/Policy</i>	Adequacy of laws and policies to reduce/avoid barriers
<i>Budget / expenditure</i>	Allocation & disbursement of required resources that constrain effective coverage
<i>Management / Coordination</i>	Bottlenecks that obstruct accountability and transparency, as well the impediments to coordination and partnership
<i>Financial access</i>	Direct and indirect costs that prevent target group from utilizing available services or adopting certain practices from full realization of child rights
<i>Social and cultural practices and beliefs</i>	Individual/community beliefs, behaviors, practices, attitudes
<i>Timing and Continuity of use</i>	Completion/ continuity of NAP that undermine the effectiveness of NAP

Ethical considerations

Considering UNICEF's strategic agenda to harness innovation and deepen and widen the evidence base to drive and sustain global progress towards the realization of children's rights, ensuring ethical conduct in evidence generation is imperative. This is necessary both in its own right and as a significant contributor to ensuring quality and accountability in the evidence generation process, especially when it involves children.

Evaluation methodology should be based on UNEG Ethical considerations and respond to UNEG ethical guidance to evaluation as guiding principle to ensure quality of evaluation process (<http://www.uneval.org/search/index.jsp?q=ETHICAL+GUIDELINES>) as well as on Standard Operations Procedures (SOP) for Quality Assurance and Ethical Standards in UNICEF-supported Research, Studies and Evaluations (RSEs) towards Measurable Results for Children in the CEE/CIS Region and UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis.



Ethical clearance will be obtained before the fieldwork starts through the official ethical approval by submission to regional LTA holder.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS

UNICEF as a commissioner takes the accountability of the evaluation. Managerial function for this evaluation will be done by Child Rights Monitoring Specialist (Evaluation Manager). Support for this evaluation will be provided by all UNICEF programme staff.

The Evaluation Manager will have the following responsibilities:

- Lead the management of the evaluation process throughout the evaluation (design, implementation and dissemination and coordination of it follow up);
- Convene the ERG meetings; Facilitate the participation of those involved in the evaluation design;
- Coordinate the selection of the Consultant;
- Safeguard the independence of the exercise and ensure the evaluation products meet quality standards;
- Connect the Consultant with the wider programme units, senior management and key evaluation stakeholders, and ensure a fully inclusive and transparent approach to the evaluation;
- Facilitate the Consultant Team's access to all information and documentation relevant to the intervention, as well as to key actors and informants who should participate in interviews, focus groups or other information-gathering methods;
- Provide the evaluators with overall guidance as well as with administrative support; Oversee progress and conduct of the evaluation, the quality of the process and the products;
- Take responsibility for disseminating and learning across evaluations on the various programme areas as well as the liaison with the RSE Steering Committee;
- Ensure that the TOR, IR and Evaluation Report are submitted to external QA review conducted by external institution;
- Disseminate the results of the evaluation.

The Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will comprise of the representatives of the major stakeholders including Evaluation Manager, Deputy Representative (or OIC), UNICEF Programme staff, Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor.

The ERG will:

- Provide clear specific advice and support to the Evaluation Manager and the Consultant throughout the whole evaluation process;
- Review the Inception Report and all drafts of Evaluation Report and ensure Final draft meets the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards;
- Review and provide comments and feedback on the quality of the evaluation process as well as on the evaluation products (comments and suggestions on the TOR, draft reports, final report of the evaluation).



UNICEF is seeking to contract an international consultant, corresponding to the following requirements:

The International Consultant should have the following qualifications:

- Advanced university degree, preferably in evaluation, human rights, social studies or a related field. A combination of relevant academic background and relevant work experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree;
- At least three years' experience in evaluation, including experience in human rights area; evaluations using non-experimental approaches; familiarity with UNICEF and the UN system (CVs required);
- Expertise to analyse, good understanding of human rights issues;
- Geographical scope of professional experience;
- Familiarity with UNICEF work and procedures (possible but not necessary);
- Strong analytical skills and statistical data analysis experience;
- Ability to produce content for high standard deliverables in Russian and English;
- Language skills, ICT skills;
- Sensitivity towards ethics with regards to human and child rights issues, different cultures, local customs, religious beliefs and practices, personal interaction and gender roles, disability, age and ethnicity.

In order to deliver this assignment, an Consultant will be working in close collaboration with 10 SDG Ambassadors and Institute of State, Law and Democracy (ISLD) to assist in evaluation design, to undertake the on-line or country mission interviews and analysis. The ISLD will provide inputs and feedback to the evaluation report. The Consultant will work jointly with SDG Ambassadors under guidance of the UNICEF CO and in close cooperation with Ministries and other partners.

The Evaluation Consultant will report to Evaluation Manager and conduct the evaluation by fulfilling the contractual arrangements in line with the TOR, UNEG/OECD norms and standards and Ethical Guidelines; this includes developing of an evaluation (implementation) plan as part of the inception report, drafting and finalizing the final report and other deliverables, and briefing the commissioner on the progress and key findings and recommendations, as needed.

The **Evaluation Consultant** should also adhere to UNICEF's Evaluation Policy, to UNEG's ethical guidelines for UN evaluations and to UNICEF Reporting Standards. Evaluation Consultant members will sign a no conflict of interest attestation.

The **Evaluation Consultant** must demonstrate personal and professional integrity during the whole process of the evaluation. The Evaluation Consultant must respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced to its source. Further, the team must respect ethics of research while working with children including using age appropriate consent forms, age appropriate data collection, and principle of do no harm. Furthermore, the Team must take care that those involved in the evaluation have an opportunity to examine the statements attributed to them. The evaluation process must be sensitive to beliefs, manners, and customs of the social and cultural environment in which they will work. Especially, the Team must be sensitive to and address issues of protection, discrimination and gender inequality. Furthermore, the



Team is not expected to assess the personal performance of individuals and must balance an assessment of management functions with due consideration of this principle.

The evaluation should follow UN Evaluation Group Norms and Standards (including ensuring that the planned evaluation fully addresses any ethical issues).

WORKPLAN AND DELIVERABLES

The evaluation is expected to be completed within **30 days**.²²² This might be subject to change depending on the prevailing situation on ground at the time of the evaluation.

The evaluation process at all stages should follow UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis.

The Evaluation Consultant is responsible to submit the following **Deliverables (subject to external Quality Assurance)**:

Detailed Inception Report (IR) in English (Electronic version to be submitted within two months after signing a contract and initial briefing with the Evaluation Manager, ERB and ERG). This report should be 20 to 25 pages in length and should be in line with UN standards for IRs. The IR should outline detailed scope, evaluation framework; methodology; sampling, field visit timing and modality, data collection methods, timeline for activities and submission of deliverables, dissemination plan). The IR should also include initial data and findings based on the documentary review and final evaluation design/plan. The Inception Phase will be used as an evaluability phase and phase to collect and review all available evidence. This report will be used as an initial point of agreement and understanding between the Evaluation Consultant and Evaluation Manager. A draft will be shared in advance for comments and approved by the ERG. Final inception report will be presented by the Evaluation Consultant to the ERB and ERG and quality assured by RSE Steering Committee, Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor and external QA institution. Young SDG Ambassadors will be involved to cover visits into the velayats to have interviews with local representatives in partnership with the evaluation Consultant, who will be supporting them on-line. The final list of sites/ institutions as well as respondents will be defined with the evaluation Consultant.

Draft Evaluation Report in English and Russian (Electronic version of the first draft should be submitted after completion of the data collection). The draft report should be in line with UNICEF adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standards and contain the same sections as the final report (described in the p. 10) and will be at least 50 pages in length (excluding annexes). It will also contain an executive summary of no more than 5 pages that includes a brief description of the context and current situation, the purpose of the evaluation, its methodology and its main findings, conclusions and recommendations. The draft will be shared with the ERG to seek their comments. The drafts report will be quality assured by RSE Steering Committee and Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor. The final draft will be quality assured by external QA institution.

Evaluation Report (Final draft) in English and Russian (Electronic and hard copy versions to be submitted after receiving consolidated comments and feedback from UNICEF). The final report will be 50 to 60 pages in length. It will also contain an executive summary of no more than 5 pages. The final report should include all received comments and suggestions provided by QA review providers. The Evaluation Report should systematically answer the key evaluation questions posed. It should fairly and clearly represent the views of the different actors/stakeholders. It should clearly give the conclusions and recommends in a way that is substantiated by evidence. The Final Report should be submitted along with the **Power point presentation in English and Russian** (electronic version). Presentation should

²²² interested candidates should indicate the expected time to complete the assessment in their proposals



be based on the finalized evaluation report summarizing the entire process, purpose, objectives, methodology, findings and recommendations and conclusions.

Dissemination plan and advocacy approaches should be developed as part of the IR and then discussed/agreed with the CO. Primarily, the result will be disseminated to the CO senior management. The findings will be discussed at the management team meetings, programmatic reviews to inform the CO's programming. The plan for dissemination and advocacy of the Evaluation result will be cleared by the CO's Representative.

The Evaluation Consultant should propose a timeline to submit the deliverables in their implementation plan (in proposals). Necessary and adequate time (at least two weeks) should be allocated for review and quality assurance processes of the deliverables by the Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor and External Institution.

The Evaluation Consultant should produce the above assessment and conduct the meetings for submitting each Deliverable. Deadline for each deliverable to be agreed between the Evaluation Consultant and UNICEF.

Table 4. Reporting format of the Deliverables

Deliverable	Reporting format	Time Frame
Evaluation and verification of results:		
Home-based consultancy work, to conduct desk review of the relevant laws, policies, concepts, studies, reports, research documents, coordination mechanisms, formal and in-formal services, available statistics. The documents for review to be provided by UNICEF and the Government. They should be submitted two weeks prior to the first consultations with the Government for dissemination among national partners.	Prepared and agreed with UNICEF via exchange of e-mails evaluation schedule, implementation plan	30 July 2021
<p>Detailed Inception Report</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) In consultation with UNICEF and state stakeholders to develop an inception report with the suggested methodology and data collection tools for the evaluation. The inception report should refine the scope of the evaluation and evaluation questions and identify additional data needs. The UNICEF office in Turkmenistan will then make official request for data to the relevant Government offices. 2) Review of the inception Report by UNICEF and the Government 3) Train SDG Ambassadors for the Field work and develop structure and agenda for the required focus groups 4) First consultations with the Government: in collaboration with the selected national 	Electronic version in Russian and English	30 July 2021



expert(s) finalize and agree on the methodology of the assessment. Initiate the evaluation by conducting interviews with relevant partners		
Data collection/Field work (virtual, considered COVID-19 related risks). Visits of national consultant and SDG Ambassadors to velayats	Meeting notes, participant lists, Focus Group notes	30 August 2021
Reporting:		
1st interim report (including UNICEF and external versions) and incorporation of UNICEF and Government comments	Electronic version in Russian and English	30 October 2021
2nd version of report after incorporation of UNICEF and Government comments	Electronic and hard copy versions in English and Russian	30 December 2021
Presentation of the findings and discussion of recommendations	Power point presentation on key findings and recommendations in English and Russian	20 February 2022
Finalization of the report, including recommendations to UNICEF and the Government of Turkmenistan	Report in English and Russian is	30 March 2022
Follow up and use of evaluation findings:		
Dissemination of the final report to all partners and stakeholders	Final Report	30 May 2022
Development of management response	Management Response in Russian and English	30 May 2022

All deliverables should be drafted in Russian and English. All reports should follow the structure and detailed outlines discussed and agreed with UNICEF in Turkmenistan.

All deliverables should respond to UN Evaluation Group QA criteria, including UNEG quality checklist for Inception Report and Evaluation Report

<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/library>)

Performance indicators:

- Timely developed and agreed with UNICEF evaluation schedule and implementation plan;
- Timely carried inception meetings;
- Timely delivered Inception Report;
- Timely carried out field work (considered COVID-19 related risks);
- Timely prepared Draft of the Report;
- Timely carried out meetings to discuss Draft of the Reports;
- Comments from UNICEF and QA institution, if any, to the Draft of the Report, are addressed and incorporated;



- h) Timely finalized and submitted Evaluation Report (final version after external QA review);
- i) Quality and context of all required reports corresponds to the TOR requirements and, if any, incorporates recommendations of UNICEF and/or QA review;
- j) Qualifications of involved staff correspond to TOR requirements.

