

UNICEF Sri Lanka

Evaluation of the
Country Programme
(2018-2022)

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BCC	: Behaviour Change Communication	NCPA	: National Child Protection Authority (Sri Lanka)
CC-DRR	: Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction	NEP	: National Evaluation Policy
CEDAW	: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	NMC	: National Monitoring Committee (CRC)
CMT	: Country Management Team (UNICEF SLCO)	NNC	: National Nutrition Secretariat
CP	: Country Programme	OR	: Other Resources Regular
CPD	: Country Programme Document	PS	: Perception Survey
CPE	: Country Programme Evaluation	PSN	: Programme Strategy Notes
CRC	: Child Rights Convention	RAM	: Results Assessment Module
CERC	: Contingent Emergency Response Component	RR	: Core Resources for Results (Regular Resources)
CSD	: Child Survival and Development (CSD) Programme (UNICEF SLCO)	SAARC	: The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
CSOs	: Civil Society Organizations	SAM	: Severe and Acute malnutrition
DMC	: Disaster Management Centre	SDGs	: Sustainable Development Goals
DRR	: Disaster Risk Reduction	SGBV	: Sexual and Gender Based Violence
DHS	: Demographic and Household Survey, GoSL	SitAn	: Situation Analysis
DNM	: District Nutrition Monitoring System)	SLEvA	: Sri Lanka Evaluation Association
DPCCS	: Department of Probation and Child Care Services	SPSS	: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
ECD	: Early Childhood Development	SUN	: Scaling Up Nutrition
ECCD	: Early Childhood Care and Development	ToC	: Theories of Change
ECE	: Early Childhood Education	UN	: United Nations
ERG	: Evaluation Reference Group (UNICEF ROSA)	UNCT	: United Nations Country Team
FAO	: Food and Agriculture Organization	UGC	: University Grants Commission
GCE	: General Certificate of Education	UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product	UNESCO	: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
GoSL	: Government of Sri Lanka	UNICEF	: United Nations Children's Fund, (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
ILO	: International Labour Organization	UNFPA	: United Nations Fund for Population Activities
IMEP	: Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	UN-Habitat	: UN-Habitat, is the United Nations agency for human settlements
INGOs	: International Non-Governmental Organizations	UNSDf	: UN Sustainable Development Framework
IYCF	: Infant and Young Child Feeding	UNICEF SLCO	: UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office
KII	: Key Informant Interview	UNICEF ROSA	: UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
LBW	: Low Birth Weight	USD	: United States Dollar
LCA	: Life Cycle Approach	VAC	: Violence Against Children
LLRC	: Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission	WASH	: Water Sanitation and Hygiene
MDGs	: Millennium Development Goals	WFP	: World Food Programme
MoE	: Ministry of Education	WHO	: World Health Organization
MoH	: Ministry of Health		
MoWCA	: Ministry of Women and Child Affairs		
MSAPN	: Multi-sectoral Action Plan for Nutrition		
NGOs	: Non-Governmental Organisations		

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Executive Summary

The Country Context

Sri Lanka has a population of 21.8 million with a under 18 years of child population of about 6.2 million. The Gross Domestic Product per capita is USD 3,852. It has a high human development index with a life expectancy of 75 years. The ethno-political conflict from about 1983 to 2009 resulted in the death of thousands and devastation inflicting deeply felt consequences at the human, social, physical, and institutional level.

Despite sound health indicators, nutrition in children under five remains a major public health concern, with high and persistent rates of undernutrition. Sri Lanka is unlikely to meet the SDG target on wasting. Access to safe water is almost 85% with about 44% with pipe-borne water supply. There is near universal access to primary education with gender parity. Learning outcome assessments find that there are large disparities according to language, subjects and geographic locations. Data on violence against children in Sri Lanka is limited, and there are no national data. Corporal punishment is widely practiced in schools and accepted by parents. Online child sexual abuse is a concern. The child protection system has weaknesses. Information on children with disabilities is very scarce. Social protection schemes in Sri Lanka are fragmented and does not focus on children. Gender parity in Sri Lanka is high compared with other countries in the region.

The constitutional crisis (2018/19) resulted in Sri Lanka being downgraded to lower middle-income country (2020); the new governments in 2019 and 2020 did not explicitly give priority to peace and reconciliation. The Easter Sunday attack of 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic caused disruptions to livelihoods and the economy.

UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Programme

UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Programme for 2018-2022 is aligned with and constitutes UNICEF's contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Framework and is guided by a theory of change that is based on investing in the critical windows of early childhood and adolescence *to contribute to increased cognitive capital which in turn will support Sri Lanka's sustainable development*. There are three outcome areas reflecting three lifecycle stages: Early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence; these are supported by two overarching outcomes in social policy and programme effectiveness. The current country programme represented a strategic shift from more emergency and service-delivery-focused implementation logic to a more upstream, policy-influencing and advocacy-oriented approach.

The vision is to contribute to national efforts to accelerate the realization of child rights for all children in Sri Lanka, while promoting strategic investments in children and adolescents to enhance Sri Lanka's cognitive capital. The Country Programme Document (CPD) identified three programming levels, viz., upstream (national); midstream (provincial) and downstream (community).

The CPD has been designed with an indicative budget of USD 57,235,000, made up of USD 4,735,000 from regular resources and USD 52,500,000 from other sources. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the programmes have been adjusted to accommodate COVID-19 related work.

Purpose and Objectives of the Country Programme Evaluation

The CPE, covering the period 2018-2020, will provide information for the next country programme, assess performance of results and the adoption of the lifecycle approach for effective delivery. The CPE examined the Theories of Change and assessed results of a selected number of outputs.

The main participants of the evaluation were stakeholders, who were mapped and identified in consultation with UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office (UNICEF SLCO). Altogether 46 (M-22; F-24) and 56 (M-29; F-27) stakeholders were identified for KIIs and the Perception Survey, respectively.

Methodology: The evaluation was confined to a limited number of outputs, as agreed, and adopted a participatory and interactive approach; qualitative data were collected from interviews. A perception survey was undertaken using a group of stakeholders, which provided quantitative data on relevance and effectiveness, including stakeholder satisfaction of interventions. Forty-nine stakeholders (F-24; M-24) (or 88%) responded to the survey, Desk review was conducted using reports and other published materials. Based on an Evaluation Matrix developed, KII Guides were developed for different groups of stakeholders.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all KIIs were conducted online with 51 external stakeholders (M-28; F-23). Ethical norms and principles were followed during the interviews. This evaluation was guided by the minimum standards laid down by UNICEF and UNEG. The qualitative information collected was analysed and triangulated to derive trends and conclusions. Perception Survey data were analysed using SPSS software.

The evaluation team adopted mitigatory actions to overcome the key limitations, which included the short time period available for the evaluation, meeting restrictions due to COVID-19, potential low response to the Perception Survey, and limited number of key informants.

Relevance

Programme alignment: In **Nutrition** and in **Child Protection**, initiatives align well with national priorities. Sri Lanka has “pathfinding” status with the Global Partnership to end Violence against Children, and the work assessed is directly linked with Sri Lanka’s commitment as a pathfinder country and is a priority in GoSL. In **Education**, outputs are aligned with the government policy at the time of designing; they also align with the Peacebuilding Priority Plan of GoSL. The programme interventions are more relevant at the community (school community) and require more attention towards the society leaders such as political leaders, parents and caregivers and village leaders. The outputs become relevant only when there is integration in the society. The **Disaster Risk Reduction** work is in line with UNICEF’s Global Strategic Plan and has been found to complement GoSL efforts in DRR. The **Social Policy and Social Protection** work broadly covers GoSL welfare services and are very relevant especially for the low-income families and their children. Overall, the identified programme serves the needs of children and young people.

Theory of Change: Analysis of Theories of Change reveal that there is a gap between outputs and very high-level national outcome indicators. The evaluation notes the UNICEF policy of linking with national indicators at the outcome level; however, the limited portfolio of work is unlikely to make any changes in national indicators. These national statistics are more apt for service delivery mode with large funding. Furthermore, most data for national level indicators are generated by GoSL and are generally not available in a timely manner. Also, many of the policies, strategies and tools supported by UNICEF SLCO are yet to be fully operationalised; the expected outcomes are unlikely to be demonstrated in the near future. Nonetheless, the evaluation notes the relevance at output level; yet the interventions are spread and small and depend on the uptake by the Government to truly become relevant.

The evaluation notes that the CPD has included some of the key priorities identified in the Situation Analysis of 2017. There have been good stakeholder consultations in the design of CPD.

Positioning of UNICEF SLCO: The evaluation notes UNICEF SLCO’s strengths as a respected partner with GoSL on **child protection** matters and as the only international agency with expertise in child protection. In **education** also, UNICEF SLCO is well positioned within GoSL as having supported in many ways in the past. In **health** and **nutrition**, there are a few UN agencies working on different aspects of nutrition of children and mothers; the position of UNICEF SLCO is much less prominent. In **Social Policy**, GoSL considers agencies such as UNDP, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the International Labour Organisation as stronger partners than UNICEF SLCO.

Effectiveness

Reach and delivery of Results: In general, the programme effectiveness has been adversely affected due to implementation delays caused by the change of Government (2018 and 2019), Easter Sunday attack (2019), inadequate programme funding, and COVID-19 (2020 -). UNICEF SLCO implemented a variety of containment measures for COVID-19 pandemic, but normalcy of implementation is yet to return.

In **Nutrition**, the interventions supported by UNICEF SLCO include formative research on infant and young child feeding and maternal nutrition practices in Sri Lanka, and introduction of national protocols for management of severe and acute malnutrition. The advocacy work led GoSL to allocate additional funding for production of supplementary food for children <5 y and pregnant mothers. The effectiveness of the nutrition component is hampered due to several reasons including non-implementation of the National Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Action Plan, non-functional National Nutrition Secretariat, gaps between the Policy and grassroot level actions, and due to delays in delivery. Engagement with Ministry of Health has been limited, and their technical needs should reflect the national/local context rather than experiences from other parts of the world. The evaluation did not

find evidence for the notion of the stakeholders that the priority given to nutrition is less than that given for health, but because this notion was expressed regularly by external stakeholders, this needs further examination.

In **Child Protection**, UNICEF SLCO led the development of the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children and the Alternative Care Policy. The momentum has since been lost and the platform for VAC is now inactive. The delivery of the pilot on life skills programme is delayed due to COVID-19, and government ownership has been limited. Similarly, the parenting skills pilot is very delayed and is currently still at module finalization stage. Securing government ownership of pilots, towards achieving a scale up should the results be successful, is not consistent largely due to funding issues of GoSL. The results are unlikely to significantly contribute to outcome level changes. Whilst interagency coordination has been limited, frequent managerial changes in GoSL agencies have also caused delays.

In **Education**, the programme supports an overall school curriculum that promotes social harmony. Whilst some work on curriculum development is delayed, GoSL has decided that all revisions to the curriculum should be a part of the ongoing education reforms, which are expected to be piloted partially in 2022. In *positive disciplining*, work has progressed, and the package is expected to be rolled out in 2022. The social cohesion work piloted in selected schools is not properly monitored due to COVID restrictions, and the E-platform is fully implemented at only a few schools due to funding difficulties. The *Music for Social Cohesion* is an innovative strategy that could be upscaled, but there is an uncertainty in upscaling due to funding difficulties by GoSL. The national study on the issues of ragging and SGBV in Sri Lankan Universities by the University Grants Commission is also incomplete to assess effectiveness. Inadequate coordination between the education and child protection sections at UNICEF SLCO in delivering outputs on school violence is also seen by both GoSL and UNICEF SLCO staff as an issue. Pre-COVID-19 implementation delays coupled with post-COVID closure of schools and lockdowns have affected delivery. A proper assessment is not possible as the outputs need a coordinated effort of all deliverables to achieve the outcomes. The National Action Plan on Education for Peace and Reconciliation has not been implemented by Ministry of Education due to school closure since March 2020.

The **Child-Centred DRR** programme has been piloted in several districts prone to disasters together with district child protection officials with a reach of about 3,500 children via the Children's Clubs. UNICEF SLCO has also taken the lead to reinvigorate the school safety guidelines originally drafted in 2016, and the Ministry of Education (MoE) has taken steps to formalise these guidelines within the school curriculum. Work relating to the safety of children in transition (from school to home) is appreciated by the GoSL partners.

In **Social Policy**, the UNICEF SLCO-advocated National Monitoring Committee for monitoring child rights (CRC) is dormant since 2019. It is also supporting the Department of Census and Statistics to introduce the Multidimensional Poverty Index linking with SDG as a tool for measuring child poverty, and this work is ongoing. UNICEF SLCO has supported citizen friendly budget consultation processes, which has been implemented in the Eastern Province, and work on budget allocations for child sensitive initiatives. It has also provided an analysis of the national budget to assess inclusion of vulnerable groups.

UNICEF SLCO, together with UNICEF ROSA technically and financially supported improving the national evaluation capacity, which included developing a curriculum for a postgraduate diploma in evaluation at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura which has been offered to about 100 GoSL and NGO staff, and training about 60 Young and Emerging Evaluators in short-term courses. However, the effectiveness of the initiatives has not been assessed. The National Evaluation Bill, the development of which has been supported by UNICEF SLCO is pending the approval within GoSL.

Despite providing advocacy on budget allocations, work on influencing increased budget allocation for children has not borne fruition, and the situation is exacerbated by the economic melt-down due to COVID-19. The concept of the Citizen's Budget, facilitated by UNICEF SLCO, has been embraced by the Eastern Provincial Council, and the Northern Provincial Council will follow suit. On Social Policy, the engagement with the Government agencies has been few and sporadic; stakeholders are of the view that a more concerted engagement is needed to influence GoSL policy. The CRC/NMC became inactive since its last meeting in 2018 due to lack of political willingness and absence of a lead Ministry for coordination of its affairs.

Sustainability: It is premature to assess sustainability for initiatives that are still being rolled out; nonetheless, in **Nutrition**, since the initiatives supported by UNICEF SLCO are already in the programmes of MoH, they are likely to be continued, subject to availability of funds. In **Child Protection**, the outlook for sustainability of the

national partnership on VAC is currently limited due to challenges in engaging government stakeholders. Some early lessons show linkages to line ministries which have to be activated to develop a more streamlined system. In **Education**, there is a likelihood of interventions being scaled up once the changes in the Government agencies are stabilised. A worrisome situation is the reduction of funding for the Peace and Reconciliation Unit of the Ministry of Education, which has not received GoSL funds for activities. In **Social Policy**, UNICEF SLCO initiatives, some of which are also supported by other UN agencies, are embedded in the work programmes of the relevant GoSL agencies and are likely to be continued with the support of donors.

Overall, GoSL commitments to sustainability and adoption of some of the measures advocated by UNICEF SLCO that require increased investments by the Government are dependent on improving the economic situation in the country. Nonetheless, some policy/strategy initiatives can be sustained with minimal investments.

Timeliness of Delivery: One of the main challenges faced by UNICEF SLCO is timely delivery of the programme. There have been delays in implementing 2018-19 workplans due to delivery delays by both GoSL partners and UNICEF SLCO; COVID-19 exacerbated the situation relating to 2020 workplans from about March, 2020. Overall, most work in education and child protection have been delayed and are unlikely to be streamlined this year.

Monitoring and Reporting: Review of the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plans for the three years show that some data gathering activities were postponed from 2020 to 2021, but for the large part most have been concluded or initiated, few seem to be dropped. The annual reporting differs somewhat from year to year due to changes in organization-wide reporting formats (RAM). The evaluation notes that reporting structures are complicated, and staff find reporting at outcome level challenging.

Country Office Architecture: UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office is organised by thematic sections, with Zonal Offices in the Northern and Eastern Provinces and an outpost office in Uva/Central Province. In the current cycle, the lifecycle approach is used which is not in sync with office structure. Staff indicate that there too many meetings; yet external stakeholders find inadequate internal coordination.

In the previous programme cycle, the UNICEF SLCO adopted a service delivery approach, and the staff capacity and competence were adequate for that purpose. With upstream policy dialogue and advocacy, a different set of skills for advocacy is needed in some thematic areas,

The Zonal Offices function as UNICEF SLCO representative offices and have developed very close rapport with the relevant provincial administration. This arrangement facilitates identification of provincial needs, and to provide a feed-back. Overall, Zonal Offices and the outpost office are recognised as very useful.

Funding: The evaluation notes inadequate funding as a major reason affecting programme effectiveness. The Country Programme is premised on the availability of USD 57 million made up of USD 4.7 million from Core Resources (RR) and USD 52.5 million from other resources (OR - donors). It is seen that UNICEF SLCO received only about 22% of the originally envisaged budget or about 33% of the prorated budget (for 3 years). There is a significant shortfall in funding as only 18% of the expected external funds (RR) have been realised as at Dec, 2020. As of October, 2021, USD 25,770,000 (or 45% of the original budget) has been received and a part of this has been 're-phased' for 2022.

Knowledge products and Outreach: The evaluation noted the need for rigorous quality assurance of knowledge products, especially publications, to meet the accepted standards to UNICEF. In regard to outreach, some senior GoSL partners were unaware of UNICEF SLCO's programme or the focus areas in the current cycle. Similarly, some partners were unaware of the results of work done – as a result, there was a show of disinterest in the overall outcome indicators by the partners.

Partnerships: The evaluation noted that some of the Civil Society Organisations (CSO) engaged have long-standing partnerships with UNICEF SLCO and have added value to UNICEF SLCO's work and provided valuable feed-back on the programme. Some GoSL and NGO stakeholders expressed reservations on the choice of CSOs as some of them lacked in-house capacity. Information sharing is an important element in the partnerships; 81% were 'satisfied' with the way UNICEF SLCO is sharing information.

Engagement with the private sector is in a nascent stage and has moved slowly. Since 2018, USD 129,000 have been collected, largely for COVID-19 response. Private sector engagement guidelines are being prepared. It is evident that private sector can be attracted by offering custom-made programmatic packages to align with the core business of the company. Although some staff are not convinced on engaging with the private sector due

to potential reputational risks, there is a case for UNICEF SLCO to work with businesses to achieve results for children.

The perceptions of the stakeholders on general effectiveness in a number of areas show an overall rating of moderately satisfactory/satisfactory; however, about 20% show unsatisfactory rating for quality of work and timeliness of delivery.

Programme assumption: The CPD is premised on a number of assumptions. However, some of important assumptions (e.g. changes in social services and budgeting, data management by GoSL, support for UN agencies) remain unaddressed.

Coherence

Much of the work is still in progress. The indications are that the current portfolio of work, when completed, is likely to show coherence with national programmes as they fit well and complement GoSL initiatives, albeit with limited effect. In regard to UN joint programming, the evaluation notes implementation has been very compartmentalised in participating UN agencies and have been treated as distinct sub-project components by them. The spirit of joint programming has not been demonstrated due to a number of challenges. Some of these have been recognised, and the UN Country Office, which leads joint programming has taken steps to improve the situation.

Equity and Gender: The evaluation notes that the application of United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and the UNICEF's Gender Action Plan across the programmes is uneven, largely due to funding constraints. There are gender aspects in nutrition that could be addressed. In social cohesion and bullying in schools, there is no specific reference to gender inequality; the University study on ragging does consider gender inequality. It would appear that a 'gender lens' has not been consistently used in project implementation and reporting, partly due to the limited understanding of gender equality aspects by the implementing partners.

Although UNICEF SLCO has acknowledged the need for focusing on mainstreaming gender and disability in all outcomes, disability remains almost invisible in planning documents. Disaggregated data to show inequities and gender differences are not very evident in the portfolio. About 20% of the stakeholders rated UNICEF SLCO's work unsatisfactory in a number of gender-related areas.

Lifecycle Approach

Lifecycle approach was introduced to UNICEF SLCO during the current programme cycle. There is broad agreement that the theory behind this approach, a child-centred/holistic way of delivering results, makes much sense and is desirable. However, excepting health and nutrition, there is little support by UNICEF SLCO staff for continuing the lifecycle approach in the next country programme. In health and nutrition, there is better congruence with GoSL structures. The negative effects of implementation such as long and too many meetings, lack of staff time, loss of specificity, need to use sector-based indicators, misalignment with GoSL structures, and internal management difficulties are felt very strongly, while the positive outcomes are minimal. Any value added is limited to very few instances.

Both the lifecycle meetings as well as the various working groups appear to mostly involve staff in Colombo though they include at least one field-based staff. The "Matrix Management", creating linkages and reporting structures that reflect that one person's work impacts other sectors, is still in its early phase.

Lessons learnt

The positive and negative lessons summarised below are from the analysis of evidence gathered during the CPE and will be useful when developing the next programme cycle.

- The Outcome indicators, which use national indicators as a policy of UNICEF, are not realistic will not be useful to show results from the CP. Further, in most cases the required data are not available. Investments on supporting national fora and policies have not brought the desired results to fulfil indicators.
- Due to funding constraints, the programme appears over-ambitious and generate wrong signals to others.
- The CC-DRR work has been embraced by the provincial authorities due to effective transfer of knowledge and experiences and replicability.

- The disability and gender aspects are not mainstreamed adequately in programme planning, and the understanding of these concepts by implementing CSOs is limited, providing a lesson for the next cycle.
- The UN Joint Programming assessed during the CPE does not demonstrate that the agencies have understood the spirit of UN Joint Programming. The joint programmes have worked in isolation without much coordination.
- Some of the implementing CSO partners who have had long-standing engagement with UNICEF SLCO have added value to the programme; these lessons are useful for strategically selecting CSOs. There is also potential for engaging new partners to bring new perspectives.

Recommendations

Programme Strategy and Design

1. The new programme should be based on clearly identified priorities and should be based on the availability of funding. A package of actions may provide outcomes at local level. If full upstream portfolio is adopted, suitable indicators to measure policy and advocacy rather than child wellbeing should be used
2. In regard to equity and gender equality, UNICEF SLCO should focus on disaggregated data collection in programmatic work, and support cyber space issues (gender), and addressing issues of children in special situations (equity).
3. The Theories of Change in the new Programme Cycle should clearly articulate the convergence of interventions to higher level results. The outcomes and outputs should be measurable with available data..
4. In the new programme, more attention to nutrition is needed. The nutrition regimes should be customised to localities. CRC work should be the responsibility of Child Protection Section, Protection work on education requires collaboration between Education and Child Protection sections. Several programmatic areas are identified for consideration in the next cycle.

Programme Delivery

5. In the new programme cycle, discontinue the lifecycle approach in its current form and introduce other methods to increase internal collaboration.
6. In the new programme cycle, reprofile/reskill the staff competences for upstream policy dialogue and advocacy to enable high-level engagement with GoSL.
7. The Zonal Offices (Kilinochchi and Batticaloa) and the Outpost Office (Uva) should continue, but their scope of work and staffing should be revisited once the new programme priorities and funding are determined in the new cycle.
8. In partnerships, review the selection criteria for identifying CSO partners; jointly review the delivery of previous UN Joint Programmes to introduce new mechanisms to improve delivery, and ensure regular dialogue with GoSL partners particularly on policy matters. work.
9. Ensure that reporting in the Annual Reports and RAM is consistent and help in tracking progress; develop tools to track progress on indicators and for early detection of delays; and assess the outcomes of building the national evaluation capacity.

Sharing of Results and Knowledge

10. UNICEF SLCO should strive to periodically inform its implementing partners, including GoSL partners on the country programme content and results.

1. Introduction

In accordance with the UNICEF Evaluation Policy, it is necessary to conduct a Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) at least once every two programme cycles or once in a programme cycle if monitoring and audit information points to a significant shift in the programming context or a significant increase in the level of risk. The previous CPE for Sri Lanka was for the 2002-2006 cycle.

This CPE commenced in September, 2021

1.1. UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Programme

UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Programme for 2018-2022 is aligned with and constitutes UNICEF's contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF), 2018-2022. The UNSDF brings together 13 UN agencies working in Sri Lanka, and reflects global, national, provincial and UN priorities, including the SDGs.

The country programme for 2018-2022 is guided by a theory of change that is based on investing in the critical windows of early childhood and¹ adolescence *to contribute to increased cognitive capital which in turn will support Sri Lanka's sustainable development*. 'Cognitive capital' represents the complete set of intellectual, socio-emotional and executive function skills that allow for creativity, flexibility and ability to work collaboratively².

Overall there is a primary orientation towards creating change for children of different age groups rather than creating change by sectoral area. The Country Programme has three outcome areas reflecting three lifecycle stages: Early childhood (0-5 years), middle childhood (5-9 years), and adolescence (10-18 years). This 'lifecycle approach' is thought to promote convergence across sectors and create a more child-oriented perspective. Under each outcome, key sectoral contributions are merged towards creating a change in the lives of children. To support these three outcomes, two complementary and overarching outcomes were developed: Social policy and child rights monitoring; and Programme effectiveness (ensuring that the country programme is efficiently implemented, monitored, and supported to achieve results).

In addition to the new lifecycle orientation, the current country programme represented a strategic shift from more emergency and service-delivery-focused implementation ~~logic~~ to a more upstream approach with focus on advocacy and influencing policy, aligning with UNICEF's programming approaches in middle-income countries. In line with the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2022, the following intervention strategies were to be given priority across all programming areas: Strengthening systems to improve service delivery particularly to the most disadvantaged; leveraging resources for children; and supporting children and adolescents as agents of change.

Three different levels of programming were envisaged: (1) upstream - national; (2) midstream - sub-national (provincial and district) and (3) downstream - community (parents, caregivers, immediate service providers, children and adolescents themselves)³. Interventions were to be

¹ Excerpted from CPD and PSN Notes; however, it is felt that this should read "early childhood to adolescence.

² Noble DJ, Blight S, & Fajth G (2016). Cognitive capital for children in Asia and Pacific. BMJ Global Health 2016; 1(Suppl2). http://gh.bmj.com/content/bmjgh/1/Suppl_2/i1.full.pdf

³ See: Terms of Reference and the PSN Notes.

guided by a 'vision' of change as well as evidence generated from piloting, to advocate for and inform the generation of strengthened policies, standards and guidelines; as well as support the implementation of these measures *"to benefit the most disadvantaged children, parents and their communities"*. Support to the roll out of national plans, policies and legislation was considered *"instrumental in strengthening child-friendly, gender-responsive and quality service delivery at the subnational level"*. The programme was to *"demonstrate affordable, integrated and innovative solutions to tackle inequalities (including gender inequalities) at the provincial and district level, while national policy and budget advocacy will ensure replication and sustainability"*. To support social and economic policy development and legal reforms, UNICEFs role would be critical in provision of high-quality technical assistance, generating evidence on the situation of children and adolescents, and strengthening linkages to global knowledge and best practices.

The CPD, whilst focusing on national efforts to upstream policy and advocacy, was expected to continue its mid-stream and down-stream work in the four Provinces, Northern, Eastern, Uva, and Central Provinces (see Fig. 2.1).

In **early childhood**, the country programme aimed to reduce neonatal mortality and morbidity, address undernutrition, increase access to quality early learning and development services, improve child protection services to identify, record and refer child abuse cases, and support efforts to create national action on early identification of disabilities and intervention services. Key strategies to achieve this included (i) support systems strengthening to improve quality of neonatal care, including interventions such as promoting mainstreaming of the Early Childhood Care and Development Programme, using the 1000 day approach to good nutrition, "tackling malnutrition", and family and community support; (ii) contribute to strengthening of the CP system to prevent and respond to child abuse, neglect and violence through interventions such as modeling of CP mechanisms, building capacity of actors, improving functions and resources of the CP system in target districts, mitigating the unnecessary institutionalization of young children; and (iii) support government authorities at national and subnational levels to provide early learning and school readiness services, through interventions such as strengthening capacity of parents, caregivers and preschool teachers; identifying gaps in preschool curricula according to global standards and develop and pilot new materials including for children with disabilities in targeted districts, and advocacy for increase in public investments in early childhood development.

In **middle childhood**, the programme aimed at *"ensuring that children, especially the most deprived, benefit from healthy, nurturing, protective environments and live free from violence"*. Key strategic priorities include (i) increasing skilled human resources in school, strengthening institutional care settings and increasing the capacity to address WASH, nutrition and health issues towards improved quality of services – backed by guidance and technical advisory support; (ii) support holistic and child-centred learning in primary schools, through working with stakeholders to develop and apply policies, strategies and budgets that are equity-focused and grounded in evidence; (iii) accelerate national action to address violence against children, through interventions such as the establishment of a national coalition to generate awareness, building resilience among children for prevention, and improving skills and knowledge of parents and community members and generating demand for services.

In **adolescence**, the programme aimed at *"ensuring that adolescents, especially the most deprived, use high-quality basic social services in a safe, supportive and protective*

environment and will be active agents of behavioral and social change". Priority strategies included (i) leveraging investments for adolescent-sensitive services and psychological counseling in public health facilities, reproductive health and hygiene education in schools, non-formal education and vocational training, and life skills education; (ii) support revision of national legislative and policy frameworks, advocate for increased investment in the justice system for timely quality services for children, and work with stakeholders to improve equitable access to justice for children; and (iii) strengthen efforts to integrate peacebuilding and social cohesion in schools through technical support for a new curriculum and support innovative extracurricular platforms.

In **Social Policy**, the country programme aimed at *"developing policies that address the structural causes of inequities"* to *"advance the realization and create awareness of adolescent and children's rights"*. Key strategies include (i) contribute to development of a national child rights monitoring system operating across sectoral ministries at national and subnational levels, establishing an independent monitoring and accountability system, and monitoring multi-dimensional child poverty; (ii): building govt capacity to design, implement and monitor cash transfer schemes to cover all children, and (iii) bolstering strategic partnerships with civil society and academia for evidence generation and policy advice to improve evidence and systems for equity-sensitive planning, budgeting and evaluating.

The purpose of the outcome area in **programme effectiveness**, is to ensure that the CP is effectively designed, monitored, managed and evaluated and includes cross sectoral support to several areas such as emergency preparedness and response, DRR, advocacy and communication, and promoting engagement with local government and civil society organizations.

The CPD provides a broad and exhaustive list of partners for each outcome area; without specific information regarding contributions or roles.

The Sri Lanka country programme was designed with an indicative budget of USD 57,235,000, made up of USD 4,735,000 from regular resources⁴ and USD 52,500,000 from other sources. According to the UNICEF global website, for the organization as a whole OR amounted to about two and half times RR in 2020 (USD 1.43 billion RR and USD 3.46 billion OR). In comparison, the Sri Lanka CPD relied on sourcing other resources more than tenfold the expected regular core resources.

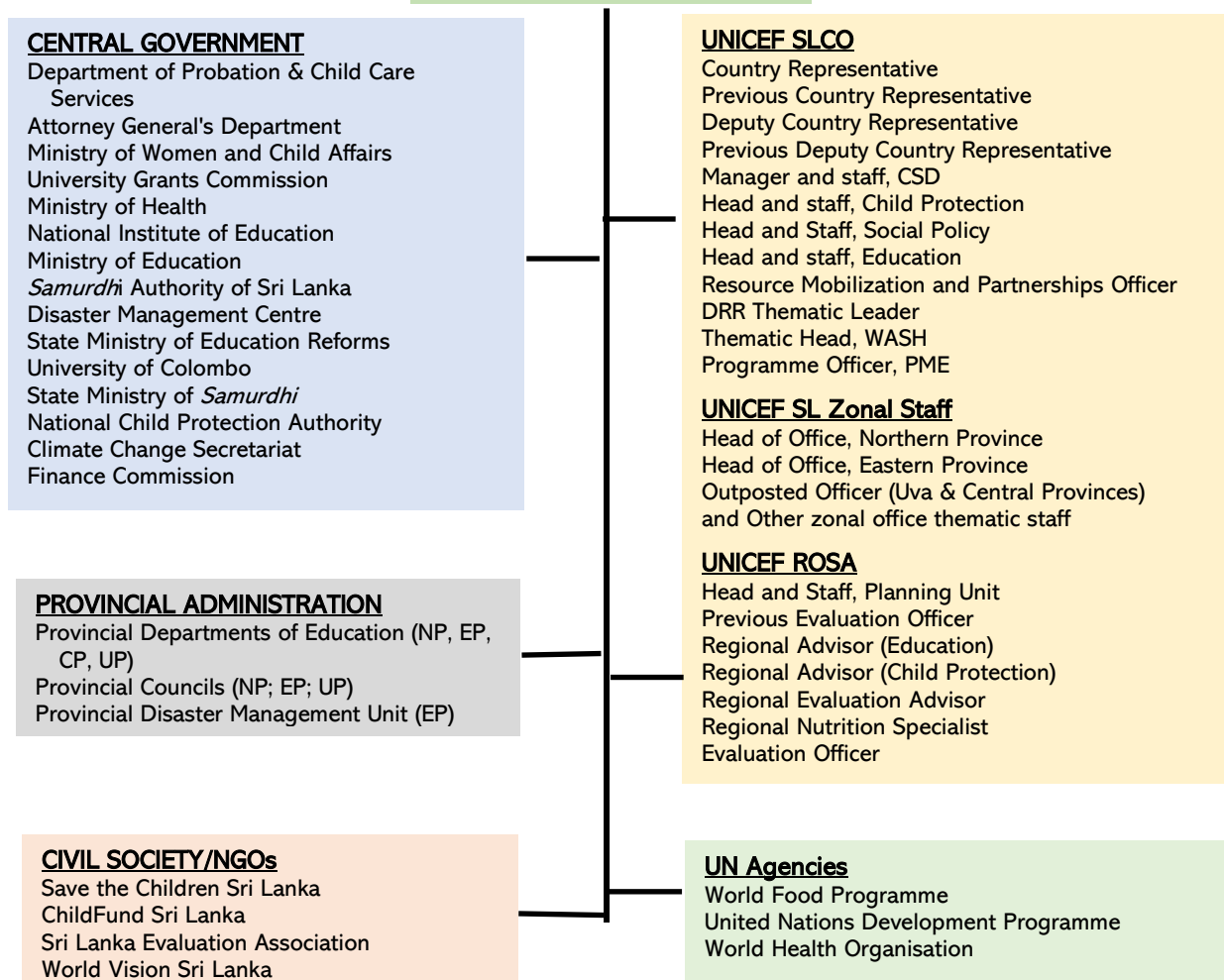
The Programme Strategy Notes that contain the 'visions' of change for each of the five outcomes above have been adjusted in 2020 following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. While outcomes were not changed, a new output was added under each of the four programming outcomes to reflect interventions and results related to COVID-19. There were also adjustments to reflect the constrained funding situation experienced since the start of the country programme.

⁴ UNICEF terminology: RR (Core Resources for Results – Regular Resources) refer to funding that is received by the organization without restrictions such as country or sector, from which country offices receive a certain proportion each year. OR (Other Resources Regular) refer to contributions from donors that are earmarked for specific purposes.

Stakeholders of the Country Programme

As a first step for inception of the evaluation, the Team undertook a stakeholder mapping in consultation with UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office. Two groups of stakeholders were identified, viz., (a) internal, and (b) external. The internal stakeholders were further categorised into three sub-groups, namely, UNICEF regional staff, UNICEF SL Country Office (Colombo) staff, and UNICEF Sri Lanka Zonal Office staff. These stakeholders are closely involved with the Programme. A summary is presented in Fig. 1.1.

Fig. 1.1 Stakeholder mapping



1.2. Purpose and Objectives of the CPE

The purpose of the CPE is as follows:

- To inform programme design and support managerial decision-taking at country office level in preparation of the next country programme.
- To foster organizational learning about what works and what has not worked, especially in areas where the country programme components have not achieved the

results and how the lifecycle approach has impacted the effectiveness of delivering results.

- To support accountability by providing an independent assessment of how selected results were achieved (or not) and the factors that contributed to the achievement or lack of, as UNICEF has an accountability to design and implement programmes at a standard of excellence.

The objectives of the CPE are as follows:

- (a) Provide an independent assessment of the relevance of the country programme, focusing on specific predetermined programmatic areas - to local needs and context;
- (b) Provide an independent assessment of results achieved - focusing on specific programmatic areas - and explanatory factors for their achievement (effectiveness).
- (c) Provide an independent assessment of the internal and external coherence of the programmatic focus areas and whether UNICEF is well positioned to play a strategic role to advance the (UNICEF and National) goals in the country.
- (d) Provide an assessment of the life cycle approach as an effective tool for implementing the country programme.

1.3. Main end users and use of the evaluation

The primary users for this evaluation will be UNICEF, with the Sri Lanka Country Programme using the information for design of its next programme cycle, and UNICEF ROSA for programme direction and oversight; the secondary users are Government counterparts (Ministries and other agencies) who receive direct benefit from the programme; UN Agencies, in particular those who have interest in joint programming; implementing CSOs; and donors.

The findings of the evaluation will be used by UNICEF SLCO to improve performance of the programme, seek funding for implementing priority areas of work which could not be addressed due to paucity of funds, and assist the development of the next programme cycle. The GoSL and CSO/UN partners will be able to use this evaluation to review their partnership strategies with UNICEF SLCO in order to improve performance and complement actions on thematic areas where priority attention is needed.

1.4. Scope of the Evaluation

The scope of the evaluation is briefly outlined below:

- (a) **Geographical and chronological scope:** The focus of the evaluation was for the period 2018 to December, 2020⁵. Information outside this period was sought only insofar as to illuminate issues in the current programme. The evaluation was national with particular focus on programme implementation provinces, namely Northern, Eastern, Central and Uva Provinces.
- (b) **Theory of Change:** The Results Framework (Annex 1.1) has been constructed on three outcome areas, namely **early childhood**, **middle childhood**, and **adolescence**. Each of the outcomes is fulfilled through a portfolio of Results/activities. The outcome indicators have been established for 2022 with annual progress indicators with a scoring system for tracking progress. The Results Framework shows the relationship between outputs and

⁵ The evaluation has noted some of the work done after December, 2021.

outcomes. The Results Framework and the Theory of Change of the Country Programme were explored, with a more analytical examination of the Theories of Change for the outcome areas ('Visions' of Change) that have been identified for the evaluation (see Table 3.1) for changes that have been adopted/implemented;

- (c) **Results Level:** The CPE did not assess the full results framework, but evaluation design focused on the outputs presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 – Outputs identified for Evaluation

Programme Component	Output #	Output description
1	1.1	By 2022, the Health, Nutrition and WASH service delivery systems provide quality healthcare, nutrition and WASH interventions for pregnant women and children under 5 from the most vulnerable families
2	2.2	By 2022, children and families have capacity to prevent violence and abuse in home and school settings
3	3.3	The education system is strengthened to promote peace, reconciliation and resilience among adolescent girls and boys
	3.4	Children aged 10-18 years and their families most affected by the disaster have improved access to child protection services that facilitate recovery and build resilience to promote a return to normalcy after an emergency
4	4.4	The Government has the capacity to provide efficient and effective social protection services to the most deprived girls and boys

Based on discussions with UNICEF ROSA, the evaluation examined other outputs under Outcome 4, to the extent information is available. The Terms of Reference of the evaluation is at Annex 1.2.

- (d) **Participants:** As one of the important objectives of the evaluation is to seek information for the next programme cycle, the main participants of the evaluation were external stakeholders. In this connection, the evaluation team undertook a stakeholder mapping exercise (cf. Section 1.6).

1.5. Approach

The evaluation adopted a participatory and interactive approach. Qualitative methods/techniques in terms of their relevance to the characteristics or performance of the programme were used to collect data/information. Qualitative data were selected from specific sources of information including primary and secondary information related to the Country Programme.

The evaluation adopted the principles of gender equality, inclusion and non-discrimination and followed the concept of SDG 'leave-no-one-behind (LNOB)'. The evaluation also ensured that participants were provided an opportunity to voice their views openly. The evaluation team accorded acknowledgment and respect for differences in culture and customs, religious beliefs including avoiding prayer times for discussions, gender roles, age, and ethnicity.

A perception survey was undertaken using a group of stakeholders, which provided quantitative data on relevance and effectiveness, including stakeholder satisfaction of interventions.

The data collection methods and tools were customized to obtain answers to the evaluation questions stipulated in the Terms of Reference under the given criteria (Effectiveness, Relevance, Coherence, and the Life Cycle approach). Data collection was conducted in an independent and objective manner and followed a participatory and ethically accepted approach.

As the Country Programme is in the middle of the current cycle, the evaluation examined the processes and progress towards achieving outputs and outcomes.

1.6. Evaluation Methodology and Tools

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, which allowed triangulation of data from different sources. The Evaluation Design Matrix (Annex 1.3) summarises and links the evaluation criteria, key questions and sub-questions, indicators and sources of information/data. The proposed methods are briefly described below:

Identification of Stakeholders for the Evaluation

UNICEF SLCO programme has used a rights-based approach during its design and implementation⁶. Accordingly, it has identified the rights holders and their entitlements and corresponding duty bearers and their obligations; furthermore, the programme has strived to enhance the awareness of rights holders and the capacities of the duty bearers to discharge their responsibilities.

The stakeholder mapping exercise (*cf.* Fig. 1.1) identified institutions in the central and provincial administrations that are essential duty bearers for the realization of children's rights in the thematic areas of focus for the evaluation. Relevant UN and civil society organizations working in the same thematic areas were included as key stakeholders, both at the central and provincial levels. Their role from a human rights-based approach is in between; of providing support to the duty bearer as well as foster awareness and demand among rights holders. In coordination with UNICEF SLCO, it was determined during the inception phase that it would not be possible to include rights holders in the evaluation. While this was considered a significant drawback, it was necessitated by the very tight time schedule the evaluation was facing, requiring tentative findings at a very early stage in order to feed into and coincide with critical SLCO planning steps of the new country programme. For the same reasons, the duty bearers are at the institutional level – the evaluation did not include parents, health staff or teachers who do play a role as duty bearers for some of the focus areas of the evaluation (e.g. child nutrition, violence against children). Annex 1.4 provides an analysis on rights-holders and duty bearers⁷.

After several rounds of discussions, stakeholders for interviews as well as for the Perception Survey (see later in this Section) were identified by UNICEF SLCO. Whilst the Country Office was conscious of having a gender balance in selecting the stakeholders, it was constrained by rigidly applying it as the stakeholders identified were based on their position in the organisation. Table 1.2 presents a summary of stakeholders identified for the two aforementioned purposes.

⁶ See: <<https://sites.unicef.org/policyanalysis/rights/>>

⁷ Disaggregated data on rights holders in terms of gender, age and disability were not available.

The participation of stakeholders in the evaluation was voluntary; they were informed of the evaluation by the Representative of UNICEF SLCO and was followed up by the Team Leader to make appointments for interviews. The choice of language for the interview was left to the interviewee.

The methodology for evaluation was presented to the Country Management Team⁸ on 18 August 2021. This was also an opportunity to further discuss stakeholder identification and their engagement with the evaluation given the ongoing SitAn to avoid duplication of interviews. The Inception Report was presented to the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) on 6 September 2021, which has been set up to advise the evaluation team⁹. During this meeting, the methodology and the processes were discussed and agreed upon.

The main findings of the evaluation were presented to the Senior Management of UNICEF SLCO in one-to-one meetings in December, 2021.

Table 1.2 – Summary of stakeholders identified for KII and Perception Survey

(a) Group/Agency	KII	PS	(b) Thematic area	KII	PS
Central Government	27	18	Child Protection	9	11
Prov. Government agencies	8	23	Social Policy	4	6
CSO	3	9	DRR	4	5
Other*	8	6	Education	13	15
TOTAL	46	56	WASH	-	9
			Health & Nutrition	5	8
			Overall programme (High-level/UN)	11	2
			TOTAL	46	56

*Includes Retired GoSL, UN, Academia

Examination of the Results Framework

The evaluation used the Results Framework for assessing performance. As indicated elsewhere, the evaluation was confined to selected outputs (*cf.* Table 3.1); in each of the outputs, the progress was assessed through reference to Reports (mainly RAM but where available special reports) and their relevance, effectiveness and coherence were assessed through interviews and the Perception Survey. An analysis of the component Theories of Change ('Visions' of change as presented in PSN notes) were also undertaken simultaneously. No attempt was made to revise the Theories of Change as it was not required in the ToR.

⁸ The Country Management Team (CMT) consisted of the UNICEF SLCO Representative, Deputy Representative, Heads of Divisions including Communications, PME, Statistics & Monitoring Specialist, and representatives of the UNICEF ROSA Evaluation Group.

⁹ The ERG was comprised of the Representative (Mr Christian Skoog) and the Deputy Representative (Ms Emma Brigham), Statistics & Monitoring Specialist (Dr Sajith de Mel) of UNICEF SLCO, UNDP SL Representative (Mr Robert Juhkam), Dr Vinya Ariyaratne (Sri Lanka), Representative of the World Food Programme (Mr Andrea Berardo, Deputy Representative, WFPSL), and UNICEF ROSA staff (Dr Jim Ackers, Ms Amanda Bissex, Dr Zivai Murira, Dr Dharshini Seneviratne, Dr Esther Kaggwa and Ms Barsha Pradan)

Desk Review

The review of existing secondary sources and data had a dual function for the evaluation:

- (a). Internal performance monitoring documents such as annual reports and RAM Outcome and Output ratings/descriptions were reviewed and analyzed to assess performance against the targets in the CP results framework (Annex 1.5). Additional external sources were also identified and used where possible, to shed further light on the status of various indicators. This review also included an analysis of the theory of change for each focus area, as presented in the PSN notes. This desk review was a key component of the evaluation question on effectiveness (to what extent targets were achieved and documented and whether they contributed to change for children) and was further elaborated and triangulated by the interviews and perception survey.
- (b). Studies, evaluations and other research or evidence were reviewed in each thematic focus area and applied throughout the evaluation where relevant, particularly for evaluation questions related to relevance (whether programmes were adequate or appropriate to respond to needs). A list of documents was provided by SLCO; to which the evaluation team added further evidence.

A full list of Key documents consulted, and other bibliography are in Annex 1.6.

Key Informant Interviews and tools

Semi-structured interviews and small group meetings were conducted with those identified in Annex 1.7. For this purpose, interview guides were developed by the evaluation team and reviewed by UNICEF ROSA (Annex 1.8). As the evaluation progressed, additional informants were identified, in consultation with UNICEF, depending on the need for additional information and evidence. Fifty-one stakeholders, made up of 23 females and 28 males participated in the KIIs.

Due to other exigencies with work, four informants¹⁰ identified by UNICEF SLCO could not be interviewed, in spite of repeated attempts by both UNICEF SLCO and the Team Leader.

Due to the prevailing lock-down and travel restrictions imposed by the Government of Sri Lanka, all KIIs were conducted online.

Perception Survey

An online Perception Survey (PS) was carried out from 1 to 20 September, 2021 with stakeholders identified in the mapping exercise (Annex 1.9). The PS solicited views of the stakeholders on relevance, effectiveness, operational aspects, communications and sharing knowledge, and stakeholder satisfaction on UNICEF SLCO programming and implementation (the questionnaire developed for the Perception Survey is in Annex 1.10). Of the 56 stakeholders identified, 49 (or 88%), comprised of 24 females and 25 males responded to the Perception Survey. The report of the Perception Survey is in Annex 1.11.

Data Management

The reliability of the quality of data/information collected was ensured by using well-designed Interview Guides to capture the required information and that same or similar responses would have been gathered if administered under similar conditions.

¹⁰ Two officials from GoSL and two staff members from UN Agencies.

The evaluation collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Descriptive qualitative data collected from KIIs were analysed and triangulated to derive trends and conclusions. Information was cross checked with sources other than the original source to seek verifications. This analysis was also used to identify any limitations experienced by the Programme during implementation stage.

The data gathered in the Perception Survey was analysed using statistical software SPSS. The descriptive statistics were separately reported and supplemented data and information from desk research and KIIs.

Key actions in the Evaluation

The key actions taken for the Country Programme Evaluation are outlined below:

- Initial discussion with UNICEF ROSA to develop a common understanding of the Terms of Reference of the CPE, and to agree on the scope of the evaluation and limitations (several rounds of discussions starting on 20 July 2021 through August, 2021);
- Stakeholder mapping in consultation with UNICEF ROSA and UNICEF SLCO (mid-August, 2021);
- Development of Interview Guides and Perception Survey Questionnaire for review and approval by UNICEF ROSA (September, 2021).
- Presentation of the methodology to the Country Management Team (CMT) (18 August, 2021)
- Presentation of the inception process to the Evaluation Reference Group (6 September, 2021);
- Submission of the final Inception Report (24 September, 2021);

Ethical standards

Ethical norms and principles were followed during the interviews. The evaluation team took measures to maintain a free and an independent evaluation process upholding evaluation ethics, in order to maintain the integrity and honesty. The evaluation followed the ethical guidelines of UNICEF¹¹ and UNEG¹² during the evaluation.

Integrity was maintained by respecting the involved stakeholders and adopting standard ethical principles and professional standards during the evaluation. Additionally, the evaluation team ensured that there was no conflict of interest. Accountability was ensured by the team's background experience in ethics, quality assurance at different stages of the evaluation, and proper data and information management. The evaluation did not engage children; therefore ethical clearance was not deemed necessary. The evaluation team consisted of two males and two females with both national and international experience thereby ensuring diversity and representation. The consultations during the evaluation were carried out in an impartial and an objective manner based on the guides prepared for the purpose; all stakeholders were clearly informed of the purpose of the evaluation, and their responses were voluntary. No audio recordings of conversations were made. The team ensured that the

¹¹ UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis Doc. CF/PD/DRP/2015-001 (April 2015)

¹² Revised UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, 2020

information collected both through interviews and by the online questionnaire survey was kept confidential and not disclosed to third parties.

The evaluation adopted an approach to ensure that its results would benefit all stakeholders by having a clear purpose and using a systematic assessment process. Do no harm principle was always considered. Carbon neutrality was maintained by avoiding travel, somewhat necessitated by COVID-19 restrictions and by adopting online/remote interviews.

1.7. Limitations

The study faced several limitations; Table 1.4 shows the limitations and mitigatory actions taken:

Table 1.4 – Limitations and mitigatory actions

Limitations	Actions taken
Short time period available for the evaluation	With the consent of the duty bearers, meetings were held after working hours and during the holidays.
Travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19 outbreaks which prevented meeting persons physically, especially parents and school children (schools were closed)	Online meetings were arranged with the participation of the full evaluation team, as available. No mitigatory actions were available to overcome the difficulty of meeting parents and children.
Low response to the Perception Survey	Sending reminder emails regularly to the respondents.
Limited KIs to prevent 'too many meetings' with GoSL stakeholders due to the ongoing SitAn	Key informants were identified in consultation with UNICEF SLCO who were able to provide fuller perspectives.
Limited engagement with provincial staff and stakeholders due to COVID-19 restrictions	Online meetings arranged and additional respondents were identified to provide details.

2. Country Context

Sri Lanka is an island located in the Indian Ocean with a population of 21.8 million¹³ with child population of about 6.2 million. The Gross Domestic Product per capita is USD 3,852¹⁴. Sri Lanka is also in the high human development category, positioned at 72 out of 189 countries, and is the highest in South Asia¹⁵. Yet, about a quarter of the population lives just above the official poverty line and is extremely vulnerable to economic shocks.

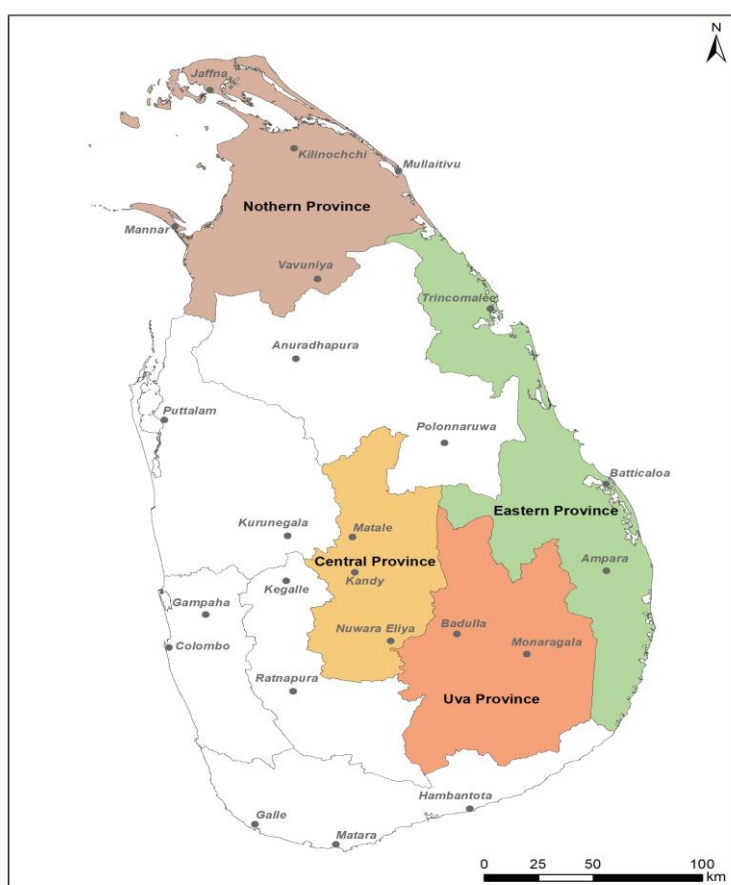


Fig. 2.1 – Map of Sri Lanka with Provinces where UNICEF works

Sri Lanka experienced a serious ethno-political conflict from about 1983 to 2009 between government forces and separatists in the North and the East, resulting in the death of thousands and devastation inflicting deeply felt consequences at the human, social, physical, and institutional level. There are lingering issues with post-traumatic stress disorders within the affected communities. The situation was exacerbated by youth-led sporadic violence in the South and in some other parts of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is well poised for successful implementation and achievement of the SDGs based on her performance under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially with regard to health, education, and poverty.

Sri Lanka's performance

towards becoming a resilient society, including the high coverage of safe water supply and sanitation facilities, near universal electrification, education achievements, and increasing the share of population living in permanent houses is impressive. The principles of sustainable development are reflected in Sri Lanka's development plans such as the Public Investment Programme (2017-2020)¹⁶, which provides inter-linked and mutually supportive goals for the

¹³ Annual Report, Central Bank 2019

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ UNDP (2020) Global Human Development Report 2020

¹⁶ Public Investment Programme (Sri Lanka; 2017-2020)

http://www.npd.gov.lk/images/publications/english_pip_book.pdf

implementation of social protection schemes for all necessary segments in the country and the climate resilient 'Blue Green Budget' of 2018.

As in other parts of South Asia, Sri Lanka has been experiencing extreme climate events in the recent times. There are extremes of excess and scarcity of water, causing widespread damage to agriculture, including, livestock. Extreme rainfall has been frequently observed in certain districts (e.g., Badulla, Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Kegalle and Ratnapura) causing landslides and severe flash floods.

Social indicators

Sri Lanka has a long tradition of strong investment in education, health and poverty alleviation, and as a result achieved many of its MDG targets ahead of time. Life expectancy is high, at 77 years (2021).

Maternal and childhood mortality rates are among the lowest in the region, due in large part to a widely distributed hospital network. The rates are reducing at a slow pace, estimated at about 30% over the past 15 years¹⁷. Most of deaths among children under five in Sri Lanka occur within the first month of life: The neonatal mortality rate is 7 out of 1000 live births, while under five mortality is 11 out of 1000 live births¹⁸. There are significant geographic differences; districts with the highest mortality are Kilinochchi (44 out of 1000) and Trincomalee (26 out of 1000), in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, respectively.

Despite sound health indicators in Sri Lanka, nutrition in children under five remains a major public health concern, with high and persistent rates of undernutrition. Among children under five, 15% suffer from wasting (low weight-for-height), an indicator of acute malnutrition¹⁹. Acute weight loss is considered as 'very high' as per the WHO benchmarks and is widespread across the country. Currently, Sri Lanka ranks number 2 in the South Asia Region and placed number 7 among countries with the highest prevalence of wasting. In spite of relatively favourable indicators on breastfeeding practices in Sri Lanka, two out of five children aged 6-23 months do not consume a minimal acceptable diet in terms of both food diversity and meal frequency²⁰. Fig. 2.2 shows that wasting has not improved over the last three decades in spite of heavy investments by GoSL and donors. The available statistics show that there are geographical variations in wasting, with Monaragala district showing 25.4%, Hambantota (21.8%) and Mullaitivu (21.6%). Thus, Sri Lanka is not on track to meet the SDG target on wasting to maintain the prevalence of wasting below 5% by 2025²¹.

The prevalence of stunting (low height-for-age) among children under five years is 17.3% and is much higher in economically backward more disadvantaged populations such as the plantations sector (e.g. in Nuwara Eliya and Kandy, stunting is 32.3% and 26.0%, respectively)²². These are notable as child stunting is mostly an irreversible outcome of inadequate nutrition, particularly in the first 1,000 days of a child's life cycle.

¹⁷ DHS 2016

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

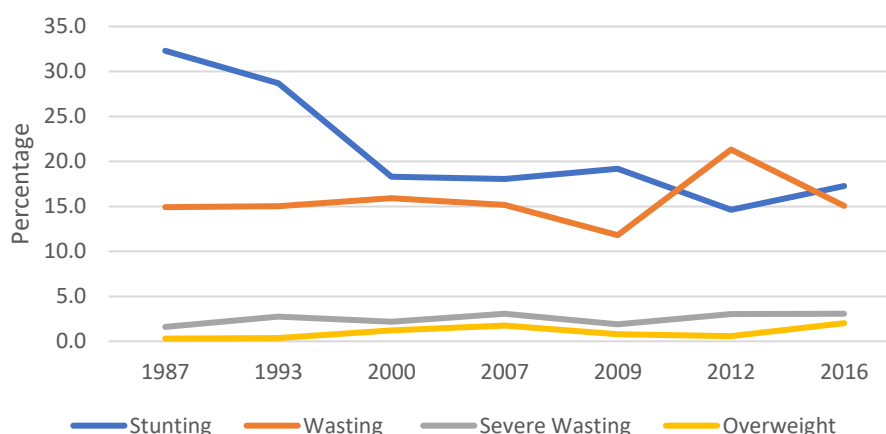
¹⁹ DHS 2016

²⁰ WHO 2018 Infant and young child feeding practices in Sri Lanka: A desk review – 2006-2017

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

Fig. 2.2 - Malnutrition indicators among children <5 y over time



Low birth weight (LBW < 2500 g) affects one in six new-borns (15.7%), already placing them at a disadvantage for optimum growth including physical and cognitive development. Low birth weight is an indicator of a multifaceted public health problem that includes long-term maternal malnutrition, ill-health and poor health and nutrition care in pregnancy. The statistics also show that while 9.1% of women of reproductive age (15-49 years) have low Body Mass Index (BMI <18.5 kg/m²), 45.3 percent are overweight or obese (BMI ≥ 25.0 kg/m²). Maternal anaemia, particularly during pregnancy, contributes to negative birth outcomes, such as low birth weight. The prevalence of anaemia (Hb<11 g/dL) among pregnant women is 31.8%²³.

Access to safe water is almost 85% with about 44% with pipe-borne water supply. Another 40% have access to hand pump tube wells or protected wells. About 15% of the population is unable to access a safe water source within 200 meters of their residence²⁴. Water resources are heavily impacted by the effects of climate change.

There is near universal access to primary education with gender parity, though national data mask significant disparities in access, quality and management at all levels of education. Learning outcome assessments find that there are large disparities according to language, subjects and geographic locations. Lower levels of achievement in lower grades often correlate with poverty and other child rights deprivations and are most prevalent in the estate sector, Northern and Eastern region. There is a mismatch between education, labour market needs and the aspirations of adolescents, with a critical gap in transversal skills. Enrolment in preschools is about 56% (it varies significantly across districts), and consistent quality standards are lacking²⁵.

There is very limited data on violence against children in Sri Lanka, though reporting is increasing: Government services registered about 12,000 cases in 2015, compared with 2000 cases in 2014. A 2018 study found that physical violence was the most common form (45%),

²³ Medical Research Institute (2015) The National Nutrition and Micronutrient Survey of Pregnant Women in Sri Lanka

²⁴ Asian Development Bank (2015); Sri Lanka's Water Supply and Sanitation Sector: Achievements and a Way Forward (Working Paper No. 35)

²⁵ National Census of Early Childhood Development Centres in Sri Lanka, 2016

followed by emotional violence (28%) and sexual abuse (9%)²⁶. The most common perpetrators were families and teachers, except for sexual abuse where neighbours were more common. Corporal punishment is widely practiced in schools and accepted by parents and is not yet unlawful in most settings. Except for some small studies, there is a lack of data on this form of violence. A recent regional UNICEF study on online violence identified online child sexual abuse to be a concern in Sri Lanka. There are also reports of bullying being taken online. Almost half (47%) of the children surveyed had been victims of at least one form of physical or psychological bullying at school²⁷. The child protection system lacks the framework, capacity and resources to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Information on children with disabilities is very scarce: the Programme Strategy Notes state that they do not seem to have adequate access to mainstream education, health and rehabilitation services and that there is a lack of early identification and interventions across the country.

Social protection schemes in Sri Lanka are fragmented, with multiple schemes managed by different governmental agencies and ministries, at both national and provincial levels. Among the social assistance programmes, the largest is *Samurdhi*, however this programme is not effectively addressing the needs of children in terms of catalytic support to reduce child poverty. While targeting the poorest, targeting errors exclude a high proportion of the intended recipients, one study estimates that up to 6 out of 10 households who qualify in reality end up excluded.²⁸ For those four households that receive the *Samurdhi*, the transfer value is low.

The most recent Concluding Observations of the CRC Committee highlighted five areas of concern in Sri Lanka: Violence; sexual exploitation and abuse; economic exploitation; administration of juvenile justice; and reconciliation, truth, and justice.

Some of the key national policies relevant to this evaluation are noted below:

- Policy Statement of the Government - 2015
- National Policy Framework -Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour-2019
- National Child Protection Policy 2019
- National Child Protection Authority Act- No.50
- National Policy and a Comprehensive Framework of Actions on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace (Curriculum development; teacher training; co-curricular activities)
- Sri Lanka Peacebuilding Priority Plan
- Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation
- National Nutrition Policy of Sri Lanka and subsequent Government Circulars
- *Samurdhi* Act and the subsequent revisions
- Sri Lanka Sustainable Development Indicators

In addition, major educational reforms are currently ongoing, which has a bearing on some aspects of the evaluation.

²⁶ Nadeeka K Chandraratne, Asvini D Fernando, Nalika Gunawardena: Child abuse and neglect, 2018 Jul:81 214-224.

²⁷ Estimating the Prevalence and Drivers of bullying including cyberbullying in Sri Lanka, UNICEF, 2019.

²⁸ See for a full analysis: Alderman, Harold, Ugo Gentilini, & Ruslan Yemtsov (2018) The 1.5 Billion People Question: Food, Vouchers, or Cash Transfers? (*Chapter 4. Food-Based Social Assistance Programs in Sri Lanka: Evolution and Transition to Cash Transfers*) Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1087-9

Equity and Gender

The Constitution of Sri Lanka specifically prohibits sex-based discrimination and ensures everyone's equality before the law²⁹. The Women's Charter adopted by GoSL (1993) guarantees equality and equal protection of the law for women. There are other numerous policy documents relating to prevention of violence against women.

Although women have gained the right to vote and political participation, representation of women in the national parliament has never exceeded 6% and has been even lower in the local councils. The unemployment rates of women are twice as compared with men at all age levels, and there is a large number of women in unpaid family labour³⁰. Sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls often go unreported due to social and cultural norms and fear of reprisals. Despite amendments to the Penal Code³¹ and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act,³² the incidence of rape, sexual abuse and domestic violence continues to be high.

With achievements particularly in health and education, gender parity in Sri Lanka is high compared with other countries in the region. In 2019 the country ranked 90 out of 162 on the gender inequality index.

The adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) in the aftermath of the armed conflict was a landmark for new gender dimensions and to recognize the women's contribution to the peace process³³. Also, the country has ratified international instruments such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)³⁴. The Policy Framework and the National Plan of Action on SGBV 2016-2020³⁵ upholds human rights and gender equity and equality and adopt a three-pronged approach of prevention of SGBV, intervention in situations of SGBV, and advocate for enforcement of related policies and laws.

The National Policy on Disability for Sri Lanka (2003) relates to the provisions in the Constitution of Sri Lanka and the to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and has identified 26 policy areas.

Important contextual changes during the current programme cycle

(a) Changes in the Government

The Presidential elections held on 16 November 2019 saw the election of a new President. The policies of the new President are reflected the election manifesto of the President³⁶. The new policy does not explicitly mention peace and reconciliation, and transitional justice as key areas. Following the Presidential elections, Parliamentary elections were held on 5 August 2020 following which a new Government came into power. These changes resulted in changing key

²⁹ The Constitution Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka articles 12 (2) and 12 (3)

³⁰ Country Gender Assessment, Sri Lanka: An Update – GIZ/ADB -2015
[<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/172710/sri-lanka-country-gender-assessment-update.pdf>]

³¹ Penal code Si Lanka –[<https://www.lawnet.gov.lk/penal-code-consolidated-2/>]

³² Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, No.34 of 2005[<https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/fr/countries/asia/sri-lanka/2005/prevention-of-domestic-violence-act-no-34-of-2005>]

³³ <https://www.peacewomen.org/content/sri-lanka-13>

³⁴ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

³⁵ Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to address SGBV in Sri Lanka

³⁶ National Policy Framework: *Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour*

portfolios of the Ministries and the Boards of Management of statutory Boards and Corporations. These changes affected implementation of UNICEF SLCO programmes.

The new government later decided to withdraw the commitment under UN Human Rights Council's resolution 30/1 to promote reconciliation and accountability, which the previous government had co-sponsored. Some of the peace building administrative structures established by the previous Government (e.g. Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms; Office for National Unity and Reconciliation) were either disbanded or became non-functional.

(b) Economic outlook

Sri Lanka was elevated from low income to lower middle-income category in 1997. The economic growth since then helped Sri Lanka to become an upper middle-income country in 2019. However, within one year, the World Bank downgraded Sri Lanka from upper middle income to lower middle-income category (2020)³⁷ due to the uncertainty created in the economic system in the first half of 2019 emanating from the constitutional crisis of October-December 2018, and the Easter Sunday attack in April, 2019 and the resultant religious disturbances which impacted on growth. The Easter Sunday attack caused economic downturn, particularly by greatly reduced tourist income.

(c) COVID-19 pandemic

The Sri Lankan authorities reacted quickly to the emergence of COVID-19 by setting in place travel bans, lockdowns (initially a strict curfew) and workplace closure by March 2019. While there was a gradual return to normalcy by around May, subsequent pandemic waves caused restrictions to be reimposed regionally or nationally. The most recent national lockdown was lifted 1 October, 2021. The economy contracted by 3.6 per cent in 2020, which is the worst performance on record – in the second quarter alone it contracted by as much as 16 per cent³⁸.

The COVID-19 containment measures are likely to have had a severe impact on livelihoods, as more than 66% of the labour force work is in the informal economy. During the pandemic, UNICEF SLCO partnered with UNDP to implement a telephone survey to monitor how families were affected by the crisis, providing insights into income fluctuation, nutrition, food security and access to basic services³⁹. Five rounds were completed, each reaching a nationally representative sample of about 2,000 households. The first three rounds, in May-July 2020, found that the initial lockdown period had had a profound negative impact on income (almost half of the respondents in round three were also part of round one and two): In April, 39 per cent reported a complete halt in income, and 32% experienced a reduction in income. By June, 18% were still not earning income, while 45% reported reduced income. About one in eight (12%) had lost their job by June, and one out of three had had to borrow to make ends meet. Rounds four and five were held in October-December 2020 and July-August 2021 and gave insights into the longer-term impact of COVID-19 on households. Forty per cent reported losing their job at some point due to COVID-19, and 80 per cent of these had become employed again. However, 68 per cent of households reported reduced income in July/August

³⁷ <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>

³⁸ Economic and poverty impact of COVID-10, Sri Lanka Development Update 2021, World Bank 2021.

³⁹ Sri Lanka Telephone Survey on COVID-19 Crisis Household Impact, UNDP and UNICEF, three rounds: May, June, July, 2020.

2021, compared to 32% in April 2020. At the same time as such a high proportion saw their incomes drop, 82 per cent reported an increase in the cost of living. In 2021, almost half of the households had pawned belongings, compared to 21% in April 2020.

To mitigate the economic impact on households, the Government implemented several livelihood support programmes. Some assistance programmes were channeled through existing welfare schemes such as *Samurdhi*, as a temporary allowance during April and May across all districts in the country, at a cost of about USD 240 million⁴⁰. Despite these and other efforts, the World Bank estimates an increase in the USD 3.2 poverty line from 9.2 per cent in 2019 to 11.7 per cent in 2020, and notes that the poorest experienced the largest earning shocks. Prior to COVID-19, the poverty rate had reduced from 16.2% in 2012/13⁴¹.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected health and nutrition service delivery. The UNICEF/UNDP telephone survey showed that by early May 2020, 30 per cent of families had reduced their food consumption. One year later, in August 2021, food consumption was reduced in 43% of households. In the May 2020 survey, more than half (51%) postponed and 15% were unable to access to pre- and postnatal care. An alarming 45% of children with moderate or severe malnutrition did not receive nutrition services. In earlier planning documents, inequitable access to key preventive and curative health and nutrition services was noted as a key concern; this was further compounded by COVID-19 containment measures. By August 2021, access to healthcare appeared much improved; 89% reported being able to consult a doctor or accessing prenatal/antenatal/postnatal care. Less than one in ten (8%) of those needing access to health service, reported that they could not access it. COVID-related travel restrictions was the primary reason, followed by delays in receiving service due to COVID⁴².

The government response to the COVID-19 pandemic caused schools to be closed across the country, affecting over 5.5 million students. Initially the closure lasted from March to August 2020, but due to increases in COVID-19 cases all schools in the country were closed again⁴³. In the ensuing one and a half years, the Ministry of Education has offered web-based learning. UNICEF SLCO supported hardcopy learning packages for children in Grades 1 and 2 to complement the web-based option in mostly hard to reach geographic locations (covering 328,000 students). The education system made a fairly swift change to adapt to the situation; however the impact of remote schooling on enrolment and learning outcomes is not yet known.

Following the curfew imposed due to COVID-19, there was a dramatic rise in the proportion of violence against children cases reported to the 1929 child helpline⁴⁴. In the three weeks from 16 March to 7 April, 2020, the proportion of such cases among all child protection complaints rose from 10 to 40 per cent (121 out of 292 cases). The national hotline on domestic violence recorded 463 cases in March and April 2020 compared to 123 cases in February and March 2020⁴⁵. Some areas of government child protection work were taken online, including digital case management.

⁴⁰ Economic and poverty impact of COVID-10, Sri Lanka Development Update 2021, World Bank 2021.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Sri Lanka Telephone Survey on COVID-19 Crisis Household Impact, UNDP and UNICEF, five rounds/reports: May 2020, June 2020, July 2020, October-December 2020, and July-August 2021.

⁴³ UNICEF SAR Education Covid-19 Response, update #12, 19 October 2020.

⁴⁴ UNICEF and NCPA press release, 9 April 2020.

⁴⁵ UN Advisory paper: Immediate socio-economic response to Covid-19 in Sri Lanka, 2020.

3. Findings of the Evaluation

3.1 Introduction

The Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) is aimed at understanding the current situation on the Country Programme's progress and strategic alignment vis-a-vis the Theory of Change and the Results Framework. The evaluation will also inform the CO on the design of the next programme cycle, and also on key organisational learnings and aspects that are needed to support the delivery of the CP.

The findings are categorised into four sections based on the evaluation criteria, as follows:

- (a) Relevance of the Country Programme;
- (b) Effectiveness of the Country Programme;
- (c) Coherence of the Country Programme implementation; and
- (d) Adoption of the Life Cycle Approach to deliver the programme.

The key areas of inquiry against evaluation criteria are summarised below:

Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extent to which the programme addressed the needs of children• Programme's adaptation to COVID-19 and other changes• Critical interventions that have been missed• UNICEF SLCO's comparative strengths and advantages
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reach the most disadvantaged• Programme delivery and its contributions to outcomes• Major factors contributing to achievement/non-achievement of outcomes• Unintended outcomes• Sustainability of the programme• Timeliness of delivery
Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do the interventions fit within the national framework• Equity and gender equality• Partnerships with others
Life Cycle Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extent to which LCA has been implemented• Adequacy or otherwise of LCA towards achieving outcomes• Challenges in implementing LCA• What more could be done to improve adoption of LCA

The assessment focused on the five selected outputs⁴⁶ (Table 3.1).

⁴⁶ Following the submission of the Inception Report, it was agreed to examine, to the extent possible, all outputs in Social Policy.

Table 3.1 – Outputs and activities

	Output	Key Activities
Early childhood	Output 1.1 - By 2022, the Health, Nutrition and WASH service delivery systems provide quality healthcare, nutrition and WASH interventions for pregnant women and children under 5 from the most vulnerable families (with focus on nutrition)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate evidence and analyses on existing nutrition behaviours • Nurturing care practices for all children • Support MoH on the management and treatment of wasting, including evidence generation; • Support Nutrition Information System
Middle childhood	Output 2.2 - By 2022, children and families have capacity to prevent violence and abuse in home and school settings (Scope includes VAC for all life cycle stages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the establishment of a national coalition of stakeholders to generate greater awareness about violence against children and its impact on children and communities, • Improving the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of parents and community members, and • building resilience among children to prevent abuse and violence • Promote positive disciplining
Adolescence	Output 3.3 - The education system is strengthened to promote peace, reconciliation and resilience among adolescent girls and boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a National Action Plan on Education for Peace and Reconciliation • Support to curriculum development • Promote co-curricular activities for social cohesion
	Output 3.4 - Children aged 10-18 years and their families most affected by the disaster have improved access to child protection services that facilitate recovery and build resilience to promote a return to normalcy after an emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce CC-DRR activities and mainstream them; • Provide school safety guidelines for disaster preparedness
Social Policy	Output 4.4 - The Government has the capacity to provide efficient and effective social protection services to the most deprived girls and boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen GoSL capacity to articulate a national social protection strategy • Improve the capacity of the social protection system to address the needs of most disadvantaged • Support the development of a child-sensitive National Social Protection Strategy

3.2 Relevance of the Country Programme

The analysis of relevance relies on information available in the national policies and strategies, UNICEF SLCO Situation Analysis of 2017 (SitAn, 2017), the Country Programme Document, and information from Key Informant Interviews.

(a) Programme components

In **Nutrition**, early child (0-5 y) undernutrition remains a major concern in Sri Lanka followed by high prevalence of undernutrition in pregnant women which contributes to intergenerational undernutrition in children. The National Nutrition Policy of 2010⁴⁷, identifies optimum nutrition for children under 5 years and pregnant mothers as a key priority area of the government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) (Policy Statement 5.1). In line with this policy, UNICEF SLCO's current country programme (CP) proposed to address maternal and child undernutrition through strengthening the capacity to deliver nutrition services focusing primarily on interventions to prevent stunting, wasting and other forms of malnutrition in children under two years, upgrading/scaling up district nutrition monitoring and surveillance system, and advocating the government for increased public financing for quality care to pregnant mothers and children during the first 1000 days. The available data (*cf.* Section 2.1) show that, in spite of concerted efforts, stunting and wasting do not show substantial improvement, and more concerted work is needed. These interventions therefore directly address GoSL priorities, as well as SDGs.

The UNSDF⁴⁸ identifies the need for *a strong focus on improving the nutritional status of children and women of childbearing age* (under Driver 3: Human security and socio-economic resilience) and relates to Indicator 4.2.1.

Child Protection: While there is little data on violence against children, the issue is recognized as a priority by the Government. As noted in the 2017 SitAn, there has not been any recent national survey that could provide an estimate of prevalence, and the only data available are from administrative sources – widely considered to under-represent the true extent of the issue. In 2016, Sri Lanka became among the first countries to seek “pathfinding” status with the newly established Global Partnership to end Violence against Children. The key criteria for becoming a pathfinder country are a formal, public commitment to comprehensive action to end violence against children. The pathfinder status commits the country to accelerated action to achieve SDG 16.2. Following such status, governments are to develop a multi-stakeholder group, collect and analyze data on violence against children, and develop an evidence-based national action plan. Output 2.2 is directly linked with Sri Lanka’s commitment as a pathfinder country; as one of the key interventions is to support the establishment of this national multi-stakeholder group.

Output 2.2 also relates directly to the relevant GoSL policies⁴⁹. Although there are some gaps in legal instruments, the legal coverage regarding violence against children is considered

⁴⁷ National Nutrition Policy of Sri Lanka (2010) Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition (GoSL)

⁴⁸ UNSDF (2018-2022) for Sri Lanka

⁴⁹ There are a number of relevant policies and action plans such as the National Child Protection Policy (2013); the National Child protection Act-No.50 of 1998; National Action plan for Children 2016-2020; National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development etc.

good, with implementation being the main challenge⁵⁰. For example, corporal punishment in schools is prohibited, however it is practiced and widely accepted by parents. The Government of Sri Lanka has repeatedly expressed its commitment to prohibiting corporal punishment of children in all settings (including at home, in alternative care settings, day care, penal institutions), most recently during the Universal Periodic Review in 2017. Taking into account the above, Output 2.2. is highly relevant to the national agenda on ending violence.

Furthermore, the output is in line with the UNSDF 2018-2022, perhaps particularly Driver 1 on evidence-based policy. As noted above, the output is also directly linked with SDG 16, as one of the SDG targets (16.2) is to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. The Global Partnership and Fund to End Violence Against Children was formed in 2016 to spearhead achievements under 16.2, by creating a platform for members to connect to raise awareness, catalyze leadership commitments, mobilize new resources, and promote evidence-based solutions.

Education: Since the cessation of civil conflict in 2009, successive governments adopted approaches addressing reconciliation and rehabilitation. The Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission of the then Government of Sri Lanka (LLRC)⁵¹ identified education as a key area for attention to bring about peace and reconciliation. The Government at the time of the development of the current UNICEF SLCO Programme Cycle identified education in a more focused manner as explicitly stated in its peacebuilding strategies. The Peacebuilding Priority Plan agreed between the United Nations and the Government of Sri Lanka identifies *"support a review of the education system to ensure it is conducive to promoting reconciliation and cohesion"* as a strategic priority under Focus Area # 3; the output identified is *"education system, including governance, policies and curricula, strengthened to promote reconciliation and social cohesion"*. The underlying rationale is that the education sector can play a critical role in fostering a culture of peace starting from childhood for the first time to a generation of children growing outside the shadow of conflict⁵². The output 3.3 directly addresses the national need for peace and reconciliation. Furthermore, this output is in synergy with the policy framework of the Ministry of Education⁵³.

With the change of Government in 2019, there is a new policy framework in place⁵⁴. The priority accorded to peace building is not explicit in this policy framework, which is perhaps reflected in the attention paid to integrating social cohesion within the realm of education and the allocation of funds for that purpose. In spite of this drawback, social cohesion remains a priority in the current educational reforms process⁵⁵.

It is recognised that reconciliation and peace building perspectives require the engagement of different levels of the society, viz., political leadership, society leaders from different ethnicities, religious faiths, academia, local leaders, CSOs, and the community. The programme interventions are more focused at the community (school community) and to a lesser degree

⁵⁰ Preventing violence against children in Sri Lanka Policy Brief. MOWC, UNICEF, The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2017.

⁵¹ Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation, November 2011; Presidential Secretariat; xii+388

⁵² The Sri Lanka Peacebuilding Priority Plan (August, 2016); UN and the Government of Sri Lanka

⁵³ National Policy and a Comprehensive Framework of Actions on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace (2008); Ministry of Education

⁵⁴ *Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour*, Government of Sri Lanka, 2019

⁵⁵ KII with MoE staff.

at the society leaders. The interventions of reaching school children, parents and the school community are strategically effective as they reach a larger population; however, the desired change depends on the interface with other layers of the society, in particular the political leadership. The outputs become relevant only when there is integration in the society.

The output also relates to the Convention of the Rights of the Child and falls within the aegis of the UNESCO framework of Global Citizenship. Articles 28 and 29 states **that** children's needs relating to a rights-based strategy for social cohesion. Building the personalities of children through co-curricular activities introduced through this component is relevant in the context of peace building.

The output is in line with the Driver 3 of the UNSDF⁵⁶. Overall, the output is of high relevance in the operating context in the country.

Disaster Risk Reduction: Following the Tsunami of December 2004 in Sri Lanka and the experiences gained from conflict-related displacement of children, Save the Children in Sri Lanka highlighted the need for children friendly and children-sensitive DRR and facilitating children's participation in promoting DRR⁵⁷.

UNICEF's Global Strategic Plan shows that DRR efforts can be improved by increasing attention to climate change impacts and focusing on the vulnerabilities and needs of different age groups. Furthermore, children are able to make changes in the attitudes of elders and have been thought as a vehicle to disseminate information on DRR to their parents. Following a study commissioned by UNICEF SLCO⁵⁸, the Child-Centred DRR has been introduced to the current programme cycle as a priority. It is a flexible rights-based approach combining child-focused (for children) and child-led (by children) activities, geared towards bringing about change in their community, and amongst local and national duty bearers.

Disaster Risk Reduction is a priority in UNSDF (Driver 4) where assistance to the Government has been identified for building capacity for disaster risk reduction and resilience, climate change adaptation and sustainable management and conservation of natural resources.

The output is also in line with the recommendations of the South Asian (SAARC) Child-centred DRR Framework⁵⁹, and also aligns with the provisions in the Sri Lanka Disaster Management Act No.13 of 2005.

UNICEF SLCO supported the development of the National Action Plan for CC-DRR, which has been endorsed by GoSL and it is a part of the national development plan.

In **Social Policy and Social Protection**, it is to be noted that GoSL's social policies and social protection priorities have long embraced pro-poor interventions. In the National Policy Framework, *Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour*⁶⁰, GoSL promotes policies on productive citizenry and a vibrant human resource together with a people-centric economic development, including *inter alia*, childcare, elderly care, and women's affairs. Similarly, the Public Investment Programme (2017-

⁵⁶ United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2018 – 2022, Sri Lanka

⁵⁷ Promoting Children Friendly and Child Centred Disaster Risk Reduction in Sri Lanka (2006); Save the Children in Sri Lanka

⁵⁸ Climate Change Impact on Women and Children in Sri Lanka (July, 2019) Unpublished Report, UNICEF Sri Lanka

⁵⁹ Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia (2015) SAARC Disaster Management Centre and UNICEF Regional Office For South Asia

⁶⁰ National Policy Framework Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour (<http://www.doc.gov.lk> > FinalDovVer02-English)

2020)⁶¹ includes implementing specific social protection schemes for all deserving segments of the society to improve their living conditions and empowering them to contribute to the development of the country.

The Poverty Headcount rate reduced from about 37% in 2002 to 11% in 2016. The projected rate for 2019 is 9.1%⁶². Despite these trends, the World Bank noted that inequality in some segments such as children, disadvantaged women, elders and disabled remains a major issue, in spite of implementing nearly 35 poverty reduction welfare programmes⁶³. The government has focused attention on these groups targeting at inclusive growth. It is reported that although 11% of the households are below the poverty line, only 16% of the households in the country have received *Samurdhi* cash transfers⁶⁴; there are number of reasons for this anomaly, but an important shortcoming is on data and registry of beneficiaries. The situation is exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic where an additional 500,000 people have been added to the poverty headcount, which is projected to be 11% in 2020⁶⁵.

With regard to child poverty, GoSL strives to address the underlying issues of malnutrition among children, poor quality of early childhood development and education, violence and abuse against children, and health, nutrition and education of vulnerable children by adopting strategies which include policy advocacy process to mobilize adequate resources.

The social protection interventions supported and implemented by UNICEF SLCO broadly cover areas such as social assistance and welfare services, technical support and capacity development for cash transfer programmes to address child poverty and generating evidence of child poverty and vulnerability including multidimensional data collection, data base management and maintenance of social and beneficiary registries. Thus, the social protection interventions supported and implemented by UNICEF SLCO under the current program cycle are very relevant and productive especially for the low-income families and their children.

UNICEF SLCO's social protection approach⁶⁶ is based on social protection objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The social protection interventions are targeted to ensure that the national and sub-national governments and the civil society strive to advance and monitor child rights for most deprived children as a priority need.

Overall assessment: The interventions introduced are relevant to each life cycle stage and complement GoSL policies and strategies to serve the needs of the children and adolescents. As indicated in the preceding sections, the interventions are also in line with SDG goals, in particular # 1 (Poverty), # 2 (hunger), # 3 (health and well-being), # 4 (education), # 5 (gender equality), # 6 (clean water and sanitation), # 13 (climate action), # 16 (peace), and # 17 (partnerships).

The programme also addresses, subject to limitations of resources, the needs of children and adolescents in the different life cycle stages, which is the core business of UNICEF.

⁶¹ Public Investment Programme; 2017-2020 (Department of National Planning Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs)

⁶² The World Bank Group (October, 2021) Sri Lanka Poverty assessment – Accelerating Economic Transformation

⁶³ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/03/02/part1-understanding-poverty-sri-lanka>

⁶⁴ Household Income & Expenditure Survey of GoSL; 2016

⁶⁵ Institute of Policy Studies (2021) Sri Lanka State of Economy

⁶⁶ Social Protection of UNICEF (<https://www.unicef.org/social-policy/social-protection>) and UNICEF's Global Social Protection Program Framework-[<https://www.unicef.org/media/file/Global-so...pdf>]

(b) An analysis of the Theories of Change

The Country Programme is guided by a Theory of Change based on investing in the critical windows of early childhood and adolescence *to contribute to increased cognitive capital which in turn will support Sri Lanka's sustainable development.*

The Programme Strategy Notes of UNICEF SLCO provide 'visions of change' in each outcome area. The following narrative provides an analysis of 'Visions of Change'.

Early Childhood

The initiatives are targeted to provide benefits to children <5 years from access to quality healthcare and nutrition, protection and development opportunities in their home, care and preschool environments, with the following outcome indicators:

- Percentage of children under five who are stunted
- Neonatal Mortality Rate
- Number of children (0-5 years) living in residential care

Brief observations on this ToC are given below:

- The stated outcome is of high order and is an ambitious one, and the indicators are national indicators. This outcome results from a multitude of initiatives from different players including GoSL in the arena of health, nutrition and education. The evaluation acknowledges the UNICEF policy of using national indicators; yet the UNICEF SLCO initiatives are inadequate to contribute to significant changes to the outcome indicators.
- Additionally, there are difficulties with measuring Indicators. For example, national data for stunting is available only for 2016. MoH has data on stunting for the following years, but there is a discrepancy in the data.
- Some baselines are not indicated in the Results Matrix. The baseline for children in residential care is given for '0-18 years'.

The progress reports do not report on outcome indicators as they are 'not available'.

This is indicative of the difficulties in using national data.

Given the progress stated in RAM 2020, it is unlikely that the outcome Indicators will be achieved (already rated constrained in the Report). The reality of achieving the outcome indicators by implementing the suite of actions also need to be carefully analysed; the evaluation is of the view that the CP actions in Early Childhood are unlikely to make a significant impact on the indicators.

Despite having achieved many of the targets associated with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Sri Lanka did not attain the nutrition target by 2015. Sri Lanka's stunting and wasting are both off-course⁶⁷.

The situation is exacerbated by limited funding available for the CP. Additionally, achievement of indicators is also conditional on GoSL contributions towards programme implementation.

⁶⁷ Sri Lanka: Averting a national nutrition anomaly (2018) Directorate Sustainable Growth and Development, European Union

As noted in the revised PSN, a major risk is GoSL economic situation which has come to realisation; in the circumstances, GoSL is unlikely to fulfil its commitments relating to the realisation of outputs.

Of the outputs, adopting WHO standards for SAM protocols has been achieved; it would appear that the target might have been too modest, as it was achieved already in 2019. Since there is a year and a half left of the CP, the CO could revise the target and aim beyond mere existence to use of the protocols (or evidence of the protocols making a difference in actual treatment).

The potential for the largely upstream UNICEF investments in nutrition to significantly influence the stunting prevalence during the course of the CP seems limited. In very concrete terms, there is no direct link from government-approved protocols and the outreach strategy to changes in stunting⁶⁸. Neither of the outputs aspire for actual use or implementation of the protocols or strategy, not even on a local scale. In the results framework, there are no demonstrable strong links with partners doing more downstream work to reduce undernutrition, which could have boosted the effect (use) of new standards and protocols. As seen above, measurement of the national stunting prevalence for the 2022 end line might be a challenge. Considering the progress in extending access to treatment in the Northern and Eastern provinces, one option might be to measure changes in nutrition indicators in these geographic areas only (though perhaps wasting more than stunting, as the time period may not be long enough to pick up changes in stunting).

Middle childhood

The changes expected are that young girls and boys would realise their rights to protection from violence to good health, and to appropriate cognitive and physical development. The indicators are as follows:

- Percentage of children (5-9 y) who are stunted
- Percentage of children (5-9 y⁶⁹) who have experienced violent disciplinary practices by an adult member of the household during the last month
- Percentage of students who obtained 70 and above marks in Grade 5 exam

The main observations are as follows:

- The indicators are of high order, and the initiatives implemented by UNICEF SLCO are spread rather thinly to contribute to this outcome.
- As with Outcome # 1, the Reports do not provide indicator progress due to paucity of national data.

There is no baseline for the outcome indicator on VAC by a household member, and an end line KAP as planned will have minimal information value vis-à-vis the country programme. Using administrative data as a proxy (with obvious limitations, including that of increased/decreased reporting blurring the real incidence rate) could be an alternative, though there does not seem to be any such administrative data at the national level combining the different departments' reporting systems – or no significant progress on that up until 2020, as

⁶⁸ UNICEF SLCO has an ongoing formative research programme which will be followed up with an evidence-based BCC strategy.

⁶⁹ The age group in the CPD is 5-14, while in the PSN it is 5-9 years.

seen from the analysis. That the limited piloting of parenting and life skills programmes will influence the national incidence rate of VAC in the household in 5 years is perhaps optimistic and creates a need for national data in an area that is generally poor in terms of data availability. This would mean that baseline/end line surveys are necessary, despite UNICEF SLCO's investment being on a very limited scale and perhaps not warranting national surveys to track effect of input. Such surveys, if undertaken, would in reality be more useful for situation monitoring than CPD monitoring, and ideally not be implemented by UNICEF SLCO on its own as a monitoring tool, but in partnership with others and more as an end in itself (engaging different government departments, agreeing on shared definitions and testing indicators, and so on towards better data collection on VAC in administrative reporting systems).

It is possible that there could be a local reduction in VAC in the geographic areas where UNICEF SLCO is piloting the life skills and/or parenting programmes, and at least for the PATHS pilot, there appears to be pre-intervention data collected.

The direct relevance of the last indicator (Percentage of students who obtained 70 and above marks in Grade 5 exam) to this outcome appear to be an outlier as interventions are limited to a very specific geographic area. Furthermore, performance at the Grade 5 examination is perhaps not the ideal as the predictive validity of the scholarship examination has come under scrutiny, given its large focus on rote learning and memorisation⁷⁰.

Adolescence

This Outcome seeks to provide a more equity-focused and gender-responsive approach to integrated adolescent development and participation of all adolescents in Sri Lanka, including the most deprived. As in previous analyses, the indicators are high order, and the influence of UNICEF SLCO are unlikely to make a substantial change on the indicators, as given below:

- Teenage pregnancy rate by age
- Average time taken for legal trial related to children cases reduced to 1 year
- Net enrolment rates in secondary education for children (15-16 years)

The main observations are as follows:

- On legal trials, whilst there has been success in reviewing some 17,000 plus files to ascertain whether there are indictable offences, there has been no progress afterwards to make any headway on indicator # 2.
- The focus on education has been for social cohesion, but the indicator embraces a much broader perspective. There is also a mismatch in reporting; for example, the Annual Report for 2020⁷¹ highlights the education component as *"the nurturing of concern for people and community – civic values – in young people is integral to achieving social cohesion, or the sense of connectedness, among the different groups in our society"*.

Social Policy

⁷⁰ Please see for a fuller analysis: Abayasekara, Ashani (2019) Sri Lanka's Grade Five Scholarship Examination: An Evaluation of its Effectiveness and Relevance: Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka

⁷¹ UNICEF Sri Lanka Annual Report 2020.

The expectation is that the interventions will support strengthening policies and systems so that children, particularly the most marginalized children and adolescents, progressively benefit from effective, equitable and inclusive social services and social protection system. The indicators used are given below:

- Per capita social spending on basic services (education and health)
- Number of children covered by social-protection systems

The measurement of this outcome is also affected by paucity of data, and lack of clarity on the indicator specifications. Outcome indicators are not reported (the baseline given is 2015, prior to the current programme cycle). At the output level, there are variances in indicators. For example, the output indicator in the Country Programme Document, *public spending on social protection from domestic resources as a proportion of national budget* is changed in reporting to: *public spending on health and education* because social protection programme expenditures are not publicly reported on a regular basis by GoSL. To add to the confusion, it has to be noted that the social protection sector in Sri Lanka is not clearly defined and the ownership is devolved. In the absence of data, UNICEF SLCO has reported on health and education expenditure.

Similarly on the output indicator, *social protection systems/programmes include emergency prevention, preparedness and response*, the baseline lists this as 'partly achieved' (the Government uses the *Samurdhi* program for cash transfers in case of emergencies). In 2019 the CO reported that this was completed. Discussions were ongoing on the use of social protection systems to respond to shocks, but the main focus had been on an overall reform of the social protection system.

Focus on Policy and Strategy formulation

The current programme cycle focusses on policy and strategy formulation (or upstream work). In the Sri Lankan context, where policy implementation is the prerogative of GoSL, it is difficult to relate outcomes to policy changes during a given timescale. This would affect achievement of indicators, both at Outcome level as well as Output level.

Table 3.2 summarises some of key policies and strategies facilitated by UNICEF SLCO in the current programme cycle.

Table 3.2 – Some key policies facilitated during the current programme cycle

Policy/Strategy	Comments
National Multi-sectoral Action Plan (for Nutrition) (2018-2025) Supported by Scaling up Nutrition (SUN), UNICEF SLCO and WFP	UNICEF SLCO supported the formation of MSAPN; however, the National Nutrition Secretariat, which is expected to coordinate MSAPN work is not functional now.
National Child Protection Policy	Started in 2000 and approved in 2019. It provides authority to NCPA for national level coordination of child protection activities. The Parliament of Sri Lanka recently raised concerns on the delays in implementing the provisions of the Policy ⁷² .
National Action Plan on Education for Peace and Reconciliation	Completed, but not implemented .

⁷² Proceedings of the Committee on Public Enterprises of the Parliament of Sri Lanka on 12 Feb., 2021
<<https://www.parliament.lk/committee-news/view/2057>>

Policy/Strategy	Comments
National Protocols for the Management of SAM	UNICEF SLCO originally did this in 2007; the updating to conform to WHO standards was completed in 2019, but the eventual outcomes of application of protocols are not evident.
National Preschool Education Policy	Awaiting approval.
Inputs to revision of curricula	Completed, but will not be in place until GoSL completes comprehensive educational reforms; likely to be fully available in 2024.
New School Health and Nutrition Policy	Policy developed and awaiting Cabinet approval.
National Normative Framework to enable diversion of children in conflict with law	Not available yet.

In conclusion, it is evident that there is a gap between outputs and very high-level outcome variables, all at national level. As would be seen from Table 3.2, many of the policies and tools are yet to be fully operationalised; the expected outcomes are unlikely to be demonstrated in the near future. A more meaningful indicators would be perhaps district/local level, given the limited programme implementation. It has to be noted that achievement of national outcome indicators would require substantial effort from GoSL, which has not been demonstrated in the current cycle due to a variety of reasons.

Nonetheless, the evaluation notes the relevance at output level; yet the interventions are spread and small and depend on the uptake by the Government to truly become relevant.

(c) The Situation Analysis (2017) and the Country Programme Document

The main areas relevant to the evaluation identified in the Situation Analysis are summarised in Table 3.3 together with the corresponding areas identified in CPD for action during 2018-2022.

Table 3.3 – Summary of areas identified in SitAn and CPD

Thematic area	Assessment in the Situation Analysis	Country Programme Actions implemented
Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child undernutrition is widely prevalent in families living below the poverty line in districts Mullaitivu, Mannar and Kilinochchi (Northern Province), Batticaloa (Eastern Province), and Monaragala (Uva Province), which are areas with the largest share of individuals, families and children living below the poverty line. Undernutrition in pregnant women has been identified as a formidable barrier for child development 	The current CPD has identified nutrition as a priority in early and middle childhood. However, interventions applied are limited in scope.
<i>Violence against children</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-sectoral collaboration for child protection; Addressing issues related to corporal punishment in schools; The need to address violence against girls and women systematically at all levels; Supporting the work, including capacity development of officials of the MoCWA, NCPA and DPCCS, in their role as leaders for child protection; 	Violence against children is a priority in middle childhood, focusing on supporting a national partnership to end VAC, and testing pilots on bullying as well as positive parenting. Interventions on inter-sectoral collaboration and sectoral

Thematic area	Assessment in the Situation Analysis	Country Programme Actions implemented
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate addressing child protection within other sectors, particularly with regard to sectoral policy development, institutional guiding principles and staff training, and clarity on the roles on different players 	policy development have been limited, largely due to GoSL inaction.
<i>Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reforming curricula to address issues such as sub-optimal learning outcomes, inequitable access to quality learning, and discrimination founded in ethnicity and/or socio-economic class; Address corporal punishment; Providing psychosocial wellbeing; and Support implementation of the Inclusive Education policy to address challenges faced by children with learning and Intellectual disabilities/difficulties 	Strengthen efforts to integrate peacebuilding and social cohesion in primary and secondary schools. Interventions limited.
<i>DRR</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involving children in DRR and climate change adaptation by mainstreaming DRR through the school system and educating children on environmental protection. 	Child-Centred DRR has been introduced together with school safety guidelines
<i>Social Policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the context of increasing agglomeration in Sri Lanka, urban poverty and how it is impacting on children and issues of sustainability; particularly in the context of access to services, home environments and the institutional strengthening required to redress shortfalls; Budgeting for Children, making a case for child-sensitive budgeting, and medium-term expenditure frameworks in social expenditure 	Improve evidence, capacity and systems for equity-sensitive planning, budgeting and evaluating by evidence-generation and policy advice. Interventions limited due to low level of engagement of GoSL counterparts.

As shown in Table 3.5, UNICEF SLCO has been able to include only some of the needs identified in SitAn due to funding constraints. However, external stakeholders were unclear on the prioritization process between SitAn and actual programme design based on funding etc. This lack of clarity was also evident to a certain degree amongst the internal staff who felt that the availability of external donor funds influenced the prioritization process⁷³.

(d) Stakeholder engagement in identifying the country needs:

UNICEF SLCO actively engaged with the main Ministries (MoE, MoH, MoF & MoWCA) and their agencies, both at the national and at the provincial levels to develop the programme⁷⁴. In addition, there has been consultation with the academia, I/NGOs, think-tanks and children. In **nutrition**, the dialogue with the Ministry of Education to obtain their views relating to nutrition of children is inadequate. The MSAPN would have been an ideal forum to reinforce programmatic areas identified by UNICEF SLCO. In **Child Protection**, the programme has been developed through extensive dialogue with stakeholders at both provincial and national levels. There are no indications of lacking collaboration in the planning phase. In the sphere of **Disaster Risk Reduction**, CC-DRR package is a result of collaboration between DPCCS, MoE, DMC and the provincial DRR agencies.

⁷³ KII with UNICEF SLCO staff.

⁷⁴ Representatives of the Provincial Chief Secretaries participated in the UNICEF SLCO Programme Development Steering Committee (Source: KII with GoSL staff)

In **Education**, the national level engagements were aimed at more policy-oriented actions such as supporting curriculum reinforcement for life competencies and citizen education, enhancing the capacity of teachers to use new modules on social cohesion and peace education etc. These have been followed up with extensive dialogue with provincial education authorities to identify the actions to be implemented in selected educational zones.

Engagement with Provincial Staff: Whilst there have been extensive dialogues with authorities from the provinces where UNICEF SLCO works, the approach to identify the provincial needs and priorities have to be based on provincial priorities which have been developed using well-thought-out criteria such as ethnicity, poverty etc. UNICEF SLCO's provincial planning therefore needs to start at matching the needs at Provincial level first, rather than the current approach of identifying district needs. UNICEF SLCO should be able to match the Provincial needs with its own priorities so that the societal balances of development work envisaged by the Provincial Council will not be disturbed.



- 67% of the respondents opined that the current UNICEF SLCO programme has taken into consideration both national and provincial priorities.
- 57% thought that the current UNICEF SLCO programme is based on results and learnings from the previous programme.

Perception Survey

The majority of the informants corroborated the findings of the Perception Survey presented in the box above.

(e) Programme adaptation to external shocks

Adaptation of UNICEF SLCO programme to external shocks during the current programme cycle is discussed under three categories, as follows:

- Extreme climatic events
- Easter Sunday attack (21 April, 2019)
- COVID-19 pandemic (since March, 2020)

Extreme climatic events

UNICEF SLCO is a key member of the Humanitarian Country Team of the UN Resident Coordinator to coordinate delivery of humanitarian assistance on protection, education, WASH, food security, and nutrition in the aftermath of disasters. Accordingly, UNICEF SLCO pre-positioned itself by providing to DMC the immediate disaster preparatory needs such as water pumps, water purification equipment, emergency shelter materials, and nutrition supplements for immediate distribution in the aftermath of floods and cyclones.

Aside from launching the CC-DRR programmes as a part of the current programme cycle, UNICEF SLCO supported DMC by providing relief to disaster-affected families and children during cyclone Burevi (2021 in the Northern Province) and monsoon floods in 2020 and 2021. It also supported the DMC and the Disaster Preparedness and Response Division of the Ministry of Health an online training on the management of safety centres for southwest monsoon (2021) amidst COVID-19, bringing in strong child protection in emergencies guidance for the first time in camp management training in Sri Lanka. Additionally, UNICEF

SLCO coordinated with the partner agencies to develop a handbook for safety centre managers.

The technical and material assistance provided are relevant and appreciated by the stakeholders.

Easter Sunday attack (April, 2019)

The Easter Sunday attack on 21 April, 2019 left 270 people dead and about 500 injured. UNICEF SLCO reported 46 children dead and 25 injured. Several children were left with only one parent. This attack caused serious setbacks to the peace and reconciliation efforts that were being implemented in the country. In particular, UNICEF SLCO's joint programme on peacebuilding suffered due to implementation delays, and some of the gains from social cohesion work were adversely affected. In the immediate aftermath of bombing, UNICEF SLCO responded as follows:

- The hospitals in the epicentres of the attacks (Negombo, Colombo, and Batticaloa) had a huge influx of patients. UNICEF SLCO provided urgent equipment required to manage critical patients;
- Procuring special medical equipment and essential materials to treat injured children;
- Supporting programmes to provide mental health and psychosocial support;
- Supporting the MoWCA to coordinate data collection to ensure that children and adolescents are prioritized in this response; and
- Supporting the DPCCS to find alternative care facilities for children separated from parents and to reunite the families⁷⁵;

Whilst implementation of the normal programme activities suffered a setback, particularly in the Eastern Province, UNICEF SLCO responded by adapting the relevant components of the Peacebuilding Project to target about 20,000 school communities, principally children, with awareness programmes on peaceful co-existence, tolerance, and long-term peace⁷⁶.

UNICEF SLCO was able to source additional funds, mainly from Japan, to cover costs related to these measures. UNICEF SLCO efforts are both relevant and timely and are appreciated by the stakeholders.

COVID-19 pandemic (since March, 2020)

When the COVID-19 attained pandemic status in Sri Lanka in February/March, 2020, the government response was swift: Schools were closed across the country and a very strict curfew was imposed. Up until October 2021, there have been repeated lockdowns due to surges in COVID-19 cases, with schools for the most part remaining closed. Immediate concerns included the impact of the lockdowns on livelihood, as about 70% of the labour force work in the informal economy⁷⁷; access to education for children; access to basic health and protection services; as well as issues related more directly to the pandemic: Infection prevention control measures and COVID-19 knowledge, awareness and practices.

⁷⁵ UNICEF-Sri Lanka Easter Sunday Attack Situation Report -May2019

⁷⁶ Progress Report of the Project, *Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka*; 2020 (UNICEF Sri Lanka)

⁷⁷ Informality, job quality and welfare in Sri Lanka. World Bank, 2020.

Programme response

Key UNICEF Sri Lanka programme responses to the pandemic and its containment measures included, *inter alia*,

- Household telephone survey with UNDP at regular intervals to keep informed of the socio-economic impact felt at the family level.
- Development and implementation of risk communication strategies with other development partners and MoH; as the pandemic gained momentum, misinformation began to spread fueling discrimination and stigma. UNICEF SLCO launched interventions to promote facts over fear, and bringing trustworthy guidance to parents, caregivers and educators;
- Procurement and delivery of supplies for infection prevention control, including WASH facilities for handwashing.
- Support to MoE to develop learning packages for Grades 1 and 2, to complement the web-based learning platforms, reaching over half a million children. The package contained print-based materials, to be distributed to students in schools that were predominantly in hard-to-reach geographic locations.
- Development of technical guidance notes, standard operating procedures and similar guidance documents together with government counterparts for national rollout on issues such as WASH and IPC measures in households and schools, standard operating procedures for digital case management in child protection, guidelines for management of children's homes during COVID-19, guidelines for provision of maternal and newborn care services, and a pocketbook for community health staff on restarting health services.
- Following advocacy by the Child Protection Working Group, the Government declared child protection services essential, meaning that Child Protection officers were able to resume work from the second week of the first curfew, leaving almost no gap in service delivery. Tips on positive parenting were made available online, and a psychosocial support network was established centrally and in the Eastern and Northern regions.
- UNICEF SLCO also mobilized external resources from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank and took on the procurement and delivery of USD 24 million worth of medical supplies in collaboration with WHO.

COVID-19 mitigation measures have complemented GoSL efforts; the medical supplies are timely and very much appreciated by GoSL stakeholders.

Programme and operational effectiveness

In order to ensure available capacity to support a timely COVID-19 response, the programme management team deferred non-essential programme work⁷⁸. On the operational side, the country office switched from regular operating procedures to the Business Continuity Plan, a transition that was eased by recent experiences doing the same during other emergencies in the country⁷⁹.

⁷⁸ UNICEF Sri Lanka Annual Report, 2020.

⁷⁹ Real-time assessment of the UNICEF South Asia response to COVID-19, UNICEF ROSA 2020.

Key programme documents were reviewed and updated, to better reflect the changing context and also to align better with national priorities and resources available for the remaining years of the programme. The Programme Strategy Notes, which outline the priorities within each sectoral area, were amended and some new outputs were added to facilitate monitoring and reporting on COVID-related activities. Planned studies and evaluations for 2020 were carried forward to 2021.

The size of the World Bank and ADB funding relative to the country programme must not be underestimated. It amounts to almost half of the total budget for the five-year country programme (a budget that so far has not been realized and annual actual spending has been far lower), placing a strain on the capacity and resources of a smaller country office.

During the early months of the pandemic, when PPE equipment was in short supply globally, UNICEF SLCO used the opportunity to connect garment industry partners with UNICEF Supply Division. Facilitating this dialogue between high level political leadership in Sri Lanka, private sector entities and UNICEF Supply Division, the country office succeeded in enabling the reopening of several factories (and restoring income opportunities for the mainly female staff), for local manufacturing of PPE in line with international standards. Several contracts were made with UNICEF Supply Division for meeting needs globally, in addition to local contracts to fill domestic needs.

(f) Comparative Strength of UNICEF SLCO

This section provides a brief narrative on the comparative strength of UNICEF SLCO in its programmatic areas of operation, and other actors who are active in Sri Lanka and who are contributing to the programmatic areas. UNICEF SLCO's strengths are summarised below⁸⁰:

- UNICEF SLCO is considered a respected partner with GoSL on child protection matters and is recognised as the only international agency with dedicated expertise;
- UNICEF SLCO is also considered a key agency to address children's wellbeing;
- It has contributed towards generating knowledge products required for evidence-based policy formulation;
- In the past, UNICEF SLCO provided support, both financially and technically, to improve delivery of services relating to children and mothers.

In **child protection**, UNICEF SLCO's standing within GoSL is well recognised and is seen to place UNICEF in a unique position in terms of advocacy⁸¹. UNFPA also has several programmes on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)⁸². In **education** also, UNICEF SLCO is well positioned within GoSL as having supported in many ways including infrastructure development, introduction of WASH facilities, general education improvements including ECCD⁸³; however, in regard to social cohesion vis-à-vis education, UNDP also has interventions relating to peace building but their focus on education is minimal⁸⁴. In **health** and **nutrition**, there are a number of UN agencies such as WFP, UNFPA, WHO and FAO who work on different aspects of nutrition of children and mothers. As a result of reduced activities in the recent times, the relevant GoSL stakeholders are of the view that the position of UNICEF SLCO much

⁸⁰ Source: KII with GoSL and NGO partners.

⁸¹ KII with GoSL staff

⁸² The UNFPA Country Programme (2018-2022) has allocated USD 1.8 million for adolescents and youth.

⁸³ KII with GoSL staff.

⁸⁴ Peacebuilding fund programme for Sri Lanka (2017)

less prominent than in other programmatic areas⁸⁵. Various aspects of **Social Policy** are addressed by different UN agencies (e.g. UNDP, WFP, ILO), and the prominent player is UNDP which enjoys prominence within GoSL as a lead partner, together with others such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank⁸⁶. Of these agencies, only UNICEF SLCO focusses on child poverty.

There are also a number of International NGOs operating in child protection with substantial donor funding.



- 71% were of the view that UNICEF SLCO is best placed to support their work.
- 21% were unsure whether UNICEF SLCO is the best agency for their work;
- 92% were of the view that UNICEF SLCO is well equipped in their thematic areas.

Perception Survey

(g) Geographic coverage

In addition to the national work, UNICEF SLCO is implementing programmes in the Northern, Eastern, Central and Uva Provinces (*cf.* Fig. 2.1).

In the **Northern** and **Eastern** Provinces, stakeholders are of the view that whilst there are ongoing programmes, the coverage within the Provinces is inadequate. For example, the provincial authorities have identified backward educational zones which require attention⁸⁷. Likewise, coverage in health and nutrition is inadequate. In the **Central** and **Uva** Provinces, UNICEF SLCO's work is limited to education whereas child nutrition is a priority area requiring early attention. Authorities also wish to expand the CC-DRR work to all districts which are prone to disasters. In relation to child protection and health and nutrition, stakeholders are of the view that UNICEF SLCO work should be expanded and upscaled in other districts.

The evaluation was constrained by limited stakeholder consultation in provinces other than those where UNICEF SLCO is active due to deadlines. Also, the current reduced funding limits UNICEF SLCO's geographic expansion, which is not well understood by GoSL stakeholders. The GoSL stakeholders view on UNICEF SLCO's expansion to other areas in the country is based on the assumption that UNICEF SLCO is still on a service delivery mode, and they are yet to come to terms with the transition made by UNICEF SLCO. However, given the current nature of work in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, there is a case for replicating some of the good examples in other parts of the country.

(h) Areas needing more attention

The evaluation examined the critical areas of interventions identified by the stakeholders based on national and/or provincial priorities which are not reflected in the current programme cycle

⁸⁵ KII with GoSL staff.

⁸⁶ KII with GoSL staff

⁸⁷ As revealed during KII with provincial GoSL staff, UNICEF SLCO does not work in some of the backward districts due to fund limitations.

or those which have not been sufficiently covered due to funding constraints. Table 3.4 summarises the areas where increased efforts are needed.

Table 3.4 – Summary of areas where increased efforts are needed⁸⁸

Health & Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing mental and education wellbeing of children between 3-8 years who could not attend school due to COVID-19; Address undernutrition in children <5 y, particularly in identified critical geographic areas in the country (e.g., Uva and Central Province with particular reference to plantations); Nutrition of pregnant mothers*;
Child Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate actions to facilitate establishment of a functional coordinating mechanism for child protection work; Gender based violence and the link between intimate partner violence and violence against children; Support CSOs to promote child protection issues and advocate for their space to do so; Address issues of online violence (particularly after COVID-19); Examine the issues relating to care of children under 3 y where parents are working and not able to provide the needed care*; Introduce initiatives to improve the conditions of children and adolescents in urban low-income settlements to provide optimal health and educational attainment and vocational training*; Develop a policy on children's environmental health aspects as they relate to air pollution and climate change*;
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on education for children with disabilities to support inclusive education policy of the Government; Supporting children who drop out after GCE (Ordinary Level) with life skills/vocational training for them to become useful citizens; Support for teacher fora for action research; Expansion of social cohesion work on schools to other provinces; Designing school infrastructure to avoid heat stress*; Develop programmes to provide learning environment at home for children who lack parental care after school, face family violence, child employment etc.*
DRR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support upscaling CC-DRR activities to all disaster-prone areas

3.3 Effectiveness of the Country Programme

The effectiveness of the country programme was assessed using (i) the desk review of existing data and information from the Results Assessment Module (RAM), annual reports as well as external secondary sources (please see Annex 1.5 for a summary), (ii) key informant interviews, and (iii) perception survey.

The assessment focused mainly on the identified outputs (1.1, 2.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 4.4). The Results Framework largely used national indicators at the outcome level, and the data and information

⁸⁸ Statements followed by an asterisk (*) are from the Perception Survey.

on national indicators are generated by GoSL. In many cases, updated indicator status was not available as GoSL has not undertaken the relevant surveys to generate data. This is a limitation in assessing effectiveness at the outcome level.

(a) Reach and Delivery of the Results

Nutrition

Achievements: The nutrition programme is addressed from a systems perspective. The interventions supported by UNICEF SLCO are ongoing; the formative research on infant and young child feeding and maternal nutrition practices in Sri Lanka is expected to be completed in 2021 and will provide much-needed information to develop a well-informed national infant and young child feeding strategy with a comprehensive behavioural change communication component. Other achievements include: introduction of national protocols for management of SAM, and advocacy work leading to GoSL to allocate additional funding for production of supplementary food (*Thripasha*) for children <5 y and pregnant mothers. The real-time District

The efforts of UNICEF in addressing the problems of SAM and their support to address SAM have helped us to learn the underlying issues of SAM. UNICEF staff have been most helpful in this regard.

Provincial GoSL staff member

Nutrition Monitoring System (DNMS) has been completed in three districts; once completed, data will be available to monitor key nutrition performance indicators so the follow-up actions can be rationally decided⁸⁹.

UNICEF SLCO, noting the dormancy of the National Nutrition Secretariat (NNS), made repeated requests to the Ministry of Health to take action to reactivate the Secretariat; finally, UNICEF SLCO made a presentation to the President of Sri Lanka

emphasizing the need to re-activate the Secretariat in order to coordinate actions on nutrition⁹⁰.

UNICEF SLCO also made recommendations to the MoH on a simplified protocol for BP 100 and a revised protocol for *triposha*. MoH has accordingly revised the *triposha* protocol, but there is no agreement by the FHB of MoH on BP 100 recommendation.

UNICEF SLCO also advocated Ready-to-use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) to address severe acute malnutrition (SAM).

UNICEF interventions in nutrition have always been consistent with Government actions, and they complement what is being done by the Government.

An Academic

Assessment of Effectiveness: The effectiveness of the nutrition component is hampered due to a number of reasons, viz.,

- Lack of GoSL interest in the Multi-Sectoral Action Plan for Nutrition (MSAPN); the MSAPN was facilitated by UNICEF SLCO to coordinate the work of GoSL and donors

⁸⁹ Information sourced from Annual Reports and RAM.

⁹⁰ Source: KII with UNICEF SLCO staff

and other interested parties. Its previous work led to improvement in ranking of the priority districts based on their performance against critical nutrition indicators as well as in identification of the most vulnerable districts for targeted nutrition interventions. Furthermore, the National Nutrition Secretariat, originally established in the President's Office, was expected to ensure the multi sectoral involvement of all relevant stakeholders in nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive issues. This agency is also not functional. As a result, there is duplication of work, particularly by donors, at grassroots level⁹¹. In this regard, the Nutrition Steering Committee on Nutrition of MoH is expected to make some efforts towards coordination, but the Committee does not receive workplans of the actors⁹².

- As with many other GoSL programmes, there is a gap between the Policy and grassroots level actions needed. Introduction of customised nutrition packages appropriate in the context of the region/community/individual (e.g. plantations, urban shanty areas, rural, undernourished children under 5 y) which take into consideration the behavioural context of communities will have better results.
- Overall, there are delays in delivery due to COVID-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions; consequently, some results are yet to be seen.

GoSL stakeholders have expressed concern that in spite of interventions by GoSL and donors, it is unable to demonstrate effectiveness in terms of some of the key progress indicators (e.g. reduction in stunting). Consultations during this evaluation also noted the following which have a bearing on effectiveness of its interventions⁹³:

- UNICEF SLCO engagement with MoH is largely with the Family Health Bureau, whereas the Nutrition Division and other Divisions have important roles to play.
- There is a notion amongst GoSL and Civil Society stakeholders that as health and nutrition themes are amalgamated at UNICEF SLCO, the importance given to nutrition is less than desired in spite of the priority needs in nutrition in the country. The evaluation did not find any concrete evidence for this imbalance in its limited examination; however, it is worth examining this internally as the external perceptions are important. One reason may be the shortage of funds for nutrition programmes.
- Whilst appreciating the technical support of UNICEF SLCO, a number of senior officials expressed the view that GoSL would more favourably respond to UNICEF SLCO's technical advice if such advice is customised and contextualized considering the conditions in Sri Lanka, rather than basing on practices carried out elsewhere in the World.
- Given UNICEF SLCO's focus on upstream work, it is best placed to periodically review GoSL's relevant policies with a view to examine why some policies or elements thereof are functioning well or not functioning to provide a feedback to GoSL⁹⁴.
- The capacity of GoSL public health personnel in nutrition management needs further development to ensure that the advice proffered at the grassroots level is consistent

⁹¹ KII with GoSL stakeholders, Civil Society and UN Agencies

⁹² KII with GoSL stakeholders.

⁹³ Source: KII with GoSL (MoH) stakeholders

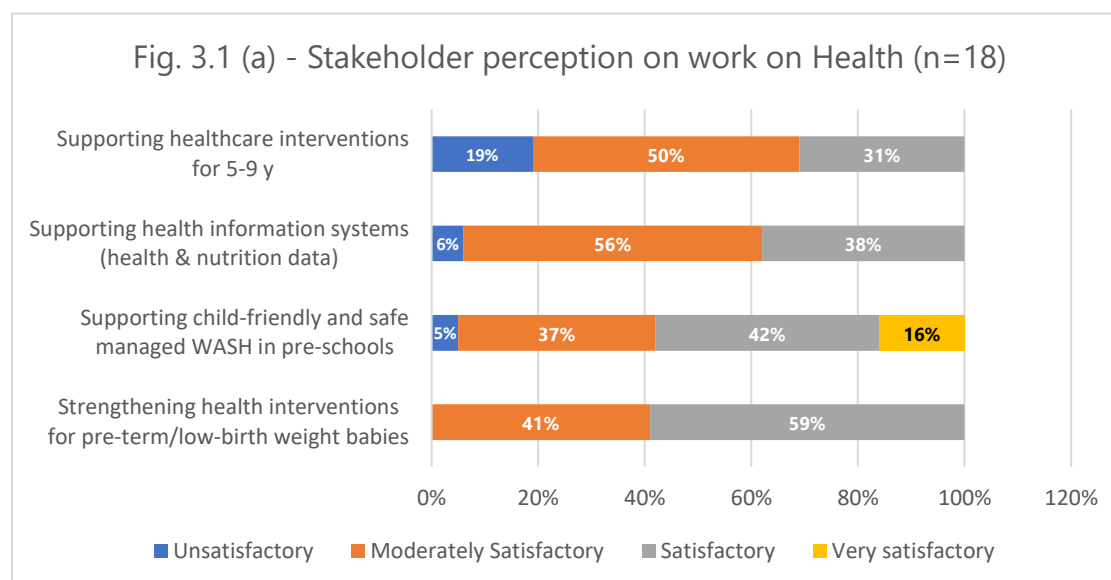
⁹⁴ KII with GoSL stakeholders.

and reflect the GoSL policy. Currently, UNICEF SLCO is providing training and capacity development, which are found to be timely and useful by GoSL.

Stakeholder perceptions of Health and Nutrition work

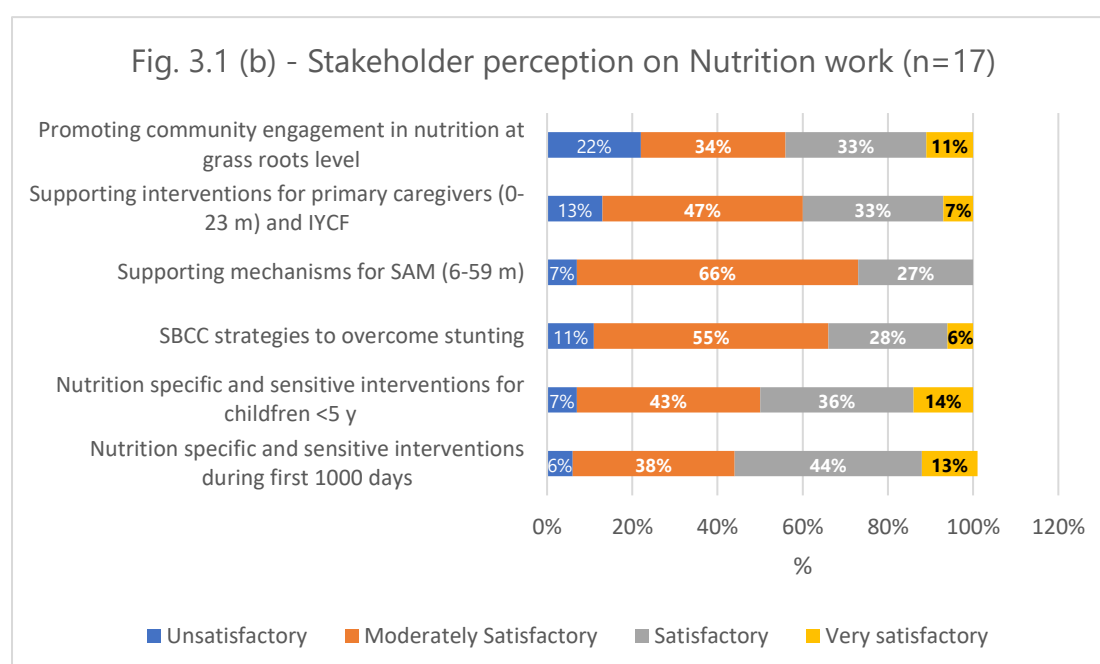
Health

As shown in Fig. 3.1 (a), majority expressed satisfaction/moderate satisfaction on health interventions of UNICEF SLCO.



Nutrition

As shown in Fig. 3.1 (b), most respondents have rated nutrition related support as moderately satisfactory/satisfactory. A somewhat higher proportion of respondents (22%) is of the view that community engagement in nutrition is unsatisfactory.



Child Protection

Achievements: The target to help establish a functional national partnership under the formal leadership of MoWCA was achieved, with UNICEF SLCO driving the process through two years of activity resulting in a roadmap and the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children (2018-2023). This role is widely acknowledged and supported by stakeholders. The partnership was very active for two years (2017-2019), but the momentum has since been lost and it is now inactive. Views on the reasons for this vary; from UNICEF SLCO losing interest and failing to hand over the stewardship; changes in GoSL and Ministry leadership; to disappointment that the pathfinder role did not lead to the expected increase in funding⁹⁵. The latter issue has caused partnerships in other pathfinding countries with a similar fate. The next step for this initiative would be to advocate with different Ministries and Departments for the implementation of the Action Plan, however the partnership is no longer a viable platform for this. Alternative multi-sectoral committees are being explored by the Country Office.

UNICEF SLCO supported GoSL on the development of the National Alternative Care Policy for Children in Sri Lanka. The Policy received the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers in March, 2019⁹⁶.

The development of a training curriculum for selected children in the care institutions (for NVQ level 4) was facilitated by UNICEF SLCO⁹⁷.

UNICEF SLCO also supported the Attorney General's office by providing services of seven Attorneys to expedite the pending files of nearly 17,000 child abuse cases to determine indictments.

We consider UNICEF's support towards the finalization of the Alternative Care Policy a key milestone in the process. Without this support, we would not have been able to develop the Policy.

GoSL staff member

Assessment of Effectiveness: The consultations during the evaluation noted that delivery of the life skills programme is delayed. A programme originating in Hong Kong (PATHS) has been contextualized and translated for use in Sri Lanka and is being piloted in the Northern Province (Mannar). It was delayed before COVID-19, but the prolonged closure of schools has added to the delay although as an interim solution, it has been delivered online. The pilot is being implemented by an NGO, and government ownership has been limited⁹⁸.

⁹⁵ KII with GoSL stakeholders.

⁹⁶ The National Alternative Care Policy for Children in Sri Lanka (Ministry of Woman and Child Affairs and Dry Zone Development) (undated)

⁹⁷ KII with GoSL stakeholders.

⁹⁸ KII with GoSL stakeholders and RAM (2019).

Similarly, the parenting skills pilot is very delayed and is currently still at module finalization stage. It evolved during the development process, from a focus on positive *disciplining* (draft modules were made) to a broader view on positive *parenting*. The expected result is a casebook more than training modules and expected entry points for reaching parents of small children include midwives and primary health care centres.

The Attorney General's Department is short-staffed; if not for the support of UNICEF SLCO, we would not have been able to clear the backlog of pending files on complaints of child abuse.

Official of the Attorney General's Department

Securing government ownership of pilots, towards achieving a scale up should the results be successful, seems to be uneven, largely due to

fund constraints and coordination issues in GoSL agencies. There are challenges in terms of engaging local government and line ministries at the local level, and also lack of clarity on how such buy-in will go to the national level and thus pave the way for scaling up. Lack of government ownership was also an issue for the national partnership; hence this is a broader issue affecting the Output as a whole. Strategic partnerships, with the Ministry of Education in the case of bullying, are key to upscaling.

Aside from the difficulty of demonstrating change in the national indicators, an important need is to establish a functional partnership amongst the key players to ensure implementation of the action plan. As there is only a short time available in this cycle, it seems unlikely that these interventions will have enough time to contribute to a reduction in violence on a national scale.

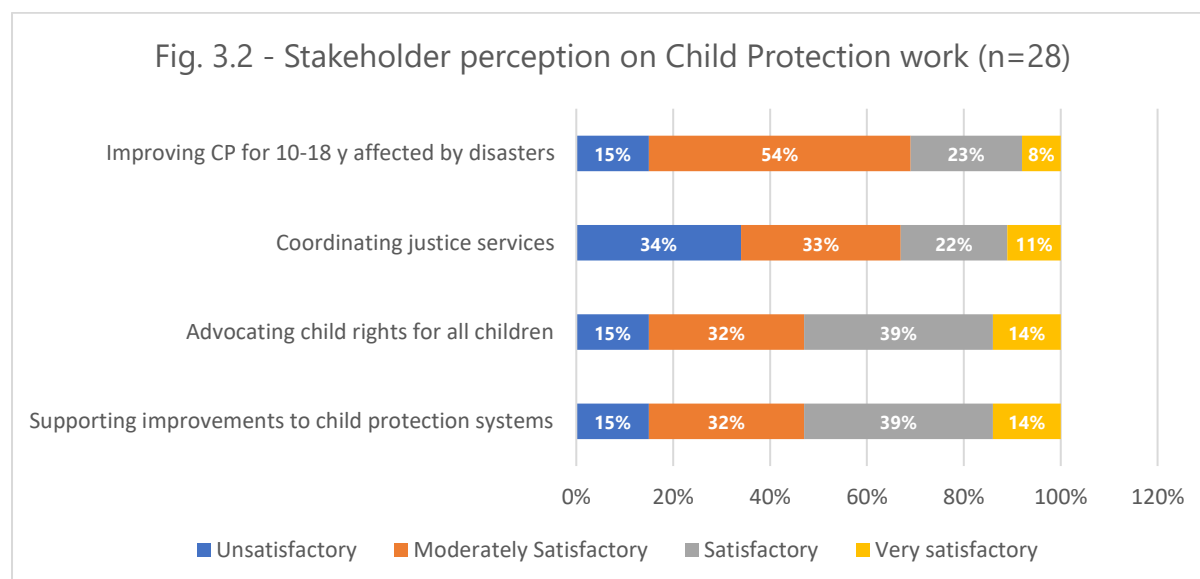
The capacity in the three agencies under the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (MoWCA), namely, the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA), Department of Probation and Childcare Services (DPCCS) and the National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development is somewhat limited due to frequent turnover of staff and inadequate training⁹⁹. Indeed, the National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development was dormant for some time but has recently resumed limited activities. Additionally, frequent political changes have meant that relationships have to be continually rebuilt. Inadequate coordination between agencies responsible for child protection together with unclear mandates have affected implementation of child protection initiatives in the country. Similar situation is seen in the provinces also. Added to this constraint is the weak coordination amongst GoSL agencies with other ministries and agencies which work on child protection issues, resulting on an overall lack of coordination in child protection work. This situation has been highlighted in the Situation Analysis of UNICEF SLCO (2017) as well.

Stakeholder perceptions on Child Protection work

Majority of the respondents have rated UNICEF SLCO's protection support as satisfactory or moderately satisfactory (Fig. 3.2). Justice services stand out from the rest, as one third (34%) of respondents rated this support as unsatisfactory. During consultations, views on technical support from UNICEF SLCO in child protection are mixed, with the majority finding it adequate or strong. In terms of openness and transparency around plans and activities, several note that this could be much better in the working groups, stating that "*we would discuss ideas and then*

⁹⁹ KII with GoSL staff; the evaluation notes that in 2018, UNICEF SLCO supported staff capacity development of Government field staff. For example, in the Northern and Eastern provinces, 11 field officers were sent on an exposure visit to India after local training programmes on child rights protection.

later find out that UNICEF SLCO had gone ahead and implemented, without informing any of us”¹⁰⁰.



Education

Achievements: **Output 3.3** (Social Cohesion) is expected to support the delivery of an overall school curriculum that promotes social harmony and addresses “interpersonal violence” or bullying in schools. Whilst some work on curriculum development is delayed (e.g. Civic Education Curriculum), GoSL has decided that all revisions to the curriculum should be a part of the ongoing education reforms, which are expected to be piloted in one primary and one secondary schools in each zone (204 schools) in 2022 and rolled out to selected grades in 2023 with full scale rollout in 2024. Training of resource persons at the Teacher Training Colleges is on hold due to COVID-19 pandemic¹⁰¹. Another contribution from this output is the ongoing capacity development of MoE staff to prevent and resolve conflict and promote civic engagement.

We found the Music for Social Cohesion a novelty to introduce the subject. The trainings provided were very useful in changing our mindset and to inculcate the philosophy amongst the children.

A Provincial Education Official

The social cohesion work piloted in selected schools is currently not adequately monitored due to COVID-related disruptions in the schools, and the E-platform is fully implemented only at a few schools. The *Music for Social Cohesion* is an innovative strategy introduced during the current programme cycle that provide students with a range of experiences and appreciated by the teachers. This programme is being upscaled and a

¹⁰⁰ KII with UNICEF SLCO staff.

¹⁰¹ KII with GoSL stakeholders.

national mechanism has been developed to replicate the programme; however, the capacity of GoSL to replicate the programme is currently limited due to financial difficulties of GoSL in procuring equipment¹⁰².

In *Positive Disciplining*, work is based on the premise that improvement of social and emotional skills reduces bullying and peer victimization. It is being implemented in all UNICEF SLCO's operational provinces with a reach of about 225 schools. In 2021, UNICEF SLCO, together with MoE, provincial educational authorities and teachers, has reviewed the existing positive disciplining manuals for teachers and case studies developed by the provincial resource teams in North, East, Central and Uva provinces¹⁰³.

In order to develop a package of resources on positive disciplining with a view to scale up the work, UNICEF SLCO has developed the conceptual framework and the structure for a manual to be used in introducing and teaching this subject¹⁰⁴. In October, 2021, work has begun on the development of the package of resources which include the manual, a workbook and pocketbook¹⁰⁵. This

We found the UNICEF-supported NIE publications were available in both Sinhalese and Tamil. These covering subject areas such as positive disciplining, improvement of their Transversal competences and recreational skills were most useful for teachers and for In-Service Advisors.

A Provincial Education Official

package is expected to be field tested in December 2021 with possible roll-out by MoE in 2022.

UNICEF SLCO also facilitated providing psychosocial background support to the children's committees and media clubs in schools. As a part of this task, about 3,000 psychosocial counsellors attached to different organizations were brought together for online counselling training from time to time.

The national study on the issues of ragging and SGBV in Sri Lankan Universities has been inordinately delayed; this is largely due to the change of senior management of the University Grants Commission (UGC) following the change of Government in 2019. The report, commissioned by UGC in 2018, has been finalized during the second half of 2021, and work on developing policy guidelines to promote violence-free environments and the module on co-existence and peace for the new university entrants is ongoing at the time of the evaluation¹⁰⁶.

The evaluation also noted inadequate coordination between the education and child protection groups at UNICEF SLCO in delivering outputs on school violence and children's safety¹⁰⁷. Whilst work in schools is within the domain of the Education group, there could have been value addition to technical aspects of school violence from the Child Protection Group.

¹⁰² KII with UNICEF SLCO staff; this work has been undertaken in 2021.

¹⁰³ UNICEF SLCO; Review of the Positive Disciplining manuals (15 March 2021)

¹⁰⁴ UNICEF SLCO; Manual on Positive Disciplining (Draft); October 2021

¹⁰⁵ Package developed at the workshops starting with 24 October 2021

¹⁰⁶ KII with UNICEF SLCO staff

¹⁰⁷ KII with GoSL and UNICEF SLCO staff

In **Output 3.4** (DRR), a Child-Centred DRR programme has been launched in 2020¹⁰⁸ in collaboration with the DPCCS and piloted in several districts prone to disasters together with district child protection officials. The provincial authorities are appreciative of the introduction of CC-DRR as a concept, which has proven to be useful in creating awareness amongst children (and adults) on disasters and the preventive action that should be taken. The authorities are now able to identify children vulnerable for disasters, providing alarm systems for children and readiness of safety centres (existing infrastructure) and providing child protection during disaster times. Whilst developing the capacity of district and divisional level officials on CC-DRR, UNICEF SLCO also reached about 3,500 children in Galle, Kalutara, Ratnapura, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Batticaloa, Ampara, and Trincomalee districts on DRR capacity development via Children's Clubs.

The Divisional Secretaries and the DMC field staff as well as CSO partners appreciated the inclusion of voice of the children in the CC-DRR action planning.

NGO Senior Manager

UNICEF SLCO has also taken the lead to reinvigorate the school safety guidelines originally drafted in 2016, and MoE has taken steps to formalise these guidelines within the school curriculum. Over 30 schools in potentially dangerous situations have been identified using criteria developed under this programme. MoE appreciates this work as pioneering work relating to the safety of children in transition (from school to home), an aspect which has not been considered previously¹⁰⁹.

Most of the time, our thinking of safety of children was confined to school time. We began to think about extending children's safety until they reach homes because of UNICEF thinking.

GoSL Official

Assessment of Effectiveness: **(Output 3.3)** Pre-COVID-19 implementation delays coupled with post-COVID closure of schools and lockdowns have affected delivery. School closure led to alarming inequities in learning opportunities for children. UNICEF SLCO supported GoSL in supporting remote learning. The full range of activities planned have not been implemented as evidenced in the delivery of outputs, and the provincial reach is also limited. Some of the challenges highlighted in an evaluation related to this output yet remains¹¹⁰. Due to various reasons, delivery of many components is pending¹¹¹. Work on the Civic Education Curriculum and positive disciplining has been delayed. A proper assessment is not possible as Output 3.3 needs a coordinated effort of all deliverables to achieve the outcomes.

¹⁰⁸ CC-DRR activities have been undertaken previously also under child protection, but this particular Output has been established only in 2020 workplan.

¹⁰⁹ KII with GoSL stakeholders

¹¹⁰ Terminal Evaluation of the Project, *Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka* (Peacebuilding Fund); 2021

¹¹¹ According to RAM (2020), there has been difficulties of fund transfer to Government due to absence of a national budget in the interim Government structure.

According to MoE, the National Action Plan on Education for Peace and Reconciliation could not be implemented due to school closure since March 2020¹¹².

Some of the delays are beyond the control of UNICEF SLCO. COVID-19 pandemic affected almost all operations of schools since about March 2020; in some other cases, the change of Government in 2019 and consequent changes in the Government departments/agencies and policies¹¹³ required some of the agencies to revisit UNICEF SLCO inputs (e.g. University Grants Commission; Educational Reforms).

In positive disciplining, the effectiveness could have been assessed if there was a baseline study and the introduction of common modules with provision for adaptation across the Provinces and sectors of living. A more stringent review of implementation would have provided some directions to improve effectiveness¹¹⁴.

(Output 3.4) – Implementation of this output started only in 2020. Yet it brought in active collaboration between DPCCS, DMC and MoE, and reached the most vulnerable adolescents in 64 *Grama Niladhari* Divisions in seven districts, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also engaged with several Children's Clubs. The consultations of this evaluation reveal that the work is well received in the provincial administrations, who are keen to upscale it. However, due to COVID-19, it has not been possible to have community focus on DRR activities as they are pre-occupied with economic revival. Although DMC is positive about CC-DRR work, it has not participated in the joint committee with DPCCS, which is a limitation in integration of activities in the different departments.

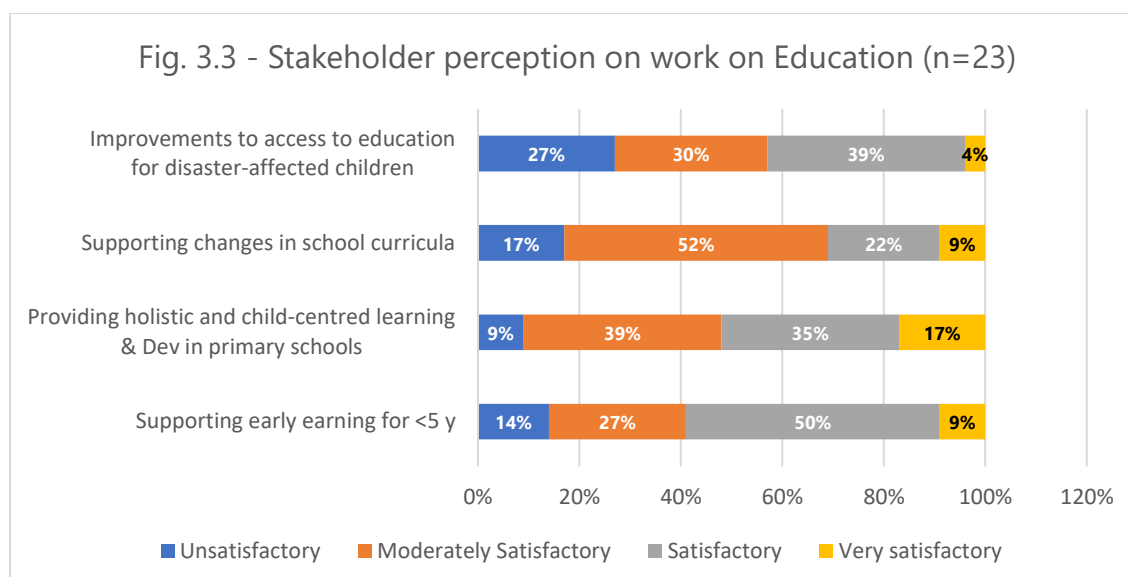
Stakeholder perceptions of Education work

As shown in Fig. 3.3 most respondents have rated education related support as moderately satisfactory/satisfactory. An area of concern is the access to education for disaster-affected children.

¹¹² KII with GoSL officials.

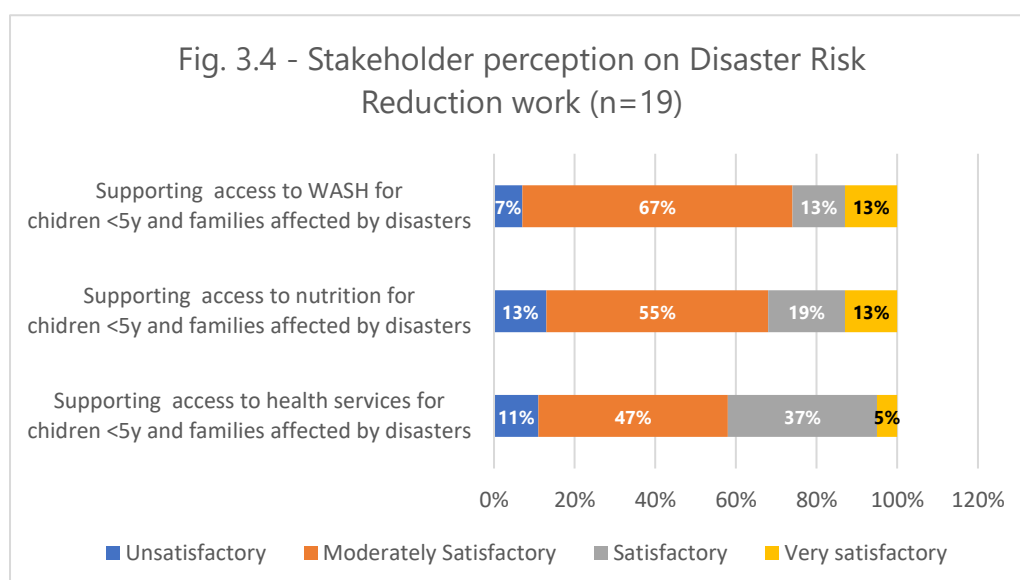
¹¹³ Re-imagining Education (Sept. 2020) – Presidential Task Force on Sri Lanka's Education Affairs

¹¹⁴ Terminal Evaluation of the PBF Project, *Promoting Reconciliation in Sri Lanka* (March, 2021)



Disaster Risk Reduction

The responses for DRR are summarised in Fig. 3.4. Majority show moderate satisfaction with UNICEF SLCO work.



Social Policy and Social Protection

The evaluation notes that the Social Policy and Social Protection theme is comparatively new in the country office, having been added in the current Programme Cycle. In 2018, the programme began exploring priority areas for its portfolio development. As a nascent programme, funding was limited. Work relating to CRC has been entrusted to this Division without additional financial resources as CRC is not considered a sectoral issue¹¹⁵.

¹¹⁵ KII with UNICEF SLCO staff

The Programme has been developed on the premise that well-targeted and evidence-based social protection supports the realization of children's rights, alleviate income poverty thereby assisting families to ensure that children are adequately nourished; are able to benefit from education; and receive appropriate health care¹¹⁶.

During programme formulation, UNICEF SLCO identified the constraints in the implementation of social policy component as limited institutional capacity of GoSL agencies to protect children's rights, limited capacity and intersectoral coordination for data collection, analysis and use, inefficient planning and coordination amongst development partners due to absence of a national development plan, and fragmented social protection systems¹¹⁷.

Achievements:

Monitoring child rights of deprived children (Output 4.1):

The support is intended to contribute to developing and strengthening a national, independent child rights monitoring system, which will operate across sectoral Ministries.

Coordination Mechanism: In the current program cycle UNICEF SLCO launched advocacy initiatives for operationalizing a coordination mechanism at national level to oversee implementation of international recommendations on child rights. Based on the National Children's Charter for implementation of the recommendations of CRC, GoSL established a National Monitoring Committee (NMC), which has not met since the change of Government in 2019¹¹⁸. However, there is evidence of coordination at the provincial level, largely effected through local-level CSO partners¹¹⁹.

Advocacy for Child rights: The National Human Rights Commission was expected to function as an independent body to promote and protect human rights, including child rights. NHRC has not been successful in delivering its mandate towards protecting child rights. This has created a lacuna in the effective monitoring and oversight of child rights and implementation of commitments under the CRC¹²⁰.

With very limited funding and staffing, we have been able to achieve some success, and provide GoSL evidence on social benefits to design their programmes.

UNICEF SLCO staff member

In regard to these two areas of work, UNICEF SLCO regularly brought to the notice of MoWCA the need for a functional coordination mechanism; as a result, the situation has been brought to the attention of the Presidential Secretariat.

During the presidential election of 2019, UNICEF SLCO strongly advocated for greater attention to child poverty and a social protection system to meet the needs of families and children. This included specific advocacy with candidates to establish a universal child benefits starting with families with children under five years, as a means

¹¹⁶ UNICEF SLCO Situation Analysis, 2017 (page 42)

¹¹⁷ Programme Strategy Notes (Social Policy) (May 2021)

¹¹⁸ KII with GoSL stakeholders (reference period up to Dec., 2020); One meeting has been held in 2021.

¹¹⁹ KII with GoSL and CSO stakeholders.

¹²⁰ KII with GoSL and non-Governmental stakeholders.

of reducing disparities, eliminating child poverty, and ensuring the right start in life for all children¹²¹.

Generating a multidimensional evidence base to address the situation of children (Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)):

Our policies and interventions can be underpinned using data and evidence presented in the 2020 global report on the Multidimensional Poverty Index. This is key to ensuring that Sri Lanka addresses the COVID-19 socio-economic impacts in a way that leaps forward towards the aspirations of our national policy framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"

State Minister of Samurdhi (2020)

At the time of formulation of the CPD Sri Lanka did not measure child poverty. UNICEF SLCO's work (in collaboration with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and the Centre for Poverty Analysis) to support the Department of Census and Statistics to introduce the Multidimensional Poverty Index linking with SDG as a tool for measuring child poverty is ongoing. The consultations reveal that the evidence generated will be effectively used (see box¹²²). With technical and financial support from UNICEF SLCO, the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) initiated the first-ever

official measurement of child and multidimensional poverty in 2019 using the tool developed, which is expected to be launched in December, 2021¹²³.

The effectiveness of the tool is enhanced by its ability to link measurements to SDG with a holistic and multidimensional approach, which will help to better understand the drivers and actions necessary to address poverty in all its forms¹²⁴. The staff in the DCS are trained to undertake this national initiative¹²⁵.

National Evaluation Capacity Development (Output 4.2):

As a part of UNICEF SLCO's global strategy of improving the national evaluation capacity, UNICEF SLCO supported the development of the Sri Lanka National Evaluation Policy (NEP), the first country in South Asia. The Department of Project Management and Monitoring is in the process of developing the strategic framework in 2020 to implement the National Evaluation Policy¹²⁶. This is a long-felt need supported by UNICEF SLCO.

An important investment related to the Policy is the development of the capacity of evaluators. UNICEF SLCO and UNICEF ROSA supported the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association (SLEvA) on the development of a curriculum and modules for a postgraduate diploma in evaluation at the Centre for Evaluation at Sri Jayawardenepura University to improve the capacity of M&E

¹²¹ UNICEF SLCO Annual Report for 2019 and KII with UNICEF SLCO staff

¹²² See Box on the statement of the State Minister of *Samurdhi* on data ([<https://www.lk.undp.org/content/srilanka/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/11/Addressing-Poverty-Towards-Empowered-Sri-Lankan-Households.html>])

¹²³ KII with UNICEF SLCO staff

¹²⁴ Measuring and Monitoring Child Poverty - UNICEF Data [<https://data.unicef.org/measuring-monitoring-po...PDF>].

¹²⁵ [<https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/stories/unicef-and-cepa-hold-first-roundtable-child-poverty>]

¹²⁶ Annual Performance Report 2020 Ministry of Finance- [<https://www.treasury.gov.lk>] [<https://www.google.com/search?q=+national+evaluation+policy+gazetted++2020-Sri+Lanka>]

officials, and to train a cadre of young and emerging evaluators (YEE). An abridged module on Monitoring & Evaluation has been developed for public sector officials.

About 100 persons, largely GoSL officials and to a lesser degree evaluators from the NGO sector have been trained in the Diploma Programme. Sixty-two YEEs have been trained at two 2-day workshops.

UNICEF SLCO also supported the establishment of the Sri Lanka Parliamentarians' Forum on Evaluation in 2017.

Capacity Development of Social sector to implement child-responsive budgets (Output 4.3)

Government spending on Education and Public Health:

UNICEF SLCO supported National Planning Department to develop their technical capacity for leading social protection reform, helped build trust with stakeholders, and sensitized GoSL on the need for the social protection system to be child sensitive.

UNICEF SLCO also supported citizen friendly budget consultation processes, and work on budget allocations for child sensitive initiatives.

As a result, the Eastern Provincial Council produced the first-ever citizen's budget in Sri Lanka in 2020. The Finance Commission noted that the citizen budget is in simple language and understood by the communities which would help imparting a sense of community ownership. The Finance Commission was present at the launch and committed itself to include the preparation of citizen budgets in all Provincial Councils from 2020¹²⁷.

The concept of Citizen Friendly budget was a novel approach, and we were quite excited to learn of it. We piloted it in Batticaloa, and the community liked the idea very much.

Eastern Provincial Council staff member

UNICEF SLCO developed five Budget Briefs to examine the adequacy and equity of resource allocations to critical social sectors; these were launched in 2019 as information sources and advocacy tools to be used by GoSL¹²⁸. The budget of 2021 has been analysed¹²⁹ to ascertain whether poverty eradication measures recognized in GoSL priorities are reflected in the budget and found that the budget has indeed recognized the vulnerability of many workers including those who suffered during the COVID-19 crisis losing livelihoods.

Government's capacity to provide social protection services to the most deprived children (Output 4.4)

Government Cash Transfer Programmes Covering Child Poverty Reduction: Samurdhi is the biggest poor relief programme of GoSL. It has not been explicitly designed to address the needs of children. There is no single registry on total number vulnerable families/people entitled to social security benefits. It supports about 33 per cent of the households which represents a population that is much higher than the current poverty levels. Data show that targeting has worsened over time with a lesser proportion of poor households benefiting each year. The programme thus suffers from both inclusion – including ineligible groups – and

¹²⁷ KII with UNICEF SLCO Staff

¹²⁸ UNICEF SLCO Annual Report (2019)

¹²⁹ UNICEF on Budget Speech 2021

<https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/media/1736/file/UNICEF%20on%20Budget%20Speech%202021.pdf>

exclusion – excluding eligible people¹³⁰. Transfer values are low and the vast majority of children – including over half of the poorest children – are excluded from *Samurdhi*¹³¹.

*Social protection system for emergency prevention, preparedness, and response*¹³²: Social protection programmes include emergency prevention, preparedness, and response as a key element. UNICEF worked downstream in areas affected by natural disasters (floods or drought, landslides) where service delivery is a significant challenge for access to basic facilities. In this regard, UNICEF SLCO's work on Child-Centered Disaster Risk Reduction (CCDRR) to address issues relating to high vulnerability of children affected by disasters has helped communities in disaster-prone areas. Whilst the DPCCS and NCPA are well integrated into this programme, DMC is yet to demonstrate its full engagement.

Overall, UNICEF SLCO's work has shown a higher poverty levels in the country than the GoSL statistics indicate. There has been no agreement by GoSL on the approach adopted by UNICEF SLCO in determining poverty levels, and this is a point of disagreement between the parties¹³³.

Assessment of Effectiveness; The consultations for this evaluation revealed that the Provincial Councils have embraced the concept of citizen budgets supported by UNICEF SLCO to ensure that there is better citizen understanding of how public finances are managed and used, and to encourage increasing inclusive civic participation. The Eastern Provincial Council has prepared citizen budgets for 2019 and 2020¹³⁴. A similar exercise is underway in the Northern Provincial Council to produce a citizen budget for 2022.

In regard to public spending, UNICEF SLCO initiatives were expected to influence GoSL by their work with the Department of National Planning to either increase or maintain government spending on Education [2.06% of GDP-2015] and Public Health [1.62% of GDP-2015] by 2022. These initiatives do not appear to have the desired effect as the available statistics of the Central Bank show that the Government spending on education and public health has not improved (Fig. 3.5). The evaluation noted one instance where the allocation for child protection has increased, based on pressure brought out by NCPA.

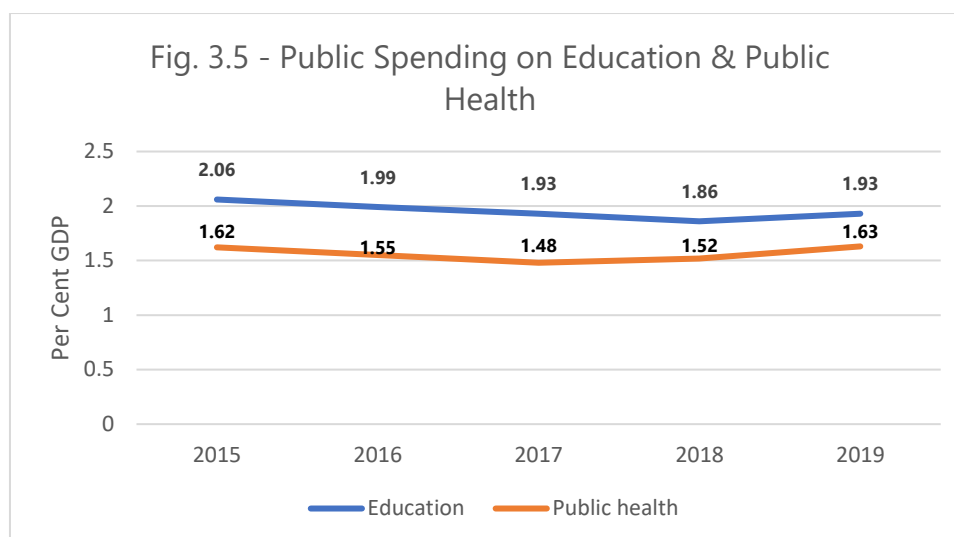
¹³⁰ Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, March 2021 Towards Zero Poverty: Why Effective Targeting of Samurdhi Transfers is Essential [<https://www.ips.lk/talkingeconomics/2021/03/03/towards-zero-poverty-why-effective-targeting-of-samurdhi-transfers-is-essential/>]

¹³¹ [<https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/samurdhi-programme-sri-lanka>]

¹³² Reported in RAM in 2018 under Output 4.4

¹³³ KII with UNICEF SLCO staff

¹³⁴ Eastern Provincial Council Citizens Budget 2019;



Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka¹³⁵

Sri Lanka has been moving from a status of relatively high safety net spending to one with limited resource allocation for critical safety nets at the time of the design of the CP¹³⁶. The situation is exacerbated by deteriorating financial situation of GoSL following COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, the consultations for the evaluation noted the following:

- On Social Policy and Social Protection, the engagement with the relevant Government agencies has been few and sporadic, and the relationship with the National Planning Department has been challenging¹³⁷. Stakeholders are of the view that a more concerted engagement is needed to influence GoSL policy, particularly in the COVID-19 climate where GoSL funding is very limited¹³⁸.
- UNICEF SLCO has undertaken a review of public expenditure on nutrition and has presented the results to H E the President; however, the NPD is yet to respond¹³⁹.
- UNICEF SLCO's work on transparency and participation in budget development, accountability and oversight was not explicit in Government agenda in the GoSL Policy Document at the time of programme design.
- UNICEF SLCO is best placed to provide leadership to the development of a child sensitive social protection policy for GoSL.

In child rights advocacy, The GoSL priority for child rights monitoring has been affected due to the overall waning of priority accorded to Human Rights, Reconciliation, Transitional Justice¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁵ Sri Lanka Socio Economic Data 2020 – Volume XLIII Statistics Department, Central Bank of Sri Lanka

¹³⁶ Sri Lanka's Demographic Transition: Facing the Challenges of an Aging Population with Few Resources, Luxshmanan Nadaraja, 29 September 2012, The World Bank

¹³⁷ KII with UNICEF SLCO staff

¹³⁸ KII with GoSL stakeholders

¹³⁹ KII with UNICEF SLCO staff and RAM (2020)

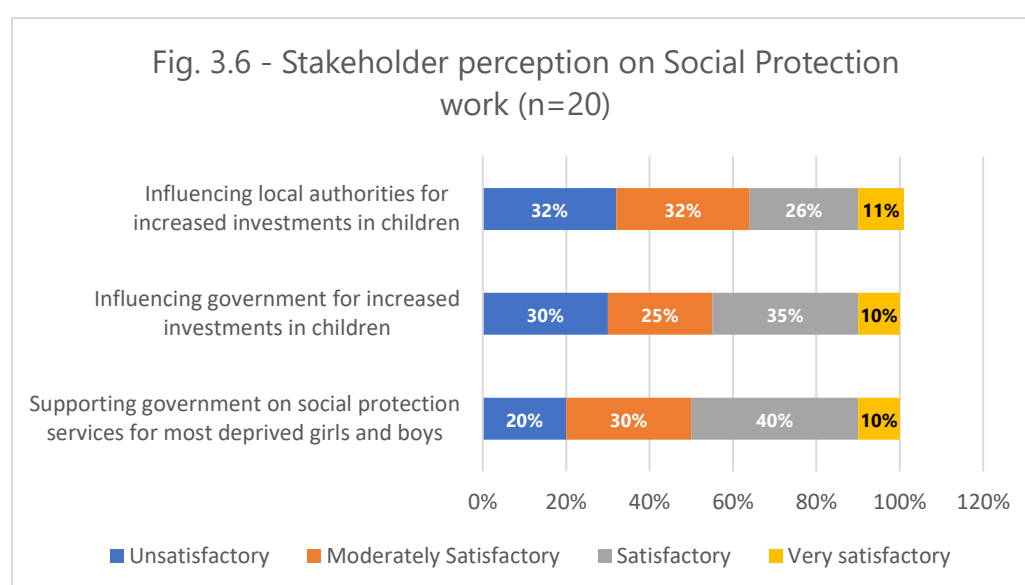
¹⁴⁰ See UNICEF Programme Strategy Note- Social Policy and Child Rights Monitoring Updated - May 2021

The NMC did not function as expected and became inactive since the change of Government in 2019. The consultation of this evaluation revealed that the failure of NMC was due to lack of continued political willingness and absence of a lead Ministry for coordination of its affairs.

In national evaluation capacity development, the effectiveness of the initiatives can only be examined by evaluating the post-training work of the trainees, and improvements to the overall evaluation work of GoSL, as it is the main beneficiary of this support.

Stakeholder perceptions of Social Policy work

As shown in Fig. 3.6, majority show moderate satisfaction with UNICEF SLCO work. However, about a third of the respondents have rated UNICEF SLCO's work in increasing investments for children, both at national and provincial level, as unsatisfactory.



(b) Sustainability

It is premature to assess sustainability for initiatives that are still being rolled out; however some notes can be made.

In **Nutrition**, the consultation for this evaluation noted that the initiatives supported by UNICEF SLCO are already in the programmes of MoH, and are likely to be continued, subject to availability of funds.

In **Child Protection**, the outlook for sustainability of the National Partnership is currently limited. The National Partnership to End Violence that was established with UNICEF SLCO support is no longer considered a viable platform by stakeholders. Sustainability of the two pilots depends on their implementation and success in proactively engaging government stakeholders, which has been limited. Some early lessons that have been made on securing government engagement and linkages to line ministries are evident; these lessons need to be put to use in order to develop more streamlined coordination processes so that scaling up is not dependent on *ad hoc* relationships.

In **Education**, there is a likelihood of interventions being scaled up once the changes in the Government agencies are stabilised. A worrisome situation is the reduction of funding for the Peace and Reconciliation Unit of the Ministry of Education, which is exclusively dependent on donor funds for any activities as GoSL provides only the salaries of officials.

Sustainability also depends on contextualizing the introduced initiatives, which require additional follow-up inputs from UNICEF SLCO. For example, social cohesion through music education was found to be effective, subject to the improvements to the module, which is yet to be completed¹⁴¹.

In **Social Policy**, UNICEF SLCO initiatives, some of which are also supported by other UN agencies, are embedded in the work programmes of the relevant GoSL agencies and are likely to be continued with the support of donors as some of the policy-related studies are expected to be funded by the donors¹⁴².

Overall, GoSL commitments to sustainability and adoption of some of the measures advocated by UNICEF SLCO (e.g. increased public expenditure on health and nutrition, child protection and education) are dependent on improving the economic situation in the country. For example, the Appropriation Bill for 2022 indicates a reduction for public spending compared to the level in 2021¹⁴³. Notwithstanding this situation, a better sense of sustainability was observed amongst provincial GoSL staff; there was evidence of replication of good practices. Allocation of funds for replication, and expansion of activities are largely due to the authority of the provinces to allocate funds from its own budgets.

(c) Timeliness of Delivery

One of the main challenges faced by UNICEF SLCO is timely delivery of the programme. Analysis of the performance of 2018-19 workplans indicate delays in delivery due to delays by resource persons, and implementation delays by Partners. COVID-19 exacerbated the situation from about March, 2020. Most work in education have been inordinately delayed as the schools remain closed for most of the time since about March, 2020. Where community participation was essential, such work too has been affected due to restrictions on gatherings and meetings due to COVID-19. As a result, most work in education and child protection have been delayed and are unlikely to be streamlined this year; however UNICEF SLCO is exploring avenues to expedite work.

¹⁴¹ The evaluation of the Project *Promoting Social Cohesion Through Music Education: A pilot project in the Eastern province, Sri Lanka* noted that "If the project is to be handed over to state authorities for replication, it needs to be designed and implemented in a way that it can be easily 'adopted' – that is it needs to be low cost and involve activities and logistical arrangements that are within the capacity of local educational institutions to implement without significant external funding or assistance" (Evaluation Report, March, 2019)

¹⁴² KII with GoSL stakeholders

¹⁴³ Appropriation Bill 2022 <<https://www.parliament.lk/news-en/view/2283>> accessed on 10 Oct 2021.



- Overall, 27% of the respondents were very unsatisfied with timeliness of delivery by UNICEF SLCO;
- The lowest score for satisfaction amongst the six parameters was for timeliness of delivery.
- Amongst partners, 31% of GoSL officials were unhappy with the timeliness of delivery.

Perception Survey

(d) Reporting and Monitoring

The Results Framework provides the guidance for monitoring and reporting. Aligned with the annual or biannual workplans, the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) maps out all planned assessments, studies and evaluations. Review of the IMEPs for the three years show that some data gathering activities were postponed from 2020 to 2021, but for the large part most have been concluded or initiated, few seem to be dropped.

The annual reporting differs somewhat from year to year due to changes in organization-wide reporting formats (RAM). There is some repetition from year to year in narrative statements, making the entries for different years harder to compare as the documents are substantially different for each year under review. In terms of accessibility, the 2020 RAM format was particularly difficult.

The evaluation notes that reporting structures are complicated, and staff find reporting at outcome level challenging. This is further complicated by the lifecycle approach, which requires a reflection on the merged effect of several sectors at each lifecycle stage.

Indicators

The Results Framework uses UNICEF's standardized indicators at outcome level to enable UNICEF SLCO results to be connected to global indicators, which provides the alignment between global, regional and country priorities. Whilst countries can generate their own indicators, the process is cumbersome as it involves several layers of approvals. In regard to the outcome indicators in the Results Framework, the evaluation notes the following:

- The outcome indicators are broad long-term indicators of GoSL (e.g. % children <5 y who are stunted; net enrolment rates in secondary education; number of children covered by social protection systems);
- Usually, data for such outcome indicators are generated by GoSL; often at longer time intervals (for example health and nutrition indicators are derived from DHS). Such data may or may not be available during the lifetime of the programme cycle, or may come in the middle of the programme period, making their usefulness for performance assessment limited;
- During the programme cycle, several indicators have been dropped or changed without this change being clearly noted in the relevant documents; and the PSNs were also provided in their current (rolling) form without any possibility to see what was updated and when.
- Given the limited coverage of work by UNICEF SLCO, there is possibility of developing local level indicators (e.g. district) where UNICEF SLCO has been working and explore the possibility of achieving those local indicators through the interventions.

- The UNICEF SLCO staff show an element of indifference to their own outcome indicators because they are 'very far' to achieve.

The key performance indicators are regularly reviewed by the CMT, but follow-up actions to address the shortcomings are not evident.

Consultations during the evaluation indicate that using provincial indicators, which are more meaningful and interesting to staff, may be one way of attracting their attention and to ensure that thematic units work towards them. Whilst using provincial indicators (at least in the provinces UNICEF SLCO works) may not be feasible given the global protocols adopted by UNICEF SLCO, these may be more meaningful for monitoring and reporting internally and to ensure a more realistic monitoring regime. As is seen in Annex 3.1, it is unlikely that UNICEF SLCO will be able to report on some of the Indicators at the end of the current programme cycle (e.g. data from DHS survey).

On output indicators, UNICEF SLCO has developed criteria for scoring the level of achievement. The evaluation noted that the interpretation of these criteria (and subsequent scoring) is not consistent amongst the programme staff.



- Regular review of work conducted should be done at least quarterly with the Ministry higher officials to track the speed and comprehensiveness of the work;
- The government officials did not produce many results with indicators though UNICEF SLCO is providing a lot of resources. An effective monitoring system need to be introduced to make things better, even to Partner CSO also.
- I think UNICEF needs to improve its M&E Systems to capture the impact of programs. Further, UNICEF SLCO also needs to improve the quality of its interventions by providing more technical assistance for partners though a consistent system

Quotes from the Perception Survey

(e) Current Country Office Structure and Capacity for Delivery

UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office is organised by thematic divisions. The Social Policy and Social Protection, Education, and Child Protection are stand-alone divisions; Health and Nutrition and WASH are clustered under Child Survival and Development. In addition, programme implementation is supported by field offices. There are two types of field presence: the Zonal Offices (or UNICEF SLCO representational offices) in Kilinochchi (serving the Northern Province) and in Batticaloa (serving the Eastern Province). An outposted officer based in the Uva Provincial Council overlooks the work in Central and Uva Provinces, with a limited portfolio of work. Fig. 3.7 shows the organogram relating to the programme.

The current country programme uses the lifecycle approach, where activities are organised to provide support to children based on their age group. The approach identifies specific priorities and plans for each age group. However, the UNICEF SLCO office structure is not organised to address issues according to age; the office has a traditional sectoral structure of thematic units. In a small office such as UNICEF SLCO, the required technical diversity may not be available. As an alternative, the Office has set up several Groups which are expected to meet often so that inputs to life stages could be discussed and agreed upon. Such groups are

expected to bring about coordination and linkages between thematic areas to provide integrated solutions to an issue. A full analysis of the SLCO experience applying a lifecycle approach to programming is in section 3.5.

Despite the efforts to increase cross-sectoral collaboration internally mainly through numerous meetings, external stakeholders are of the view that internal coordination within UNICEF SLCO is inadequate and not demonstrated in its engagements with the external stakeholders. The

- *We spend a great deal of time at meetings, which are often non-productive. We can always meet other staff informally if there is a need.*

UNICEF SLCO staff member

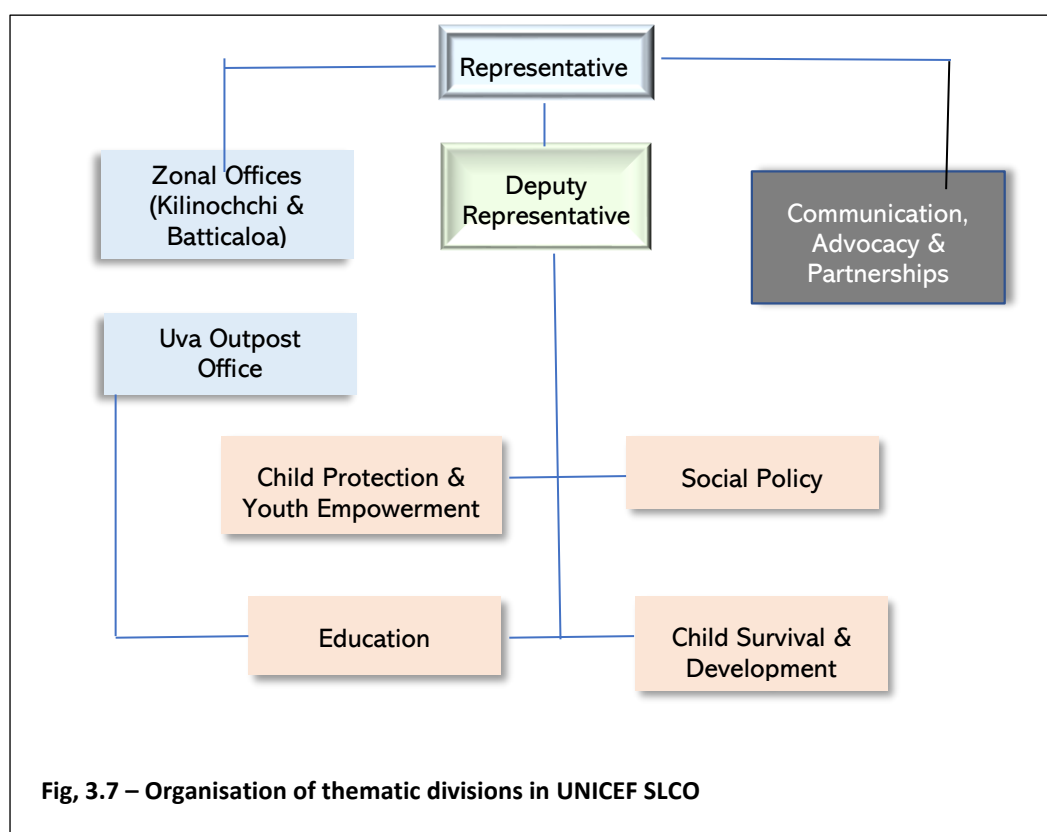
- *We do not see effective coordination amongst UNICEF divisions. Each division has its own programme.*

GoSL Stakeholder

consultations of this evaluation also noted that the internal coordination is uneven amongst the thematic areas. For example, in violence in schools, there was no demonstrable coordination between Education and Child Protection in providing the technical inputs to the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, MoE appreciated the joint work done by the Education and Climate Change teams in providing inputs towards the development of School Safety Guidelines.

Overall, effectiveness could be improved by better coordination between thematic units to source expertise available in different units.

In regard to the organisation of thematic divisions, several stakeholders observed that clustering health and nutrition together has diminished the priority given for nutrition.



Country Office capacity

In the previous programme cycle, the CO adopted a service delivery approach. It is the view of the stakeholders that staff capacity and competence for service delivery were adequate for that purpose. However, with the change of approach to upstream policy dialogue and advocacy which in itself is a challenging task, there is a felt need for a different skill sets to communicate with the high-level officials¹⁴⁴. The consultations for this evaluation noted the concerns expressed by both external and internal stakeholders on the need to analyse and profile the capacity needed for policy dialogue and influencing the upper echelons of the Government. The inability to influence GoSL on some of the key pending policy matters is attributed to the absence of a persuasive and cogent voice from UNICEF SLCO.

The Zonal Presence of UNICEF in Sri Lanka

UNICEF SLCO first established Zonal Offices in 1996 to address humanitarian issues relating to the conflict in the original North-eastern Province. With the demerger of Northern and Eastern Provinces, UNICEF SLCO established offices in the provinces to facilitate work on conflict-related issues. The Zonal Offices were expanded after the Tsunami of December 2004 to

facilitate relief work in the coastal provinces of Sri Lanka. After the Tsunami recovery phase, some zonal offices were closed.

UNICEF Staff visit us regularly to look at our work and support us with planning and implementation – it is an encouragement.

Provincial Govt. Official

Currently, there are two Zonal Offices, viz., Northern Province (in Kilinochchi) and Eastern Province (in Batticaloa). These offices concentrate on post-conflict resettlement, rehabilitation, and reconciliation work in the Northern and Eastern Provinces with key staff as follows:

- Kilinochchi Office – has Child Protection, Education and CSD staff
- Batticaloa Office – has Education and Child Protection staff

The Chief of Office, with the overall responsibility towards day-to-day work and liaison with the Provincial Councils, reports to the Representative, and thematic staff report to the respective thematic heads in the Colombo Office.

The Zonal Offices function as UNICEF SLCO representative offices and have developed very close rapport with the relevant provincial councils and other provincial departments and agencies. The consultations for this evaluation revealed the close rapport with provincial administration, and the mutual trust and dependency displayed by both parties. It is also clear that this close collaboration has enabled the Zonal Offices (as well as the outpost office) to identify provincial needs and priorities through regular discussions, workshops etc., which are then matched with UNICEF SLCO priorities to be included in the annual workplans. However, there is a need to revisit the *modus operandi* for this process (see Section on Consistency with Provincial Plans).

The technical staff in the zonal offices function as the intermediary between UNICEF SLCO and the provincial departments and provide much-needed technical and logistical support to the departments. Their inputs are very much appreciated by the departments and agencies.

¹⁴⁴ Source: KII with GoSL, NGO and UNICEF staff.

UNICEF SLCO also has an outposted officer accommodated in the Uva Provincial Council office in Badulla with the responsibility for the Central Province as well. The Outposted Officer's main responsibility is to ensure the implementation of the education component in the two provinces; he reports to the Deputy Representative in the Colombo Office.

The Central/Uva outpost office has a very large geographic area to cover with long travel times due to the terrain; currently the portfolio is limited to education, but the stakeholders are of the view that child nutrition is a priority, particularly in the plantation sector. This outfit will have to be suitably strengthened if the programme portfolio is increased in the future, as one officer is unable to cover the large geographic area effectively.

(f) Capacity of the Government Partners

The consultations during the evaluation revealed that the capacity in the relevant departments and agencies of GoSL at both central and provincial levels is, in general, adequate to fulfil the obligations. Since the partnership with UNICEF SLCO has been long-standing, GoSL officials acknowledge the UNICEF SLCO support to develop capacity of the GoSL staff at various levels, which is continuing. The evaluation noted the high-level of understanding of programmatic issues by the Provincial officials, and the use of RBM for monitoring and reporting.

An observation by several stakeholders is that there is minimal coordination and linkages between government agencies in the relevant interventions, which the evaluation confirms.

The evaluation noted the enthusiasm of GoSL partners to acquire new knowledge and experiences. An example is the Child Friendly Cities concept, which has triggered enthusiasm amongst provincial administrators as an initiative worthy of replicating. The provincial councils have acquired adequate expertise to launch this concept to duplicate efforts of the Batticaloa Municipal Council, which pioneered the establishment of Child Friendly City of Batticaloa. Likewise, the CC-DRR concept is well understood by provincial authorities.

In the current cycle, UNICEF SLCO has supported the development of evaluation capacity, both in GoSL as well as in the NGO sector. A noteworthy contribution is the training of 'Young and Emerging Evaluators'; it is expected that the planning, monitoring and evaluation capacity of national cadres has improved. However, the evaluation noted some limitations in GoSL officials on project and programme cycle management.

(g) Funding

The Sri Lanka country programme document (CPD) has an indicative budget of USD 4,735,000 from Core Resources for Results (RR) and USD 52,500,000 from Other Resources Regular (OR). The total budget is USD 57,235,000 and the indicative allocations are in Fig. 3.8 (a). The allocation provides 29% for early childhood, 19% for middle childhood, 25% for adolescence, and 14% for social policy¹⁴⁵.

The evaluation did not examine budgets and expenditures as it was not covered in the ToR. The limited analysis provided in the following section is warranted in light of the evaluation

¹⁴⁵ Country Programme Document (2018-2022)

finding that the programme implementation has been significantly affected by inadequate funding.

Fig. 3.8 (a) - Allocations as per CPD (USD X '000)

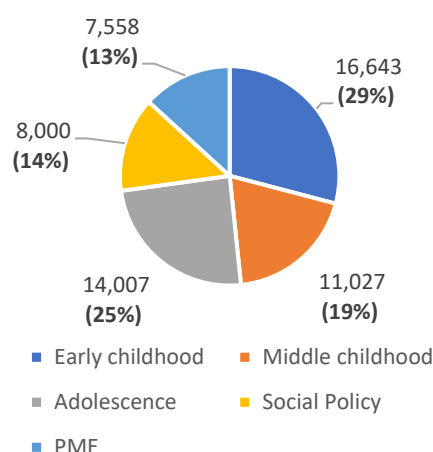
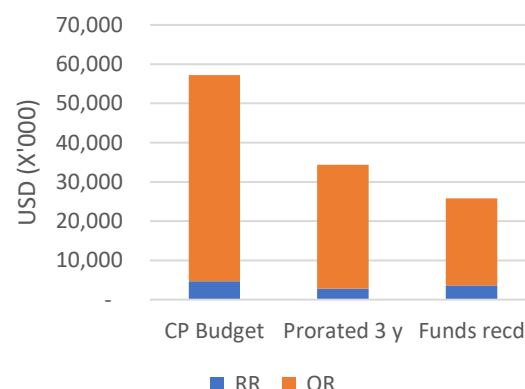


Fig. 3.8 (b) Funds received (USD X '000)



In the original 5 year indicative budget of USD 57.2 Mln, the Country Office expected USD 52.5 Mln (or 92%) from OR (external sources). As at October, 2021, the Country Office has received a total of USD 25.7 Mln (**or 45% of the original 5 year planning amount**) made up of USD 3.6 Mln RR (or 77% of the 5 year planning amount) and USD 22.1 Mln OR (or 42% of the original OR planning amount). Part of these receipts has been 're-phased' to 2021 and 2022, the last year of the current programme.

As of 31 December 2020, the Country Office has spent USD 12.4 Mln (or 22% of the original budget) made up of USD 2.7 Mln RR funds (or 57% of the original RR budget) and USD 9.7 Mln OR funds (or 18% of the original OR budget).

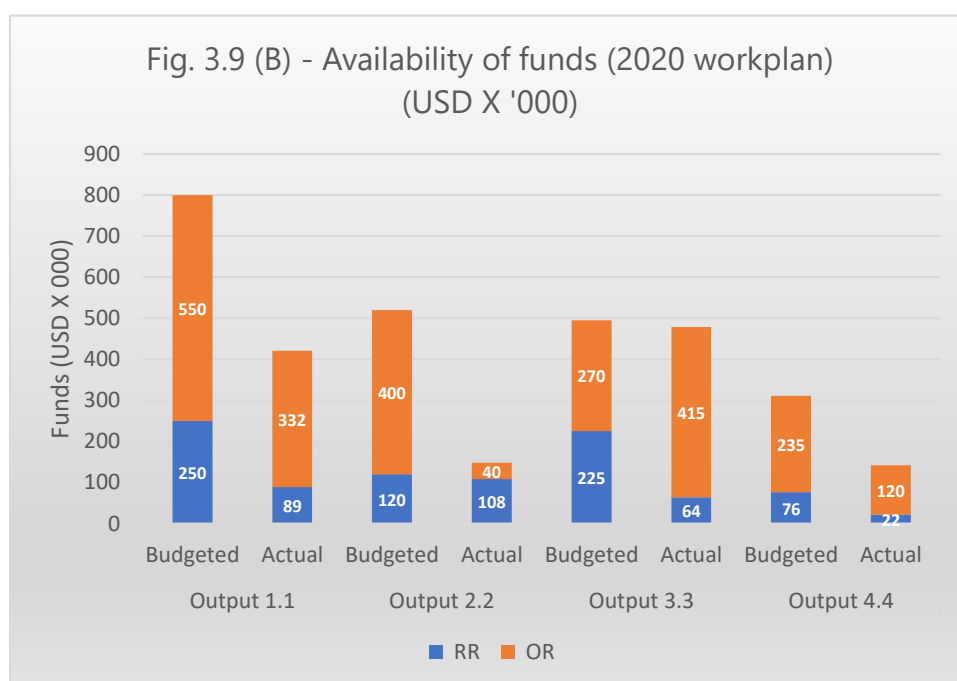
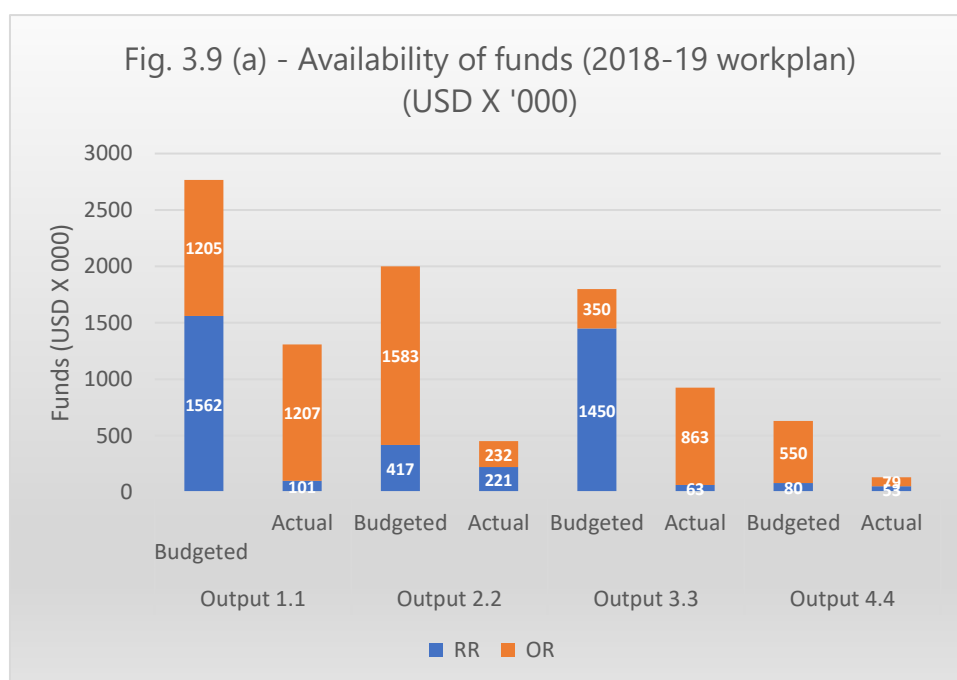
The shortfall of funding as of October, 2021 (about USD 20 million) is reflected in curtailed activities of UNICEF SLCO. Fig. 3.9 (a) and (b) show the actual allocations for four outputs (1.1, 2.2, 3.3, 4.4) for 2018-19 and 2020 workplans, respectively¹⁴⁶. The analyses show that in 2018-19 workplan, all outputs suffered due to funding difficulties. A similar trend is observed in the 2020 work-plan as well, except for education, which received donor funds as budgeted.

Overall, the realisation of funds for the four outputs under reference was 39% in the 2018-19 workplan and 56% in the 2020 workplan.

As would be seen from Fig. 3.9 (a) and (b), the Child Protection output suffered most as a result of the inability to raise OR funds. In 2018-19 about 15% of OR funds were raised, and this dropped to 10% in 2020. The funding limitations appear to have affected particularly the pilot programmes. For the life skills programme, funds were initially only secured for contextualizing the materials, causing further planning into dissemination to be delayed.

The funding pattern corresponds to donor contributions and is indicative of donor influence on the implemented programme.

¹⁴⁶ Output 3.4 (DRR) was not considered for this analysis as the Output was introduced only in the 2020 work-plan.



(h) Knowledge Products and Outreach

UNICEF SLCO has moved from service delivery to upstream policy and advocacy. An essential pre-requisite in this transition is UNICEF SLCO's ability to provide credible knowledge products (e.g. technical publications). The main partner, GoSL will have to rely on such products for informed decision-making. This is an area UNICEF SLCO will need to pay attention to as

consultations during the evaluation noted the reservations expressed by some partners on the technical rigour of some of the UNICEF SLCO technical publications.

UNICEF SLCO uses two modalities for developing technical publications; they are either directly contracted or are contracted by the partners using UNICEF funds. The evaluation is of the view that irrespective of the modality of the publication process, there has to be rigorous quality assurance of the final product to meet the accepted standards of UNICEF.

Although not thoroughly examined, the evaluation came across issues on outreach of UNICEF SLCO's programme and work. Some senior GoSL partners were unaware of UNICEF SLCO's programme or the focus areas in the current cycle, although GoSL is expected to partner UNICEF SLCO on work in such focus areas. Similarly, the evaluation came across several instances where partners were unaware of the results of work done – as a result, there was a show of disinterest in the overall outcome indicators and the expectations of results. In the area of child protection, several point to the evidence generation of UNICEF SLCO being lower than expected.



- 55% of the respondents were familiar with UNICEF SLCO's current programme.
- *"UNICEF SLCO does not provide details fully; Better transparency from UNICEF will improve the effectiveness."*

Perception Survey

(i) Partnerships

This section examines UNICEF SLCO's partnerships for programme delivery. Broadly, the partnerships can be classified into three categories, as follows:

- Partnerships with GoSL and CSOs for implementation;
- Private sector partnerships
- Joint Programmes with UN Agencies

Brief comments on findings on these partnerships are provided below:

Partnerships with GoSL and CSOs for implementation

The main modalities used by UNICEF SLCO for implementation are (a) through Government agencies (including provincial agencies), and (b) through identified CSOs. The CSO engagement differs depending on the programme. Work on nutrition and DRR is largely through the relevant government agencies at national and provincial level. The engagement of CSOs is more prominent in child protection and education spheres.

The evaluation noted that some of the CSOs engaged have long-standing partnerships with UNICEF SLCO and have added value to UNICEF SLCO's work as the CSOs are closer to the community. Their engagement facilitated UNICEF SLCO's work; often they provided valuable feed-back on the programme.

Our partnership with UNICEF has been beneficial to us. We are happy to be associated with them and have learnt from the association.

An implementing CSO (Provincial)

The evaluation also notes a number of positive developments in engaging with CSOs such as enhancing the programmatic capacity of CSOs and communications and outreach.

Whilst there are advantages of using long-standing CSOs for implementation, UNICEF SLCO will benefit from seeking the services of new CSOs who are capable of bringing new perspectives. The consultations revealed that UNICEF SLCO has engaged with new CSOs during this cycle, who have brought in their own strengths to the table.

A number of GoSL and NGO stakeholders expressed reservations on the choice of provincial level CSO implementers as some of them lacked in-house capacity for the work programme and contracted Government officials for their work¹⁴⁷. A number of stakeholders were of the view CSOs should be used only when there are no other alternatives for implementation, and not as a matter of routine.



- "The CSOs do not understand problems; they are not properly briefed about the work - they do their own work."
- "The CSOs are not competent to provide the services; sometimes our teachers are better."
- "There is too much involvement of the NGOs in programme implementation."

Quotes by non-implementing stakeholders; Perception Survey

Information sharing is an important element in the partnerships. According to the Perception Survey, 81% of the partners (out of 49) showed some degree of satisfaction with 12% rating their view as 'very satisfactory'. Nineteen per cent are 'not satisfied' with the way UNICEF SLCO is sharing information (see below).



- "We do not receive reports of work done or the results or any feedback".
- "We are not provided with information on how UNICEF SLCO has performed in doing the work; we only do our work, but we do not hear of any higher level results from UNICEF SLCO".

Quotes by implementing partners; Perception Survey

Private sector partnerships

In UNICEF SLCO, private sector engagement is relatively new. Firstly it started a donation window in its website to accept public donations. Since then, with the recruitment of the Resource Mobilization and Partnerships Officer, more concerted efforts have been made to engage the private sector to assist UNICEF SLCO in implementing its programme. These included creating platforms for funding emergency situations arising from disasters and public

¹⁴⁷ Source: Several GoSL partners, both in the central and provincial administration and one national NGO.

disorder. In the current cycle, a sum of **USD 212,208¹⁴⁸** has been received, made up of individual contributions of USD 10,884 and USD 201,324 from the private sector (for COVID-19 response in the Northern Province) (Table 3.5). However, UNICEF SLCO has not prepared reports on the use of these funds to the donor¹⁴⁹. One prospective funding fell through due to lack of reporting by UNICEF SLCO on a previous contribution made by the company¹⁵⁰.

UNICEF SLCO is currently preparing the Guidelines for private sector engagement – this has been in a draft mode for several months and is yet to be approved.

In the last several years, some headway has been made in securing private sector assistance (e.g., better parenting programme, hand-washing campaign following COVID-19 pandemic).

Table 3.5 – Donations and Private Sector contributions (eq. USD)

Year	Individual Donations	Private Sector	Total
2021	2,596.90	82,237.92	84,834.83
2020	5,832.01	119,085.85	124,917.86
2019	1,701.87		1,701.87
2018	753.28		753.28
Total	10,884.06	201,323.77	212,207.83

Although still in the nascent stage, UNICEF SLCO may revisit its private sector engagement strategy from the results made thus far. It is evident that private sector can be attracted by offering custom-made programmatic packages to align with the core business of the company, and this requires much work from the programme.

Some staff are not convinced on the need for private sector engagement, particularly because of the inherent reputational risks associated with businesses¹⁵¹. Aside from being a source of funding, there is a strong case for UNICEF SLCO to work with the private sector to achieve results for children, by ensuring that businesses are aware and increasingly adopt measures in line with the Children’s Rights and Business Principles (CRBP).

Overall, the private sector engagement has moved slowly in the country office due to low enthusiasm and slow progress in finalising the Guidelines. Several reasons within the country office. Once the guidelines are in place, the strategy for engagement needs to be carefully thought out after due consultations with the private sector, beginning with, say, the Chambers of Commerce. While the evaluation has not looked into existing engagements on children’s rights and business principles, the garment industry and the plantation sector are areas with potential – the latter is linked with low scores on several key indicators.

¹⁴⁸ Of this, approximately USD 168,000 has been received from the London Stock Exchange Group.

¹⁴⁹ The Private Sector engagement guidelines that are being drafted requires donor reporting (cf. Section 2.7)

¹⁵⁰ KII with UNICEF SLCO staff

¹⁵¹ UNICEF has due diligence process (see UNICEF Procedure on due diligence for private sector entities (PFP/Procedure/2020/007))

(j) Satisfaction of implementing partners

The Perception Survey shows that 95% of the implementers have some degree of satisfaction about their partnership with UNICEF SLCO (30% 'very satisfied'; 28% satisfied, and 37% moderately satisfied). The reasons for their satisfaction are noteworthy (see box).



- "Collaborative, participatory planning with technical support."
- "Efficient implementation support and flexibility."
- "Fidelity/transparency, staff commitment and friendly and accessible service."

Basis for Satisfaction: Quotes by implementing stakeholders (*Perception Survey*)

Perceptions of the stakeholders on the Effectiveness of the UNICEF SLCO Programme

Fig. 3.10 (a) summarises the perceptions of the stakeholders on general effectiveness in a number of areas. Overall rating of moderately satisfactory/satisfactory is noted in all areas; however, about 20% show unsatisfactory rating for quality of work and timeliness of delivery.

A further analysis was carried out to examine the perceptions of the Government and CSO/NGO community. The CSOs/NGOs consistently rated higher satisfaction of UNICEF SLCO programme [Fig. 3.10 (b)]. It is noted that most of these, if not all, NGOs have been contracted work by UNICEF SLCO during this programme cycle.

Fig. 3.10 (a) - Perceptions on effectiveness of UNICEF programme (n=49)

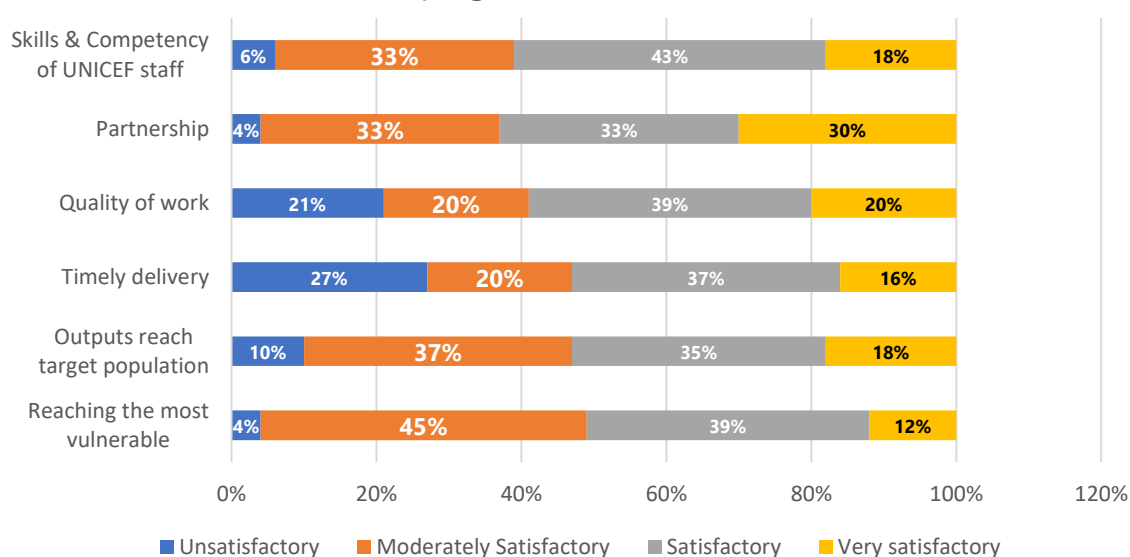
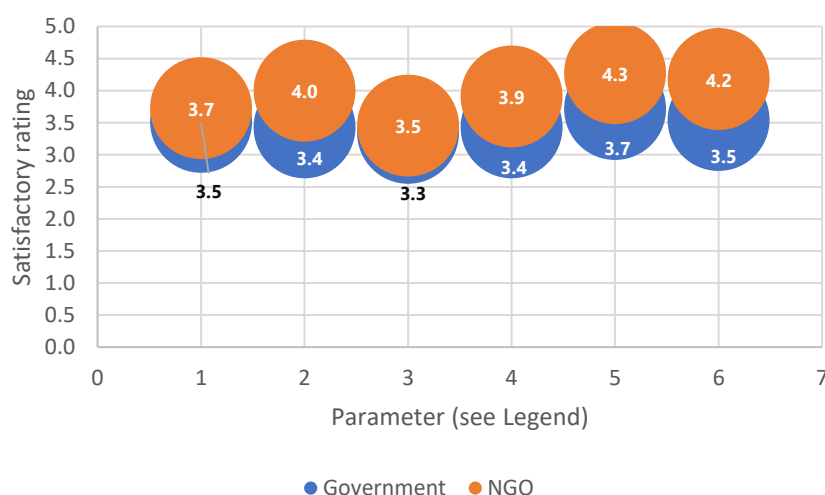


Fig. 3.10 (b) - Perception of Effectiveness (Govt vs NGOs) (n=49)



Legend

1. Reaching the most vulnerable
2. Reaching the target population
3. Timely delivery
4. Quality of outputs
5. Partnerships
6. Skills and competency of UNICEF staff

Satisfaction rating

1. Very unsatisfactory
2. Unsatisfactory
3. Moderately satisfactory
4. Satisfactory
5. Very satisfactory

The stakeholder suggestions for improving effectiveness are provided in the box.



- Working better with partners (47%)
- Improving working modalities (49%)
- Adopting different interventions (51%)
- Increasing scale of operation (41%)

Ways of improving effectiveness (Perception Survey)

(k) Programme Assumptions

In general, the programme assumed that there will be political will to achieve changes in social services and that there will be a change in budgeting processes for integrated social protection services for children and adolescents¹⁵². These assumptions have been made considering the country situation at the time of programme design (2016/17) and were considered realistic at that time. It also assumed that legislation and national plans will strengthen service delivery for children and adolescents. Both these assumptions have not been fulfilled completely and are challenges for the next programme cycle. The budgeting process and allocation for children are affected due to poor economic situation in the country, which will remain so for some time.

In Early childhood, funding of ECD services will be affected due to overall poor economic situation in the country. GoSL commitment to multi-stakeholder coordination has not been fulfilled in spite of repeated attempts by UNICEF SLCO. These constraints are likely to remain during the remainder of the current programme cycle.

In Middle childhood, data management by GoSL and provincial administrations remains a challenge to demonstrate progress towards achieving SGD goals. The political will to establish child protection coordination mechanisms and the commitment to the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children have not been fully demonstrated. UNICEF SLCO's convening

¹⁵² PSN Notes Overview (June, 2017)

power on establishing common fora has been questioned by some of the implementing partners.

In Adolescence, resource allocation will remain a challenge in the current context of economic downturn. The human resources in the health sector are greatly stressed due to COVID-19 management, and may not be available freely for UNICEF SLCO work, as envisaged. As noted in the evaluation, the coordination between the Ministries of Health and Ministry of Education has not reached the desired level. The expectation that the Ministry of Justice remains open to reform is showing positive signs, but the changes are likely to take time.

In Programme effectiveness, the risk of diminishing support to UN organizations remains, which will affect fundings.

Overall, a number of key assumptions in the Country Programme have not materialised largely due to the economic situation in the country and the external events such as Easter Sunday attack and COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these will remain as challenges to the new country programme.

(l) Unintended outcomes

The evaluation focused on selected outputs only; no significant unintended outcomes were observed.

(m) Overall assessment

Based on the assessment in RAM¹⁵³, the achievements are summarised in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 - Reported progress in 2020 (orange: constrained, green: on track)

Outcome	Output			
Outcome 1 Early Childhood	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4
Outcome 2 Middle Childhood	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4
Outcome 3 Adolescence	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4
Outcome 4 Social Policy	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4

Note: Yellow highlighted outputs are the selected ones for the evaluation.

The evaluation notes that RAM records Outcome # 3 as 'on track' in spite of the fact that three out of four outputs are constrained. The reasons for this assessment are unclear.

The constraints are largely due to COVID-19 pandemic, Easter Sunday attack, and funding difficulties.

The evaluation notes that UNICEF SLCO interventions are rather dispersed and diluted to make an overall impression to the changes that are envisaged in children. This is largely due to limited funding of the programme, a situation which is likely to continue. A better option is to introduce more strategic interventions using the limited funds available to ensure that the interventions bring some of the expected changes.

Although UNICEF SLCO has adopted the Lifecycle approach, its engagement with GoSL is sectoral. The reasons for this are well understood as government works in sectors, often

¹⁵³ RAM, 2020

without adequate coordination. One way of improving the overall effectiveness to use UNICEF's philosophy more proactively to reach beyond the sectoral approach to embrace children's health, safety, and wellbeing to show children as the nation's wealth¹⁵⁴. This would trigger better integration within GoSL.

3.4 Coherence

(a) UNICEF SLCO Interventions

The current CP focusses on upstream policy and advocacy related work which are normally long-term in nature to show results. The advocacy work in **Social Policy** will continue; the initiative to influence GoSL for cash transfers to the poor to ensure inclusive child rights remains in abeyance, due largely to macro-economic challenges, the high debt burden, large refinancing needs, and weak external buffers faced by the Government¹⁵⁵. Despite contributions such as budget analysis and other advocacy work, UNICEF SLCO's initiatives to influence increase of GoSL allocations to the education and health have not met with success¹⁵⁶. The UNICEF SLCO led initiative on citizen budgets has been taken up well by Provincial Councils.

In **Nutrition**, the national protocols for the management of SAM were finalised and is being adopted by the Government. MSAPN is not fully functional, and the formative research to support IYCF strategy is delayed due to COVID-19 and is ongoing.

In **Child Protection**, the initiatives of UNICEF SLCO fall within the national policies. However, the national coordination mechanism for child protection work is not functional; progress towards home-visiting and parent education is limited, and the roll-out of peer-to-peer violence work, and PATHS has been put in abeyance (due to COVID-19).

In **Education**, UNICEF SLCO's inputs towards curriculum development will be used in the upcoming educational reforms work, which includes comprehensive review and updating of the curricula. The pilot work on learning and co-curricular activities developed and tested for social cohesion have not been scaled up or repeated due to school closure following COVID-19. Work on community engagement on skills development is yet to be launched.

(b) Joint Programmes with UN Agencies

The UN Joint programming is expected to help achieve system-wide coherence that support national priorities. It is also a tool for improved coordination amongst development programmes. Joint programmes are also expected to identify and build on complementarities of partner agencies (in particular UN agencies)¹⁵⁷.

¹⁵⁴ See for example in: National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2004). *Children's Health, the Nation's Wealth: Assessing and Improving Child Health*. Committee on Evaluation of Children's Health. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press

¹⁵⁵ World Bank. 2021. *Shifting Gears: Digitization and Services-Led Development*. South Asia Economic Focus, Fall 2021. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank

¹⁵⁶ RAM 2019

¹⁵⁷ United Nations Development Group (2014) *Guidance Note on Joint Programmes*

Joint programmes are launched on the premise that each agency commits adequate resources and time to work together; there is clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each partner based on their comparative advantages; there is adequate capacity to ensure shared geographical presence, human resources and the capacity to scale up; ability to integrate responses from different agencies; and implementation capacity at the national and provincial levels.

In terms of the UNDG Guidelines, the Joint Programmes are expected to be led by the UN Country Team (UNCT) with strong coordination led by the Resident Coordinator involving all of the UNCT team leadership. However, in practice, UNICEF SLCO was the 'Lead Agency' of a recently concluded joint programme¹⁵⁸.

UNICEF SLCO has conducted several joint programmes with other UN Agencies, notably WHO, WFP, UN-Habitat, and UNDP during the current programme cycle. The evaluation notes that in these joint programmes, implementation has been very compartmentalised and have been treated as distinct sub-project components by the implementing agencies. The spirit of joint programming has not been demonstrated during the implementation period. The evaluation notes the following challenges and shortcomings on the situation for which all participating UN agencies are responsible:

- Inadequate participation of the agencies during design and planning of the joint programmes. This has been due to short time available for the development of the proposal and the funding window. Often, there has been very little time to jointly review important components of the proposal such as the Results Framework and implementation modalities.
- Inadequate commitment and responsibility by participating UN agencies to ensure delivery as agreed. As a result, UNICEF SLCO has struggled to operationalise the joint programme to the expected level and quality.
- Limited staff time availability for development of the proposal, and for work afterwards due to conflicting programmatic priorities;
- Flawed understanding of the spirit of joint programming amongst some key staff in the UN agencies;
- Not synchronizing the pace of work at the agencies due to staffing issues (for e.g. UNICEF SLCO uses its own core staff for sub-projects whereas other agencies may recruit project-based staff) or different priorities in the agencies;
- Inadequate synergy of activities at the field level. The stakeholders reported duplication of work by UN agencies, often requiring the same set of beneficiaries to attend separate but related meetings. The stakeholders were also interested in joint UN programming, particularly in areas of common interest (e.g., health and nutrition) so that the delivery would be holistic and the time of GoSL agencies could be optimised.
- Absence of a 'project manager' with the overall responsibility of ensuring project implementation as per agreed schedules and providing a consolidated results-based report, rather than collating participating agency notes as a report.

¹⁵⁸ PBF-funded Project, Promoting Reconciliation in Sri Lanka

Some of these shortcomings have been highlighted in evaluations of joint projects¹⁵⁹.

The evaluation notes that UNICEF SLCO is mindful of the challenges and shortcomings and has taken corrective action in future joint programmes. Equally, other agencies interviewed have also taken action in their own organisations to improve joint programming. For example, UNDP has invested much time with other UN agencies, including UNICEF SLCO, to design a new project on Access to Justice so that the ownership of the project lies with all agencies. There is both formal and informal discussions during the project preparation phase, which bodes well for more integrated implementation of such projects.

The evaluation also notes that the systems at the Regional Coordinator's Office, which is tasked with providing coordination support, have been strengthened, with better engagement of UNCT to support joint programming.

A challenge that remains to be addressed is the field level coordination of activities in joint programmes. The provincial Government stakeholders have noted the lack of coordination in UN work at the field level. The degree of field presence of different UN agencies varies with some agencies using CSOs. When CSOs implement activities, they are unable to coordinate inter-agency work as CSO's mandate is very limited. This is a complex issue that needs careful thought.

(c) Equity and Gender Equality

UNICEF programmes are expected to apply its equity and gender strategies across programmes.

Addressing Disabilities

The concepts such as "leave no one behind" and "reaching the most vulnerable" are UNICEF's approaches to address disabilities. The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy¹⁶⁰ post-dates the development of the Country Programme. There are a few interventions in different lifecycle stages addressing disabilities; whilst the programme staff are mindful of the need, paucity of funds for mainstream work has not allowed the development of comprehensive disability-specific components. The attention to disabilities in some components (e.g. WASH and DRR) is more prominent than in the others. The need for developing special educational programmes for disabled is a need of GoSL, although its own attention is not explicitly demonstrated. Addressing issues of disability is multi-sectoral with each lifecycle stage having specific needs.

Gender Equality

UNICEF's commitment to an equal future for all girls and boys recognizes that promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women is not only crucial, but necessary.

The programme focus is on gender-based violence and identifying and addressing the bottlenecks in achieving gender equality in both regular and emergency settings, in line with the road map for promoting gender equality in the draft UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018-

¹⁵⁹ See evaluation reports the Projects, *Catalytic Support to Peace building in Sri Lanka* (Sept, 2019) and *Promoting Reconciliation in Sri Lanka* (November, 2020).

¹⁶⁰ UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (2018)

2021¹⁶¹,¹⁶². Additionally, strengthening of national and sub-national data systems, disaggregated to show inequities and gender differences, particularly in relation to monitoring of progress towards Sustainable Development Goal indicators, is considered important for social policy and child-rights monitoring programmes. Analysis of results is expected to highlight the specific needs of both girls and boys.

The CPD notes that while gender parity was achieved in many indicators for children, "*disparities emerge during adolescence and adulthood*". Subsequent annual reports note that in education, there are wide gender disparities in learning outcomes as children become adolescents.

Gender in the Situation Analysis¹⁶³ and CPD

The Situation Analysis preceding the country programme identified several areas of concern, including *inter alia*:

- Gender norms that reinforce systemic social discrimination against girls and women pose a threat to children's rights.
- Despite successes in improving girls and young women's participation, the education system reproduces gender stereotypes.
- The internalization of gendered stereotypes influences girls' choices in terms of vocational training and higher education.
- The low level of participation of girls and women in the labour force suggests broad societal discrimination.
- Stakeholders reported increased violence as a consequence of conflict and disaster, and that internally displaced women and children, women-headed households, and women and children in estate sector were particularly vulnerable.

The situation analysis recommended that violence against girls and women (physical, sexual and social) must be systematically addressed at all levels.

Gender in programme implementation

Review of documents and consultation for this evaluation note that application of UNICEF's Gender Action Plan across the programmes is uneven.

In the nutrition status of children under 5 years, there is no significant gender difference in the prevalence of undernutrition in terms of stunting and wasting, with slightly higher prevalence observed in male children¹⁶⁴. Birth weight of an infant is a crucial indicator of mother's and infant's nutrition status and is therefore a determinant of healthy future generation. Although the proportion of pregnant mothers with low BMI on or before 12 weeks of gestation has reduced over time, the low birth weight remained almost static from 2015-2020 at about 12% among registered infants (Fig. 3.11)¹⁶⁵. These features point to a gender issue in nutrition.

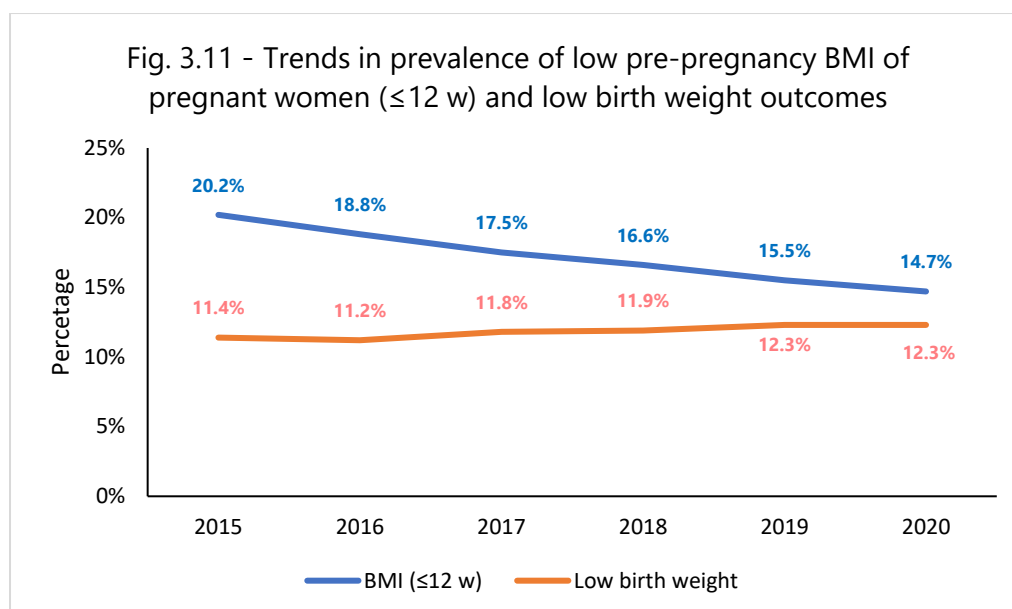
¹⁶¹ Country Programme Document, UNICEF SLCO (2018-2022)

¹⁶² UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2018-2021

¹⁶³ SitAn, 2017

¹⁶⁴ DHS Survey, 2016

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*



In social cohesion and bullying in schools, there is no specific reference to gender inequality and social exclusion especially with reference to those of non-binary gender identities and other excluded groups such as children with disabilities, and 'poor social class'¹⁶⁶.

In projects, it would appear that a 'gender lens' has not been consistently used during implementation and reporting¹⁶⁷. This is also partly attributed to the limited understanding of gender equality programming and monitoring of the implementing partners, and their lack of appreciation on the need for monitoring and reviewing of projects using the inclusive gender lens.

The annual reports have limited information about relevant achievements. One exception is the study on ragging and SGBV in the Universities; however, this study has been much delayed due to GoSL administrative changes, and it is too early to comment on the outcomes. The measurement of multi-dimensional child poverty is expected to include gender dimensions.

In terms of responding to the needs set out in the situation analysis, the coverage is uneven, looking at the focus areas for the evaluation as above. There are other achievements outside the focus areas, including:

- To prevent gender-based violence in both regular and emergency settings, UNICEF SLCO supported capacity development of child protection staff (CRPOs, CPOs and Probation Officers) to integrate a gender perspective into their work, which contributed to increased reporting of GBV cases. There is evidence of knowledge transfer by trained staff to adolescents in selected areas; however there is no assessment whether knowledge dissemination served to change power relations and identified gender issues at household and community level.
- UNICEF SLCO provided technical support to MoE to improve menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and develop gender sensitive plans for school sanitation systems together with provision of safe disposal system for sanitary napkins. Efforts have also been

¹⁶⁶ See: Report on the Terminal Evaluation of the Project, *Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka* (2021); UNICEF

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*

made to provide gender responsive WASH facilities in schools and health institutions. MHM required stronger investments in positive changes in children and the communities they live in and address negative social norms and harmful practices such as restricting toilet use for women during menstruation. This includes sensitization of adolescent boys through their participation in awareness campaigns.

The first annual report of the country programme noted as a lesson learned that more focus should be placed in coming years on mainstreaming gender and disability in all outcomes. The reviewed reports and consultations do not bring out any significant shift in the approach to these issues.

Although UNICEF Gender Guidelines require disaggregated data to show inequities and gender differences, this is not evident in programme implementation. The shortcoming of not providing disaggregated data by UNICEF SLCO is also highlighted in an ongoing study by UNICEF ROSA¹⁶⁸. In the Perception Survey 31% of the respondents have expressed their dissatisfaction on the non-availability of sex-disaggregated data.

COVID-19 and Gender

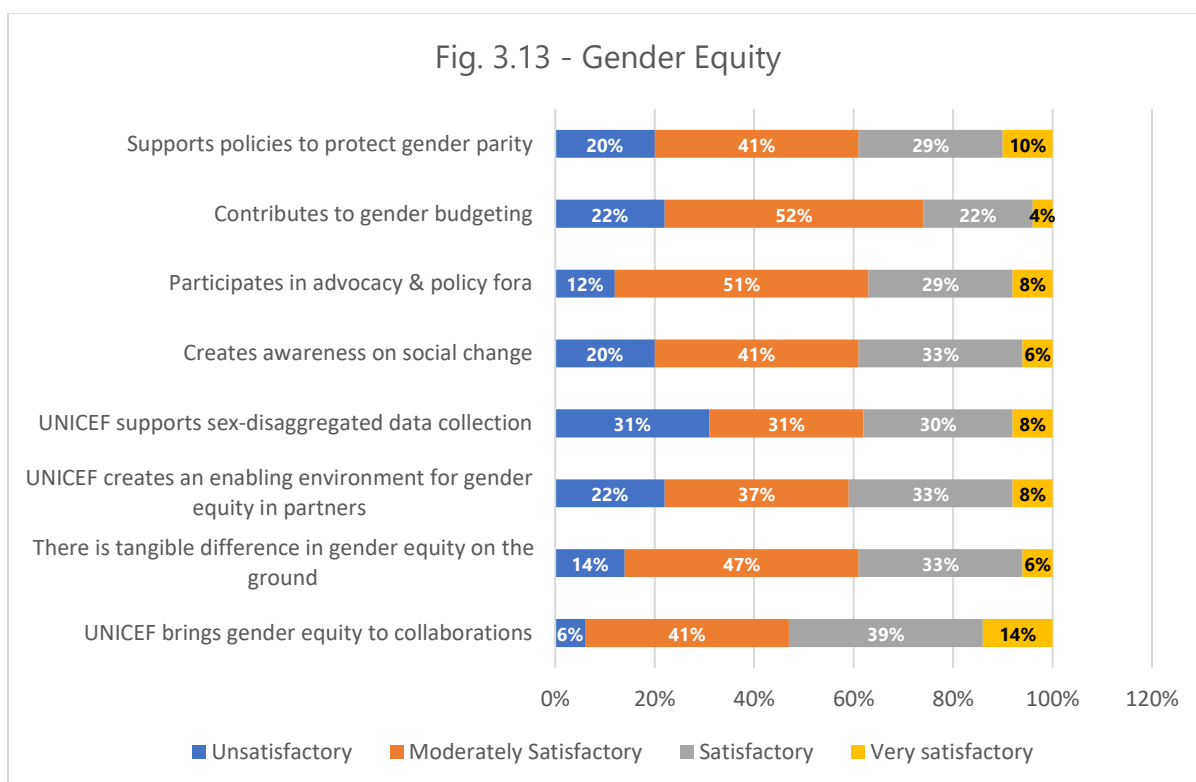
A recent study has shown the likelihood of COVID-19 exacerbating existing inequalities such as disparities in income due to lockdowns and economic downturns, differences in boys' and girls' access to technology, potentially impacting on access to resources¹⁶⁹. The travel restrictions, limitations and lockdowns have added to existing burdens and risk factors for violence and abuse, by increased loss of livelihood combined with closed schools and seclusion of families. Beyond the above study, discussions around these issues and the potential need to tweak interventions to fit with changed parameters appear limited.

Stakeholder perceptions of Gender Equity in UNICEF programming

As shown in Fig. 3.13, most respondents rated UNICEF work on gender equity as moderately satisfactory/satisfactory. However, areas of concern where over 20% have rated UNICEF's work unsatisfactory are: policies to protect gender parity, contribution to gender budgeting, creating awareness on social change, sex-disaggregated data collection, and UNICEF facilitating an enabling environment for gender equity in programming in partners.

¹⁶⁸ Gender Integration and Effectiveness of the UNICEF COVID-19 Response in South Asia (UNICEF ROSA) Study in progress.

¹⁶⁹ Fry, D., Padilla, K., Neelakantan, L., and Ivatury, S., (2021) A gendered analysis of child protection (CP) systems responses in COVID-19 programming in South Asia, UNICEF, Kathmandu.



Source: Perception Survey

3.5 Adoption of the Lifecycle Approach

This section focuses on the lifecycle approach that was introduced with the 2018-2022 Country Programme.

Rationale and vision

Traditionally, UNICEF Sri Lanka country programme has been designed around sectoral pillars, with separate targets based on sectoral needs, capacity, and partnerships. With the 2018-2022 CP, UNICEF SLCO decided to change from a sectoral design to a lifecycle-based approach. Key achievements of the country programme were phrased around three lifecycle stages: early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence, where different sectors would come together to deliver results for children at each stage of life.

The main rationale was the desire to create a more child-oriented focus, reflecting children's reality of multiple, overlapping rights deprivations rather than a sector-specific view. In a traditional, sector-based country programme, sections are often targeting the same children, but each only looking at their own thematic domain. The CPD notes that lessons learned from the previous country programme highlighted *"the need to invest in an integrated, child-centred approach that maximizes synergies and results for the most disadvantaged"*¹⁷⁰. Consultations with former and current staff confirmed this; there was a felt need to recognize that in practice different thematic sections target the same children, and to focus more on services coming together to serve children, particularly as the country programme also included a shift towards a system-strengthening focus. The country programme was also transitioning to working with

¹⁷⁰ UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Programme Document 2018-2022.

less resources¹⁷¹ after the conflict and immediate post-conflict years, and the lifecycle approach was thought to be potentially a more effective way of working. There was also a recognition of the need to ensure better, more strategic and systematic collaboration between sections, as *"an integrated outcome forces sections to come together"*.

In designing the country programme, country office management maintained regular contact with other offices in the region who were at the same planning stage. There was an initial process led by UNICEF ROSA to facilitate country-to-country learning during the CPD planning process, but beyond that continued sharing and learning was made possible by informal and more personal networks. The CO also had close contact particularly with Bangladesh, a CO that was one year into its lifecycle-based country programme and thus had valuable experience to share. Important lessons were learned from this, including the difficulty with creating lifecycle-based outputs. As a result, the Sri Lanka CO did not attempt this, but instead kept standard, sectoral outputs, and only phrased the outcomes using a lifecycle model (the actual indicators for the outcomes are still sectoral). In practice, the results at outcome level are highly narrative, a conglomerate of outcome indicators from several sectors. This structure allowed more flexibility towards aligning with internal reporting on UNICEF's own strategic plan as well as with government structures which were known to be largely sectoral.

According to the stakeholders consulted, there was broad support among staff for this approach during the design phase of the country programme; the basis for implementation was good. The planning also seems to have been careful in ensuring that lessons learned by others were taken into consideration, likely making the transition less tumultuous than what it could have been.

Implementation and challenges

The country office maintained its operational structure, hence it continued to be divided into thematic sections, each led by a section chief. The lifecycle orientation is largely implemented through outcome working groups, one for each of the three lifecycle stages. Each group is led by an "outcome lead", chief of one of the sections being part of the programme delivery for that age group (early childhood: Child survival and development; middle childhood: Education; adolescence: Child protection). The outcome leads are responsible for monthly coordination meetings where all relevant sections participate.

Some sections have found the approach more operationable than others. This is generally where there is some concurrence with government structures, or where the construct of the issues/deprivations is related to age. The evaluation found that this is the case particularly for health, where many interventions and indicators focus on children <5 y and where GoSL also has a multi-sectoral working approach.

The numerous challenges in implementation/operationalization of the lifecycle approach voiced during the evaluation are summarized below. Views expressed are primarily those of current and former staff, though some external informants who were aware of the approach implemented in UNICEF SLCO also added to the analysis on some points. The outcome group meetings are felt somewhat artificial – coming at a set time and not necessarily when there is

¹⁷¹ Sri Lanka became a Lower Middle-Income Country in 1997 – thus opportunities for donor funding reduced.

a need. The organization of these meetings was at times described like forced **collaboration out of synchronization with the real needs at hand**¹⁷².

In practice the approach has required **spreading already limited human resources very thin**. Many sectors are relevant for all lifecycle stages, and thus requires the limited programme staff to take part in several different outcome level groups; some stating *"it doubled our work"*.

Each sectoral area is in itself affected by other sectors – for example, nutrition is in itself a multi-sectoral issue. When child protection and early childhood is added to that mix, the outlook becomes even broader, and there is a felt **loss of specificity** that contrasts with the desire for technical, specific, and targeted programming for better results.

Some issues do not have a natural home in any of the lifecycle stages and **including them arbitrarily here or there can affect impact negatively**: For example, placing climate change in middle childhood when adolescents are perhaps the ones who can really raise their voice. Similarly with participation being pegged to adolescence, when it is also very much a middle childhood issue. Child-centered DRR is in principle cross-cutting but was placed under middle childhood as that was where WASH outputs were most prominent.

Some sectors are highly specialized, in addition to having no meaningful relation with lifecycle stages. Child protection and WASH are good examples of this, where each lifecycle stage is equally affected, and it becomes artificial and confusing to divide the work to fit age groups. The issue of staff time becomes even more critical, as the need to participate in several outcome groups can affect several technical areas/programme staff within the same section (for example drinking water and sanitation in WASH, or violence against children and alternative care in child protection).

The Government is the main counterpart of UNICEF SLCO and follows **a largely sectoral structure**. Hence, annual workplans that require government signature had to be made by sector. Government budget lines are also by sector, which has limited the added value of this approach vis-à-vis Government. The envisaged increase in collaboration across ministries was found to be difficult to facilitate.

Donors are looking to fund thematic issues, not age groups, and the approach has **not had any added value for resource mobilization**.

With each thematic area split into several life stages in Vision, the internal management information system, it has become more difficult for section chiefs to use this tool for **implementation monitoring**. The lifecycle approach has also caused complications with regard to accounting.

Indicators at both output and outcome levels are sector-based, but the outcome result *statement* requires a narrative story that weaves these indicators together. This is challenging, and a largely **desk-based exercise, to show how results come together** to create change for a certain age group.

Within UNICEF SLCO, there is a push to use standardized indicators, and conditions for developing new indicators at country level are very strict. Standardized indicators align with

¹⁷² In spite of the array of internal meetings, the external stakeholders felt that there is lack of coordination within UNICE SLCO

UNICEFs Strategic Plan and SDGs, which are all sector-based. There is a **mismatch between the lifecycle approach and internal reporting standards**.

Effect of the lifecycle approach on internal collaboration and coherence, and results achievement

One of the key underlying drivers of the lifecycle approach is its promise of increasing internal cooperation. Views on whether this has occurred during the current programme cycle are mixed, the majority questioned whether the old, more natural way of collaborating was more efficient than the mandatory meeting structures that came with the lifecycle approach. There are few indications of any real difference in “getting the job done” – none felt that their approach to work had changed. Some also pointed out that having an outcome lead from a particular section can limit the space for other sectors to actively participate. This could undermine internal collaboration, while on the surface appear as a more collaborative approach. In terms of coherence among sections, most support the view that the necessary collaboration does occur, on an on-need basis, regardless of the lifecycle approach. Field offices do not appear to be well integrated into the lifecycle approach and the staff were not particularly enthusiastic about the approach, and it does not seem to have increased central office – field office collaboration.

It is the issue that brings us together – not the compulsory meetings.

UNICEF SLCO Staff member

In terms of coherence with national priorities, the potential for the lifecycle approach to have an effect is limited by the fact that GoSL structures are largely sectoral. An exception is health, as noted above; however, the evaluation did not uncover evidence of this playing a part to increase coherence. Many government partners interviewed for the evaluation were unaware of UNICEF's lifecycle approach. All

other partners interviewed, whether UN agencies or I/NGOs, worked according to a sectoral approach. Some were aware of UNICEF's lifecycle approach, but it did not seem to be of any consequence to their collaboration; it was often seen as an internal process within UNICEF SLCO.

In general, the approach is not seen to have affected results achievement significantly. There is a very limited number of positive, concrete outcomes (one example that was mentioned was broadening of the government focus from ECE to the more holistic ECD, though that is still within one sectoral area of programming). While outcome leads have accountability for results achievement, they have limited control or influence over other sections contributing to the same outcome. The operational structure does not match the programme structure, and this mismatch was voiced during the evaluation¹⁷³. Some also stated that the “*lifecycle does not fit at all for the country programme*”, referring to the emphasis placed on upstream/leveraging processes (which are largely controlled by a sector-oriented government) versus a more service-delivery oriented country programme (where UNICEF SLCO holds more control over results).

Overall Analysis on the Lifecycle Approach

There is still broad agreement that the theory behind this approach, a child-centered/holistic way of delivering results, makes much sense and is desirable (also among some external

¹⁷³ KII with UNICEF staff.

partners, though the definition of lifecycle is not necessarily the same as that of SLCO). Staff feel it is a *'beautiful idea'*, that *'makes analytically a lot of sense'*, and that *"this is how we would like the world to be"*.

However, there is little support from staff for continuing the lifecycle approach in the next country programme: The negative effects of implementation are felt very strongly, while the positive outcomes are minimal. Any value added is limited to very few instances.

Not much advice was offered in terms of how it could be improved/amended to work better. The only proposal was to have informal lifecycle groups, where staff from different sections could meet as needed, on an *ad hoc* basis and not mandatory as they are now. However, some also warn that there are already too many internal cross-cutting working groups, which overburdens sections in a small office. Both the lifecycle meetings as well as the various working groups appear to mostly involve staff in Colombo and less so the field offices. With relation to internal cooperation, it could be noted that UNICEF is globally implementing the "Matrix Management", creating linkages and reporting structures that reflect that one person's work impacts other sectors, field offices and so on – beyond the traditional reporting structure. Sri Lanka started implementing this in 2020 and was among the first to test it in the region. It is still in its early phase, having reached its full shape in early 2021.

4. Conclusions

This section summarises the main findings of the CPE and are presented according to the main evaluation criteria¹⁷⁴.

Relevance

The overall relevance of the programme in relation to nutrition, child protection, education Disaster Risk Reduction and Social Policy and Social Protection is high, with clear alignment to the stated policies, programmes and strategies of GoSL and other international covenants. These have been, by and large, identified as priority programme areas in the Situation Analysis of 2017; however, the work programme has been limited due to fund limitations. The CPE also noted extensive stakeholder engagement in designing the programme.

Analysis of the Theories of Change indicated a gap between outputs and very high-level outcome variables, all at national level. Furthermore, since the CP has several initiatives aimed at developing policies and strategies which are yet to be fully operationalised, the expected outcome indicators are unlikely to be demonstrated in the near future. National indicators are more apt for service delivery (rather than upstream) and large funded situations. A more meaningful indicators are needed at the outcome level, particularly as data are not available on many national indicators. Nonetheless, the evaluation noted the relevance at output level; yet the interventions are spread and small and the results depend on the uptake by the Government to become relevant.

The CP actions support the realisation of Sri Lanka's Sustainable Development Goals, with particular reference to early childhood and social policy.

UNICEF SLCO is positioned as an important partner in child protection and education with UNICEF being the main organisation for child protection. In health and nutrition, there are other competing UN Agencies able to invest more with GoSL. Although UNICEF is well known for children's nutrition, this position is not well demonstrated in GoSL quarters.

During the current programme cycle, the CP faced three main external shocks, the change of Government, Easter Sunday attack, followed by COVID-19 pandemic. All three events contributed to major economic downturns and on people's lives. UNICEF SLCO took mitigatory actions, within the available resources to overcome some of these; nonetheless, the latter two events significantly affected programme delivery.

The consultations also identified a number of areas which could be considered for increased efforts.

UNICEF SLCO is currently engaged in Northern and Eastern Provinces, and in Uva and Central Provinces with a very limited portfolio.

¹⁷⁴ Relevance, Effectiveness, Coherence and Lifecycle approach

Effectiveness

The CPE assessment focussed on selected outputs. Overall, COVID-19 affected programme delivery particularly in child protection and education work. Effectiveness of **nutrition** programmes was hampered due to lack of coordination due to GoSL's lack of interest in the National Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Action Plan. The need for more focussed approach of providing customised packages depending on the nutritional situation of smaller geographic regions is indicated. Overall, GoSL is unable to show adequate progress in some of the key child nutrition indicators in spite of long-term interventions by donors and GoSL.

In **Child Protection**, effectiveness of interventions is hampered by loss of interest in the national partnership, inadequate coordination among government agencies as well as organizations, and delays in implementation. The PATHS programme was launched in a district in the Northern Province, but its piloting has been delayed owing to COVID-19 related issues. It is difficult to assess whether UNICEF SLCO's limited interventions could make a difference in national indicators on reduction of VAC.

In **Education**, work on social cohesion is appreciated by MoE; however, an impact can only be assessed when the overall curriculum revisions are completed and adopted by MoE in 2023/24. Work on positive disciplining has progressed in 2021, and the resource package is expected to be rolled out in 2022. Work on ragging and SGBV in the Universities is inordinately delayed due to changes in management at the University Grant Commission.

The **Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction Programme**, although in nascent stage, is well received by the GoSL authorities as well as provincial administration. Although there is scope for better coordination amongst GoSL agencies, there are positive developments in the provinces by allocating funds for CC-DRR work. Similarly, School Safety Guidelines have been incorporated into the school system.

Work on **Social Policy and Social Protection** is affected due to a number of reasons. The National Monitoring Committee to monitor child rights was established but is dysfunctional. The work on Multi-dimensional Poverty Index is ongoing; work on the National Evaluation Policy and supporting the development of evaluation capacity within the country have progressed. Interventions on influencing GoSL budget allocations to address child poverty reduction are yet to be fully recognised; additional allocations for poorer children is perhaps not focussed by GoSL in the current economic crisis. Similarly, public spending on education and health too has not increased due to the same reason. Citizen' budget has been implemented in the Eastern Province and is appreciated by the provincial authorities. It is likely to be replicated in the Northern Province.

In general, implementation is affected by delays in delivery, during the pre-COVID-19 period (2018-19 workplan) exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic. This is likely to continue in the current workplan period as well.

The programme results, even under better performance, is unlikely to show impacts in the current situation of using key national indicators in the Theories of Change. These indicators are long-term and UNICEF SLCO's interventions are unlikely to be fully reflected in changing the indicators.

In regard to the **Country Office Structure and capacity**, the CPE notes that the country office capacity is more aligned to the service delivery mode, applied by UNICEF SLCO in its previous

programme cycle. The transition to upstream policy dialogue and advocacy requires a different set of skills, which is not evident in some of the thematic areas. Whilst the sectoral approach has been the traditional approach of engaging with GoSL, reaching beyond the sectoral approach to embrace children's health, safety, and wellbeing to show children as the nation's wealth has not been communicated well to GoSL.

In spite of numerous working groups and meetings within UNICEF SLCO, internal collaboration amongst the Sections is seen weak by external stakeholders, both GoSL senior managers and Civil Society.

The two Zonal Offices of Northern and Eastern Provinces as well as the outposted office in Uva work very closely with the provincial administration in identifying provincial priorities and working as a conduit between the UNICEF SLCO and the provincial administration. They are considered trusted partners and appreciated for their contributions by the provincial authorities.

A major constraint for effective implementation of the programme has been **funding**. The CP was launched with an indicative budget of USD 57,235,000 made up of USD 4,735,000 CR and USD 52,500,000 OR funding with the largest allocation (29%) for early childhood. At the end of the third year, the country office received about 45% of the original budget. The shortfall in funding (\approx USD 20 million) is reflected in the curtailed implementation of the programme. Since much of this work has used OR funding, the programme is largely driven by donor funds.

On **knowledge products and outreach**, GoSL values to knowledge products; nonetheless, the CPE found the need for rigorous quality assurance of technical publications to ensure that they conform to the accepted UNICEF standards. Improving partners' knowledge on the UNICEF SLCO programmes is another area which could contribute to improving effectiveness.

UNICEF SLCO relies on **partnerships** for programme delivery. GoSL agencies are the main implementing partners, and their capacity was found to be adequate to fulfil their tasks. The long-standing partnerships with GoSL agencies have contributed towards the development of capacity of GoSL agencies. In general, CSOs have positively contributed towards implementing programmes, and have often provided feedback from the field, aside from contributing with their own expertise. There are a few CSOs who lack in-house capacity to deliver the programme, indicating the need for a more strategic approach in selecting CSO partners. The engagement with the Private Sector is at early stage, and their contribution thus far towards programme delivery is small. The effectiveness of private sector engagement needs specific approaches to engage them in line with business practices, branding, and choice of interventions which fit their business model. UNICEF SLCO is in the process of finalising Guidelines to engage with the private sector; UNICEF already has guidelines on due diligence, and these are good entry points to strategise private sector engagement in the future.

A number of key **assumptions** in the Country Programme have not materialised and will remain challenges to the new country programme. These include: active support from GoSL, proper data management, establishing coordination mechanisms, restricted GoSL allocations due to economic difficulties, and funding for UN agencies.

Overall, effectiveness is hampered largely by shortage of funds, limited engagement by GoSL, and the country office structure which is not congruent with the Lifecycle approach. These are important considerations for the next programme cycle.

Coherence

The current country programme focusses on more upstream **policy and advocacy work**, which take time to show results, especially in the Sri Lankan context where translation of policy to action is often weak. The work in Social Policy, though relevant, has not shown the expected fit, primarily as a result of external adverse situations such as the deteriorating economic situation in the country, as already noted by UNICEF SLCO in its PSN notes.

Equity and Gender -In disability, application of the disability principles across the programme is minimal. In nutrition status of children under 5 y, there is no significant gender difference in the prevalence of undernutrition in terms of stunting and wasting. In social cohesion and bullying, there is no specific reference to gender inequality. UNICEF SLCO has not consistently used a 'gender lens' or in implementing projects due to limited understanding of gender equality in programming and monitoring of projects. UNICEF SLCO supported MoE on menstrual hygiene management in schools. UNICEF SLCO also did not consistently collect sex-disaggregated data in programme implementation.

Joint programming with other UN Agencies has not been coherent. The CPE examined two such joint programmes, and their implementation has been far from expectations, primarily due to low level of coordination between agencies, lack of overall leadership for accountability, and non-synchronisation of pace of work by the respective agencies. These joint programmes have not demonstrated the spirit of UN Joint Programming.

Lifecycle Approach

The Lifecycle Approach has not taken root in UNICEF SLCO and has not been effective. There is a misalignment with the operational structure of the Sri Lanka office and GoSL sector structures. Staff face many challenges with regard to LCA; however as poor internal coordination is noted by many partners, it will be important to develop alternative means or refining the current approaches to improve performance. Adoption of lifecycle approach has overstretched staff, is creating confusion amongst them or arbitrary delineations, caused problematic results measurements, too much meeting time and so on. The Zonal Offices have not embraced this approach, which would appear to be a blind spot for internal coherence. It is also noted that in a small office like UNICEF SLCO with funding and staff limitations, every issue cannot be represented at every lifecycle stage. Whilst Lifecycle approach is deemed inoperable in the next programme cycle, the need for a more coherent inter-thematic coordination mechanism(s) is strongly indicated.

Concluding analysis

The outcomes of the evaluation provide important insights into the country programme.

The current programme is quite ambitious with an expectation of 92% of the funds from external donors. These funds have not realised to the expected level causing the programme to limit its operations and interventions. The Country Office faced challenges in implementing the funded activities because of external shocks, the change of the Government during this programme cycle, Easter Sunday attack, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

A more limited programme based on funding availability would have provided an opportunity to demonstrate its effectiveness more positively. The limitations in the current programme do not provide adequate impetus to make changes in the national indicators of child wellbeing.

The evaluation also noted a number of areas which could be considered for increased effort, and the Country Office could consider these together with the findings of the ongoing SitAn in formulating the new country programme.

The current approach to work in the policy arena, whilst very pertinent, has brought out challenges due to government's pace of work in policies. Currently, there is a mix of policy and service delivery interventions and future programming strategies require cognisance of the ever-present challenges. Additionally, the working structure in the Country Office is not congruent with the Government structures to demonstrate the full effects of the Country Office work.

5. Lessons learnt

The positive and negative lessons summarised below are generated from the analysis of evidence gathered during the CPE and information obtained from the desk review. They should be read together with the recommendations when developing the next programme cycle.

1. **The Theories of Change are not realistic, not quite contextual, and are not positioned to show changes that are needed.** In formulating Theories of Change for the next programme cycle, UNICE SLCO can use learnings from the current ToCs to determine more meaningful indicators to demonstrate results. The current programme cycle will show at the end of its term that interventions on policy formulation and strategic plans have not contributed to the indicators to the level expected because policies, strategies and action plans are implemented by GoSL where UNICEF SLCO has minimal influence. These experiences should be considered when formulating the next ToCs.
2. **Over-ambitious programme.** UNICEF SLCO undertakes a situation analysis before each programme cycle; however, in the current cycle, UNICEF SLCO has not been able to undertake some of the priority areas due to funding constraints. Specifically, the prioritization process that occurs between the SitAn needs and the CPD commitments is not clear to external stakeholders and even internally. Over-ambitious programmes and limited implementation due to fund constraints generate wrong signals in GoSL and NGO partners. Lessons from the current programme design would be useful for the next programme design, as well as for UNICEF ROSA as a matter of guidance in programme design in other countries.
3. **The Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction work has been embraced by the provincial authorities.** Although the CPE found certain shortcomings in GoSL inter-agency coordination, this work has created enthusiasm all-round. The CPE found the approaches adopted by UNICEF SLCO to transfer the CC-DDR knowledge with frequent meetings and first-hand sharing of knowledge has been effective, particularly with GoSL, and would provide lessons for adoption in other programmes as well.
4. **Applying 'disability lens' and 'gender lens' in programme implementation.** UNICEF SLCO has not consistently used the disability and gender lenses for programme implementation, partly due to inadequate understanding by implementing partners. These experiences would help UNICEF SLCO to focus on key aspects of application of equity and gender equality criteria in project implementation, including developing the capacity of implementing partners.
5. **The UN Joint Programming assessed during the CPE does not demonstrate that the agencies have understood the spirit of UN Joint Programming.** Any future inter agency UN programmes and projects can take lessons from the previous programmes to strengthen joint planning and joint ownership to better implement the projects and to enable harnessing of strengths in individual agencies to maximise results. These lessons are also applicable to other UN agencies who are involved in joint programming to improve design and implementation of joint programmes in the future.
6. **Some of the implementing CSO partners who have had long-standing engagement with UNICEF SLCO have added value to the programme and new CSOs have brought in fresh outlook.** They are in sync with UNICEF philosophies because of their long-term partnerships and have proven to be useful sources safeguarding children's lives as trusted

partners on the ground and providing feedback from the provinces, Such attributes may be used in the future to strategically select CSOs for implementation. On the other hand, there are new CSOs engaged by UNICEF SLCO who have brought fresh insights to programme implementation. Both these perspectives provide lessons for selecting CSOs.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented, based on the analysis of data and information generated during the CPE for consideration in the new programme cycle. Many of the recommendations were developed during consultations with the stakeholders where consensus was built. The recommendations were presented to the UNICEF SLCO Senior Management for validation.

Programme Strategy and Design

Recommendation 1: Given limitations of funding, the new programme cycle should focus on actions that will demonstrate programme effectiveness with enhanced participation of GoSL actors. As the interventions in the current cycle are spread thinly across a broad spectrum of themes, effectiveness is not well/easily demonstrated above the level of individual interventions. In this regard, the following actions are proposed for the 2023-2027 programme:

- The new programme should be based on clearly identified priorities selected after analyzing the situation of children and women, considering the work of other donors/agencies, and the comparative advantage and position of UNICEF SLCO in Sri Lanka. The planned programme should also be subjected to robust affordability analysis considering the funding prospects.
- Apply a package of interventions from multiple sectors as a pilot in a smaller geographic area (e.g. *Grama Niladhari* Divisions) to demonstrate results for children. UNICEF SLCO will have more control over the actions, and therefore the results can be attributed to actions as models for GoSL ownership. UNICEF SLCO will likely have to establish the baselines and end-lines for the relevant geographic areas (or generate supplementary data to what is already available at the local level). This approach could be particularly relevant should the field presence be downscaled, to retain in a few selected areas direct programmatic reach and connection with communities to assess what works and not.
- Whilst the current country programme has begun to focus on upstream work, the actual implementation is a mix of upstream and service delivery. An option for the next country programme is to embrace a full upstream portfolio with indicators that measure policy and advocacy rather than child wellbeing.
- In identifying provincial level priority areas of work, UNICEF SLCO should ensure to consult the Provincial Council in order to understand the overall provincial priorities for wellbeing of children as well as those of the Divisional Secretariat Divisions and ensure that ethnic and religious balances envisaged by the Provincial Councils are not disturbed in providing assistance.

Action: UNICEF SLCO with GoSL support

Recommendation 2: In regard to equity and gender equality, UNICEF SLCO should focus on actions to comply with the minimum standards in UNICEF ROSA strategy and those highlighted in 2017 SitAn, subject to availability of funding.

- In **Gender**, disaggregated data collection in programmatic work, and support technology innovation to address online and cyber space issues are priorities.
- In **Equity**, addressing issues of children in special situations (e.g. disabled, orphaned) is considered a felt need.

Action: UNICEF SLCO

Recommendation 3: In the new country programme, develop Theories of Change and Result Frameworks where:

- the ToC details how the planned interventions *converge* to create higher level results, avoiding the tendency in the current ToCs to list a number of activities as separate entities under each result. This will reduce the gap seen in the current CP between interventions at output level and very high level, ambitious national results. It will also improve the internal consistency and elasticity of the new programme; and
- the Outcomes and Outputs are measurable considering the availability of data.

The CPE does not recommend any changes to ToCs in the current cycle as there are only 14 months left, but it recognises that many of the Outcomes are national targets that may not either be met or reported on due to paucity of data. Given the experiences of the current programme, it is recommended that lower-level indicators be established in the new programme for improved internal programme review and accountability.

Recommendation 4: In the new programme, UNICEF SLCO may consider the following changes to thematic focus areas and interventions:

- Provide more attention to nutrition and formulate area-based/community-based nutrition regimes developed specifically considering the situation of the geographic areas under consideration, which are likely to be sustainable because of GoSL's agreement;
- Before the launch of the new programme, the responsibility for CRC work should be transferred to the Child Protection Section from the Social Policy Section;
- Protection work in Education has to be undertaken collaboratively with Child Protection Division;
- In the new country programme, consider areas needing further attention and new areas of work for UNICEF SLCO as suggested by stakeholders during the CPE, which are presented in the End Note of this Chapter. A Situation Analysis is currently ongoing with broad stakeholder participation. The SitAn 2021 will present a broad assessment of the situation of children and women and form the basis for prioritization of key areas of work for the next cycle, likely also giving due consideration to post-COVID-19 developments. The suggestions in the End Note are provided as a supplement to the SitAn.

In the new programme, the proposed activities should be fully discussed with the GoSL partners, including provincial administration, before workplans are prepared.

Action (3 & 4): UNICEF SLCO with GoSL support

Recommendation 5: Before the launch of the new programme, discontinue the lifecycle approach *in its current form*. UNICEF SLCO may consider other options as follows:

- Map the current cross-cutting working groups to better understand their roles and responsibilities, time required and the value addition by having these structures, and reform them as needed to ensure internal collaboration.
- Introduce informal, non-mandatory working groups, that would facilitate increased internal collaboration.

Recommendation 6: Before the launch of the new programme, reprofile/reskill the staff competences for upstream policy dialogue and advocacy to enable high-level engagement with GoSL. Staff competency for service delivery mode is felt adequate but there is a need for reskilling some staff for upstream policy dialogue and engagement with GoSL.

Recommendation 7: The Zonal Offices (Kilinochchi and Batticaloa) and the Outpost Office (Uva) should continue until the completion of the current programme cycle. However, their scope of work, staffing, and operations should be revisited once the new programme priorities and funding opportunities are determined in the new cycle. The outpost office in Uva will have to be upgraded if the new programme in that Province is expanded to other thematic areas.

Action (5, 6, & 7): UNICEF SLCO

Recommendation 8: The current partnerships and internal arrangements should be critically reviewed to optimise delivery of the CP. In this regard, the following are suggested:

- Review the selection criteria for identifying implementing CSO partners to ensure that they have the requisite competencies and local-level experience to implement the programme, and who are congruent with UNICEF values and are able to bring added value to the programme;
- Review, together with other partner UN agencies, the delivery of completed UN Joint Programmes implemented by UNICEF SLCO with a view to introduce tools and mechanisms to improve delivery of Joint Programmes to truly reflect the spirit of joint programming and modalities of UN New Way of Working. It is to be noted that the UNSDF 2018-22 which parallels the current UNICEF SLCO programme cycle, would benefit from joint work to demonstrate the inter-linkages between the SDGs and cross-cutting issues of human rights, gender, social protection, social cohesion and youth. .
- Ensure regular dialogue with GoSL partners to strengthen partnerships, particularly when dealing with policy and strategic matters. Engagement with the Ministry of Health (for health and nutrition) has to be strengthened by engaging with all relevant divisions in the Ministry; given the comparative strength of other UN agencies and international organisations in social policy/protection, UNICEF SLCO may consider partnering with such organisations in working with the National Planning Department.

Action: UNICEF SLCO (and UNCO/UNDP/WHO/UN Habitat for Joint Programming)

Recommendation 9: Improve the reporting and monitoring practices in RAM (and elsewhere) towards better consistency and ease in tracking progress.

- Ensure narrative reporting in the Country Office Annual Reports and reporting in RAM is consistent, repeatedly reporting on the relevant indicator, including where there is a reversal of progress or where achievements noted in reports of earlier years have been rendered less valuable for the Outcome by new developments in the country or other external events.
- Considering the complexity of the monitoring and reporting system and particularly the accessibility of RAM, it is recommended that UNICEF SLCO keep developing the current internal tracking tools for progress on indicators, possibly also including milestones for early detection of implementation delays (if not available already). This should be an active tool for thematic sections in addition to Planning.
- UNICEF SLCO should examine the overall results of the national evaluation capacity building supported by it.

Action: UNICEF SLCO & UNICEF ROSA

Sharing of Results and Knowledge

Recommendation 10: UNICEF SLCO should strive to periodically inform its implementing partners, including GoSL partners on the country programme content and results. Such an approach will bring transparency to the work and provide a sense of satisfaction, confidence, and trust to the implementing partners.

Action: UNICEF SLCO

End Note:

Summary of Programmatic areas for consideration in the next Programme Cycle

The following areas were identified during consultations with stakeholders:

Areas where increased efforts are needed¹⁷⁵

Health & Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addressing mental and education wellbeing of children between 3-8 years who could not attend school due to COVID-19;• Address undernutrition in children <5 y, particularly in identified critical geographic areas in the country (e.g., Uva and Central Province with particular reference to plantations);• Nutrition of pregnant mothers*;
Child Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initiate actions to facilitate establishment of a functional coordinating mechanism for child protection work;

¹⁷⁵ Statements followed by an asterisk (*) are from the Perception Survey.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender based violence and the link between intimate partner violence and violence against children; • Support CSOs to promote child protection issues and advocate for their space to do so; • Address issues of online violence (particularly after COVID-19); • Examine the issues relating to care of children under 3 y where parents are working and not able to provide the needed care*; • Introduce initiatives to improve the conditions of children and adolescents in urban low-income settlements to provide optimal health and educational attainment and vocational training*; • Develop a policy on children's environmental health aspects as they relate to air pollution and climate change*;
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on education for children with disabilities to support inclusive education policy of the Government; • Supporting children who drop out after GCE (Ordinary Level) with life skills/vocational training for them to become useful citizens; • Support for teacher fora for action research; • Expansion of social cohesion work on schools to other provinces; • Designing school infrastructure to avoid heat stress*; • Develop programmes to provide learning environment at home for children who lack parental care after school, face family violence, child employment etc.*
DRR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support upscaling CC-DRR activities to all disaster-prone areas